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We hereby approve the Dissertation

of

Guy Louis Parmigian

Candidate for the Degree:

Doctor of Philosophy

_____
Kate Rousmaniere, Director

_____
James Burchyett, Reader

_____
Richard Quantz, Reader

_____
Andrew Cayton, Graduate School Representative

ABSTRACT

MAKING A CONSOLIDATED ASHTABULA-LAKESIDE HIGH SCHOOL: POLITICS AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN RUSTBELT OHIO, 1963—2006

by Guy Louis Parmigian

This dissertation is a historical case study of the political process that made a consolidated high school within the Ashtabula Area City School District in northeast Ohio and the leaders who made it happen. The study opens with an introduction and a review of four literatures including: educational leadership, school consolidation, high schools, and the politics of school location. The study then examines the strategies and arguments of leaders during the 43-year consolidation process. This dissertation argues that a failure of leadership caused the contentious and polarizing process out of which a consolidated Lakeside High School was made. The final chapter discusses why the process failed, suggestions for leaders, and examines the legacy of school consolidation in the American Midwest.

MAKING A CONSOLIDATED ASHTABULA-LAKESIDE HIGH SCHOOL: POLITICS AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN RUSTBELT OHIO, 1963—2006

A DISSERTATION

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Guy Louis Parmigian

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DEDICATION

To my grandpa “Boie” and grandma Chris who passed away just before I began the doctoral program at Miami. Yet, I very clearly felt them with me at crucial points in the past three years. The words of this dissertation are colored by the lives of these two, second generation Italian-Americans who worked, learned, nurtured, loved, and continue to inspire:

Christine A. Parmigian
June 1, 1912—July 18, 2003

Louis Standy
February 22, 1916—September 5, 2003

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By the wonderful grace of God, and for the support of my family and friends, this project was made possible.

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CHAPTER 1

MAKING A CONSOLIDATED LAKESIDE HIGH SCHOOL

"Educational leaders must operate in a complex political world that places a premium on skills and strategies involving consensus building, negotiations, and reciprocity."[1]

This dissertation is about the leadership strategies in the political process of high school consolidation in the Ashtabula Area City School District in northeastern Ohio. The focus of the study is on the leaders who drove the political process by which Ashtabula High School and Harbor High School were consolidated and made into a new and larger institution called Ashtabula-Lakeside High School.[2] The political process of making a consolidated high school in Ashtabula commenced in 1963 and concluded in 2006, when a new 123-acre Lakeside High School campus opened to students and the community. Even though a new consolidated high school was opened in 2006, a large portion of the community still opposed it and held onto ill feelings about how the process played out. In this dissertation, I argue that a failure of leadership caused the contentious and polarizing 43-year process that made a consolidated Lakeside High School.

This dissertation is an historical case study of leadership. By leader, I mean an agent with more than just position or authority. I understand leadership to be an activity that is twofold: establishing a common purpose and establishing and guiding a plan of action. The activity of leadership can also be characterized as creating a vision that influences people toward goal achievement. The use of social power, through mastering, coercing, influencing, and enabling others, is the key variable in leadership. Because leaders use social power to create and guide a vision, their activities are often resisted because power in general presupposes resistance in general, and vice versa.[3]

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[1] John Portz, Lana Stein, and Robin R. Jones, *City Schools and City Politics: Institutions and Leadership in Pittsburgh, Boston, and St. Louis* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1999): 35.

[2] Ashtabula-Lakeside High School was technically the name of the school. However, it was commonly referred to as simply, Lakeside High School.

[3] Johan Fornas, *Cultural Theory and Late Modernity* (London: Sage Publications, 1995): 59-61; Paul Hersey, Kenneth H. Blanchard, and Dewey E. Johnson, *Management of Organizational Behavior: Leading Human Resources 8th Edition* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001): 78-79; Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994): 20.

Leaders in Ashtabula had to deal with two key pieces in the process of making a consolidated Lakeside High School: the legal consolidation piece and the physical consolidation piece. Understanding the difference between these two pieces is critical to understanding the leadership struggles and political nuances of this study.

First, legal consolidation refers exclusively to the legal action of merging two separate schools into one: two staffs, two student bodies, two school budgets become one. In Ohio, the elected school board has the sole authority to take this legal action, meaning that their majority vote (3 members) can turn two separate high schools into one. The act of legal consolidation can potentially take place without the funds necessary to build a physically consolidated home for the legally consolidated school. The school board's authority to legally consolidate the high schools derives from their legal authority granted by the state legislature to organize the educational system within school district boundaries.[4]

The second piece to the high school consolidation process is physical consolidation. Physical consolidation means that millions of taxpayer dollars are spent to build one new high school building, to house all the students who used to attend two separate high school buildings. Of course, the new consolidated high school would have to be built larger than the two old high school buildings. In order to raise millions of taxpayer dollars for the school construction, school boards in Ohio must place a bond issue in front of voters. A bond issue appears on the ballot as a question. For example: "Shall bonds be issued by the Board of Education for the purpose of constructing a new high school building…in the sum of $9,500,000?" If a majority of voters approve the bond issue, the physically consolidated high school is constructed. If a majority of voters reject the bond issue, the building is not constructed.

Between 1963 and 2006, school and other community leaders struggled to determine how the two pieces of the consolidation process would be ordered.[5] From 1963 to 1998, passing a bond issue to build a physically consolidated high school

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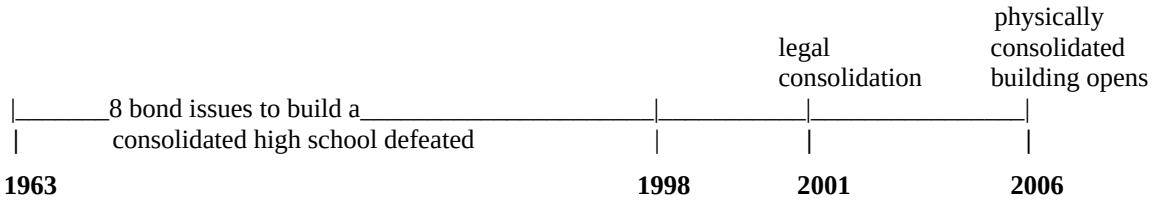
[4] I.N. Edwards, "The Legal Relation Between School Districts and Municipalities," *The Elementary School Journal* 30, no. 10 (June 1930): 734-745; I.N. Edwards, "The Law Governing the Creation, Alteration, and Control of School Districts," *The Elementary School Journal* 28, no. 9 (May 1928): 673-689.

[5] Anderson's Ohio Online Docs, Section 3318.06, located at http://onlinedocs.andersonpublishing.com/oh/lpExt.dll?f=templates&fn=main-h.htm&cp=PORC

building, before legally consolidating the two high schools, was focused upon and failed. In 2001, the high schools were legally consolidated. Then, in 2002, a bond issue to build a physically consolidated home for Lakeside High School was passed and a consolidated Lakeside High School complex opened in 2006.

Figure 1.

Ashtabula's High School Consolidation Process: 1963-2006



Brief Summary of the Consolidation Process

Two high schools, Ashtabula High School and Harbor High School, served the Ashtabula Area City School District community since the district was established in 1961. The school district community was 55 square miles in geographic size and included the central city of Ashtabula, suburban Saybrook Township and rural Plymouth Township. Both high schools were located in the City of Ashtabula. Ashtabula High School was larger, older, and located on a 3.86-acre parcel of land in downtown Ashtabula. Harbor High School had a smaller student population and was located on 2-acres in a historic neighborhood on the shores of Lake Erie in a distinct area of Ashtabula city known as The Harbor. Demographically, Ashtabula High had significantly more students of color than Harbor High.

From 1963 to 1987, a majority of school board members, superintendents, and business community elites pushed the consolidation of the two high schools and the construction of a brand new consolidated high school complex. They touted the advantages of high school consolidation for the educational system and the economic

well being of the community at-large. These pro-consolidation forces supported a bond issue to raise millions of dollars for the construction of a new consolidated high school, but did not disclose its location, because the school board did not yet have the funds to purchase a property for the new school. The school board decided to ask voters to approve a bond issue to construct the high school building before legally consolidating the two high schools. The reasoning for this was to wait to see what voters said about financing a consolidated high school complex before the school board exercised their legal right to consolidate the two schools. Thus, when citizens went to the polls to vote on the high school construction bond issue, they were really deciding on two interrelated things: whether or not to tax themselves for the construction of a school building and, implicitly, they were deciding if the idea of a consolidated high school in Ashtabula was a good idea. Between 1963 and 1987, voters defeated these bond issues five times.

During this same period, the City of Ashtabula, which was once the most important iron ore receiving ports on the Great Lakes because of its proximity to the Pittsburgh and Youngstown steel-making complex, lost its economic base due to de-industrialization and globalization. The city became part of the Rustbelt. By the mid-1970s, the Ashtabula Area City School District began to steadily lose enrollment due to the loss of population in the Ashtabula area. Most of the school district's population loss came from the City of Ashtabula, which experienced a steady population decline. Most of the white middle-class fled to suburban Saybrook Township and it grew moderately, while the Ashtabula city remained home to more senior citizens, persons of color, and the less affluent. Once home to vibrant ethnic neighborhoods and industrial growth, the City of Ashtabula came to be perceived as unseemly, impoverished, and drug-infested.[6] By the 1980s, the suburb of Saybrook Township was perceived to be home to the middle-class American Dream.

In 1993, the Ashtabula Area City School District school board purchased 123-acres of vacant property in Saybrook Township with funds it had in its coffers. They bought the land for the express purpose of constructing a consolidated high school there,

[6] See, for example, the website www.trashtabula.com. The site was created by victorious city manager candidate Anthony Cantagalo in 2005 and provides visual evidence of the consequences of poverty and Rustbelt decline. For more precise information and measures on the differences between the City of Ashtabula and Saybrook Township, see Chapter 3.

even though Ashtabula High School and Harbor High School had not been consolidated and voters had not approved a bond issue for the construction of the school. In 1993, 1997, and 1998, the school board placed bond issues in front of voters to finance the construction of a consolidated high school on the Saybrook property. Each time, the bond issues were defeated. Ashtabula High and Harbor High remained separate and the 123-acres of land in Saybrook remained vacant.

In 2001, the school board legally consolidated Ashtabula High and Harbor High into Ashtabula-Lakeside High School. However, the new institution was still physically split, with the 9th grade at the old Harbor High building and grades 10-12 at the old Ashtabula High building. Thus, Ashtabula-Lakeside High was legally consolidated first, without the means to construct a physically consolidated facility. The 123-acre site in suburban Saybrook was still vacant.

Then, in May 2002, the school board placed a bond issue before the electorate to finance the construction of a physically consolidated Ashtabula-Lakeside High School building in Saybrook Township. Ashtabula City Council, the city manager and city solicitor vehemently opposed the bond issue because it meant building the high school outside the corporation limits of the city. They saw the construction of a physically consolidated home for Ashtabula-Lakeside High in Saybrook Township as the loss of a vital asset in which to leverage the economic revitalization of the city. Despite strong leadership against the bond issue, it passed on May 7, 2002.

A physically consolidated home for Ashtabula-Lakeside High School was finally financed and located in Saybrook Township. Yet, before the project would be completed, it would be nearly derailed by wetland protection and endangered species issues that arose in 2004, which involved the Ohio EPA and the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Focus of the Study

This study is focused on the political process of making a consolidated Lakeside High School and the strategies of leaders who prolonged the process for 43-years.

Consolidation is a political process because it involves power and values.[7] Broadly speaking, this study builds upon revisionist histories of education, which open up the history of education and school institutions to questions of power relations, economics, social struggle, and politics.[8] More narrowly, this study is situated within the genre of third-generation "conflict" histories of education, which advantage the study of institutions, situate analysis in local contexts, and reveal schools as politically constructed sites.[9]

This dissertation's use of the idea of "making" a consolidated high school institution is intended to reinforce the focus on political process and product. My use of the term "making" was inspired by David F. Labaree's *The Making of an American High School*, which uses Philadelphia's Central High School as an illuminating case. Labaree argued that the American high school was the product of a continuing struggle between politics and markets. This dissertation is different from Labaree's in many important ways. Most notably, his monograph was a case study that aimed at the social history of the American high school.[10] However, my use of the term "making" is consistent with Labaree's use of the term because we both use it to indicate that a process leads to a product. For Labaree, making involves a *process* of ideological conflict between democratic and capitalist principles, which *produces* the contradictory goals that remain at the heart of the American high school today. For this study, making involves the process of educational leaders struggling within and through political conditions, which produced a consolidated Lakeside High School.

This study is informed by and builds upon the work of other educational historians who have focused on school institutions as political constructions including Daniel L. Duke's *The School That Refused to Die*, which examined the political

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[7] See, for example, David R. Reynolds, *There Goes the Neighborhood: Rural School Consolidation at the Grass Roots in Early Twentieth-Century Iowa* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999). For an expanded discussion of consolidation as a political process, see chapter 2.

[8] Kate Rousmaniere, "Historical Research," In deMarris and Lapan, *Foundations for Research: Methods of Inquiry in Education and the Social Sciences*, (Mahwah, NJ and London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2004): 39.

[9] Barbara Finkelstein, "Education Historians as Mythmakers," In Gerald Grant (Ed.), *Review of Research in Education 18* (Washington, D.C.: American Educational Research Association, 1992): 283.

[10] David F. Labaree, *The Making of an American High School* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), see especially 1-3; 174-176.

processes involved in creating and sustaining Thomas Jefferson High School in Richmond, Virginia and Gerald Grant's *The World We Created at Hamilton High*. This study is informed by historical analysis of the consolidation movement in the United States, including its potential merits for the educational system and its social consequences.[11] My study is also informed by and builds upon historical analysis of school institutions within local political arenas, such as Robert R. Alford's look at the importance of community identity and school district consolidation in one California town, David R. Reynolds look at rural school consolidation in Iowa, Jeffrey Mirel's look at the politics of the Detroit public school system and John L. Rury's look at race, space, and politics in Chicago's public schools, as well as David N. Plank and Paul E. Peterson's look at the leadership of Atlanta mayors in reforming the Atlanta schools.[12] Finally, the present study specifically draws from and builds upon Raymond B. St. John's 1938 work, *A History of Public Secondary Education in Ashtabula, Ohio.*[13]

In addition, the broader context of this study is informed by a number of historical works such as Andrew Cayton's *Ohio: The History of a People*, Jon Teaford's *Cities of the Heartland*, Michael B. Katz' edited volume *The "Underclass Debate: Views from History*.[14] It is also informed by historians who have examined the development of the

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[11] Daniel L. Duke, *The School That Refused to Die: Continuity and Change at Thomas Jefferson High School* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995); Gerald Grant, *The World We Created at Hamilton High* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); Johathan P. Sher, *Education in Rural America: A Reassessment of Conventional Wisdom* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977); Paul Theobald, "Historical Scholarship in Nineteenth Century Rural Education," In Alan J. DeYoung (Ed.), *Rural Education: Issues and Practice* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1991); David B. Danbom, "Rural Education Reform and the Country Life Movement, 1900-1920," *Agricultural History* 53, no. 2 (April 1979): 462-474; David R. Reynolds and Fred M. Shelley, "Local Control in Public Education: Myth and Reality," In Janet E. Kodras and John Paul Jones, III (Eds.), *Geographic Dimensions of United States Social Policy* (London: Edward Arnold, 1990): 107-133.

[12] Robert R. Alford, "School District Reorganization and Community Integration, *Harvard Educational Review* 30, no. 4 (Fall 1960): 350-371; David R. Reynolds, *There Goes the Neighborhood: Rural School Consolidation at the Grass Roots in Early Twentieth-Century Iowa* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999); Jeffrey Mirel, "After the Fall: Continuity and Change in Detroit, 1981-1995, *History of Education Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (Autumn 1998): 237-267; John L. Rury, "Race, Space, and the Politics of Chicago's Public Schools: Benjamin Willis and the Tragedy of Urban Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 117-142; David N. Plank and Paul E. Peterson, "Does Urban Reform Imply Class Conflict?: The Case of Atlanta's Public Schools," *History of Education Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (Summer 1983): 151-173.

[13] Raymond Bailey St. John, *A History of Public Secondary Education in Ashtabula, Ohio* (Unpublished Master's Thesis: The Ohio State University, 1938).

[14] Andrew R.L. Cayton, *Ohio: The History of a People* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2002); Jon C. Teaford, *Cities of the Heartland: The Rise and Fall of the Industrial Midwest* (Bloomington and

educational system and educational administration in the United States such as David B. Tyack's *The One Best System,* David Tyack and Elizabeth Hansot's *Public School Leadership in America, 1820-1980,* and Raymond E. Callahan's *Education and the Cult of Efficiency: A Study of the Social Forces That Have Shaped the Administration of Public Schools*, as well as Joel Spring's *Conflict of Interests: The Politics of American Education* and Spring's *The American School 1642-1996.*[15]

Finally, the work of political scientists, who have examined relationships between and among urban industrial areas, the politics of suburbanization and deindustrialization, and the public school system, inform this dissertation.[16] This research offers an perspective for making sense of the leadership struggles in the diverse and polarized community served by the Ashtabula Area City School District.

The leaders this study focuses upon are Ashtabula Area City Schools superintendents, elected school board members, prominent members of the business community, Ashtabula city officials such as the city manager, city solicitor, and members of city council, as well as members of a grass-roots community group who opposed high school consolidation, known as Citizens of Ashtabula Revitalizing Education (CARE). Most of the leaders focused on in this study held a position of prominence or authority within the community, either within or outside the formal school system organization.

A key thread that runs through this entire dissertation is the tension between leaders who held formal authority within the school district organization (namely,

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Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993); Michael B. Katz (Ed.), *The 'Underclass' Debate: Views From History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[15] David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974); David Tyack and Elizabeth Hansot, *Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership In America, 1820-1980* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1982); Raymond E. Callahan, *Education and the Cult of Efficiency: A Study of the Social Forces that Have Shaped the Administration of the Public Schools* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1962); Joel Spring, *The American School 1642-1996 4th Edition* (New York: The McGraw Hill Companies, Inc., 1997); Joel Spring, *Conflicts of Interests: The Politics of American Education 5th Edition* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2005).

[16] John Portz, Lana Stein, and Robin R. Jones, *City Schools and City Politics: Institutions and Leadership in Pittsburgh, Boston, and St. Louis* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1999); Paul Kantor, *The Dependent City Revisited: The Political Economy of Urban Development and Social Policy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995); Michael N. Danielson and Paul G. Lewis, "City Bound: Political Science and the American Metropolis," *Political Research Quarterly* 49, no. 1 (March 1996): 203-220; Thomas Byrne Edsall with Mary D. Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992); Myron Orfield, *Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1997).

superintendents and school board members) and those who did not. During the 43-year process, generally, the same interest groups advocated and opposed the consolidated high school. The major proponents of the high school consolidation process were the superintendents and most school board members who held formal control and authority over the school district. The main opponents of the high school consolidation process were City of Ashtabula officials, members of the community associated with the grass-roots group CARE, and a few school board members.

In this way, the dissertation is a top-down look at the making of an institution. Therefore, the study sidesteps institutional culture, climate, and curriculum within the school walls. For example, it does not focus on the struggles of principals, teachers and students within the consolidated school as other histories have.[17] This is not a cultural or social history of the making of Lakeside High School.

The primary sources of data used for this study were local newspaper articles and websites, government documents such as minutes of the Ashtabula Area school board and the Ashtabula City Council, written communications between leaders, school district publications, and transcripts of debates. Secondary sources include educational histories, government and foundation reports on school consolidation and the use of schools to revitalize neighborhoods, and scholarly works that discuss the political issues brought up in this research.

Purposes of the Study

This study has three purposes. First, this dissertation provides educational leaders with an historical case study on how consolidated high school institutions are political creations, made during a process that is shaped by the maneuverings, arguments, and tactics of leaders. In examining how Ashtabula's leaders failed to make this high school consolidation process move quickly and painlessly for the community, it suggests alternatives for leaders in other settings.

[17] See, for example, Neil R. Fenske, *The History of American Public High Schools 1890-1990: Through the Eyes of Principals* (Lewiston, UK: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1997).

Secondly, this study updates and extends our historical understanding of one of the most popular educational reforms in American history—school consolidation. This study fills a gap in the historical literature about school consolidation because much of the existing literature about the topic has centered on how it played out in rural America during the Progressive Era. Research on school consolidation after the Progressive Era has also focused on how it played out in rural areas, and not the consolidation process in urban or suburban school districts.[18] Another gap this study fills is that there has been much historical analysis of the consolidation of small school districts, rather than the consolidation of two schools within the same school district.[19]

This study reinforces past historical findings about consolidation, but also extends and updates them by illustrating how the process played out in a small urban-industrial area in the late 20th and early 21st century. The study shows how school and community leaders in Rustbelt Ashtabula used many of the same arguments to support high school consolidation in the 1990s that were used to support consolidation in 1890s rural Ohio: that consolidation would result in cost savings benefits because of increased efficiency, and result in a stronger educational program for the school system. This dissertation also shows how the high school consolidation process in Ashtabula included debates over such social issues suburbanization and the concentration of racial minorities and poverty in central cities, the preservation of wetlands and endangered species, and state educational funding policies and programs.

The final purpose of this study is to benefit educational leaders, politicians, state policy makers, and ordinary citizens who wish to understand how a school consolidation process involved educational leaders and a multiplicity of political issues. This dissertation will be of use to persons wishing to create a consolidated school that is responsive to the common good of the community and that does not marginalize those who need its resources. This study is of value to educational leaders and citizens in

[18] See, for example, Kenna R. Seal and Hobart L. Harmon, "Realities of rural school reform," *Phi Delta Kappan* 77, no. 2 (October 1995): 119-124.

[19] David Strang, "The Administrative Transformation of American Education: School District Consolidation, 1938-1980," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (September 1987): 352-366; Tucker L. Self, "Evaluation of a Single School District Consolidation in Ohio," *American Secondary Education* 30, no. 1 (Fall 2001): 71-81.

Ashtabula wishing to use the history of its high school to creatively solve current educational problems.

Research Questions and Organization

The primary question this dissertation seeks to answer is: What were the arguments, tactics, strategies, alliances, and political maneuvers of leaders that caused a tumultuous and drawn-out 43-year political process that made a consolidated Lakeside High School? How did leaders on both sides of the high school consolidation issue fail to build broad-based support for their positions?

This dissertation is organized into eight chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literatures the study engages. Chapter 3 provides a context for and sets the political stage for the entire 43-year consolidation process by providing a brief history of the Greater Ashtabula area, the Ashtabula Area City School District, and a brief history of the two high schools proposed to be consolidated, Ashtabula High and Harbor High. Chapter 4 then backs up to the year 1963 when the high school consolidation process begins. It examines the arguments of leaders for and against passing a bond issue to build a consolidated high school in Ashtabula, and comments on why anti-consolidation forces won out until 1998. Chapter 5 presents the story of how and why the school board legally consolidated the two high schools in 2001. Chapter 5 also examines the leadership tactics and political climate that led up to a key battle between the Ashtabula schools superintendent and the Ashtabula city solicitor on the 2002 bond issue to build a physically consolidated home for Lakeside High. Chapter 6 focuses on the debate of two leaders; the schools superintendent who argued that the 2002 bond issue should be passed and that the physically consolidated Lakeside High located in Saybrook Township, and the Ashtabula city solicitor who argued that voters should defeat the 2002 bond issue because it meant locating the high school outside the city. Chapter 7 reviews the leadership struggles during the construction phase of the consolidated high school in suburban Saybrook Township. The two objects of contention were wetlands protection and an endangered bat nesting on the property. Chapter 8 examines three areas in which leaders failed, provides suggestions for educational leaders, and discusses the legacy of the school consolidation movement in the American Midwest.

Limitations of the Study

The lessons drawn from this historical case of a high school consolidation process in Ashtabula, Ohio cannot be directly applied to other contexts. The reader of this study would do well to use caution and reflexivity when taking historical lessons from the present work. As we shall see, many of the political conditions that educational leaders grappled with during this process were unique to this historical context.

This study is also limited because it is a story told from the perspective of community leaders who shaped the consolidation process and left readily available historical data such as newspaper articles, government documents, and transcripts of debates. Finally, this study may also be compromised because of the "insider" status of the author who was born and raised in Ashtabula, attended Ashtabula High School and served as a teacher at Ashtabula High School. Great pains have been taken to fill in "blind spots" of the story that an insider reflexively assumes, although some may still exist.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study examines the politics and leadership conflicts involved in the process of making a consolidated high school. To understand the leadership challenges examined in this study, this chapter reviews four relevant literatures: educational leadership, school consolidation, high schools, and the politics of school location.

The Evolution of Educational Leadership

According to David Tyack and Elizabeth Hansot, public educational leaders, namely the superintendent and principals, increased their power throughout the late 19th century to the mid-20th century to become "benevolent rulers," unaccustomed to confrontations and challenges to their authority. Their power diminished by the 1960s and 1970s as educational leaders became one of several community actors, including elected political officials, citizen groups, business leaders, etc., who shared in the educational policy decision-making process.[1]

During the 1830s and 1840s, common school movement reformers believed that if common schools were going to teach a common moral and political philosophy, the school organization had to be standardized. Joel Spring has argued that during the common school movement of the early to mid-19th century, the most important task of school superintendents was riding from schoolhouse to schoolhouse to ensure that teachers were adhering to a standard curriculum.[2] Common school era superintendents focused on supervision of instruction and made annual reports, while most business and executive functions were in the domain of the local school board.[3] During this period, the role of superintendent was viewed as representative of or assistant to the powerful school board. Local school boards viewed themselves as both an executive and

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[1] David Tyack and Elizabeth Hansot, *Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership in America, 1820-1980* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1982): 224-240.
[2] Joel Spring, *The American School 1642-1996*, 4th Edition (New York: The McGraw Hill Companies, Inc., 1997): 123.
[3] M. Scott Norton, L. Dean Webb, Larry L. Dlugosh, and Ward Sybouts, *The School Superintendency: New Responsibilities, New Leadership* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1996): 110-112.

legislative body and were reluctant to delegate their executive functions to superintendents.[4]

Between 1880 and 1920, Progressive Era reformers sought to reform municipalities, social services, and schools in response to genuine problems that existed in American society around the turn of the century. According to Raymond Callahan, these problems included rapid industrialization, the concentration of wealth, the exploitation of natural resources, political corruption, the increase in the size of cities, and the flood of immigrants who added to the complexity of the social and political problems in urban areas. Callahan argued that during the Progressive era, efficiency and business methods were being exclaimed in popular journals as tools to use in the reform of society's institutions. Thus, Callahan argues, when Americans looked toward reforming the leadership of schools, the application of business methods seemed ideal.[5]

David R. Reyonlds and Fred M. Shelley argue that Progressive Era school reformers were motivated to restructure the system of school governance for two reasons. First, reformers wanted to create a system of governance that adapted schools to demographic and industrial changes occurring in 1890s America. Secondly, Progressive reformers argued that schools were being victimized by political groups who used schools to dispense favors and consolidate their political power. According to Reynolds and Shelley, Progressive reformers were concerned that immigrants, who were ignorant and unskilled in democratic practices, might use corrupt political machines to tailor schools to their special needs.[6]

David B. Tyack has argued that Progressive Era reformers and leading educators were convinced that there was one best system of education and were impressed by the order and efficiency of the new technology and organizational forms they saw around them: the division of labor in the factory, the punctuality of the railroad, and the chain of command in the modern corporation. Tyack argues that educational reformers sought to

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[4] M. Scott Norton, L. Dean Webb, Larry L. Dlugosh, and Ward Sybouts, *The School Superintendency: New Responsibilities, New Leadership* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1996): 108-110.

[5] Raymond E. Callahan, *Education and the Cult of Efficiency: A Study of the Social Forces that Have Shaped the Administration of Public Schools* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1962): 2-5; David B. Tyack, *The One Best System* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974): 28-39.

[6] David R. Reynolds and Fred M. Shelley, "Local Control in Public Education: Myth and Reality," In Janet E. Kodras and John Paul Jones, III (Eds.), *Geographic Dimensions of United States Social Policy* (London: Edward Arnold, 1990): 114-117.

replace confused and erratic means of control of schools with careful allocation of powers and functions within a hierarchal and bureaucratic organization.[7]

Progressive Era reformers changed the relationship between the school board and superintendent, with the superintendent gaining more power. Kathryn A. McDermott has argued that educational leadership changed as a result of Progressive Era reformers who believed that school administration should be based on hierarchal allocation of power, orderly procedures, and objective standards based on scientific knowledge.[8] Reynolds and Shelley argued that as administrators became viewed as experts, the power of school boards and local citizens in controlling the educational decision making process waned.[9] The increase in the executive power of the superintendent to make decisions about the educational program happened as a result of him, given that males dominated educational leadership roles at the turn of the 20th century, being viewed as a professional expert who based his practice upon the popular principles of Taylor's "scientific management."[10]

At the turn of the 20th century, Raymond Callahan has argued, educational leaders faced mounting pressure of reformers to be more efficient, business-like, and to adopt the principles of Frederick Winslow Taylor's scientific management. In popular magazines and newspapers of the day, critics demanded that schools should provide quantitative measures of educational outcomes, and cuts in school funding were threatened if school administrators could not produce a tangible accounting of the educational product.[11] Callahan noted that school administrators began to respond to this criticism in 1911 by applying the principles of scientific management and bureaucratic efficiency to schools.[12] The basic principles of Taylor's scientific management aimed at achieving maximum production at lowest cost by analyzing, planning, and controlling the entire manufacturing process in detail and developing a science of each job that replaced the individual judgment of workers with precise rules and laws governing each job. Taylor

[7] David B. Tyack, *The One Best System* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974): 28-29.
[8] Kathryn A. McDermott, *Controlling Public Education: Localism Versus Equity* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1999): 14.
[9] Reynolds and Shelley, 1990, pg. 116-117.
[10] Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, and Sybouts, *The School Superintendency:* 4-9.
[11] Callahan, *Education and the Cult of Efficiency:* 42-51.
[12] Callahan, 1962, pg. 54-64.

and his associates argued that scientific management could be applied to all institutions of life, including the educational system.[13]

David Tyack and Elizabeth Hansot argue that one of the central reasons why Progressive Era educational reformers embraced Taylor's scientifically managed bureaucracy was that it facilitated meritocracy, the notion that occupational advancement should be based on ability and achievement, because educational employment was too often a "political" process influenced by corrupt political machines that used schools as spoils of office.[14] Joel Spring has argued that according the principle of meritrocracy, schools also objectively selected and prepared students for their ideal places in the social order.[15]

David Tyack asserted that the application of Taylor's scientific management to school leadership ran concurrently with the efforts of prominent education reformers to shield and insulate educational leadership from disruptive and corrupt political influences.[16] Wirt and Kirst assert that progressive reformers saw political corruption as a prime cause of inefficiency in schools and, in fact, many politicians did regard the schools as a useful support for their spoils system.[17] Tyack called reformers who aimed at restructuring the governance structure of schools, "administrative progressives," who included mostly white males who were business elites, university presidents, and school superintendents. According to Tyack, the administrative progressives shared a common ideological platform and amassed considerable support in the general public behind the idea that school leadership should be the prerogative of professional, university-trained experts. The agenda of the administrative progressives was to create a decision-making process in schools that deferred to the professional expert—a process that emulated decision-making in the modern business corporation. Tyack argued that administrative progressives portrayed their reform struggle as a contest of unselfish and enlightened citizens against the forces of corruption, ignorance, and inefficiency: they wanted to

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[13] Callahan, 1963, pg. 19-29.
[14] David Tyack and Elizabeth Hansot, *Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership in America 1820-1980* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1982): 129.
[15] Spring, 1997, pg. 254.
[16] Tyack, 1974, pgs. 78-109.
[17] Frederick M. Wirt and Michael W. Kirst, *Schools in Conflict* (Berkeley, CA: McCutchan Publishing Corporation, 1982): 2.

shield the schools from extraneous political influence and give control to expert and professionally trained managers.[18] Specifically, Tyack argues, the administrative progressives sought to create school boards made up of a cadre of "successful men" who were honest, well meaning, had no personal ends to serve, no special cause to plead, and most importantly, would respect the expertise of the superintendent who would look out for what is in the best interest of all children.[19]

Critics such as George Counts questioned the agenda of the administrative progressives at the time. Counts argued that a business elite school board made up of doctors, lawyers, and manufacturers marginalized the interests of women and the working-class.[20] In addition, Callahan has argued that in the first and second decade of the 20th century, there was a small minority of educators who argued against the application of a business-industrial model and scientific management to schooling. Dissenters included the American Federation of Teachers, as well as John Dewey who opposed the inappropriate application of business and industrial values to schools because it oversimplified education and made it a superficial activity. Callahan notes that although a few victories against business-industrial values were won, opponents were small in number, their voices barely audible, and they were unable to stem the tide of bureaucratic-scientific management of schools.[21]

By the mid-1920s, a field of educational administration was clearly demarcated and legitimized as a specialized scholarly field, or discourse, grounded in scientific management, and promoted by newly established departments of educational administration in the new colleges of education.[22] By the early 1920s, departments of educational administration were offering more specialized courses and superintendents across the nation showed an increase in educational attainment. Fenwick W. English has argued that grounding the field of educational administration in scientific management helped to enhance their prestige within the university and their authority to control

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[18] Tyack, 1974, pg. 167-169.
[19] Tyack, 1974, pg. 167-172; Reynolds and Shelley, 1990, pg. 116-119.
[20] Tyack, 1974, pgs. 126-141.
[21] Callahan, 1962, pgs. 120-127.
[22] Fenwick W. English, *The Postmodern Challenge to the Theory and Practice of Educational Administration* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, LTD, 2003): 72; Callahan, 1962, pg. 198; Spring, 1997, pg. 260.

schools.[23] Tyack asserts that because school leadership was seen as a scientific matter, the expert administrator came to have more influence and control over the elected board of education in determining school policy.[24] In addition, Norton, et.al. argue that between 1923 and 1933 there was a change in the role of superintendent's that included less focus on the supervision of instruction and more of a focus on executive matters like personnel decisions.[25] According to Tyack and Hansot, school leaders also served as exemplars of approved values and as "curator of the museum of virtue."[26]

Raymond Callahan has argued that by 1925, the business-managerial conception of administration was firmly established and efficiency seemed to have been accepted as an end in itself.[27] One of the most influential thinkers in the field of educational administration was Elwood P. Cubberley who published *Public School Administration* (1916) and *Public Education in the United States* (1919). Cubberly was a leading advocate of removing politics from the leadership of schools and argued that the administration of schools should be based on scientific principles and business-industrial values.[28] The success of administrative progressives such as Cubberley in convincing a whole range of society that education should be depoliticized and put in the hands of experts was what Tyack and Hansot called, "the politics of lay acquiescence." The politics of lay acquiescence, Tyack and Hansot argue, led to a period of relative calm in school politics, in which the basic assumptions of scientifically managed bureaucracy went largely unchallenged for several decades, and the ideal of an a-political professional school leader enjoyed great popular support.[29]

Joel Spring asserts that there were several complex factors involved in the change in relationship between the school board and administration, whereby administrators felt that their role was to administer policy without interference from the board of education.

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[23] Fenwick W. English, *The Postmodern Challenge to the Theory and Practice of Educational Administration* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, LTD, 2003): 71-96.
[24] Tyack, *The One Best System:*: 144-147.
[25] Norton, et.al., 1996, pg. 11.
[26] Tyack and Hansot, 1982, pg. 168.
[27] Callahan, *Education and the Cult of Efficiency*: 244-246.
[28] McDermott, *Controlling Public Education:*: 15.
[29] David Tyack and Elizabeth Hansot, *Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership in America, 1820-1980* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1982): pgs. 204-206. See also Callahan, *Education and the Cult of Efficiency*; Frederick M. Wirt and Michael W. Kirst, *The Politics of Education: Schools in Conflict* (Berkeley, CA: McCutchan Publishing Corporation, 1982): 1-6.

Spring suggested that the most important factors were the reduction of the school board's size, making board elections non-partisan, the adoption of Taylor's scientific management principles to education, and the rapid professionalization of the field of educational administration between 1900 and 1924.[30]

According to David Reynolds and Fred Shelley, the professionalization of school leadership meant that control of education became less local and became the almost exclusive purview of a new professional elite. In the sense that the school district became a "quasi-corporation," administratively the superintendent was to act as the corporate head, with administrative staff as functionally specific corporate managers, and the board of education as representatives of company stockholders. I.N. Edwards argues that the school system is a quasi-corporation and suggests that a clear legal boundary between school system governance and municipal governance is key in avoiding fraud, corruption, and ill-considered educational policies that can result when elected municipal officers assume a degree of control over public schools.[31] Reynolds and Shelley argue that the executive functions of the school board in the 19th century became administrative functions of the superintendent's staff in the 20th century, leaving the school board with the primary responsibility of selecting the superintendent and approving decisions made by the administrative staff.[32]

According to Tyack and Hansot, 1954 was the beginning of another sea change in public school leadership. When the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court case *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka* made schools a socioeconomic battleground around the issues of race and poverty. As a result, educational administrators had to contend with people from outside the domain of educational administration seeking to influence educational policy. Tyack and Hansot argued that by the late 1960s, school leaders found themselves in an adversarial political environment quite different from the high degree of control and autonomy they had known before the mid-1950s. At first, this led to a defensive posture on the part of some school administrators who reasserted their professional ideology and

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[30] Spring, 1997, pg. 254-262.

[31] I.N. Edwards, "The Legal Relation Between School Districts and Municipalities," *The Elementary School Journal* 30, no. 10 (June 1930): 734.

[32] David R. Reynolds and Fred M. Shelley, "Local Control in American Public Education: Myth and Reality," In Janet E. Kodras and John Paul Jones, III (Eds.), *Geographic Dimensions of United States Social Policy* (London: Edward Arnold, 1990): 118-119.

argued that they were the proper arbiters of educational policy. Tyack and Hansot assert that this defensive posture restricted school administrators ability to hear or persuade a diverse public and, because educational administrators were taught to regard conflict as pathology, they failed to perceive the potential for educational renewal in the 1960s.[33] From both the right and the left side of the ideological spectrum, by the 1960s, few had anything good to say about the existing managers of the educational system.[34]

In the early 1960s, the very foundations of professional educational administration were called into question by the historical analysis of Raymond E. Callahan, who argued that the indiscriminate application of business and industrial values to education with little or no consideration of educational values or purposes was a "tragedy" for American education and society.[35] Callahan was influenced by and dedicated his book to George Counts, who had earlier in the century criticized the growth of administrative authority. Other critical theorists, such as Herbert Marcuse, argued that education was becoming increasingly functional and helped to reproduce oppressive and undemocratic capitalist relations.[36] Others were critical of the bureaucratic organization of schools because of its marginalization of women. Tyack and Hansot argued that the feminization of the teaching profession, for example, was closely linked to the bureaucratization of schools, in which women became subordinate to male managers.

Recent scholars in the field of educational administration have critiqued the way in which school administration views itself as value-free, objective science. Fenwick W. English argues that the science of administration establishes a "regime of truth, an interlocking agenda involving persons and agencies which is politically repressive to all other possibilities." Grounded in modernism, the field of educational administration has created school leaders of schools who were focused on control and order rather than what is in the best interests of students and society.[37] English asserted that by concentrating on the science of educational administration and ignoring the political context of schooling,

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[33] Tyack and Hansot, 1982, pg. 224-226.
[34] Tyack and Hansot, 1982, pgs. 205-216.
[35] Callahan, 1962, pg. 244-247.
[36] Herbert Marcuse, "The Historical Fate of Bourgeois Democracy," In Douglas Kellner, *Towards a Critical Theory of Society: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Volume 2* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).
[37] English, 2003, pg. 47-77.

educational administrators gain more power and authority.[38] Michael Dantley has argued that school leadership cannot be depoliticized and that for school leaders to perceive their work as value-neutral "is exceptionally naïve and denies the very truth of all peopled environments."[39]

David Tyack has argued that in the quest for the one best system of bureaucratic organization, Black students were marginalized.[40] Colleen Larson and Carlos Ovondo assert that mainstream educational administrators subscribed to a "difference blind" stance, which meant pretending not to see racial, class, or cultural difference so as to achieve neutral, objective, and nondiscriminatory practices in schools.[41] Larson and Ovondo argue that while the difference-blind logic may well be rooted in good intentions, it tends to silence the often difficult and awkward conversations about the tensions, contradictions, and privileges institutionalized within the school and the school abdicates its responsibility for social justice in favor of a stable status quo: " When we deny that racial, ethnic, class, or gender constructions make a difference in our decisions without any serious examination of our actions or of their outcomes, we fail to take seriously our responsibility to educate all children."[42]

Kathryn A. McDermott identifies "two principal mistakes" made by advocates of an a-political theory of educational administration. First, McDermott claims that they fail to comprehend that "administrative acts" are also political acts because they require setting priorities and allocating resources accordingly. Secondly, the advocates of a-political educational administration ignore "the fact that asserting professional authority over that of laypeople was in itself a political act."[43]

New educational leadership voices emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s, who sought to re-orient school leadership as a moral activity rather than a value-neutral

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[38] English, 2003, pg. 4-5.

[39] Michael Dantley, "Purpose-driven leadership: The Spiritual imperative to guideing beyond high-stakes testing and minimum proficiency." *Education and Urban Society* 35, no. 3 (2003): 273-291.

[40] Tyack, 1974, pg. 109-125.

[41] Colleen Larson and Carlos Ovondo, *The Color of Bureaucracy* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning, 2001): 65-69.

[42] Larson and Ovondo, 2001, pg. 73.

[43] McDermott, 1999, pg. 17-18.

management task.[44] Ronald Heifetz has argued that leadership is a value-laden activity and has said leadership should not be confused with authority.[45] Heifetz has argued that, in fact, one of the key impediments to leadership is authority.

The authority and power of superintendents was on the wane by the early 1970s and, according to Tyack and Hansot, a new conception of educational leadership was slowly emerging that required building pro-school coalitions and a willingness to abandon narrow professional ideology. Tyack and Hansot contend that educational leaders face the never-ending task of balancing parochial and universal values and local political demands and they stress the need to involve community members in decisions.[46] School leaders of the 1970s, Tyack and Hansot argued, slowly began to recognize the advantages of sharing decision making with community groups for improving public schools.[47]

Philip J. Meranto has asserted that the traditional, isolated, a-political model of governing schools has become obsolete to deal with changes impacting urban areas in the 1960s. Meranto argues that there must be a fundamental redistribution in the control over school district policy, with more decision-power located in the hands of the community who have a direct stake in schools. Meranto explains that "community control" means that the narrow ideology that only professional school administrators are capable of making decisions about educational policy must be abandoned. Community control, Meranto suggests, means striking a balance between professional operation of the schools and citizen involvement in policy-making.[48]

Clarence N. Stone, et.al. studied much needed urban school reform and argued that leadership of such reform cannot come from the superintendent alone, but must have broad, cross-sector community support. Stone concluded that the school superintendent is not an administrative entrepreneur capable of shaping her/his own educational world,

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[44] Richard Quantz, Nelda Cambron-McCabe, and Michael Dantley, "Preparing school administrators for democratic authority," *The Urban Review* 23, no. 1(1991): 3-19.
[45] Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994): 49-50.
[46] Tyack and Hansot, 1982, pg. 232-254.
[47] Tyack and Hansot, 1982, pg. 232-233.
[48] Philip J. Meranto, *School Politics in the Metropolis* (Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1970): 149-150.

but one category of actor in a much larger field of players that include mayors, city political leaders, the business community, and ethnic and religious leaders.[49]

Portz, Stein, and Jones argue that superintendents and school boards must form a coalition with members of the business community, non-profit agencies, and city governments to institutionalize quality education. They assert: "As schools increasingly become 'open systems' to their surrounding environment, new actors—business leaders, mayors, social service providers, and others—enter discussions on public education. Educational leadership is needed to focus the debate, solicit resources from supporters, appease opponents, and construct a common agenda to guide all parties."[50] Portz, Stein, and Jones have argued that there are three dimensions to educational leadership: developing and articulating an educational philosophy for the schools, managing school district resources, and political leadership, which is concerned with the relationship between the superintendent and the many actors outside the school building. They argue, "The Progressive era image of superintendents as educational specialists separate from the political fray has been replaced by one in which superintendents are key actors in the community." Portz, Stein, and Jones stress the importance of superintendents dealing with others who have an interest in the educational system such as local elected officials, citizen groups, and business leaders and argue that the skills of the educational expert are no longer sufficient.[51] Finally, according to Tyack and Hansot, educational leadership requires sharing authority and decision-making power with parents and other community partners to secure the "community of interest" that public education demands.[52]

The School Consolidation Movement

According to the National Rural Education Association (NREA), school consolidation is a process that results in the merger of two or more small schools into one

[49] Clarence N. Stone, Jeffrey R. Henig, Bryan D. Jones, and Carol Pierannunzi, *Building Civic Capacity: The Politics of Reforming Urban Schools* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2001): 19-24.
[50] John Portz, Lana Stein, and Robin R. Jones, *City Schools and City Politics: Institutions and Leadership in Pittsburgh, Boston, and St. Louis* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1999): 33.
[51] Portz, Stein, and Jones, 1999, pg. 34-35.
[52] Tyack and Hansot, 1982, pg. 254.

larger school.[53] The NREA asserts that by the mid to late 1800s, leading educators thought that the consolidation of small schools into larger units would provide students with a more thorough education. The school consolidation process has historically caused political controversy and has been cast into a win-lose framework, with state policy-makers and school administrators advocating consolidation and locals opposing it, in general.[54] Despite opposition, the data reveals the success of the school consolidation movement: As the population of the United States grew from approximately 124 million in 1930 to 248 million in 1990, the number of school districts has declined from 130,000 in 1930 to 15,500 in 1990.[55] Kathleen Cotton has argued that schools keep getting bigger and bigger, citing that between 1940 and 1990, the total number of elementary and secondary schools have declined 69% (from approximately 200,000 to 62,037), despite a 70% increase in U.S. population.[56] In Ohio, there were 2674 small school districts in 1914. By 2006, Ohio school districts were consolidated into only 612 school districts.[57]

David B. Tyack argues that the school consolidation movement began in the early 1890s as part of Progressive Era reform efforts to create an efficient and orderly bureaucratic organization in rural schools. At that time, rural schools were judged, and often were, deficient and harsh educational settings and large urban schools were adopted as a model to reform and improve them.[58] According to Tyack, school consolidation advocates envisioned that the consolidated school would create punctual, predictable, and orderly bureaucratic organizations that ran efficiently, which would improve instruction and educational opportunities for rural children. Consolidation would result in a broader and more contemporary course of study and better-qualified teachers and

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[53] NREA Consolidation Task Force (Joe Bard, Clark Gardener, and Regi Wieland), *Rural School Consolidation Report* (National Rural Education Association, 2005), located at http://www.nrea.net/awards%20&%20other/Consolidation_cover_sheet1.doc.

[54] NREA Consolidation Task Force, 2005.

[55] M. Scott Norton, 1996, pg. 113

[56] [56] Kathleen Cotton, *School Size, School Climate, and Student Performance* (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, School Improvement Research Series, Close Up #20, 1996), located at http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/10/c20.html.

[57] Tucker Self, "Evaluation of a single school district consolidation in Ohio," *American Secondary Education* 30, no. 1 (2001): 71-81.

[58] Tyack, 1974; Paul Theobald, "Democracy and the Origins of Rural Midwest Education: A Retrospective Essay," *Educational Theory* 38, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 363-367.

administrators.[59] Progressive Era reformers who advocated school consolidation thought that education could contribute to an optimal social order if both urban and rural schools were standardized and centralized.[60] The National Education Association's Committee of Twelve on Rural Schools in the 1890s, lamented that the rural community was disintegrating because of demographic shifts to urban areas and the onset of industrialization. The committee agreed that school consolidation, the transportation of students to a consolidated school, and expert supervision of the schools would help standardize and modernize rural areas, and that professional leadership would modernize rural schools to become part of the complex new industrial society.[61] David Reynolds contends that Progressive Era school reformers viewed consolidation as a means to equalize the educational opportunities of children in the cities, towns, and rural areas of the state.[62] Also, Tyack argues that the impetus to consolidate rural schools usually came from outside the rural community.[63]

Ohio was a trailblazer in the school consolidation movement and was held up as a model for the rest of the rural Midwest to deal with "the rural school problem." In Ohio, consolidation began as a question of transportation. The first formal school consolidation process began in Kingsville Township in Ashtabula County, Ohio in 1892. Known as the "Kingsville Experiment," one of the small district schools in the township proposed abandoning its school and transporting the children of that district, at public expense, to a new school building in the village of Kingsville.[64] In 1894, the Ohio General Assembly passed a bill providing for that transportation and the Kingsville Centralized School was created. Two broader Ohio laws of 1894 and 1904 provided for the relief of the cost of transporting pupils to centralized schools, and by April 1908 there were about 200 townships in which the schools were centralized. Consolidation laws in other states

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[59] Tyack, 1974, pg. 21-23.
[60] NREA Task Force, 2005.
[61] Tyack, 1974, pgs. 21-23.
[62] David R. Reynolds, *There Goes the Neighborhood: Rural School Consolidation at the Grassroots in Early Twentieth-Century Iowa* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999): 14. See also, NARA Consolidation Task Force, 2005.
[63] Tyack, 1974, pg. 25.
[64] Albert Probst, "Consolidation and transportation: A Rural school problem," *The Elementary School Teacher* 9, no. 1 (September 1908); see also Carl Feather, "North Kingsville village formed out of township 92 years ago," *Star Beacon*, April 4, 2005, pg. B1-B2. Kingsville Township is now part of the Buckeye Local School District, which borders the Ashtabula Area City Schools.

reduced the number of one-room schools across the nation from 200,000 to 20,000 between 1910 and 1960.[65]

A 1908 article in the *Elementary School Teacher* listed no less than 25 advantages to consolidation and transportation including more economical and modern school buildings, better teachers with greater enthusiasm, closer and better supervision, fewer school officers with less politics and favoritism, a healthier social and educational spirit and rivalry among students with the school becoming a community center, a longer school year, opportunities for athletics, the scientific study of argriculture, improved highway infrastructure, and improved supervision on the playground.[66] The article's author revealed the confidence that reformers had in consolidation concluding that, "These people [country people] are beginning to realize more keenly than ever before the need of better educational advantages and they are determined to have them through the one solution of the problem—that of consolidation."[67]

School consolidation was often resisted in rural areas. David Tyack argues that administrative progressives often pursued school consolidation against the wishes of local communities to do what they saw as best for rural schools.[68] The NREA asserted that many rural communities resisted consolidation because of a loss of community identity.[69] David Strang agrees, arguing that opponents to school consolidation associated the loss of small schools with the loss of community identity and that they felt more distant from the centralized authority of the consolidated school.[70] According to David Reynolds, rural citizens opposed consolidation because it meant a loss of authority over local schools and, "they preferred to entrust decisions regarding the education of their children to their friends and neighbors rather than to professional people they either did not know

[65] Tyack, 1974, pg. 25.
[66] Probst, 1908, pgs. 12-15; W. Fuller, "Making better farmers: The Study of agriculture in Midwestern country schools, 1900-1923," *Agricultural History* 60, no. 2 (1986): 154-168.
[67] Probst, 1908, pg. 16.
[68] McDermott, 1999, pg. 15.
[69] NREA Consolidation Task Force, 2005; Alford, 1960
[70] NERA Consolidation Task Force, 2005; David Strang, "The administrative transformation of American education: School district consolidation, 1938-1980," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (1987): 353.

or did not know well. They preferred their patriarchal variant of local democracy, however imperfect, to a more bureaucratic electoral democracy."[71]

Jonathan P. Sher and Rachel B. Tompkins assert that the consensus among leading educators about the benefits of consolidation was somewhat blind. The consensus argument that advocated school consolidation was two-pronged: school consolidation provided more and better resources and that those resources improve learning and life chances.[72] Sher and Tompkins conclude that the consolidation movement amounted to a "panacea as policy" resting upon an economies of scale argument, a disregard for local circumstance, and an attempt to create educational equivalents to the industrial model.[73]

David R. Reynolds has suggested that the push for rural school consolidation, which included the argument made to farmers that the consolidated school would be able to provide a better agricultural education, was insensitive to the reality that Midwestern farmers did not necessarily want schools to make their youth better farmers, but instead desired that some of their children would rise above the conditions of their birth and enter society as members the bourgeoisie.[74] Furthermore, Wayne E. Fuller asserts that consolidators were blinded by the "nobility and correctness of their cause," while Stuart A. Rosenfeld and Jonathan Sher conclude that consolidators were largely antithetic to rural life and were "obsessed with saving rural children from their parents, and rural parents from themselves" at the cost of ignoring other substantive attempts to improve rural education.[75]

In spite of resistance in some local communities, the school consolidation movement continued to flourish in the years after the Second World War. According to the NREA, Cold War tensions increased concerns that small high schools, most of which

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[71] Reynolds, 1999, pg. 57-58.

[72] Jonathan P. Sher and Rachel B. Tompkins, "Economy, efficiency, and equality: The Myths of rural school and district consolidation," In Jonathan P. Sher (Ed.), *Education in Rural America: A Reassessment of Conventional Wisdom* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977).

[73] Sher and Tompkins, 1977, pg. 49-54.

[74] Reynolds, 1999, pg. 13.

[75] Wayne E. Fuller, "Making Better Farmers: The Study of Agriculture in Midwestern Country Schools, 1900-1923," *Agricultural History* 60, no. 2 (1986): 168; Stuart A. Rosenfeld and Jonathan P. Sher, "The Urbanization of Rural Schools, 1840-1970," In Jonathan P. Sher (Ed.), *Education in Rural America: A Reassessment of Conventional Wisdom* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977): 42.

were rural, did not develop the type of human capital necessary to compete internationally. The NREA cited as key advocate for school consolidation James B. Conant, author of *The American High School Today* (1959) who argued that the most outstanding problem in education was the small high school. Conant argued that a high school should have a graduating class of at least 100, which would result in increased cost-effectiveness and greater curricular offerings. In the 1970s and 1980s, economic downturns and decreases in student enrollment in rural areas also contributed to a proliferation of school consolidations.[76] By the 1960s, Rosenfeld and Sher concluded, consolidation, centralization, and urbanization of schools had been transformed from substantive political issues into technical and administrative problems.[77]

Resistance to consolidation, historians have revealed, is not simply a matter of ignorance or backwardness but was rooted in citizen's commitment to control their lives and the lives of their children, to resist bringing schools in line with business-industrial values, and to retain the small school as a center of neighborhood and community life.[78] Robert R. Alford explains that rural schools were a key part of community identity, and that the failure of school administrators and state policy makers to appreciate this complexity has led to resistance to school consolidation efforts. In a case study of consolidation within a rural California school district, Alford found that school consolidation was perceived as being an attack on community identity and resistance to consolidation amounted to a defense of a community's identity and integrity.[79]

According to Reynolds and Shelley, consolidation implied a clash between the principle of local control and the control of elites, and school consolidation was part of a broader social project to adapt the system of education to the burgeoning industrial order and its inequalities, rather than attempt to change it.[80] The work of David R. Reynolds has expanded and complicated our understandings of resistance to the consolidation movement which, he argues, has been undercontexutalized. For example, Reynolds discusses the "paradox" that school consolidation presented to Midwestern farmers: on

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[76] NREA Task Force, 2005.
[77] Rosenfeld and Sher, 1977, pg. 40.
[78] Rosenfeld and Sher, 1977; Fuller, 1986
[79] Robert R. Alford, "School District Reorganization and Community Integration," *Harvard Educational Review* 30, no. 4 (Fall 1960): 361-368.
[80] Reynolds and Shelley, 1990, pg. 119-121.

the one hand, consolidation ensured the demise of the family farm, its values and rural neighborhood culture; on the other hand, consolidation seemed to offer the promise of better educational opportunities and class mobility. Placing the school consolidation struggle within the complex interplay between the politics of place and the politics of class gives voice to the agents who resisted consolidation and it shows that opposition to consolidation could not be explained simply by an impulse for local control or a distrust of state power.[81]

Others have been skeptical about the "local control" argument for resisting rural school consolidation. Kathryn A. McDermott has suggested that pushing school consolidation against the wishes of locals was sometimes ethically right because local control had a negative effect of producing a stratified and exclusionary system. Similarly, Paul Theobald has emphasized that one should consider the "ugly side of anti-intellectualism" in the rural Midwest where the notion of democracy was used to rationalize undemocratic thought and action, and where "democratic localist" could mean preserving a way of life that was racist, tradition bound, and unconstitutional. Theobald asserts that resistance to consolidation and preserving local control sometimes meant preserving sub-par schools.[82]

In his analysis of school district consolidation between 1938 and 1980, David Strang identified three patterns: states with relatively few districts before 1938 that experienced little change between then and 1980 (such as Florida which remained at 67 districts to match their 67 counties); in the same period states like Nevada experienced more than half of their total decrease in school districts within a single five year period; and the majority of states, about 20, which showed a steady decline in the number of school districts either in the 1940s-1950s or 1950s-1960s.[83] Significantly, in the ten years between 1950 and 1960, the number of school districts in the U.S. was halved (from 83,718 to 40,500).[84] In addition, Robert Alford has identified two tracks within

[81] Reynolds, 1999, pg. 13.
[82] McDermott, 1999, pg. 20; Paul Theobald, "Democracy and the origins of rural Midwest education: A Retrospective essay," *Educational Theory* 38, no. 3 (1988): 363-367.
[83] Strang, 1987, pg. 356.
[84] Stuart Rosenfeld and Jonathan Sher, "The Urbanization of rural schools, 1840-1970," In Jonathan P. Sher (Ed.), *Education in Rural America: A Reassessment of Conventional Wisdom* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977): 39.

the consolidation movement. The first track he called the old consolidation movement, which relied on local initiative; this track was relatively unsuccessful. The more successful track, Alford argues, was the unification movement, which occurred when state departments of education exerted pressure on school districts to consolidate small schools.[85]

Recently studies have questioned the academic and social merits of large consolidated high schools. Gregory C. Malhoit and Derek W. Black have explained that the promises of school consolidation to provide an equal education and significant cost savings have not come to pass. Mahloit and Black pointed to the example of school consolidation in West Virginia and assert that large consolidated schools have been unable to show any significant cost savings, and, at times, have proven to be more expensive because of increases in discipline, dropouts, and absenteeism. According to Mahloit and Black, cost savings associated with larger schools are offset by higher administrative costs and other expenses related to student discipline. Moreover, Mahloit and Black assert that smaller schools are more in touch with student needs and help to create democratic community.[86]

In addition, Kathleen Cotton's review of research on the relationship between school size and educational benefits concludes that small schools offer several benefits including better student attitudes and behaviors in school, a greater sense of belonging, fewer dropouts in small high schools, and better teacher attitudes toward their work and their administrators in small schools. In addition, Cotton found that poor students and those of a racial and ethnic minority are more adversely affected when attending large schools. Cotton explains that schools continue to get larger, and concluded that despite the persuasive support for small schools rather than large consolidated schools, "a gap remains—indeed grows—between research and practice regarding school size."[87] In

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[85] Alford, 1960, pg. 355.

[86] Gregory C. Malhoit and Derek W. Black, "The Power of Small Schools: Achieving Equal Education Opportunity through Academic Success and Democratic Citizenship, *Nebraska Law Review* (82 Neb. L. Rev. 50, 2003); NREA Task Force, 2005.

[87] Kathleen Cotton, *School Size, School Climate, and Student Performance* (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, School Improvement Research Series, Close Up #20, 1996), located at http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/10/c20.html. See also Suzie Boss, "Big Lessons on a Small Scale," (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001), located at http://www.nwrel.org/nwedu/winter_00/1.html.

2005, the National Rural Education Association (NREA) argued that there is no solid foundation for the belief that closing and eliminating small schools and school districts improve education, enhance cost-effectiveness, or promote equality.[88]

The Evolution of High Schools, with a Focus on Urban Ohio

The high school institution is the flagship of the state's K-12 educational system. As such, the high school institution is part of the state's field of power, defined by Pierre Bourdieu as the space of play in which people struggle for power over the state and its granting power over the different species of capital (social, cultural, and scholastic) and over their reproduction.[89]

Kathryn A. McDermott articulates the dual nature of high schools, as both a private good and a public good in economic terms. On one hand, the public high school is free and open to all, thus serving the goal of social equality. On the other hand, the high school provides and encourages multiple academic tracks for students and issues differently valued credentials to individuals engaged in competition for places in higher education and employment.[90] Similarly David F. Labaree has articulated this tension in terms of the "definitive question" that the American high school must answer: "Which is the more powerful form of pressure on the high school, the demand for public access or the demand for private advantage?"[91] This political tension has played itself out in the contested political goals of the American high school, which continue today.

George Wood has emphasized the public nature and the democratic theme of the high school as a place to nurture and develop democratic citizens with the ability to use academic skills to act on behalf of the common good.[92] Similarly, Theodore Sizer argues that the high school must radiate a commitment to shared duties and to "the demanding

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[88] NREA Task Force, 2005.
[89] Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998): 42.
[90] McDermott, 1999, pg. 20-21.
[91] David F. Labaree, *The Making of an American High School* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988): 176.
[92] George Wood, "Teaching for Democracy," In Kate Rousmaniere and Kathleen Knight-Abowitz (Eds.), *Readings in Sociocultural Studies in Education* (Boston: McGraw-Hill Custom Publishing, 2002): 109.

obligations of democracy."[93] On the other hand, Anthony Santomero, President of the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, has stressed education as a means to develop the individual skills of "knowledge workers" who are able to adjust to the realities of the 21st century marketplace. Santomero advocates a market-driven and career-integrated education.[94]

According to David F. Labaree, the high school movement in the United States began in Boston in 1821 with the establishment of Boston English High School, a natural outgrowth of Massachusetts' early role in the formation of public elementary schools. An 1827 Massachusetts law mandated that larger towns create a high school. There were very few high schools in the United States prior to 1840, and most of which were in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, and were little more than modest extensions of grammar schools.[95]

According to Elmer E. Brown, in the 1840s, there was a push to make higher education part of a state system of public schooling. At this time, in Ohio and other states, education beyond grammar school was carried on by private institutions called academies or institutes.[96] Prior to 1850, there were 14 high schools in Ohio created by special charter granted by the legislature, as well as more than 150 private academies, seminaries, and institutes of higher learning. At this time, the state did not recognize any legal obligation to finance public high schools beyond those created by special charter. As a result of the Akron Law passed in 1849, the establishment of a high school in Ohio no longer required a special charter but the vote of two-thirds of citizens in any city school system. In 1873, the Ohio General Assembly allowed school boards alone to vote on whether or not a high school would be established and as a result, high schools became more common throughout the state. Through the late 19th century, there was no definition of what constituted a high school per se. The Brumbaugh Law of 1902 set standard educational programming requirements for what constituted a high school in Ohio. The Bing Act of 1921 set compulsory attendance laws and mandated local school

[93] Theodore Sizer, "The Utopian high school in a democratic nation," *Independent School* 64, no. 4 (2005): 62-63.
[94] Anthony Santomero, "Preparing for the 21st Century Economy," *Vital Speeches of the Day* (2004).
[95] David F. Labaree, *The Making of an American High School*: 10.
[96] Elmer Ellsworth Brown, "Secondary Education in the United States: An Historical Sketch, Part III; The High-School Period (Continued)," *The School Review* 8, no. 9 (November 1900): 540-548.

districts to establish a high school as part of the public school system.[97] In Ohio, high school enrollment increased 894% between 1890 and 1933; in 1933, 16.4% of high school aged youth attended a high school.[98]

High Schools in the late 19th century were exclusive meritocratic schools that appealed to and satisfied the needs of the proprietary middle class who competed for an extremely scarce and valuable form of cultural property—the high school diploma. A classical curriculum was stressed in most early high schools.[99] David R. Reynolds and Fred M. Shelley argue that as a result of the growing disillusionment with industrial capitalism in the late 19th century, particularly the depression of 1893-1897, high school educators sought to create a closer relationship between the world of work and the world of schooling. According the Reynolds and Shelley, the solution was to convert traditional high schools, guided by a classical curriculum, to "comprehensive" high schools with a differentiated curriculum that would match the individual talents of students with the needs of the larger society and marketplace. The means of accomplishing this goal was to create differentiated curriculum to serve different vocational aspirations of students.[100] According to Reynolds and Shelley, the high school was a place where each student would have an equal opportunity to assume his or her "proper" position in society—determined not by ethnic or class background but by individual interest, ability, and the needs of the larger economy and society. Reynolds and Shelley concluded that the creation of the comprehensive high school in the first two decades of the 20th century positioned educators as "brokers" between capital's demand for a system of vocational education suited to its needs and labor's demand that high school education be universally available to working-class children. Reynolds and Shelley suggest that the restructuring of high schools was a way of adapting education to the new social order rather than an attempt to change it.[101]

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[97] See E. A. Miller, "High Schools in Ohio Prior to 1850," *The School Review* 28, no. 6 (June 1920): 454-469. See also Raymond B. St. John, *A History of Public Secondary Education in Ashtabula, Ohio* (The Ohio State University, Unpublished masters' thesis, 1938): 3-15.

[98] St. John, 1938, pg. 14.

[99] See Labaree, 1988; St. John, 1938, pg. 14-15; Miller, 1920, pg. 461-463.

[100] Spring, 1997, pg. 221.

[101] David R. Reynolds and Fred M. Shelley, "Local Control in American Public Education: Myth and Reality," In Janet E. Kodras and John Paul Jones, III (Eds.), *Geographic Dimensions of United States Social Policy* (London: Edward Arnold): 119-122.

Joel Spring contends that the development of human capital has been the most important goal of the educational system in the 20th century. Spring argues that three factors must be taken into account to understand the relationship between the high school and human capital. First, the high school was viewed as a primary means for sorting individuals to meet the needs of the labor market. Second, investment in the skills of students would increase production and the wealth of society. Finally, there was the pressure placed on schools by students to prepare them to get a job.[102]

John Rury asserts that during the 1920s and 1930s, urban public high schools of the Midwest were perceived as the envy of the world because they provided a stable and successful educative environments for both students and teachers, despite the fact that students were less economically advantaged than their suburban and rural counterparts of the time.[103] Tyack and Hansot have argued that as the early twentieth century unfolded, immigrants crowded high schools, determined to step over the obstacles to achieve social mobility.[104] William W. Cutler has explained that the architecture of urban high schools took cues from the burgeoning factories where the student's parents frequently labored. Cutler argues that the design was expected to both play a role in the learning process and serve as a monument symbolizing community spirit, civic accomplishment, and success—the school house was the most tangible link between the child and society and became a "cathedral of culture."[105]

After World War Two, high school graduation became common for a majority of American teens as high school became the appropriate path for adolescents.[106] High school enrollment increased from a mere 519,000 students in 1900 to its graduation of six out of seven of all youth in 2005.[107] The expansion of the high school's graduation rate

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[102] Joel Spring, *The American School 1642-1996 4th Edition.* (New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1997): 220.

[103] John Rury, "Race, space, and the politics of Chicago's public schools: Benjamin Willis and the tragedy of urban education," *History of Education Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (1999): 119.

[104] Tyack and Hansot, 1982, p. 121-129; Cohen, 1969, p. 302

[105] William W. Cutler III, "Cathedral of culture: The Schoolhouse in American educational thought and practice since 1820," *History of Education Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (1989): 1-40.

[106] Sherman Dorn, "Origins of the dropout problem," *History of Education Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (1993): 353-373.

[107] Patrick Ryan, "A Case study in the cultural origins of a superpower: Liberal individualism, American nationalism, and the rise of the high school life, a study of Cleveland's Central and East Technical High Schools, 1890-1918." *History of Education Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (2005): 66-95.

increased the influence of the twentieth century comprehensive high school and redefined the social lives of American youth through clubs, bands, sports, and other events.[108] Patrick Ryan argues that the local public high school has become a signature American institution indicative of American society as any.[109]

Sherman Dorn has argued that by the 1960s, high school graduation became a widely held age norm that marked a turning point in the symbolic role of the high school as it changed from an elite to a comprehensive institution. As a majority of adolescents were expected to and required to attend high school, the pejorative term "drop out" was created to enforce the norm of high school graduation.[110] Pessimistically, Dorn has concluded that, "only the success of high schools in becoming mass institutions has made the idea of a 'dropout problem' possible, yet it still suggests that high schools have failed in some basic task.[111]

The path of the high school into a comprehensive institution also involved a set of political interrelationships that continue to be problematic including, race, social class, and the economics of the community.[112] David Labaree has suggested that contemporary debate on the American high school, including the tensions between commonality and differentiation, citizenship training and job training, curriculum content and credentials, bureaucratic and local control, and open and selective access, is connected with broader tensions within American society, namely, the tension between democracy and markets.[113] As a result, Labaree argued, at the core of the high school institution is an "ongoing compromise" between politics and markets that do not satisfy either those who want the high school to serve the public democratic interests or those who wish it to serve as a private credentialing body in a flooded credentials market.[114]

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[108] Ryan, 2005, p. 66; see also a discussion in Hemmings, 2004
[109] Ryan, 2005.
[110] Dorn, 1993, pg. 370.
[111] Dorn, 1993, pg. 373.
[112] R. Williams and M. Ryan (Eds.), *Schools in Transition: Community Experiences in Desegregation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954); Craig Saddler, "The Impact of Brown on African-American Students: A Critical Race Theoretical Perspective," *Educational Studies* 37, no. 1 (2005): 41-55; Wirt and Kirst, 1982, pgs. 2-21.
[113] Labaree, 1988, pg. 174.
[114] Labaree, 1988, pg. 174-177.

The persistence of high school dropouts coupled with the perception of a crisis in the urban high school has emerged as one of the major political and educational leadership discourses since World War Two.[115] In urban industrial regions that came to be called Rustbet, the high school grappled with changing racial and class dynamics as urban areas experienced demographic changes whereby mostly white, middle-class Americans fled to the suburbs, causing the concentration of poverty and racial minorities in the central urban core.[116] In 1961, James B. Conant argued that, "The dramatic contrasts between schools in the slums and schools in the suburbs illustrate the impossibility of discussing education without specifying the kinds of homes from which the pupils come."[117] John Rury concluded that as the disproportionately young, middle-class, and upwardly mobile fled to suburbs, the central cities became older, poorer, and darker in complexion.[118] Harvey Kantor and Barbara Brenzel have argued that polarization between central cities and suburbs has manifested itself in public schools and as a result of poor and minority students being isolated in inner city schools, urban education became more associated with educational failure than suburban schools. Similarly, Rury has asserted that urban education has been defined as a "problem" based on comparisons with suburban schools and urban schools of the past.[119] Philip J. Meranto has suggested that polarization within the metropolitan area has resulted in a sorting-out process. Higher income white families sought to build high quality new schools in the suburbs while low income white and a disproportionately high number of black students remained in central city schools that intensified the handicaps of this group of students due, in part, the lack of ample fiscal resources, racist teachers, and out of touch curriculum.[120]

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[115] Michael Katz (Ed), *The "Underclass" debate* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993): 3-23;Philip J. Meranto, *School Politics in the Metropolis* (Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1970).

[116] Jeffrey Mirel, "After the fall: Continuity and change in Detroit, 1981-1995," *History of Education Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (1998): pgs. 237-267.

[117] James B. Conant, *Slums and Suburbs* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1961): 136.

[118] See Rury, 1999, pg. 121; see also Jon Teaford, *Cities of the Hearatland: The Rise and Fall of the Industrial Midwest* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993): 211

[119] Harvey Kantor and Barbara Brenzel, "Urban education and the 'truly disadvantaged': The historical roots of the contemporary crisis, 1945-1990." In Michael Katz (Ed), *The "Underclass" debate* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993): 373; see also Rury, 1999, pg. 117.

[120] Meranto, *School Politics in the Metropolis:* 24-29.

Michael B. Katz has asserted that urban high schools must grapple with the political dynamics of being responsive to the needs of the "Underclass" that populate many urban central cities in the United States, and the city schools need to help their students respond to and overcome their marginalized locations.[121] Jeff Mirel's look at urban school reforms in Detroit from 1981-1995, for example, has shown those reform efforts to be marked with serious political errors and by a lack of will by educational leaders to shift the terms or categories of the debate to make improving the quality of education the preeminent concern.[122] In Rury's examination of Chicago school politics of the 1950s and 1960s, he found Superintendent Benjamin Willis largely unprepared for the challenges posed by the social, demographic, and political changes that altered education in the city post-*Brown*. Rury concluded that Willis failure was due to an unyielding belief that schools were above politics, which left him impotent to deal with explosive political crisis such as White flight and desegregation.[123] In his account of the politics and leadership struggles of urban school reform in Houston, Texas, Donald McAdams reviews the cabals and back room dealings of the late 1980s and early 1990s and asserts that, "urban school reform is hard work, and it takes time. There is no silver bullet. School reformers who push one reform or another as the key to revitalizing urban schools misunderstand the magnitude and complexity of urban school districts."[124]

The Politics of School Location and Community Development

Political conflict about the location of a school has had a long history in American education. David B. Tyack has argued that the location of a school was a common source of arguments in late 19th century rural school communities because the school was one of the few social institutions that rural people encountered daily, and it both reflected and shaped a sense of community.[125] Robert Alford has argued that the location of a new consolidated school building has been a major issue that superintendents had to deal with when attempting to consolidate schools. Furthermore, Alford has asserted that resistance

[121] Michael B. Katz (Ed.), *The 'Underclass Debate* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993): 472-477.
[122] Mirel, 1998, pg. 262.
[123] Rury, 1999, pg. 136-141.
[124] Donald McAdams, *Fighting to Save Our Urban Schools…and Winning!* (New York and London: Teachers College Press, 2000): xiii.
[125] Tyack, *The One Best System:* 17; see also David Reynolds, 1999.

to the process of school consolidation can stem from a community's attempt to defend the closing and merger of a small neighborhood school, which is tantamount to a community defending its own integrity and identity.[126]

The location of the high school is especially important because, William Cutler has argued, "no schoolhouse symbolized community spirit more than the public high school. The quintessential manifestation of personal and civic accomplishment, a high school represented success."[127] Similarly, Alford has argued that the high school is more important than elementary schools as a source of community integration and identity because youth are old enough to transfer their loyalties from family to peer group and because there are simply fewer high schools.[128] Both Alford and Cutler have asserted that a high school added to the status of the neighborhood in which it was located. Cutler adds that a well-designed schoolhouse can uplift the morals of students and the surrounding neighborhood.[129]

According to John L. Rury, in the late 20th century, "American schools have become important indicators of the social status of particular places."[130] Rury draws upon the work of French sociologist Henri Lefebvre to help make sense of social differentiation within the urban landscape. Rury acknowledges that although Lefebvre's work does not discuss schools directly, he argues that it did offer a perspective for understanding how schools have, "become a critical factor in the definition of a new social geography for most metropolitan areas." Rury has identified the importance of examining the social and political relationships that define the ordering of the urban landscape and its significance for understanding the development of urban schools.[131]

Lefebvre's theory argues that that space is a social and historical construction, which is determined economically by capital, dominated socially by the bourgeoisie, and ruled politically by the state.[132] This has led Lefebvre to conclude that the organization

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[126] Alford, 1960, pg. 356-368.
[127] William W. Cutler, III, "Cathedral of Culture: The Schoolhouse in American Education Thought and Practice since 1820," *History of Education Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 17.
[128] Alford, 1960, pg. 358.
[129] Alford, 1960, pg. 358; Cutler, 1989, pg. 17-33
[130] John L. Rury, "Race, Space, and the Politics of Chicago's Public Schools: Benjamin Willis and the Tragedy of Urban Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 118.
[131] Rury, 1999, pg. 118-119.
[132] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1991): 227.

of space is ordered by social relations and power dynamics. Lefebvre has argued that ideology does not produce space but is "in space, and of it. It is the forces of production and the relations of production that produce social space."[133] While Lefebvre offers broad perspective on the leadership struggle over where schools should be located, others have specifically targeted the impact of school location on the social landscape. W. Cecil Steward has argued that, "the image of the public school as the center of America's image of a utopian, better future, has given almost reverent power to public school planners to control the form and future of our cities."[134] Steward explaines that schools have tried to anticipate future growth and be the first to acquire developable property in suburban areas—the best land at the cheapest price. Steward argues that because people want to live near schools, the school system is "in the enviable position of always being able to predict the outcome of its own self-fulfilling prophecy—'we had to build there, because the new families will demand it.'" Therefore, according to Stweard, school systems have become the most influential planning entity (public or private) in promoting the suburban sprawl pattern of American cities. Steward concludes that the location of schools in suburban areas saps the vitality of the city center. [135] Similarly, Myron Orfield has argued that as poverty becomes concentrated in old central cities, middle-class residents flee, old schools close, new schools are built farther out, and "schools are the first indicator and the most powerful perpetuator of regional polarization."[136]

Suburban sprawl refers to the exodus of commerce and residential development from densely populated urban concentrations into areas on a city's periphery and beyond. Developers often find it more profitable to develop "clean" land beyond the densely populated city.[137] Suburban sprawl was prevalent in Ohio: in the decade between 1982 and 1992, more than 471,000 acres of new lands were developed which meant that the 0.29-acre of built land (housing, roads, factories) per state resident in 1982 increased to

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[133] Lefebvre, 1991, pg. 210.

[134] W. Cecil Stweard, "Lincoln, Nebraska, Public School Systems: The Advance Scouts for Urban Sprawl," In Richard K. Olson and Thomas A. Lyson, *Under the Blade: The Conversion of Agricultural Landscapes* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999): 370.

[135] Stweard, 1999, pg. 370-372.

[136] Myron Orfield, *Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1997): 54.

[137] League of Women Voters of the Cincinnati Area, "Factors in Sprawl," located at www.lwvcincinnati.org/publications/Suburban_Sprawl.html. Downloaded 5/26/06.

2.23 acres in 1992.[138] Myron Orfield argues that because of trends in suburbanization, the urban landscape has been polarization along racial and class lines. Orfield also contends that suburbanization leads to fragmented land use patters which results in wasteful over-development and the squandering of natural resources. According to Orfield, new exclusive development takes place in suburban and rural areas takes place at the expense of older communities that are taxed to fund the massive supporting infrastructure for this new, more exclusive development. As a result, poverty escalates in the older central cities, which become "disposable."[139]

"School sprawl" refers to schools located on the periphery of older central cities, which encourage suburban development or sprawl.[140] According to Susan Bickford, the presence of large suburban school campuses, rather than smaller neighborhood schools, are a key ingredient in forming a new kind of social geography that sustains isolation, consumption, and racial/class polarization rather than community and public life.[141] For example, a National Trust for Historic Preservation report argued that, "the migration of schools from settled neighborhoods to middle-of-nowhere locations is one more factor weakening the ties that once brought people together. And like residential or commercial sprawl, "school sprawl" is contributing to the dismemberment of communities around the country."[142] William Cutler has asserted that the idea of a public schoolhouse as a neighborhood center that served as an all-purpose community resource center peaked in popularity during World War One.[143] Myron Orfield also argues that, "in terms of

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[138] See Richard K. Olson and Thomas A. Lyson, *Under the Blade: The Conversion of Agricultural Landscapes*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999): 25, 51. The increase of 1.94 acres of built land per state resident in Ohio between 1982 and 1992 was higher than the national average, which was a 0.60-acre increase in built land per U.S. citizen.

[139] Myron Orfield, *Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1997): 74

[140] Beaumont, 2002, pg. 12.

[141] See, for example, Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1991). Susan Bickford, "Constructing Inequality: City Spaces and the Architecture of Citizenship," *Political Theory* 28, no. 3 (June 2000): 355-376; Orfield, 1997.

[142] Constance E. Beaumont with Elizabeth G. Pianca, "Why Johnny Can't Walk to School: Historic Neighborhood Schools in the Age of Sprawl," (Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, October 2002, 2nd Edition): 12.

[143] Cutler, 1989, pg. 32-33.

community building, neighborhood schools can undoubtedly be important institutions for pulling neighborhoods and communities together."[144]

The location of schools outside central cities affects both the natural and social environment of a community. In Ohio, suburban development has meant only 10% of the state's original wetland areas remain and this has a negative impact on water quality. Locating schools to encourage suburban sprawl, depresses property values and destabilizes older neighborhoods in central cities and weakens the ties that have traditionally brought people together.[145] In addition, large schools in suburban areas that are situated on isolated park-like settings are not "human-scaled" institutions because they are not in the center of communities—or anywhere near it.

Susan Bickford has argued that bringing people together in institutions through their daily experiences makes a difference in how they think politically and does not allow people to "zone out" and isolate into "purified" suburbs: places renovated to make the consuming white middle class comfortable lead to a segregated public space.[146] Kate Evans has argued that school building design affects some ordering of experience, namely, that the fundamental pattern of the school's use belies community involvement. She argued that the "dominant theme from the external frontier of the school is a message of structured exclusion."[147]

Locating schools outside older central city communities in "middle of nowhere" places is a key factor in dismembering older central cities and, at once, is one more factor weakening the ties that once brought people together. The location of schools in suburbs is not simply a matter of following development patters. Schools themselves have become "advance scouts" for suburban development. [148]

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[144] Myron Orfield, *Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1997): 94.

[145] See Beaumont, 2002, Steward, 1999, and the League of Women Voters of the Cincinnati Area.

[146] Susan Bickford, "Constructing Inequality: City Spaces and the Architecture of Citizenship, *Political Theory* 28, no. 3 (June 2000): 355-376.

[147] Kate Evans, "The Physical Form of the School," *British Journal of Educational Studies* 27, no. 1 (February 1979): 29-41.

[148] See W. Cecil Steward, "Lincoln, Nebraska, Public School Systems: The Advance Scouts for Urban Sprawl," In Richard K. Olson and Thomas A. Lyson (Eds.), *Under the Blade: The Conversion of Agricultural Landscapes* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999): 370-373. Constance E. Beaumont with Elizabeth G. Pianca, "Why Johnny Can't Walk to School: Historic Neighborhood Schools in the Age of Sprawl," (Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, October 2002, 2nd Edition).

In conclusion, this chapter has reviewed four literatures: educational leadership, school consolidation, high schools, and the politics of school location. The review of these four areas of research is intended to provide a contextual understanding to the dissertation study.

CHAPTER 3

THE GREATER ASHTABULA URBAN AREA:
THE PLACE, ITS SCHOOL SYSTEM, AND ITS TWO HIGH SCHOOLS

"Wonderful transformations have been the order at Ashtabula for the past thirty-five years, but the greatest and most marvelous of all is the one which is occurring now. From an ordinary lake port which has had a difficult time to maintain her supremacy, she is to take one long jump in the next two years and become beyond question the greatest ore-receiving port on the great lakes and in the world."

The Marine Review
September 1906[1]

"The problems in the city of Ashtabula will take time to solve. They have been left alone for too long and cannot be fixed in a day."

Gerald A. Severino, comment upon becoming Ashtabula City Manager
September 1986[2]

In 1906, the City of Ashtabula, Ohio was in the midst of its halcyon days. The industrial revolution was underway, thousands of white ethnic immigrants had flooded into the town, and a second industrial boom time in the late 1940s and 1950s lay ahead. Economic growth and opportunity were the calling cards of Ashtabula in 1906 and a new Ashtabula High and Harbor High building, symbols of the city's success, were yet to be built within the next 10 years. The opening of the new high school buildings, Harbor High in 1912 and Ashtabula High in 1916, were beacons of success, prosperity, and were an embodiment of Ashtabula's slogan, "Bigger, Better, Busier."[3]

To fully appreciate why leaders failed to build a sufficient network of support behind the process of consolidating Ashtabula High School and Harbor High School into Lakeside High School, a historical context of the Ashtabula area's development, its school system, and its two high schools must first be established. This chapter presents the story of the Greater Ashtabula urban area, its school district, and its two public high

[1] See *The Marine Review* Vol. XXXIV, No. 12 published at Cleveland, OH September 20, 1906, pg. 1.
[2] Scott Fagerstrom, "Severino ready for progress," *Star Beacon,* September 10, 1986, sec. A1.
[3] *The Dart* 8, no. 4, Published by the Senior Class of Ashtabula High School (April 1916): pg. 17.

schools, both of which came to symbolize the spirit and success of their community as "cathedrals of culture." [4] Of the two high schools, Harbor High was the smaller and served a predominantly white student body during its history. Ashtabula High was older, larger, and changed during its history from serving mostly white middle-class students to serving students of diverse ethnicities, races, and class-interests.[5] Both schools were located in the City of Ashtabula, Ohio but grew to serve the rural and suburban areas around the city.

This chapter will first outline the economic, demographic, and cultural development of the three legal jurisdictions within the Greater Ashtabula area. An exploration of the geographic place of the Ashtabula area is important because one of the main questions surrounding the high school consolidation issue was where the new consolidated high school would be built. Secondly, this chapter will look at the development of the school system that served the Greater Ashtabula area, the Ashtabula Area City School District. Finally, the chapter will provide a brief history of the two high schools that were part of the school system. The development of the Ashtabula area's school system and two high schools will provide important insights into the political issues and conflicts that fueled the high school consolidation process in Ashtabula.

The Greater Ashtabula Urban Area

The Greater Ashtabula urban area consisted of three separate legal jurisdictions.[6] First, the City of Ashtabula was the central city of the urban area, the most densely populated area, and served as the nucleus of growth and development. A key characteristic of the City of Ashtabula that spurred its growth was its port on the south shore of Lake Erie. The port contributed to the evolution of two different communities within the city: the part near the harbor and lakeshore was appropriately called the

[4] William W. Cutler III, "Cathedral of Culture: The Schoolhouse in American Educational Thought and Practice since 1820," *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Spring 1989).

[5] In this sense, it was typical of the development of the American high school. See David F. Labaree, *The Making of the American High School: The Credentials Market and the Central High School of Philadelphia, 1838-1939,* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988).

[6] The "Greater Ashtabula urban area" as described here is synonymous with the 55 square mile territory that is the Ashtabula Area City School District, which will be described in the next section.

Ashtabula Harbor and the part of the city inland from the lakeshore was referred to as Uptown Ashtabula.

The second legal division in the Greater Ashtabula urban area was Saybrook Township, which fronted Lake Erie west of the City of Ashtabula. Saybrook Township was a geographically large rural area dominated by farms, had a few vacation cottages along the lakefront, and had a small population. By the 1950s, it began to increase its population and slowly developed into the City of Ashtabula's suburb.

The third and final part of the Greater Ashtabula urban area was Plymouth Township, a rural area to the south of the city that has remained mostly rural and small in population to the present day. By 1960, the Greater Ashtabula urban area had a combined population of about 40,000 and growth/development had shifted from the City of Ashtabula to Saybrook Township. The following will selectively chronicle the economics, demographics, and culture of the Greater Ashtabula area.

City of Ashtabula

The City of Ashtabula was the first part of the area to be settled. The city attracted people and industry because it was located on the east and west banks of the Ashtabula River, where it empties into Lake Erie. The City of Ashtabula, 7.6 square miles in size, had a natural advantage of having an excellent harbor on Lake Erie that led to the creation of two communities within the one city by the 1880s: one near the lakeshore and one inland (also known as uptown). The lakeshore community within the City of Ashtabula was called the Ashtabula Harbor, or simply, the Harbor. It was located within 2 miles of the Lake Erie shore and was dominated by the docks, railroads, and surrounding white ethnic neighborhoods. The other community within the City of Ashtabula was called Uptown Ashtabula because it was located "up" a slope in elevation, about 3-5 miles inland from Lake Erie. Uptown Ashtabula was home to a typical Main Street, neighborhoods, small manufacturing and retail. The two communities, Uptown Ashtabula and Ashtabula Harbor could have been separate cities but they were stronger and more attractive to investment joined together as the City of Ashtabula.[7]

[7] D. P. Robbins and M. D. Compiler, "The City of Ashtabula, O," (Ashtabula, O.: Board of Improvement, 1893; Earl C. Hankins, "Ashtabula: Seaway Port of Progress," *The Heartland* (Winter-Spring 1956): 14-39;

The name Ashtabula was an Algonquin term pronounced Hash-ta-buh-lah, which means "river of many fish." The name Ashtabula was first given to a river, then the city that grew up around it, and eventually was applied to the 729 square county in which it was located (Ashtabula County is geographically the largest in Ohio).[8] The area that grew into the City of Ashtabula consisted of the Ashtabula River that originally ran through a dense virgin forest, which was sparsely populated and used as a hunting ground by Iroquois and Algonquin nations. Before Ohio became a state in 1803, Ashtabula was located in what was once the Connecticut Western Reserve, a 120-mile tract of land that includes most of what is today northeastern Ohio. Thus, the first settlers to Ashtabula were Connecticut pioneers who brought to the area their traditions, values, and place names, such as Saybrook, Plymouth, Andover, and New Lyme.[9]

The first permanent settler in Ashtabula was Matthew Hubbard, the nephew of a Connecticut Land Company shareholder, who arrived in 1804. Ashtabula grew slowly in the decades prior to the Civil War and was populated by Connecticut pioneers and others from the eastern U.S. During this period, the City of Ashtabula was involved in agricultural production, greenhouses, small manufacturing, fishing, shipbuilding, and distilleries. The entire area was known for its strong abolitionist sentiment and the Hubbard House served as an important terminus on the Underground Railroad.[10] Ashtabula had enough population to incorporate as a city in 1892 and grew quickly thereafter, doubling its population between 1900 and 1920.[11]

The key ingredient in the City of Ashtabula's economic development was its harbor on Lake Erie. The harbor helped usher in the first of two waves of industrialization. Between the 1870 and 1910, the Ashtabula Harbor grew to be an

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Raymond Bailey St. John, *The Story Of Ashtabula*, 1939; The Ashtabula chamber of Commerce, *Ashtabula, Ohio: On Lake Erie Where Coal and Iron Ore Meet*, 1928.

[8] Information fromWilliam W. William's *History of Ashtabula County, Ohio* (Philadelphia: Williams Bros., 1878). The Rev. S.D. Peet is noted as a contributor to this document. This information was accessed at http://solomonspalding.com/SRP/saga2/1878Ast3.htm#pg130a .

[9] John H. Garland, "The Western Reserve of Connecticut," *Economic Geography* 19, no.3 (July 1943): 301. See also: David Lindsey, "New England Origins of Western Reserve Place Names," *American Speech* 30, no. 4 (December 1955): 253-254

[10] D. P. Robbins and M. D. Compiler, "The City of Ashtabula, O," (Ashtabula, O.: Board of Improvement, 1893): 8

[11] Information from Ohio Department of Development, Office of Strategic Research located at www.odod.state.oh.us/research/productListing.html#P00091 and accessed on 11/3/05. It is important to note that prior to 1877, the Harbor area and inland Ashtabula were two legally separate areas.

important transfer point for raw materials like iron ore and coal. In 1873, railroad and shipping interests were lured to the Ashtabula Harbor because of its strategic location. Iron ore from the Lake Superior region to the north could be efficiently shipped over the Great Lakes to Ashtabula Harbor and transferred to railcars (gondolas) in large rail yards that abutted the docks. From Ashtabula Harbor, train engines pushed loaded gondolas up a difficult grade to the south and onto the steel mills of Youngstown and Pittsburgh. Beginning in 1889 and lasting into the 1900s, Ashtabula Harbor held the distinction of taking in more iron ore on its docks than any port on the Great Lakes.[12] Pittsburgh's domination of the steel industry was in part attributable to the Ashtabula Harbor, which was a convenient and efficient import point for iron ore.[13] The strategic link of Ashtabula Harbor by rail to steel mills to the south sealed its fate as being inseparably bound up with Youngstown and Pittsburgh.[14] The bustling industrial scene of the Ashtabula Harbor on Lake Erie at the turn of the 20th century was testimony to the adage that the United States was an experiment in transportation.

This experiment included immigration, and the Ashtabula Harbor area became home to many Irish, Finnish, Swedish, and Italian immigrants who settled into neighborhoods adjacent to the docks and rail yards. The Harbor was home to bars, brothels, and the energy of sailors entering and leaving port. By the turn of the 20th century, the Ashtabula Harbor area had well-defined ethnic neighborhoods, such as Swedetown and Little Finland. As the century progressed, these lines became blurred as these white ethnics moved from working class to middle class and dispersed out of the Harbor and into other parts of the Greater Ashtabula area.[15]

The Uptown part of the City of Ashtabula, 3 to 5 miles inland, benefited from the booming Harbor activity but grew more slowly and steadily. Uptown Ashtabula did not attract large numbers of European immigrants, but remained relatively homogeneous

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[12] D. P. Robbins and M. D. Compiler, "The City of Ashtabula, O," (Ashtabula, O.: Board of Improvement, 1893): 19. See also, Darrell E. Hamilton, "The Twentieth Century of Ashtabula 1905—Part 5," *Star Beacon*, January 30, 2005, pg. B7.

[13] See Langdon White, " Iron and Steel Industry of the Pittsburgh District," *Economic Geography* Vol. 4 No. 2 April 1928

[14] Harlan Hatcher, *The Western Reserve: The Story of New Connecticut in Ohio,* (Kent, Ohio and London, England: The Kent State University Press, 1991): 262

[15] See Raymond Bailey St. John, 1939 and Raymond Bailey St. John, *A History of Public Secondary Education in Ashtabula, Ohio* (Unpublished masters' thesis: The Ohio State University, 1938): see especially chapter 2 and chapter 5.

between the 1880s and 1920s, populated by descendents of the Connecticut pioneers who originally settled the region. Beginning in the 1920s, European immigrants who originally settled in the Ashtabula Harbor close to their places of work slowly migrated into Uptown Ashtabula in search of housing. The move of these white ethnics out of their neighborhood enclaves in the Harbor signaled their assimilation into American culture and their rise into the lower ranks of the middle class.

By the late 19th century, Uptown Ashtabula was dominated by the Ashtabula Municipal Building, a traditional Main Street, and parks and hotels. Industries included large greenhouses, tanneries along the Ashtabula River, agriculture trading, and small manufacturing outfits like Ashtabula Bow & Socket, which began making horse buggy parts in 1880. If Lake Erie symbolized the Ashtabula Harbor, Uptown Ashtabula was symbolized by the 6-story, 109-room Hotel Ashtabula, faced in redbrick and Bedford stone, which served as a center of social, political, and business life.[16] Until the late 1940s, Uptown Ashtabula was a predominantly white and middle class community with the upper-middle class concentrated in large Victorian homes in the immediate civic/business district of Uptown.

The onset of World War Two opened the City of Ashtabula's second wave of industrialization and its final chapter as a place of migration and economic opportunity. In 1941, the Ashtabula Industrial Corporation was formed to attract defense industry and other industrial plants to Ashtabula for the purpose of diversifying its economic base. In doing so, the demographic make-up of the City of Ashtabula diversified from a city of white New Englanders and European immigrants to one that included significant numbers of African-Americans and white Appalachians.

The efforts of Ashtabula Industrial Corporation to purchase and develop plant sites, coupled with the multi-million dollar expansion of the Harbor's dock capacity, drew dozens of new industries to the area in the 1940s and 1950s.[17] These new industries produced electric motors, appliances, garden tools, fibre-glass boats, and automotive

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[16] The Hotel Ashtabula opened in July 1920 and its heyday lasted into the early 1960s, when lodging gravitated toward the newly built Interstate 90. See Eric A. Johnson, "Redevelopment to breathe new life into Hotel Ashtabula," *The Gazette*, March 9, 2005, pg. 9A.

[17] See Earl C. Hankins, "Ashtabula: Seaway Port of Progress," *The Heartland* (Winter-Spring 1956, pg. 14-17. See also Harland, Bartholomew, and Associates (St. Louis, MO), *A Report Upon the Comprehensive Plan for Ashtabula, Ohio*. January 1961.

parts. Most importantly, however, were the many new chemical industries that moved to the area. The chemical plants produced calcium carbide, chlorine, industrial solvents, and ferro-alloys, earning Ashtabula's lakefront area the name, "The Great Chemical Shore." Since there were no longer large tracts of undeveloped land in the City of Ashtabula for plants to develop, many of the new industries were situated in old fruit orchards just east of the city limits in Ashtabula Township. This meant that the City of Ashtabula did not realize vast new property taxes even though most of the workers for the plants lived within the City of Ashtabula. All together, about 6,000 new jobs were added in the Ashtabula area between 1943 and 1951.[18] The work paid well but often involved dangerous and dirty labor, which deterred most gainfully employed locals from taking it on. A shortage of labor resulted and a call for workers was put out by the large chemical industries. African-Americans from the South as well as white and African-Americans from Appalachia answered the call to work in Ashtabula's new chemical industries and brought with them their culture.[19] The migration of Southern African-Americans and Appalachians to Ashtabula altered the ethnic and racial dynamics of the city. Old tensions between and among white European ethnics and white Appalachians eased when African-Americans moved into the city, which led to the consolidation of the "white" race and polarized the city between black and white.[20]

These Appalachian and Black migrants to Ashtabula were part of a larger migration between 1940 and 1970 when 5 million African-Americans moved to northern industrial cities to get out from under the shadow of Southern racial violence and discrimination.[21] However, their migration to Ashtabula was different from the waves of European immigrants decades earlier. First, African-Americans who came to Ashtabula did not settle in the Ashtabula Harbor, like earlier waves of European immigrants, but in Uptown Ashtabula nearer to their work. This meant that the Harbor area remained a

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[18] Carl E. Feather, *Mountain People in a Flat Land: A Popular History of Appalachian Migration to Northeast Ohio, 1940-1965*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1998): 29-33.
[19] Carl E. Feather, "Transforming Ashtabula," *Star Beacon*, September 2, 2004, p. B1. See also Andrew R. L. Cayton, *Ohio: The History of a People* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2002, p. 294, for the influence of Appalachians on the Ohio industrial scene.
[20] This draws upon the racial formation theory and in particular the notion of racial dictatorship from Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s.* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994): pgs. 53-76.
[21] Michael B. Katz, *The 'Underclass' Debate* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993): 451

largely white area into the 1990s. Second, the chemical industry boom that drew southern migrants to Ashtabula was short lived and many of the companies moved, downsized, or closed up operations all together by the mid-1980s. African-Americans and Appalachian whites came to Ashtabula during its relatively short second wave of industrial expansion, which soon gave way to high unemployment rates.

From the mid-1970s through the 1990s, the City of Ashtabula's industrial base declined as a result of larger trend in which steel industries and manufacturing plants abandoned the American Midwest for the south, west, or overseas.[22] New trade agreements coupled with high labor and property costs in the U.S. meant that major industrial corporations took operations to more profitable areas outside the traditionally industrial Midwest. As a state, Ohio lost nearly 250, 000 jobs between 1972 and 1982—an 18% decline.[23] The Greater Ashtabula area lost an estimated 5,000 jobs between the mid-1970s and mid-1980s, which marked the beginning of a slow disinvestment from the city.[24] The large railroad in Ashtabula, Conrail, and Ashtabula's dock companies downsized. Rockwell International's brake plant moved south in 1987 taking with it several hundred jobs. Other plants like RMI Titanium and True Temper just closed up shop. Even the Ashtabula Bow Socket, which hammered out parts since 1880 and was the heartbeat of Ashtabula industry, closed for good in 1982 leaving one Ashtabula resident to remember: "When that hammer stopped, it seemed like Ashtabula stopped."[25] The jobs lost, including chemical industry jobs, were mostly good paying, living wage, blue-collar jobs worked by locals who had little training beyond high school. In 1982, unemployment in the City of Ashtabula reached 18.2% and remained in the double-digits throughout the 1980s, the city's bleakest decade.[26] The loss of jobs fueled a decline in the City of Ashtabula's population from about 25,000 in 1960 to about 20,000 in 2000. The population left in Ashtabula city also went through changes.

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[22] Jon C. Teaford, *Cities of the Heartland* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993): 211-239.

[23] Cayton, *Ohio: The History of a People*: 369.

[24] For a description of these economic descriptions see Urban Design Center of Northeast Ohio and Cobalt Group, Inc. (Cleveland, OH), *Ashtabula: Downtown and Harbor Revitalization Plan*—Prepared for the City of Ashtabula, Division of Housing and Community Development. December 2002.

[25] Carl E. Feather, 1998, pg. 44

[26] City of Ashtabula, Ohio, "Comprehensive Financial Report for Year Ended 12-31-91," page S13

Between 1980 and 1990, the City of Ashtabula's poverty rate increased from 11.5% to 23.7%. In the same period, median household income declined by 26.6%. Property values in the city of Ashtabula also declined by 27%. The white population of the city declined by 10%, while the proportion of African-American, Hispanic, and elderly populations increased.[27] The increase in poverty and unemployment ushered in an era of federally subsidized public housing in Ashtabula in the early 1970s. Many Ashtabulans believed public housing contributed to and symbolized the decline of Ashtabula city.[28]

Drug trafficking and use filled part of the vacuum left by the abandoned factories, downtown hotels, and storefronts. Ashtabula's close proximity to Interstate 90, an east-west artery that connects Chicago to Boston, combined with its small police force made it a thriving marketplace for drug pushers from Cleveland, Erie, Buffalo, Youngstown, and as far away as Belize and the Caribbean.[29] Ashtabula Police Captain Phil Varkette described narcotics in Ashtabula as "a big city problem in a small town."[30] Based on the number of drug arrests and drug related crime in Ashtabula in the late 1990s, City Council President Josephine Misener called for Ashtabulans to wake up and take notice that their city was rotting from the inside because of drugs.[31] In 2000, Ashtabula city solicitor Thomas Simon acknowledged that drug-related crime was only the surface of the problem: "Beat cops are only a short-term solution, education and economic opportunities are the long-term goals."[32]

By the early 1980s, the City of Ashtabula developed many of the same characteristics of large Midwestern industrial cities, which included the residence of comparatively large number of poor Whites and racial minorities compared to its surrounding areas. The City of Ashtabula was no longer a place where migrants sought economic opportunity. As the city became home to more people of color and poor in the

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[27] Source: U.S. Census Bureau records. See also District XI Agency on Aging, Inc., Youngstown, Ohio. "Demographic information about older adult populations in Ashtabula County," Located at www.distxiaaoa.org and downloaded 12/14/05.

[28] Warren Dillaway, "Public housing came with economic downturn," *Star Beacon*, February 6, 2005, sec. C1.

[29] Ryan Moore, "Crack Cocaine: shame of the city," *Star Beacon*, February 6, 2000, pg. A1

[30] Ryan Moore, "Simon Says: Drug problem overstated," *Star Beacon*, February 20, 2000, pg. A1

[31] Ryan Moore, "Crack Cocaine: shame of the city," *Star Beacon*, February 6, 2000, pg. A1

[32] Ibid.

1960s and 1970s, the younger white middle-class, especially second-generation European ethnics, moved to the suburban area of Saybrook Township.

One factor that led to the City of Ashtabula's difficulty in attracting developers in the 1980s and 1990s was the fact that the city had little open parcels of land available for new development.

The Two Surrounding Townships: Saybrook and Plymouth

As the growth of the City of Ashtabula stagnated in the late 1960s and 1970s, the population shifted to Saybrook in a pattern of suburban sprawl repeated throughout the old industrial Midwest. Jon C. Teaford has asserted that across the industrial Midwest, development outside urban central cities, also known as "suburban sprawl," was gaining steam beginning in the 1950s. Suburban areas drew both residents and economic resources from central cities.[33]

Saybrook Township was a 31 square mile rectangular-shaped piece of real estate that was bounded by Lake Erie on the north and the City of Ashtabula to the west. Saybrook Township was settled by pioneers from New York State, established as a township in 1816, and was governed by a 3-member board of trustees and clerk. Until the 1940s, the growth in Saybrook was relatively stable and the population remained quite small and centered on farming. Small cottages on the lakefront also began to sprout up in Saybrook in 1884, around a stream called Redbrook.[34]

Saybrook Township began to increase its population in the 1940s and 1950s from development that was sprawling beyond the City of Ashtabula's western border and along the main roads (U.S. 20 and S.R. 84) that connected the two jurisdictions. In the late 1940s, the area of Saybrook along the lakefront, just west of the Ashtabula city corporation limits, attracted upper middle class families and a country club was built there. In Saybrook Township, land was plentiful and industries like Rockwell International's brake plant set up a large factory there in 1948. Many second generation white ethnics who were raised in the City of Ashtabula, and who had attained middle class status, wandered into Saybrook Township in search of the ideal home with a large

[33] Teaford, 1993, pg. 239-242.
[34] St. John, 1938, pg. 63.

yard, more privacy, more quiet, and to escape the urban-ills that were affecting the densely populated Ashtabula city. Small businesses like bowling alleys, restaurants, and grocery stores soon followed. While Saybrook was not a developer-planned suburban community, as was the case in larger cities such as Cleveland and Milwaukee, by the 1970s, it was clear that the western portion of Saybrook Township was home to the City of Ashtabula's suburban sprawl.[35] Saybrook Township offered middle-class prestige and had its own elementary school, fire department, and retail plazas. As the population of Ashtabula city began its population decline between 1960 and 1970 (loosing 1% of its population), the population of Saybrook Township increased by 13.1%, from 9964 to 11, 274.[36]

Plymouth Township was established in 1838 and remained a stable rural territory on the south border of the City of Ashtabula. Plymouth Township was separated from the City of Ashtabula by the deep and wide Ashtabula River Gulf and roads connecting the two were steep and dangerous. Thus, Plymouth Township remained rural, isolated, and sparsely populated with a population of only 2,000 at the end of the 20th century. Plymouth Township did attract some upper-middle class residents who build large estates there, but suburban sprawl did not follow to the extent it did in Saybrook Township.

As growth and economic development stagnated in the City of Ashtabula after its short, second wave of industrialization that ended in the mid-1970s, the surrounding Saybrook Township and Plymouth Township became the space of the American Dream while vast tracts of Ashtabula's central city became a reservation for the area's poor.[37] In short, a sense of "used-to-be" pervaded Ashtabula like a chill wind by the end of the 1980s.[38]

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[35] For a discussion of planned suburbs in the Midwest, see Teaford, 1993, pg. 204-210.

[36] Information from Ashtabula city is from table 6 "Population of Places 1960 and 1970" while information on the townships if from table 10 "Population of County Subdivisions" of Ohio census data provided by the U. S. Census Bureau. Both tables were accessed at www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1970cenpopvl.htm and then from a specific file on Ohio named 1970a_oh1-01.pdf. Information was accessed on 11/4/05.

[37] Many of these ideas are owed to and developed more fully in Jon C. Teaford, *Cities of the Heartland: The Rise and Fall of the Industrial Midwest* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993): 211.

[38] This was Ashtabula described by Rick Telander and Merrel Noden, "Death of an Athlete," *Sports Illustrated*, Vol. 70, No. 8. February 20, 1989.

Table 1.
Socioeconomic Contrasts in 2000

Jurisdiction	2000pop.	% White	%Minority[39]	Median Family Income	Owner Occupied Homes
City of Ashtabula	20, 962	84.7	18.4	69, 600	58.4%
Ashtabula Township[40]	23, 239	85.7	17.4	68, 100	60.2%
Plymouth Township	2, 081	96.2	3.6	92, 600	91.7%
Saybrook Township	10, 051	95.8	4.4	88, 300	83.0%
Ashtabula County-all	102, 728	94.1	6.8	85, 300	90.0%

The School System

The Ashtabula Area City School District was formed in 1961 and served the Greater Ashtabula urban area. At 55 square miles in size, it was at the time of its creation, one of the geographically largest school districts in the state of Ohio. By the year 2000, 70% of the district's student population was centered in the City of Ashtabula, although the enrollment Saybrook Township area was growing rapidly. The Ashtabula Area City School District operated two high schools, Ashtabula High School and Harbor High School, and would try for many years to consolidate/unite them into one large high school.

Between the late 19th century and 1960, three different school districts served the Greater Ashtabula area. The first and largest of these was the Ashtabula City School District, which served most of the youth of the City of Ashtabula and all students in

[39] Due to the reporting methods used by Cobalt Group, individuals could count themselves as being more than one race. Of the minority population in the city of Ashtabula, 9.8% identified as Black or African American and 5.3% identified as Hispanic.
[40] The AACSD serves only a few blocks of Ashtabula Township. The vast majority of Ashtabula Township students are served by the Buckeye Local School District.

Plymouth Township.[41] Students in the Ashtabula City Schools attended the district's only high school, Ashtabula High School. The second district, and second is size, was the Harbor Exempted Village School District, which served students in the northwest corner of the City of Ashtabula near Lake Erie. The Harbor Exempted Village School District was formed in 1879 because the large Finnish population who lived in the Ashtabula Harbor near Lake Erie wanted to maintain separate schools from the Ashtabula City Schools.[42] Thus, even though the people of the Harbor were part of the City of Ashtabula, they did not send their youth to the Ashtabula City Schools. The Harbor Exempted Village Schools had their own high school: Harbor High. The third and smallest of the districts was the Saybrook Local School District, which served all of rural Saybrook Township, west of the City of Ashtabula. The Saybrook Local Schools offered a grade K-8 education; the Saybrook Township students who wanted to get a high school education could choose to attended one of the neighboring school district's high schools, Harbor High or Ashtabula High.[43]

On November 8, 1960, the majority of voters in the Ashtabula City School District, the Harbor Exempted Village School District, and the Saybrook Local School District approved the consolidation of the three districts into one. Consolidation became official and the Ashtabula Area City School District (AACSD) was born on New Year's Day, 1961.[44] When the AACSD was consolidated in 1961, it was at that time the largest school district to consolidate in the state of Ohio.[45] Consolidation into the AACSD meant that three once-independent school districts—each with its own school board and superintendent—were dissolved and unified into one governing unit with one superintendent and board of education. The new Ashtabula Area City School District was governed by a 5-member school board, elected at large from within the boundaries of

[41] Plymouth Township was its own school district and operated a single K-8 school building into the 1940s before it became part of the Ashtabula City School District. The Ashtabula City School District also included a very small portion of Ashtabula Township.
[42] R.B. St. John, *The History of Secondary Education in Ashtabula, Ohio* (Masters Thesis, The Ohio State University, 1938): 55
[43] The Saybrook Local School District operated a grade 9-10 (class C) high school briefly in the mid-1930s but it was discontinued.
[44] *Star Beacon,* "Schools Merge Dec. 31," December 9, 1960, sec. A.
[45] "Welcome to Ashtabula, Ohio and The Ashtabula Area City Schools," school district pamphlet, 1962-1963.

the school system. Ashtabula school board elections were nonpartisan which expressed the popular attitude across the nation that there was no Republican or Democratic way to run a school system.[46] The school district and its governing school board were independent of the City of Ashtabula and the two township governments that its territory overlapped.[47] The Ashtabula Area City Schools, while separate from other governmental units such as municipalities and townships, was also similar to them in that school districts are established by state action, have fixed territorial boundaries and legislative bodies, and must be responsive to citizen needs.[48]

The consolidation of the AACSD, and other school districts throughout Ohio, happened for a number of reasons. First, since the beginning of the 20th century state educational policy makers saw small school districts as inefficient. This view was grounded in an "economies of scale" approach to the administration of school operations fueled by the business-managerial conception of school administration, where by the 1920s, economic and facilities efficiency was held as a priority.[49] A second argument fueling the school district consolidation was that small school districts could not provide a quality education. Consolidators argued that larger school districts could offer more educational opportunities for students: larger meant stronger. Finally, state boards of education, including Ohio, strongly encouraged school district consolidation by setting fiscal and academic standards that were difficult or nearly impossible for small school districts to meet.[50] Over 100,000 small school districts were eliminated in the United States between 1940 and 1980.[51]

The two high schools of the Ashtabula City and Harbor Exempted Village districts did not consolidate when the consolidated Ashtabula Area City School District was formed in 1961; Ashtabula High School and Harbor High School remained two

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[46] Philip J. Meranto, *School Politics in the Metropolis* (Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1970): 9.
[47] I.N. Edwards, "The Legal Relation Between School Districts and Municipalities," *The Elementary School Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 10 (1930): 737
[48] Meranto, 1970, pg. 7.
[49] Raymond B. Callahan, *Education and the Cult of Efficiency*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1962): 246.
[50] Tucker L. Self, "Evaluation of a Single School District Consolidation in Ohio," *American Secondary Education*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Fall 2001): 73
[51] See David Strang, "The Administrative Transformation of American Education: School District Consolidation, 1938-1980," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (September 1987): 352-366.

separate units within the consolidated Ashtabula Area City school system. The only immediate change faced by the two high schools as a result of the consolidation was that high school attendance zones were redrawn and some youth who might have attended Harbor High were slated to attend Ashtabula High and vice versa.

A consequence of retaining the two separate high schools of the former Ashtabula City School District (Ashtabula High) and Harbor Exempted Village School District (Harbor High) was to create two de-facto school systems operating within the consolidated Ashtabula Area City Schools. For example, Harbor High was fed by Columbus Junior High, which was mostly fed by 3 elementary schools—all of which were located in the Harbor and Saybrook. Ashtabula High was fed by West Junior High, which was mostly fed by 4 elementary schools in Uptown Ashtabula. Thus, with two sets of junior highs and elementary schools feeding the AACSD's two high schools, most of the students who graduated from Harbor High never set foot in a classroom with a student who graduated from Ashtabula High during their entire K-12 career in the district. Thus, the AACSD community was divided in half not just by the high schools, but by the two sets of elementary schools and junior highs that fed the two high schools.[52]

By the late 1990s, the Ashtabula Area City School District was, given its size of about 5000 students, unique in the state of Ohio for operating two separate high schools. At that time, eight other school districts in Ohio with a student population of 4900 to 5200 each operated one high school.[53] In fact, even the nine school districts in Ohio with a student population between 6000 and 6500 all operated one high school with an average enrollment of about 1800 students.[54]

The Ashtabula Area City School District faced several challenges from the time it was founded in 1961. The district was plagued by internal tensions resulting from consolidation, a high turnover in superintendents, and had difficulty passing levies in the 1960s and 1970s. When the school district's enrollment increased by 1000 students

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[52] See Robert Smith, "Student Reaction to New Lakeside High," *Star Beacon,* January 18, 2001.

[53] The exception to this rule is the Adams County school district which includes an geographical area of about 450 square miles, nine times the size of the Ashtabula Area City School District. This geographical size likely explained Adams County's multiple high schools.

[54] Data is from Ohio Department of Education "power reports" on school district enrollment located at http://lilrc.ode.state.oh.us/Power_Users.asp. The information was accessed on 4/28/06.

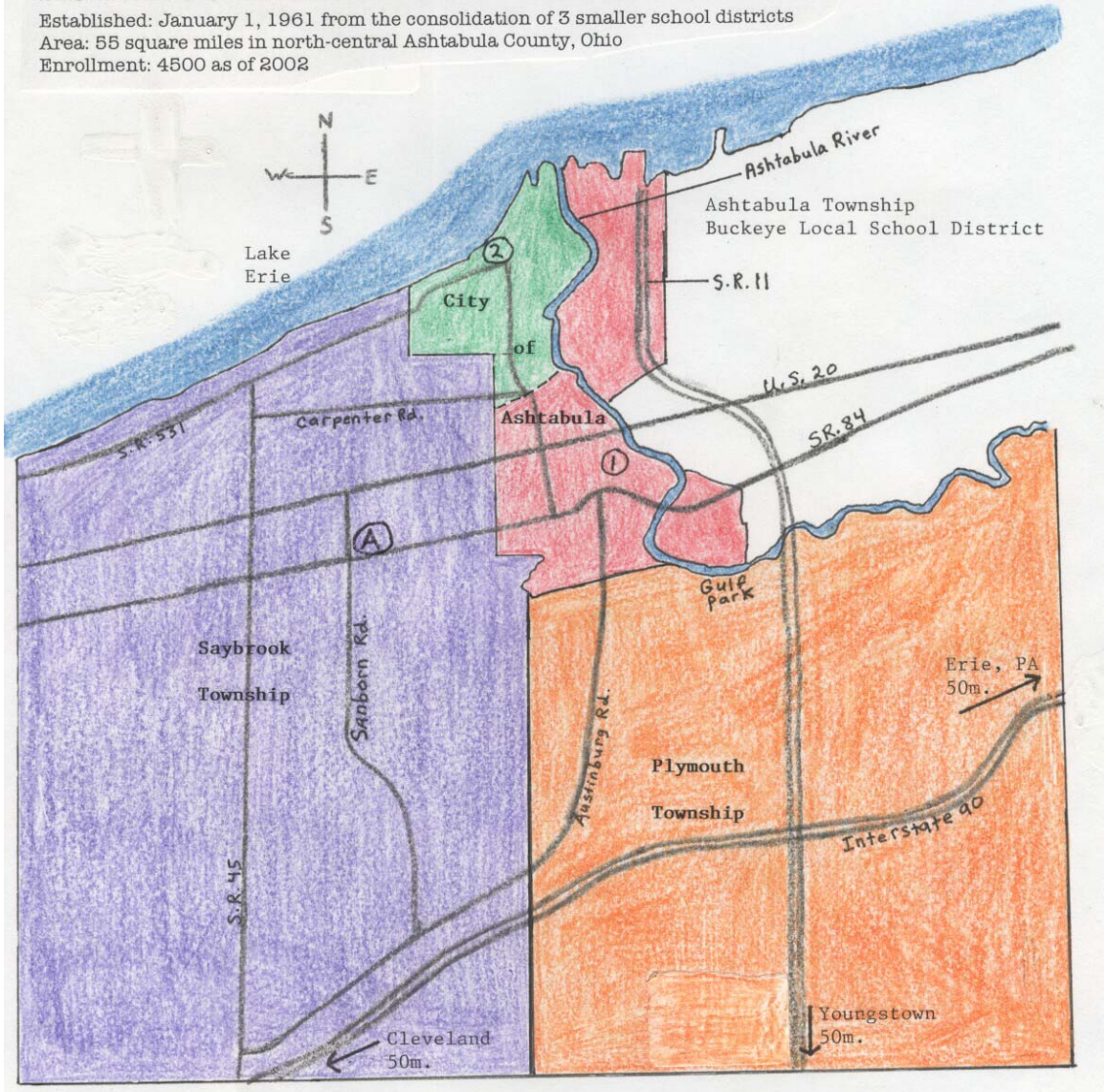
during the 1960s to about 7900, it could not pass a bond issue to build a larger consolidated high school and other facilities to alleviate overcrowding. Then, by the mid-1970s, enrollment declined to less than 5000 by the late 1990s.[55] The decline in enrollment meant that for each student lost, state formula funding to the district declined, resulting in the lay-off of several teachers and a decline in programming during the 1980s and 1990s.

One of the difficult issues faced by the AACSD, which caused great bitterness in the community, was that it did not benefit from the property taxes of the burgeoning chemical industries that moved to the area in the 1950s. While many of the chemical industries moved to Ashtabula for its harbor—which were located within the territory of the City of Ashtabula and the AACSD—and most of its employees also lived in the city, the majority of the plants were located just a few feet outside the boundaries of the City of Ashtabula/AACSD. The plants were located in the territory of the Buckeye Local School District. The Buckeye Local School District benefited from the all property taxes of these plants even though the residents of the AACSD paid many of the social and environmental costs, e.g., polluted streams and unsavory odors, from these chemical plants. When the Buckeye Local district built a sprawling new high school campus in the 1960s, it fueled a great deal of resentment and anger on the part of those living in the City of Ashtabula and AACSD.

[55] Information from the following pamphlets published by the Ashtabula Area City School District: "Welcome to Ashtabula, Ohio and the Ashtabula Area City Schools" (1962); "1968-1969 Facts and Figures About Ashtabula (Ohio) Area City Schools"

ASHTABULA AREA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Established: January 1, 1961 from the consolidation of 3 smaller school districts
Area: 55 square miles in north-central Ashtabula County, Ohio
Enrollment: 4500 as of 2002



LEGEND: All colored areas are part of the Ashtabula Area City School District

- Ashtabula City part of the former Ashtabula City SD
- Ashtabula City--former Harbor Ex. Village SD
- Plymouth Twp. part of the former Ashtabula City SD
- Saybrook Twp.--former Saybrook Local SD

1 Location of Ashtabula HS
2 Location of Harbor HS
A Site Alpha

1" = approx. 1.25 m.

Guy L. Parmigian 2006

The Two High Schools

From the 1960s to the end of the 20th century, Ashtabula High School and Harbor High School were situated on small parcels of land in densely populated Ashtabula city neighborhoods, easily accessible by foot or bike by approximately one-third of each school's student body.[56] Harbor High School was at the center of the city's historic harbor district and it provided a "glue" that held together a vibrant mix of commercial and residential uses. Harbor High embraced the street life around it and, at once, sustained the area's economic viability because it attracted people wanting to raise their children near it.[57] Ashtabula High School inspired civic pride because of its location in the city's mixed use civic district and because it was established in 1856 and was the oldest high school in continuous operation in Ohio. The three and one half story Ashtabula High building, constructed in 1915, was a civic landmark and held the memories of several generations of Ashtabulans.[58]

According to a 2002 study of Ashtabula, both high school buildings were neighborhood anchors that maintained a sense of community connection because of their proximity to densely populated neighborhoods. They were assets to the City of Ashtabula because they enhanced property values, stabilized neighborhoods, and could be leveraged for future growth and revitalization.[59] In many respects, the two handsome high school buildings harkened back to a time before neighborhood schools were replaced by large nondescript buildings on large tracts of land outside traditional

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[56] Urban Design Center of Northeast Ohio and Cobalt Group, Inc., *Ashtabula: Downtown and Harbor Districts Revitalization Plan*, December 2002. pages 5-25. See also Harland Bartholomew and Associates, *Report Upon The Comprehensive Plan Ashtabula, Ohio*, January 1961, especially "Plate 13: Existing and Proposed High Schools."

[57] Urban Design Center of Northeast Ohio and Cobalt Group, Inc., *Ashtabula: Downtown and Harbor Districts Revitalization Plan*, December 2002. pgs. 13-37; Constance E. Beaumont with Elizabeth G. Pianca, *Why Johnny Can't Walk to School* (Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, October 2002): pages 5-17; Kate Evans, "The Physical Form of the School," *British Journal of Educational Studies* 27, no. 1 (February 1979): 29-41.

[58] See especially Urban Design Center, 2002, pg. 34 and Constance E. Beaumont with Elizabeth G. Pianca, *Why Johnny Can't Walk to School* (Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, October 2002): pages 5-17.

[59] Urban Design Center of Northeast Ohio and Cobalt Group, Inc., *Ashtabula: Downtown and Harbor Districts Revitalization Plan*, December 2002. pages 5-25.

community centers and disconnected from sidewalks.[60] By the late 1990s, suburban sprawl had affected the schooling experience of American children by removing schools as community centers within traditional neighborhoods and placing them on large tracts of land only accessible by car. By 2000, only 13% of all American student trips to school were made by foot or by bike.[61] Due to their accessibility and proximity to city neighborhoods, Ashtabula and Harbor high schools in the 1990s symbolized the dying tradition of small neighborhood schools.

Ashtabula High School—the Panthers

Ashtabula High School (AHS), established in 1856, was the patriarch of institutions in Ashtabula. It was the longest enduring civic institution in the Greater Ashtabula urban area and by the mid-1990s was the oldest high school in continuous operation in the state of Ohio.[62]

In the early 1800s, Ashtabula was served by a number of small, un-graded district schools (one-room school houses) and the private Ashtabula Academy, which was established in 1832 to train youth in a classical curriculum for college.[63] The desire of the people of Ashtabula to demonstrate their growth and prosperity and the idea that if secondary education was good for people who could afford a private academy education it should be available to all, led to the effort to establish a high school in Ashtabula.

In February 1849, the Ohio General Assembly passed a general law, commonly referred to as the Akron Law, that allowed cities and towns to unite the small, un-graded district schools within their boundaries and organize them into what were called "Union

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[60] Beaumont, 2002; Cutler, 1989.

[61] Constance E. Beaumont with Elizabeth G. Pianca, *Why Johnny Can't Walk To School: Historic Neighborhood Schools in the Age of Sprawl,* 2nd edition. (Washington D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation, October 2002): pgs. 12-24; see also Kate Evans, 1979.

[62] Darrell E. Hamilton, "The History of Ashtabula and Harbor High Schools," located at http://www.ashtabula200.com. Downloaded 4/15/04; Darrell E. Hamilton, "Twentieth Century of Ashtabula 1902—Part 2," *Star Beacon,* August 8, 2004, sec. B7.

[63] Raymond B. St. John, *The History of Public Secondary Education in Ashtabula, Ohio* (Unpublished masters' thesis, The Ohio State University, 1938): 37. See also Carl D. Washburn, *The Rise of the High School in Ohio* (Unpublished dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1932): 46-51.

schools."[64] While there was no mention of a "high school" in this law and no section mandating that towns create a high school, the 1849 Akron Law made it possible to create a high school as part of the graded system of Union schools without the formalities of securing a special charter from the legislature.[65] The 1849 law essentially allowed the creation of high schools in Ohio without mandating them.[66]

At a town meeting held March 22, 1856, voters of Ashtabula decided to place the small, un-graded district schools of the area under the Union school laws, and as part of this, established Ashtabula High School. The new Ashtabula High School, with the motto "What is worth doing at all, is worth doing well," was a progressive step in both the educational system and greater progress of Ashtabula. Ashtabula High School would draw many students from the surrounding areas, adding prestige to the growing borough and giving it an educational advantage that helped attract manufactures and economic investment.

Between 1856 and 1886, Ashtabula High School had a small and static student population and was housed in a few unremarkable rooms of the old Ashtabula Academy building in Uptown Ashtabula. In 1886, the high school course was extended to four years and a new Ashtabula High School building was constructed.[67] These developments brought the greatest increase in the high school's enrollment, which jumped to 114 students in 1888-1889.[68]

Before the passage of the Brumbaugh Act by the Ohio General Assembly in 1902, high schools in Ohio operated without being properly defined. The Brumbaugh Act originated out of late 19th and early 20th century Progressive reform movement and

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[64] Frederick Dean McClusky, "Introduction of Grading Into the Public Schools of New England, Part I" *The Elementary School Journal,* Vol. 21, No. 1 (September 1920): 34-46. See also Part II of this article which appears in Vol. 21, No. 2 (October 1920): 132-145.

[65] E.A. Miller, "High Schools in Ohio Prior to 1850," *The School Review,* Vol. 28, No. 6 (June 1920): 466-467.

[66] Therefore, all of the high schools established in Ohio prior to 1849, were created by a special charter granted by the legislature. It is also important to note that although the law of 1849 allowed high schools to exist, there was no standard that had to be met to be called a high school. Most early high schools were 3-4 year courses, but the number of grades required to be completed and the age of the student before one could attend the high school varied. Standard classification of high schools in Ohio would come in 1902, which will be discussed in a later part of this chapter.

[67] This was built at the site where Ball Gym Complex now stands at the corner of West 44th and Station Avenue. When it was built in 1886, the street was called Division Street.

[68] St. John, 1938, p. 66

created a formal definition of the high school as separate from elementary schools. Under the provisions of the Brumbaugh Act, high schools were inspected and placed within one of three categories, or grades. To be a high school of the "first grade," the following standard must have been met: a 4 year program, a school year of at least 32 weeks, and the requirement of 16 courses for graduation. High schools of the second and third grades had shorter school years and lower standards for graduation. Ashtabula High School was classified as a high school of the *first grade*, a fact proudly displayed on AHS diplomas throughout the years.[69]

AHS soon outgrew its new home and a new building for 200 students was constructed on Park Street in 1902.[70] This building was erected at a time when the attendance at Ashtabula High was about 200. The student enrollment at Ashtabula High grew steadily and by 1914 enrolled 475 pupils[71] The building on Park Street constructed in 1902 was getting overcrowded and nearly the entire March 1914 Ashtabula High yearbook, *The Dart,* was given over to make the case for the construction of a new Ashtabula High including cartoons, short stories, and testimonials.

Ashtabula High School, 1916-2001

Ashtabula High School's fourth and final home opened to 515 students on April 3, 1916. It included 60 modern rooms, including manual training and domestic science

[69] Forest Leroy Shoemaker, *Public Secondary Education in Ohio: 1875-1933* (Unpublished dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1935): 153-154. See also: Ohio History Central Online Encyclopedia on the Act located at http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/entry.php?rec=1502 and downloaded 3/26/06.

[70] This building was built on Park Street (later Park Avenue). After its use as a high school, it served as a junior high and then as the first home to the Kent State University Ashtabula Branch. It was destroyed by fire in the early 1970s.

[71] St. John, 1938, p. 71-72

rooms, and an auditorium for 1000. It was located on 3.86 acres in the heart of Uptown Ashtabula, and was within walking distance to many of Uptown Ashtabula's neighborhoods. Upon the opening of the new building, the Ashtabula High *Dart* commented: "Never before has a student body in Ashtabula been afforded such an opportunity… Every student should feel that this building is an expression of faith from the parents of Ashtabula, and he should justify such faith by proving that the new A. H. S. can turn out Bigger, Better, Busier men and women for Ashtabula's future."[72] The statement on this new school building embodied the spirit of a growing Ashtabula.

The enrollment in the school topped 1100 by 1926. In 1934, Ashtabula High graduated its largest class to that date, 292, made up of many of the children of Italian and Irish immigrants along with the descendents of Connecticut pioneers who settled Ashtabula. In the 1940s and 1950s, Ashtabula High School expanded as a new gymnasium/classroom complex was added as well as a large cafeteria, band room, and industrial arts area. The enrollment of Ashtabula High grew to over 1300 students in the 1950s and 1960s.[73]

In the 1960s and 1970s, African-Americans and white Appalachians added to the diversity of Ashtabula High School. In the 1990s, Hispanics increased their numbers at the high school, although Whites still made up about 75% of the student body. The diversity at the school caused several political conflicts at Ashtabula High School in the late 1980s and 1990s. On the one hand, there was White-Black racial conflict and tension within the student body leading to violence and behavior problems.[74] On the other hand, racial minority parents pressured the school district administration to hire more Black teachers to serve as role models for Black students.[75] Then, in 1991, Ashtabula High School principal Dr. W. Roger Snead, an African-American and the only Black administrator in the school district, alleged that his firing was clearly racially motivated. Snead said his evaluations were good. He said that Ashtabula had been a

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[72] See the *Dart*, April 1916, p. 17-18.

[73] Ashtabula Area City Schools information pamphlet, 1966.

[74] See Deanna Hohler, "Parents want new Ashtabula high school," *Star Beacon*, February 15, 1996. See also the personal diary of Guy Parmigian which recorded the fact that the Ashtabula Police Department was stationed around the school grounds at dismissal time between 1993 and 1995 to prevent race-related violence.

[75] Julie Tagliaferro, "Parents more of a role in kids' lives," *Star Beacon*, November 7, 1995, sec. A1.

hostile community for him to work in and said, "It's almost a throwback to what one would find in the 1800s in the South."[76]

Ashtabula High School was also located within close proximity to many public housing complexes and had many students who were in poverty, with approximately 25% of students participating in the free lunch program in the 1980s.[77] Ashtabula High School was also plagued by a drop out rate of approximately 30% in the 1990s. Drop out rates were considerably higher among Black and Hispanic students.[78]

Even though Ashtabula High School struggled with academic and racial issues and its aging physical plant was deteriorating and required more than $8.5 million in renovations, it still remained an anchor of the contiguous neighborhoods and a potential asset that the city could leverage to attract people and investment to revitalize the uptown Ashtabula civic district.[79] Try as they did, Ashtabula city officials were unable build upon the location of AHS in uptown Ashtabula to draw any significant investment to civic district in the 1980s and 1990s. In fact, businesses like the Carlislez department story, a Main Avenue fixture since the early 20th century, continued the exodus out of uptown Ashtabula in 1993.

Harbor High School—the Mariners

For a good part of its history, Harbor High School was part of the Harbor Exempted Village School District. Both the district and its high school were created to serve a small, separate part of the City of Ashtabula—the Ashtabula Harbor, west of the Ashtabula River. While the Harbor school district was created in 1879, Harbor High

[76] See Carl E. Feather, "Controversy swirls around AHS principal," *Star Beacon*, March 28, 1991, sec. A1; see also Carl E. Feather, Board dumps AHS principal; racism alleged," *Star Beacon,* March 26, 1991, sec. A1.

[77] This is based Ashtabula Area City School District data from the 1980s and 1990s. A student qualifies for free lunch because of a low family income.

[78] Based on Ohio Department of Education Data for 1990-2001. See also, Urban Design Center of Northeast Ohio and Cobalt Group, Inc., 2002, pg. 24.

[79] The renovation estimate from a study by an engineering firm, see Lori Wetzel, "Crumbling city schools at the crossroads," *Star Beacon,* December 15, 1996, sec. C2; see also Northeast Ohio Urban Design Center and Cobalt Group, Inc., 2002, pgs. 5-10.

School was not established until 1890; it graduated its first class of 6 students in 1893.[80] In its early days, Harbor High School lacked adequate facilities and even youth who lived in the Ashtabula Harbor who wanted to further their education attended Ashtabula High School. Even though the Harbor area population of European immigrants was increasing in the 1880s and 1890s, Harbor High School enrollment did not increase immediately because many of these immigrants did not have children of high school age.[81]

As the youth of Finnish and Swedish immigrants living in the Harbor reached high school age, support for the construction of a new high school grew. Harbor High School's new home opened on September 8, 1912, with 134 students.[82] The school was designed to hold 600 students. The enrollment of Harbor High grew steadily and reached about 500 in the late 1940s.[83] Harbor High continued to grow during the 1950s, a decade that saw the addition of both a gymnasium and library to its original building. In 1961, the year in which Harbor High entered the same school district as Ashtabula High, Harbor graduated 89 students. Harbor High's graduating class was almost always half that of Ashtabula High.[84]

As Ashtabula High became more diverse in ethnicity, race, and class from the 1920s onward, Harbor High students continued to be mostly the middle-class offspring of the Finnish, Swedish, and Irish immigrants who originally settled in the Harbor. Furthermore, Harbor High's small size and location near the quaint and vibrant ethnic neighborhoods of the lakefront, gave it the character of a private school. Harbor High was situated on a 2.34-acre corner lot adjacent to the entrance of Walnut Beach and the Hubbard House Underground Railroad Museum. From the windows of Harbor High facing north, students gazed out on Lake Erie waves and the coal docks in the distance. Harbor High School used the anchor as its school symbol. The purple anchor was also a

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[80] D. P. Robbins and M. D. Compiler, "The City of Ashtabula, O," (Ashtabula, O.: Board of Improvement, 1893): 40. See also Darrell E. Hamilton, "The History of Ashtabula and Harbor High Schools," located at http://www.ashtabula200.com/id85_m.htm and accessed on 4/15/04.

[81] St. John, 1938, pg. 67. The early history of Harbor High School is sketchy at best because of the destruction of school records.

[82] *Harbor Mariner Yearbook 1961*. pg. 2-3.

[83] Ashtabula Harbor Public Schools, "Superintendent's Annual Report for 1954-1955."

[84] Darrell E. Hamilton, "The History of Ashtabula & Harbor High Schools." Located at http://www.ashtabula200.com/id85_m.htm. Downloaded 4/15/04.

metaphor for the high school, which became the anchor of the ethnic neighborhoods and businesses that surrounded it.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Harbor High School's homogeneous student population, averaging 95% White, helped it to avoid many of the racial tensions Ashtabula High went through. Harbor's student population also tended to be more stable than AHS.[85] In addition, unlike Ashtabula High, the residential area around Harbor High School was in "good to excellent condition" as many of the homes in the area had undergone historic preservation.[86] Harbor High also had about half the number of students eligible for free lunch as Ashtabula High. However, like AHS, Harbor High's physical plant was also in poor condition and required more than $6.2 million in renovations.[87]

By the 1990s, Harbor High School was in an excellent position to be used as a valuable asset in the revitalization of the Harbor district of the city as a popular regional tourism and entertainment destination. Harbor High's historic character not only stabilized contiguous neighborhoods but encouraged the renovation of single-family housing in the area and the business investment on nearby historic Bridge Street.[88]

The High Schools as Symbols of Community Identity

Harbor High School and Ashtabula High School symbolized Ashtabula city's two different communities, the Harbor and Uptown areas, respectively. Robert Alford has asserted that the high school is a particularly key part of community integration and

[85] From AACSD annual reports from 1983-1997
[86] Northeast Ohio Urban Design Center and Cobalt Group, Inc., 2002, pg. 13.
[87] Lori Wetzel, "Crumbling city schools at the crossroads," *Star Beacon,* December 15, 1996, sec. C2
[88] Northeast Ohio Urban Design Center and Cobalt Group, Inc., 2002, pg. 38.

identity because students who attend them are old enough to transfer their loyalties from family to peer group and because there are simply fewer high schools than elementary schools. Alford argues that high schools attract more community support than other civic institutions and they help reinforce social networks.[89] This was the case in Ashtabula where for generations Harbor High and Ashtabula High were intra-city athletic rivals, especially notable to community residents at the annual Thanksgiving evening football match-up.[90]

The two high schools became community symbols when the City of Ashtabula was formed in the late 19th century. In 1877, the uptown village of Ashtabula attempted to annex the Harbor area to get enough population to incorporate as a city. The annexation of the Harbor was vigorously opposed by the large number of Finnish and Swedish immigrants who lived in the Harbor. After a considerable struggle, the Harbor was joined with uptown Ashtabula and the City of Ashtabula was incorporated. At this time the village of Ashtabula school board attempted to take over control of the Harbor schools as well. The people of the Harbor resisted this move, and even though they were joined with the uptown Ashtabula as a city, they decided to form their own special school district in 1879. Harbor High School was formed in this school district in 1893.[91] Harbor High School helped sustain the identity of being "from the Harbor."

There were several efforts in the late 19th and early 20th century to consolidate the two high schools but "bitterness of feeling," presumably at being joined with uptown/inland Ashtabula, arose to defeat the plan.[92] The split between the two parts of Ashtabula city into two school districts and two high schools led to evolution of two unique identities and Raymond B. St. John asserted that the consolidation of the two districts was a major factor if unity was going to be maintained within the City of Ashtabula.[93] However, the consolidation of the two school districts in 1961 to form the

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[89] Robert R. Alford, "School District Reorganization and Community Integration," *Harvard Educational Review* 30, no. 4 (Fall 1960): 356-358.
[90] See Karl Pearson, "Harbor-Ashtabula for the final time?" *Star Beacon*, September 22, 2000, sec. B1.
[91] See St. John, 1938, pg. 54 and Darrell E. Hamilton, *The History of Ashtabula and Harbor High Schools* located at http://www.ashtabula2000.com/id85_m.htm and downloaded on 4/15/04.
[92] St. John, 1938, pg. 54.
[93] St. John, 1938, pg. 178.

Ashtabula Area City Schools did little to unify the city because the existence of the two high schools maintained the two different community identities.[94]

The community identity that the two high schools sustained was an intangible factor that reinforced resistance to high school consolidation from 1963 to 1998.[95]

Conclusion

This chapter presented the historical background for the entire political process of consolidating Ashtabula's two high schools, from 1963 to 2006.

First, the central city of Ashtabula attracted the area's population from the 1800s until the 1950s because of its burgeoning port and related industries. Beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, suburban Saybrook Township became the area of growth that attracted white middle class families.

The Ashtabula Area City School District (AACSD), which served the Greater Ashtabula urban area and formed as a result of the consolidation of three school districts in 1961. The high schools of two of these consolidated districts—Ashtabula High and Harbor High—remained separate and were operated by the AACSD throughout the 20th century. Both high schools were anchors of their contiguous neighborhoods and sustained the separate identities of uptown Ashtabula and the Harbor area.

[94] *Star Beacon, "In Our Opinion: Vote Yes on City School Bond Issue,"* May 3, 1963, sec. A2.
[95] Alford, 1960, pg. 356; see also Larson and Ovondo, 2001, pgs. 101-107.

Ashtabula City's Two High Schools

Above: The Ashtabula High School building at 401 West 44th Street, photographed 2004
Below: The Harbor High School building at the corner of Walnut Boulevard and Lake Avenue, photographed by author in 2005.

CHAPTER 4

BOND ISSUES TO BUILD A CONSOLIDATED HIGH SCHOOL, 1963—1998

"Given the enthusiasm with which consolidation was advocated, one would expect the empirical evidence supporting this policy to be overwhelming. It is not. The evidence on consolidation is incomplete."

Jonathan P. Sher and Rachel B. Tompkins[1]

This chapter backs up to the year 1963 and the start of the political process to consolidate Ashtabula's two high schools. From 1963 to 1998, this process included a total of eight bond issues to build a consolidated high school debated by leaders and ultimately defeated by voters at the polls. However, even though the bond issues were defeated, leaders who pushed for a consolidated high school still had the political will to continue. Since both the leaders who advocated consolidation and the leaders who resisted consolidation failed to build a network to completely eliminate the other side, rancor, polarization, and stalemate characterized the period between 1963 and 1998.

Between 1963 and 1998, the conflict surrounded eight different bond issues to finance the construction of a consolidated high school in Ashtabula. A bond issue meant that voters faced a tax question on a ballot that had to be answered, yes or no. "Yes" meant that voters were willing to increase their property taxes to raise money for the sole purpose of financing the construction of a single consolidated high school building. "No" meant that they were not willing to build a consolidated high school. However, increasing property taxes to build the school was not the only issue at stake. The debate about the high school consolidation bond issues involved other public conflicts such as the location of the proposed consolidated high school if the bond issue was passed, racial and community identity divisions between the Ashtabula High and Harbor High publics, and the merits of high school consolidation for improving curriculum and educational opportunity.

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[1] Jonathan P. Sher and Rachel B. Tompkins, "Economy, Efficiency, and Equality: The Myths of Rural School and District Consolidation." In Jonathan P. Sher (Ed.), *Education in Rural America: A Reassessment of Conventional Wisdom.* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977): 43-77.

The *high school consolidation process* refers to political action taken to merge, or unify, two separate institutions. One piece of the process was legally dissolving two existing institutions and legally establishing one new one. The other piece was creating a physically consolidated home for the new and larger institution. The first piece was called legal consolidation and the second piece was called physical consolidation. The question of which piece would come first was not set in stone, but was determined by leaders in Ashtabula.

This chapter will focus on the leadership and politics of the failed efforts to consolidate the two high schools of the Ashtabula Area City School District (AACSD), Ashtabula and Harbor high schools, between 1963 and 1998. It will highlight the efforts of the superintendents, most school board members, the business community and other elites leading the charge to rally support behind a bond issue for a consolidated high school facility. The chapter will also chronicle the efforts of a few school board members, community groups, City of Ashtabula elected officials, and some citizens of the school district who aligned to oppose high school consolidation. This chapter will show how the leaders and political conditions that were aligned for and against the consolidation of the two high schools evolved over this time period.

Legal Authority Over High School Consolidation

School districts in Ohio are the legal creations of the Ohio General Assembly. The legislature may, at their discretion, abolish or enlarge a school district or increase, modify, or abrogate the powers of local school boards. The state created local school districts to help execute its constitutional power and obligation of administering a state system of education. Local school districts provide local residents a voice in how they wish their schools to be organized. Furthermore, even though school districts may overlap several county, municipal, and township governmental territories, they are independent quasi-corporations and have their own governing body, the elected school board. Their purpose is to execute state educational policy. Municipalities, for example,

may attempt to influence the policies of a school district that serves their territory, but do not have any statutory authority over it.[2]

Regarding the consolidation issue in Ashtabula, the legal authority was divided between two entities within the district: first, the AACSD Board of Education and second, the majority vote of citizens living within the boundaries of the AACSD.

The elected, five-member Ashtabula Area City School District Board of Education had two powers concerning high school consolidation. Significantly, the board could legally consolidate the district's two high schools, without the passage of a bond issue to construct a new consolidated building. This allowed for the possibility of a school that was legally consolidated but physically split between two separate buildings. Also, the school board had the sole power to place a bond issue on the ballot for the purpose of raising funds for construction of a new consolidated high school. The superintendent, per se, had no explicit statutory power over school consolidation. However, the superintendent's power over high school consolidation, as with other educational policy issues, was in the power to recommend the appropriate course of action according to the norms of professional educators.[3]

School district voters also had some authority over the high school consolidation process. First, the voters elected school board members and also had the power to vote them out of office. Second, a majority vote of citizens was required to approve a bond issue to finance the construction of a proposed consolidated high school. By majority vote, citizens could also reject a bond issue for the construction of a consolidated high school, which would send any number of signals: 1) that they were politically opposed to the consolidation of the two high schools for any number of reasons; 2) that they did not approve of the location of where the new high school would be built; 3) that they did not

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[2] Martha M. McCarthy, Nelda H. Cambron-McCabe, and Stephen B. Thomas, *Public School Law: Teachers' and Students' Rights* 4th Edition (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998): 5-8; I.N. Edwards, "The Legal Relation between School Districts and Municipalities," *The Elementary School Journal* 30, no. 10 (June 1930): 734-745; I.N. Edwards, "The Law Governing the Creation, Alteration, and Control of School Districts," *The Elementary School Journal* 28, no. 9 (May 1928): 673-689.

[3] Philip J. Meranto, *School Politics in the Metropolis* (Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1970): 10.

wish to tax themselves further; 4) that they had little confidence in the governance of the high schools and/or school district; or 5) any combination of the above.[4]

In sum, the state legislature had the ultimate authority over how the state's school system would be organized and deployed. However, since the state delegates its power to the local school district, the school board had the power to legally consolidate schools and place a bond issue for the construction of a consolidated school in front of voters. If a majority of voters rejected the bond issue, the school board still had the power to legally consolidate the two high schools without a physically consolidated home.[5]

Politics of High School Consolidation Bond Issues: 1963-1973

In 1963, the political process of creating a consolidated high school in Ashtabula commenced when the AACSD school board placed a 4-mill bond issue on the May 7th ballot.[6] If passed, the bond issue would generate $5.9 million to construct a consolidated senior high school building in the district and make renovations to existing buildings.[7]

Ashtabula Area City Schools Superintendent Oscar Musgrave asserted that passage of the bond issue was necessary and part of a district-wide plan to provide the optimum educational environment for students. First, the plan included constructing a new consolidated grade 10 thru 12 senior high school, replacing the districts two separate 9-12 high schools, Ashtabula High (pop. 1324) and Harbor High (pop. 726), which the state said were seriously overcrowded. Musgrave asserted that the problem of overcrowding was only going to get worse because school district enrollment, which stood at 6968 students in 1963, was predicted to increase by about 4%, or 300 students, per school year.[8] Musgrave argued that a new consolidated 10-12 senior high school would improve education by providing extensive science laboratory areas, vocational education shops, physical education areas, facilities for music, art, home economics, and

[4] Anderson's Ohio Online Docs, Ohio Revised Code Section 3318.06, located at http://onlinedocs.andersonpublishing.com/oh/lpExt.dll?f=templates&fn=main-h.htm&cp=PORC

[5] Meranto, 1970, pgs. 4-11.

[6] Since it was a special election ballot, state law required that the bond issue get 60% voter approval to be passed, instead of a simple majority usually required.

[7] William O. Crane, "Board cites reason for school bonds: overcrowding," *Star Beacon*, May 1, 1963.

[8] William O. Crane, "Board cites reason for school bonds: overcrowding," *Star Beacon*, May 1, 1963.

a library.[9] Musgrave and the Ashtabula area school board contended that no specific sites for a new consolidated senior high school were selected, but that several had been studied. The school board noted that no sites could be selected until the bond issue was passed and funds for property purchase made available. However, the school board indicated that the consolidated senior high school would be built somewhere near the demographic center of the school district, and on at least 40 acres, as recommended by the state.

While most of the monies the bond issue would raise would pay for the construction of a consolidated 10-12 senior high school, about one-fifth of the funds would be used to renovate the existing Ashtabula High and Harbor High buildings and turn them each into grade 7 to 9 junior high schools. As configured in 1963, the Ashtabula Area City Schools did not have any junior high schools, only K-8 elementary schools and two 9-12 high schools. The superintendent and school board cited the research of James B. Conant, which supported the district's grade reconfiguration plan to establish two junior high schools. School officials cited Conant's argument that a junior high provided a special environment for young adolescents (ages 12-15) to grow and develop, as well as a broader curriculum at the junior high level with more specialized teachers.[10]

In addition to the school board and superintendent, the major proponents of the May 7th bond issue were the Ashtabula business community and several of Ashtabula's trade unions. Ashtabula's three major banking institutions were strong advocates for the passage of the bond issue, contending that the economic and cultural growth of the community was dependent upon the passage of the bond issue, which would increase the educational opportunity of Ashtabula's youth.[11] The Ashtabula Area Development Association, Ashtabula County Industrial Development, Inc., and the Ashtabula Area Chamber of Commerce endorsed the bond issue because they asserted a new senior high school and other building renovations would lure industry to Ashtabula. Finally, the

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[9] William O. Crane, "Need Bonds for High School Building, Equipment Planned," *Star Beacon*, May 2, 1963.
[10] William O. Crane, "Board's Eventual Goal of High School is 6-3-3 Plan," *Star Beacon*, May 3, 1963.
[11] Paid political advertisement by the Farmers National Bank & Trust Company, The Commercial Bank, and The Northeastern Ohio National Bank, which appeared in the *Star Beacon* from May 1 to May 7, 1963.

editors of the local newspaper, the *Star Beacon,* supported the bond issue and cited economic growth and the alleviation of overcrowding concerns, present and future, as reasons for voting for it.[12]

Many average Ashtabula citizens, who were not part of the business elite, opposed the bond issue. Representative of the voices of average citizens was David H. Olin of Saybrook Township, who, in a letter to the *Star Beacon* editor, spoke out strongly against the passage of the bond issue because it was an unwise move. Olin argued that the only place overcrowding was a problem was at Ashtabula High School, whereas other district schools had empty classrooms. Olin concluded that there must be a better way to solve the overcrowding problem at Ashtabula High than to build a new senior high school and reorganize the entire school district. He called the bond issue a waste of tax dollars and said he had no confidence in the school board. In another letter to the editor, Mrs. Ethel Dolgosh of Ashtabula city argued that she would rather see tax dollars spent on new textbooks and on more qualified teachers, and said that new school buildings do not amount to a good education. Dolgosh also noted that citizens on pension or on fixed incomes could not afford the tax increase.[13] There was a clear disconnect between school district voters and the building plans of the school board and its allies in the Ashtabula business community.

On May 7, 1963, the bond issue to construct a consolidated senior high school in Ashtabula and for other building renovations was overwhelmingly defeated by a 3 to 1 margin; 6083 were opposed to the bond issue and only 1854 were for it.[14] Out of 44 precincts voting, only one passed the issue—the country club area near the lakefront in Saybrook Township. School board president Dr. David Lusk said he was very disappointed by the defeat and the superintendent lamented that education in the district would be "tougher" because of the bond issue's failure. Board president Lusk warned that the overcrowding issue would soon become very critical.[15] The massive defeat for

[12] *Star Beacon,* "In Our Opinion: Vote Yes on City School Bond Issue," May 3, 1963.
[13] Letters to the editor of the *Star Beacon,* May 2-3, 1963.
[14] See table 2 at the end of the chapter for a breakdown of election results from 1963 and subsequent bond issues.
[15] William O. Crane, "Failed by 3 to 1," *Star Beacon,* May 8, 1963, pg. 1.

this first bond issue to construct a consolidated high school foreshadowed the long process ahead.

Survey's of the public about why the bond issue failed suggested that the public did not have faith or confidence in the school board or superintendent with regard to using public funds to construct a new high school and reorganize the school district.[16]

1969: Overcrowding Continues; Consolidation Attempted Again

By 1969, the population of the Ashtabula Area City Schools had increased to about 7900 students, a jump of 1000 students since 1963. Both Ashtabula High School and Harbor High School were bursting at the seams, as each high school was home to about 200 more students than their respective buildings were designed for. In 1968-1969, Ashtabula High enrolled nearly 1500, while Harbor High enrolled about 800.[17]

In addition, by the late 1960s, the two high school buildings were both more than 50 years old, and each was located on a small parcel of land in the midst of city neighborhoods. This was out of step with contemporary high school trends, which was for high school buildings to be located on large parcels of land that accommodated athletic fields on site.[18]

In 1969, AACSD superintendent Dr. Roger T. Beitler recommended, and the AACSD school board decided, that the consolidation of the district's two high schools into one new unified facility had several educational advantages. The board unanimously approved placing a 5.82-mill bond issue on a December 9, 1969 ballot for the purpose of financing the construction of a new consolidated high school facility designed to accommodate 2200 pupils. The school board decided to get voter approval on a bond issue to finance the construction of a physically consolidated high school building before making the move to legally consolidate the two high schools.

Advocates for the 1969 bond issue were the same as they were in the 1963 bond issue: the superintendent, the school board, and the Ashtabula business community. They

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[16] *Star Beacon*, "Poll Hunts 'Why?' of Bonds' Defeat," May 9, 1963.

[17] Ashtabula Harbor School District Superintendent's Annual Report for 1954-1955; *The Dart* published by the senior class of Ashtabula High School (April 1916): pg. 17. Despite additions to both original high school buildings in the 1950s, overcrowding was still a concern in the 1960s.

[18] See Beaumont, 2002, pg. 15; see also Evans, 1979.

offered three reasons why voters should approve the bond issue for a consolidated high school. First, they said it would reduce overcrowding in many of the district's elementary schools because with the construction of a new consolidated high school, the two old high school buildings could be transformed into 6-8 middle schools. Second, the consolidated high school would be built on a 60-acre complex at the population center of the district and would be large enough to accommodate athletic fields and expand interscholastic competition. Third, consolidation would maximize curricular offerings and educational opportunity for high school students.[19]

On December 9, two-thirds of school district voters rejected the bond issue to build a consolidated high school in Ashtabula. This was the second time in six years that voters overwhelmingly defeated a bond issue to build a consolidated high school.

Six months after the bond issue's defeat, in July 1970, AACSD Board President Charles F. Sheppard and board member Carey S. Sheldon both resigned. They resigned as a result of a citizen's committee report to the school board that determined the reason that the bond issue failed was not because the public was unwilling to tax themselves for a new high school, but because of the public's loss of pride in the schools and their mistrust and lack of faith in the board and administration. [20]

The public's loss of confidence in the AACSD board and administration stemmed from political controversy within the school district that persisted throughout the 1960s. By summer 1965, the Professional Rights and Responsibilities Commission of the Ohio Education Association was called in to investigate a political controversy that had become a "disaster." On the basis of a five day investigation that took testimony from 164 persons, the commission's report concluded that the exploitation of internal divisions after three area school districts came together to form the AACSD in 1961, religious and ethnic tensions, the resignation of two superintendents in a period of three years, the meddling of school board members in the affairs of the district's principals' association, and the use of intimidation as a management tactic throughout the district all led to the

[19] From High School + : NOW Committee, Thomas Fowler, Chairman, "Vote-Yes" pamphlet, 1969. This high school complex would have been located at the intersections of Carpenter Road, Cemetery Road, and Wade Avenue on 39 acres with an additional 20 acres under negotiation.
[20] "Sheppard, Sheldon Quit School Board," *Star Beacon*, July 7, 1970, pg. A1

community becoming apathetic and distrustful of school district governance.[21] The public's distrust of the school board and administration continued after the 1965 report was issued, and the failed 1969 bond issue was as much vote of "no confidence" in the school board and administration as it was a rejection of high school consolidation.

Efforts to Build a Consolidated High School in the Early 1970s

Public mistrust of the school board and administration escalated in the early 1970s when a conflict between the school board and superintendent exploded and caught the attention of education watchers throughout Ohio.

The central element in the early 1970s conflict was Jack W. Rumora, who was hired in August 1971 as the school district's fourth superintendent in 10 years; he was hired over assistant superintendent Angelo A. Candela. Candela, an Ashtabula native and long time school district employee, actively campaigned for two school board candidates in the fall of 1971, each of whom thought Candela should have been given the superintendent's job. A new school board majority seated in January 1972 agreed and in August 1972, the school board suspended Superintendent Rumora on charges of insubordination and named Angelo Candela as interim superintendent. Rumora then sought an injunction from U.S. district court to stop the board from installing Candela as the full superintendent.[22] In January 1974, Jack Rumora was reinstated as superintendent, but only after a costly and bitter legal battle with the school board that split the Ashtabula community.

This prolonged and bitter political battle further weakened the public's trust in the school system and precluded a serious debate about high school consolidation from happening.

There were two attempts to pass a bond issue to finance the construction of a consolidated high school in both November 1972 and May 1973. The arguments for passing the bond issue were nearly identical to those of 1969. Also, like the 1963 and 1969 issues, the school board decided to get voter approval on a bond issue to finance the

[21] The Professional Rights and Responsibilities Commission of the Ohio Education Association was a 10-member panel that investigated the school district in mid-1965. Reported in the *Star Beacon* page A1, June 14, 1965.

[22] Richard G. Ellers, "School Battle Saps Growth of Ashtabula," *The Plain Dealer*, July 12, 1973, sec. 16-A.

construction of a physically consolidated high school building before making the move to legally consolidate the two high schools. Given the conflict that was going on at the time, it was not a surprise that the November 1972 bond issue was defeated by 59% of voters, and a May 1973 bond issue was defeated by 72% of district voters.[23]

By the mid-1970s, school board-superintendent relations stabilized. However, other political conditions arose to work against getting a bond issue passed to build a consolidated high school. First, the population of the two high schools and the school district began to decline, taking the overcrowding argument for high school consolidation off the table. Between 1969 and 1979, the school district lost 1700 students; enrollment declined from about 7900 to 6300.[24] Between 1981 and 1982, more than 100 AACSD employees were laid off due to the enrollment decline.[25] Also, the City of Ashtabula lost a significant number of high paying industrial jobs, and along with them, population. Unemployment in the city reached 18% by 1982 and remained above 12% through the mid-1980s. School district enrollment also dropped by about 1100 students during the first half 1980s, to about 5200 in the 1986-1987 school year.[26] Population loss and economic decline were two factors that put the issue of high school consolidation in a deep freeze until 1987.

The Politics of High School Consolidation Bond Issues: 1987-1998

"This issue has been going on for decades. It has been on the front burner, the back burner, up in smoke, and in the deep freeze. Without it there has been some movement backwards, there has been no movement forward."

Star Beacon on Ashtabula's high school consolidation issue
April 28, 1998

1987: Gus Powell Pushes Consolidation

[23] Election information is from the Ashtabula County Board of Elections. For a summary of these election results, see table 1 in this chapter.
[24] Ohio Department of Education enrollment figures located at www.ode.state.oh.us/data/ and Ashtabula Area City Schools 1968-1969 "Facts and Figures."
[25] Cindy Zlotnik, "City schools face loss of 62 jobs," *Star Beacon,* April 22, 1981, sec. A1; Lisa Sterling, "Schools lay off 96," *Star Beacon,* April 21, 1982, sec. A1.
[26] Data from the Ohio Department of Education located at www.ode.state.oh.us/data/pupil_profile.asp.

Ashtabula Area City School Board President Augustus "Gus" Powell led the charge to construct a consolidated high school in 1987. Powell was an African-American and a high-ranking member of the Ashtabula city police department. Powell felt that if a new consolidated high school could be built, replacing the aging Ashtabula High and Harbor High, it would attract new business to the economically depressed Ashtabula area and improve the community.[27] But May 1987 poll showed that Ashtabula area respondents were against high school consolidation by a 3 to 1 margin.[28] Undeterred, school board President Powell pushed through a school board resolution by a vote of 3 to 2, which put a 5.04 mill bond issue on the November 1987 ballot that would, if passed by majority of voters, finance the construction of a new consolidated high school facility in Ashtabula. Once again, the school board decided to get voter approval on a bond issue to finance the construction of a physically consolidated high school building before making the move to legally consolidate the two high schools. The proposed location and name of the consolidated high school was not declared before the election, but were left to a school-business-community advisory group to decide if and when the bond issue passed.[29]

The proponents of high school consolidation included school board President Powell and two other board members, leaders of the African-American community, the Ashtabula Chamber of Commerce, the Ashtabula County Economic Development Council, some business leaders, and a citizens group called Ashtabula Citizens For One New High School. They made several arguments in support of the high school consolidation bond issue.

The first argument was that consolidation would be economically efficient according to an economy of scale, that is, the theory that unit costs decrease as size increases. The student body of both high schools and the overall school district population began to trend downward from the mid-1970s onward; the school district lost state funding because of the smaller number of students, but it still had to absorb the

[27] Ron Hollowell, "Board holding fast to consolidation views," *Star Beacon,* October 27, 1987, pg. C1.
[28] *Star Beacon,* "Survey: Most against consolidation," May 17, 1987, sec. A1
[29] *Star Beacon,* "Teachers, economy to be affected," October 20, 1987, sec. B8

same cost of operating the two buildings.[30] Advocates argued that a new consolidated high school facility would run more efficiently than the two existing 70 year old high school buildings by saving utility and other costs. Proponents also argued that high school consolidation would end the duplication of sports and music programs and save the school district money. High school consolidation would also mean a savings of 13 fewer teachers, which would take place through retirements rather than forced reductions.[31]

A second argument given to support high school consolidation was the expansion of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities. Proponents argued that a consolidated high school facility would allow space for improved music practice areas, advanced science and computer labs, and better sports facilities. It was argued that access to better facilities and educational equipment would encourage students to stay in school and encourage others to seek higher education.[32]

A third reason cited to support high school consolidation was to eliminate the racial divide that had emerged between Ashtabula High School and Harbor High School, a situation that reflected a racial divide in the residential patterns of the Greater Ashtabula community. Prior to the migration of southern African-Americans in the late 1940s, there were few African-Americans in Ashtabula. According to historian Carl E. Feather in 1948, there were only 10 African-American families in Ashtabula, but by 1953, the number increased to about 1300 individuals, most of whom were from the deep South.[33] Most of the new African-American population worked in chemical industry jobs and settled within the attendance zone of Ashtabula High School. Very few African-Americans moved into the Harbor area of the city, and by the 1985-86 school year, Harbor High School had only a 4% African-American population while Ashtabula High School enrolled a Black population of 17%. At the time the district had only one Black

[30] Information accessed from the Pupil Profile of the Ashtabula Area City School District (SF-12 enrollment data) from the Ohio Department of Education. Information accessed at www.ode.state.oh.us on 5/30/05

[31] *Star Beacon*, "Teachers, economy to be affected," October 20, 1987, sec. B

[32] *Star Beacon*, "Chamber of Commerce reports consolidation findings," October 19, 1987, sec. A

[33] Carl E. Feather, *Mountain People in a Flat Land: A Popular History of Appalachian Migration to Northeast Ohio, 1940-1965* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1998): 28.

administrator, two Black teachers at Ashtabula High, and none at Harbor High.[34] The consolidation of the two high schools into one large institution would have meant the de facto desegregation of the high schools. [35] Pro-consolidation advocate and African-American community leader William Branch argued that, "consolidation of the two schools would help eliminate the wall that has been built between the minority and white populations."[36]

A final reason proponents given to support high school consolidation was that it would have a positive effect on the local real estate market and property values.[37]

The opposition to high school consolidation was less organized but still powerful. Some opponents cited the area's economic woes and high unemployment rate as a reason why citizens could not afford to increase their property taxes to construct a new consolidated high school building. Senior citizens especially cited the fact that they were on fixed incomes and could not afford a tax increase. The crash of the U.S. stock market, which spiraled 508 points (or a loss of 20% of its value) on Monday, October 19, 1987 a few weeks before the election date, reinforced the uncertainty in some voter's minds about whether they could afford a tax increase.[38]

Others opposed the high school consolidation bond issue because they did not want to eliminate the two neighborhood high schools. They saw the two high schools as a source of community pride and identity and argued that a new expensive consolidated high school building did not add up to a good education. Some white residents did not embrace high school consolidation because it would mean that students who went to Harbor High School, who had little contact with students of color, would be merged with Ashtabula High, which had a near 20% minority population.[39]

In her opposition to consolidation, AACSD board member Linda Watts argued that the time was not right for a new high school because the district had other problems to deal with. Watts also cited the eroded tax base of the community and declared that the same bond issue that would have generated $290,000 in 1982 would only generate

[34] Mitzi Ring, "Consolidation to cause desegregation," *Star Beacon*, July 24, 1986, sec A.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] *Star Beacon*, "Teachers, economy to be affected," October 20, 1987, sec B8.
[38] Ron Hollowell, "Voters solid against consolidation," *Star Beacon*, November 4, 1987, sec. A1
[39] Mitzi Ring, July 24, 1986

$220,000 in 1987.[40] Long time board member (and former district administrator) Angelo A. Candela also opposed the high school consolidation plan and appeared in a debate against pro-consolidation board President Gus Powell one week before the election. [41] For its part, Ashtabula City Council made no official public pronouncement on the issue of high school consolidation in 1987, and only two members of the body expressed their personal support of it.[42]

On November 3, the AACSD high school consolidation bond issue was defeated by more than two-thirds (67.9%) of voters. The anger and frustration with the loss was palpable in the comments of school board President Augustus Powell: "The defeat of this levy just goes to show how backward we are in this community. We just don't want to see change for the better, for the kid's sake. We're always penny-wise, dollar-foolish."[43]

The 1987 high school consolidation bond vote was the first time the issue was debated unencumbered by the internal organizational conflict that had plagued the school district in the 1960s and early 1970s. In 1987, school board-superintendent relations were relatively stable, but voters still rejected the bond issue to build a consolidated high school.

In 1987, the critical event was that school leaders, who advocated the first bond issue to build a consolidated high school since 1973, failed to grapple with three political conditions. Their failure to adequately address these three issues led to the defeat of the 1987 bond issue and colored the leadership decisions and tactics of the 1990s bond issue campaigns. First, these leaders were haunted by the racial segregation between Ashtabula High and Harbor High. As Ashtabula's residential patters evolved and became segregated, school district officials in the late 1970s and 1980s failed to redraw attendance boundaries between the two high schools to better equalize the enrollment of racial minority students in each high school. In 1987, Ashtabula High School enrolled a significantly higher proportion racial minority population than Harbor High School. As a result, the racist sentiment against "mixing" the two groups of students was a factor in resistance to the bond issue.

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[40] Ron Hollowell, "Board holding fast to consolidation views," *Star Beacon*, October 22, 1987, pg. C1.
[41] *Star Beacon*, "Forum held on high school consolidation," October 26, 1987, sec. A3
[42] Ron Hollowell, "Council not taking stand on bond issue," *Star Beacon*, October 28, 1987, sec. A1
[43] Ron Hollowell, "Voters solid against consolidation," *Star Beacon*, November 4, 1987, sec. A1

A second political condition pro-bond issue leaders failed to adequately address was the fact that the two neighborhood high schools, Ashtabula High and Harbor High, sustained two separate community identities within Ashtabula city. The connection between community identity and resistance to bond issues to build a consolidated high school in 1987 and beyond was difficult to document given the fact that this study was a political-institutional history rather than a social history. However, there is historical evidence that the desire to defend community identity and integrity has fueled resistance to school consolidation bond issues.[44]

Thirdly, and finally, pro-bond issue leaders failed to adequately appreciate the consequences of Ashtabula's disintegrated economic base and high unemployment rate in 1987; and to make matters worse, the stock market crash in October 1987 just prior to the bond issue election date. Unemployed or underemployed homeowners in Ashtabula who could barely afford groceries had no choice but to vote against a bond issue that would raise their taxes, even though, as pro-bond issue leaders argued, the construction of a consolidated high school in Ashtabula would help improve the local economy by drawing industry to the area. Thus, the issue of tax increases held the most currency during the 1987 bond issue vote due to poor economic conditions locally and throughout the Rustbelt.

In the Aftermath of the 1987 Defeat

Not only was the high school consolidation issue defeated at the polls in November 1987, but a new anti-consolidation member was elected to the school board, replacing a pro-consolidation member. The new school board that was seated in January 1988 was 3 to 2 opposed to high school consolidation.[45]

In subsequent years, the Ashtabula Area City School District continued to decrease in overall student population, but increase in the proportion of African-American and Hispanic students it served. This had been the trend since the mid-1970s as the AACSD student body shrank by a one third between 1969 and 1990, to 5185 total students. The total number and proportion of high school graduates also declined, in part

[44] Alford, 1960, pg. 356; Reynolds, 1999; David Tyack, *The One Best System* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974): 17.
[45] Ibid.

as a result of increased high school dropouts. In fiscal year 1990, the AACSD graduated only 77.2% of its senior class compared to higher graduation rates in the 1970s.[46] One former Ashtabula schools administrator commented that the largest reason for the decline in graduation rates was due to "transients" who moved into public housing projects in the school district, noting that they "contribute very little as a group to the system."[47] However, Ashtabula Metropolitan Housing Authority director Jim Noyes disagreed with the position that public housing contributed to the downturn in the Ashtabula community. Noyes asserted that the advent of public housing in Ashtabula during the early 1980s was similar to the experience of other Rustbelt communities, in which unemployment skyrocketed and there was a demand for cheap housing. Noyes also contended that the vast majority of the people who live in Ashtabula public housing were from the area, and rumors that the Ashtabula housing authority was recruiting tenants from outside the area are not true.[48]

Ashtabula High School student Benji Ramirez, a Hispanic, represented the small but the fastest growing population in the school district, and his death was symbolic of the multi-layered crisis the school district and community faced in the late 1980s. Ramirez, an Ashtabula High football player, died October 31, 1988 at the Ashtabula County Medical Center, after collapsing during a routine football practice. He was allegedly the first high school athlete in the United States to die because of steroid use. The death of Benjamin Ramirez turned a national spotlight on the social fabric of Ashtabula's schools and community. In February 1989, *Sports Illustrated* published an expose on Ramirez' death, opening with a full two page photo of Ramirez lying in an open coffin, buried in his Ashtabula High School Panthers football uniform.[49]

The *Sports Illustrated* story also described the Ashtabula community as past its prime and noted that, "Physical fitness is one of the few growth businesses in Ashtabula,

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[46] Information from the Ohio Department of Education's Interactive Web Center located at www.ode.state.oh.us/data/extract_vitals.asp accessed on 11/4/05.

[47] Quoted from Ashtabula City Council meeting minutes, April 1, 2002. Downloaded 2/19/04 from http://ci.ashtabula.oh.us/councilminutes04-0-02rm.htm.

[48] Warren Dillaway, "Public housing came with economic downturn," *Star Beacon*, February 6, 2005, sec. C1.

[49] Rick Telander and Merrell Nolden, "The Death of an Athlete," *Sports Illustrated* 70, No. 8 (February 1989): pg. 70.

which has been devastated by the loss of several manufacturing companies."[50] While the Ramirez story was not directly related to the high school consolidation issue, it was a public spectacle that gave the Ashtabula community a tragic opportunity to collectively look at where they had been and forced it to grapple with the transformation inside the high schools. To make matters worse, the Ashtabula Area City Schools faced a bitter teacher's strike in December 1987, a strike that required the school board to hire private security to escort substitute teachers to and from school.[51]

Finally, a fall 1989 survey of school district citizens revealed a feeling of malaise and disappointment with the school district. Out of 9500 surveys mailed out, only 308 were returned: 41% of those gave the district a worse than average rating.[52]

1992: The Cart Before the Horse—Buying Property for a Consolidated High School

The high school consolidation issue heated up again after a four-year hiatus following the 1987 bond issue failure. In 1992, Ashtabula schools superintendent Dr. John R. Rose and the majority of a new school board were in favor of building a consolidated high school. They were eager to show their commitment to the project of building a consolidated high school and to rally voter support for a bond issue to build one.

A new strategy was developed by the school board to energize citizens to vote for a bond issue to build a consolidated high school. The strategy was for the Board of Education to purchase the property on which a new consolidated high school would be located before citizens would vote on the bond issue, which would actually pay for the construction of the school on that property. The funds to purchase the land would come from $100,000 the district received from the state in excess Ohio Lottery funds, and a $50,000 donation from The Ashtabula Foundation, a private, non-profit charitable organization founded in 1922 for the betterment of Ashtabula County.[53]

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[50] Telander and Nolden, 1989, pg. 70.
[51] Ron Hollowell, "Substitutes need security at homes," *Star Beacon,* December 8, 1987, sec. A7.
[52] Carl E. Feather, "Ashtabula school board gets results of survey," *Star Beacon,* September 26, 1989, sec. A6.
[53] See http://www.ashtabulafoundation.org/mission.html

In September 1992, the AACSD Board of Education asked the Business Advisory Council (BAC), led by Chairman William R. Herzog, to make recommendations to the school board on a piece of property that the new consolidated high school could be built on—pending the passage of the bond issue. Herzog, a graduate of Ashtabula High School and former Ashtabula City Council President (1981-1985), was a partner in the Stouffer-Herzog Insurance Agency, and had children in the school district.[54] The BAC was established in 1991 because of an Ohio law that said this council must be appointed by the local school board for the purpose of advising the board on matters it delineates. Many of the members of the council were businesspersons and elites of the community.[55] The AACSD school board stipulated that the BAC could only recommend sites that met the board's criteria, and that criteria was that the high school site must be a minimum of 70 acres, must be appropriate for building a new high school complex, and should have one owner.[56]

The stipulated condition that the property for a consolidated high school be a minimum of 70 acres transformed the debate about high school consolidation in Ashtabula and made the location of the consolidated high school a central issue. The AACSD school board stipulated the 70-acre minimum because they thought the idea of a large high school site would be popular with voters, particularly the idea of building a stadium and several athletic fields on site and the possibility of locating a junior high on the same property in the future. Constructing large sprawling high school campuses was a nationwide trend at this time, thanks to guidelines recommended to states by the Council of Educational Facility Planners International. They recommended, for example, that a 2000 student high school be built on at least 50 acres.[57] The idea of a consolidated high school built on a minimum of 70 acres was in sharp contrast with the two existing high school facilities. Ashtabula High School was located on 3.86 acres and an anchor in Uptown Ashtabula's business/civic district. Harbor High School was located on 2.34 acres and a short walk to many Harbor neighborhoods and businesses. The athletic fields

[54] *Star Beacon*, "Hall of Fame: AHS/HHS/LHS Alumni Association to induct nine Friday morning," August 30, 2004, sec. B1
[55] Ashtabula Area City Schools, *Spotlight,* Vol. 2, No. 1, March/April/May 1991, pg. 1.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Beaumont, 2002, pg. 15.

for the two high schools were not located on site, but located in other neighborhoods throughout the city.

Most significantly, the stipulation of a 70-acre minimum all but closed the door on locating the proposed consolidated high school within the 7.6 square mile corporation limits of the City of Ashtabula because the city did not have large tracts of undeveloped land. In fact, the absence of large tracts of undeveloped land hindered city leaders from attracting other development to the area; the city was in the difficult situation of having a declining housing stock and limited areas in which to build.[58] Thus, the 70-acre land stipulation essentially ensured that the new school would be built outside the City of Ashtabula in its suburb that had large amounts of open land. This raised the spectre of increased suburbanization because schools establish beachheads for residential sprawl.[59]

In April 1993, BAC Chairman William Herzog recommended to the school board three potential sites for the new consolidated high school campus. The three sites all met the 70-acre criteria and were all located in the suburban Saybrook Township part of the school district.[60] Herzog stated to the school board that the BAC had met with all local government officials and that leaders of the City of Ashtabula indicated there were no open 70-acre tracts of land in the city that met the school board's criteria.[61]

The Board subsequently hired EDP Consultants, Inc. to do a preliminary analysis of soil, groundwater, and wetlands at the one property it favored, located on Sanborn Road, about 3 miles outside the City of Ashtabula limits in Saybrook Township.[62] The report found there to be three areas of wetlands on the old farmland property and indicated that further investigation of the soil conditions would be necessary.[63] The

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[58] Warren Dillaway, Rustbelt decline challenges city housing," *Star Beacon*, February 6, 2005, sec. C1.
[59] See Constance E. Beaumont with Elizabeth G. Pianca, *Why Johnny Can't Walk to School* 2nd Edition, (Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, October 2002): 18.
[60] BBC&M Engineering, Inc. Letter to Mr. Mike Smith of the Ohio EPA, February 18, 2004, Appendix A: Gail L. Deligianis, AACSD board member, and Superintendent William J. Licate. Letter to Mike Smith of the Ohio EPA. February 4, 2004: attachment #2: William R. Herzog, letter to The Ashtabula Area City School Board, April 26, 1993. These communications were made available by the Ohio EPA.
[61] BBC&M Engineering, Inc. Letter to Mr. Mike Smith of the Ohio EPA, February 18, 2004, Appendix A: Gail L. Deligianis, AACSD board member, and Superintendent William J. Licate. Letter to Mike Smith of the Ohio EPA. February 4, 2004. These communications were made available by the Ohio EPA.
[62] The Sanborn Road location is marked as "A" (site alpha) on the school district map on page 59.
[63] BBC&M Engineering, Inc. Letter to Mr. Mike Smith of the Ohio EPA, February 18, 2004, Appendix A: Gail L. Deligianis, AACSD board member, and Superintendent William J. Licate. Letter to Mike Smith of

Board weighed the pros and cons of each site and, in September 1993, publicly announced that they would purchase the 123-acre Sanborn Road property for $175,000.[64] The school board noted that the Sanborn Road property was the best because it had less wetlands than the other two properties; it was at the geographical center of the school district; it was located between two east and west arteries that run through the district; the property had multiple access points; much of the Sanborn acreage was cleared; the 123 acres on the Sanborn Road site well exceeded the minimum requirements set forth by the Board; and finally, the additional acreage would allow for the flexibility of the future building of a junior high on the site.[65] Some of the factors that persuaded the Board to purchase the land, later fueled criticism of the property and resistance to the bond issue to build a consolidated high school.

With the property for a new consolidated high school secured, a 6.3-mill bond issue to finance the construction of a consolidated high school was placed on the November 1993 ballot. Unlike past bond issues in which voters had no idea where the proposed consolidated high school would be built, in November 1993 Ashtabula area voters knew exactly where the school would be built if they voted in favor of the bond issue: on 123-acres of property recently purchased by the school board on Sanborn Road in Saybrook Township. Even though they already purchased the Sanborn Road property, the school board decided to get voter approval on a bond issue to construct the school before making the move to legally consolidate the two high schools. The athletic directors at the two high schools and an influential member of the teacher's union agreed with the school board that it would be a good idea to build the consolidated high school first, and then consolidate the high schools.[66]

The leading proponents of the bond issue to construct a consolidated high school were William Herzog, chairman of the citizens group Positive Ashtabula School Supporters (PASS), Superintendent Rose, four of five school board members, and the

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the Ohio EPA. February 4, 2004: attachment #5; EDP Consultants, Inc., letter to Timothy Leist (AACSD architect), July 30,1993. These communications were obtained from the Ohio EPA.

[64] Ashtabula Area City School Board Minutes, September 24, 1993.

[65] BBC&M Engineering, Inc. Letter to Mr. Mike Smith of the Ohio EPA, February 18, 2004, Appendix A: Gail L. Deligianis, AACSD board member, and Superintendent William J. Licate. Letter to Mike Smith of the Ohio EPA. February 4, 2004.

[66] Mike Scully, "Consolidation: 'Build, then merge'," *Star Beacon,* July 10, 1992, sec. C1.

Ashtabula Area teachers' union.[67] The high school consolidation bond issue also had the endorsement of the local *Star Beacon.* Proponents stressed that the construction of a new consolidated high school would improve and enhance high school curriculum, be a great investment in children and help create a sense of community pride, create a center of community activity, and enhance the economic development of the area. Superintendent Rose stressed that the new building would hold 1500 students and would be open for community use. Rose also used a three-dimensional model to show voters the different academic wings, and music, art, and science areas of the proposed building.[68]

Another argument used to support the bond issue was that building the new high school on the Sanborn Road property would lead to better security for students because classrooms and athletic fields would all be located within the same complex and the school district would be better able to control access to the property isolated away from city neighborhoods. When high school consolidation proponents advocated locating the new high school away from the well-traveled neighborhoods of the City of Ashtabula, they had the Station Avenue neighborhoods around Ashtabula High School in mind. The neighborhoods around Station Avenue, home to many students of color, had become a ghettoized and blighted area with many dilapidated homes, public housing projects, and known to be an area of high crime and drug trafficking.[69]

Proponents of consolidation also stressed that although the proposed high school would be new, it would be a humble and traditional school building and would not have extras like a swimming pool, thereby keeping taxpayer costs down. Regarding the type of facility, one board member said, "I don't want any Cadillacs here, but I don't want a Volkswagen either."[70] To show support for the bond issue, the Ashtabula Area Chamber of Commerce sponsored a community unity march in late October 1993. The march of band members, parents, and teachers began at two separate places, Ashtabula High and Harbor High and ended at one location, the Ashtabula Plaza. School board member John Roskovics, an opponent of the bond issue, opposed the student's use of board-owned

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[67] Jane Bablak, "School 'unity' march for issue draws fire from board member," *Star Beacon,* October 19, 1993, sec. A6.
[68] Jane Bablak, "Many question aspects of new high school," *Star Beacon,* October 8, 1993, sec. A1.
[69] See Shelley Terry, "Fight against blight," *Star Beacon,* January 20, 2006, sec. A1; Shelley Terry, "City police unit to fight drugs, prostitution," *Star Beacon,* August 4, 2005, sec. A5.
[70] Jane Bablak, "Ashtabula board Oks issue for new school," *Star Beacon,* August 5, 1993, sec. A1.

band uniforms when marching in this event because he said it amounted to school funds (the band uniforms) being used to support the bond issue campaign in a roundabout way.[71]

Opponents to the bond issue argued that they were not convinced that a new consolidated high school building would improve education significantly.[72] However, the most vocal opponents to the bond issue focused on the Sanborn Road property as a poor choice for the location of a consolidated high school, questioning why such a large piece of property was needed. AACSD school board member John Roskovics led the opposition to the high school bond issue because he was against the proposed location of the high school and against the process by which the property was bought before the school board had the money to construct the high school, via a bond issue. [73] Roskovics also felt that there were more "reasonable and affordable" ways to address the school building needs of the district other than building a consolidated high school.[74]

Other citizens were against the bond issue because the proposed consolidated high school would not be located in the City of Ashtabula where the present high schools were located, and where the majority of school district children live.[75] Prominent local businessman Robert Morrision, who offered the school district $200,000 if they chose a build on a site other than Sanborn Road, publicly called the board's purchase of the Sanborn Road property, "stupid."[76] Morrison also criticized the school board for purchasing the land before the bond issue election and noted that the Sanborn Road site was not the population center of the school district. Morrison added that the school board was motivated to build on such a large parcel of land because they were "trying to keep up with the Perry [Local School] district," a wealthy district 25 miles west of Ashtabula that was home to the Perry Nuclear Power Plant.[77]

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[71] Jane Bablak, "School 'unity' march for issue draws fire from board member," *Star Beacon,* October 19, 1993, sec. A1.
[72] See Jane Bablak, "'No' to high school," *Star Beacon,* November 3, 1993, sec. A1.
[73] Jane Bablak, "Ashtabula board Oks issue for new school," *Star Beacon,* August 5, 1993, sec. A1.
[74] Jane Bablak, "'No' to high school," *Star Beacon,* November 3, 1993, sec. A1.
[75] Jane Bablak, "School site remains a mystery," *Star Beacon,* August 19, 1993, sec. A1
[76] Jane Bablak, "Ashtabula board buys land for school," *Star Beacon,* September 25, 1993, sec. A1.
[77] Jane Bablak, "School board tours site of high school," *Star Beacon,* September 28, 1993, sec. A1.

Opponents also questioned the stipulation of a minimum of 70 acres for the consolidated high school, which shut the door on locating the high school in the City of Ashtabula. Opponents argued that if the consolidated high school were not built in the city, it would further damage its economic viability. Other opponents of high school consolidation criticized the use of the Sanborn Road property because it was a wetlands and dangerous because it was located near railroad tracks.

The pro-consolidation forces responded to criticism about the purchase of the Sanborn Road property. One school board member said that the reason the board purchased the land before the bond issue passed was because land was scarce and the purchase showed a commitment to the project of building a consolidated high school.[78] Positive Ashtabula School Supporters (PASS) Committee co-chair William Herzog (also the chair of the Business Advisory Council that recommended the Sanborn Road property to the school board), argued that the reason the land had to be so large was because the school board wanted to fit in more athletic fields near the high school. Herzog added that the Sanborn Road property was purchased simply because it fit the size stipulation set forth by the school board in 1992 noting, "There was absolutely no intent to exclude the city."[79] Other supporters of the bond issue, including Board President Angelo Candela, who had opposed the 1987 bond issue and had since changed his mind, issued similar statements in defense of the Sanborn Road property.

On November 3, 1993, the 6.3-mill bond issue was defeated by a margin of 5201 (54.4%) against, and 4354 (45.6%) for. Significantly, the strongest opposition to the bond issue came from voters in the City of Ashtabula part of the school district. Board member John Roskovics, who opposed the bond issue, cited location of the proposed high school, the consolidation of Ashtabula and Harbor that would result in the loss of community idenity, and higher taxes as the reasons for the bond issue's failure.[80] William Herzog, integral in the purchase of the Sanborn Road property and the campaign reflected, "I don't think we could have done anything more than we did."[81]

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[78] Jane Bablak, "Many question aspects of new high school," *Star Beacon,* October 8, 1993, sec. A1
[79] Jane Bablak, "Many question aspects of new high school," *Star Beacon,* October 8, 1993, sec. A1
[80] Jane Bablak, "'No' to high school," *Star Beacon,* November, 3, 1993, sec. A1
[81] Ibid.

A New Superintendent Pushes the High School Consolidation Bond Issue

A new superintendent led a renewed push for a bond issue to build a consolidated high school. On August 1, 1994, Dr. William J. Licate became interim superintendent after the short tenure of Dr. John R. Rose. Licate, an Italian-American and long time resident of the Ashtabula area, had been assistant superintendent and had served the AACSD for many years as a teacher, guidance counselor, and administrator. When Licate was officially hired as superintendent on December 21, 1994, he expressed his support for a consolidated high school and told the local newspaper that a bond issue to build a consolidated high school would not be passed by voters until the two high schools were first legally consolidated. Licate said, "You're not going to see a new high school until you have one high school."[82] However, the Licate strategy of legally consolidating the two high schools into one first, and then going for a bond issue to build a new facility was not embraced by the school board and they left the two high schools separate. The majority of the school board wanted a new consolidated high school building but felt that a bond issue to build one should be passed first.

Undeterred, Licate moved forward in his quest of building a consolidated high school. First, he moved to convince voters that the two high school buildings, as well as the other school buildings in the district, were old, in poor condition, and needed to be replaced. Superintendent Licate noted several studies that proved conclusively that the more natural light that filters into a classroom, the better the test scores and the better morale of both teachers and students. The superintendent and school board wanted to bolster their argument that the district needed a new consolidated high school building and other new facilities and hired the firm McDonald, Cassell & Bassett, Inc., for the sum of $15,000, to report on the conditions of the district's buildings. In November 1996, the firm found that the district's two high schools and other buildings were in poor condition with substandard lighting, poor heating and ventilation systems, and crumbling walls. Along with its report on the poor conditions of the schools, the firm released five options the district could choose from to address the poor conditions. The options ranged from renovations of existing facilities, at a cost of $63 million, to complete reconstruction of all facilities, at a cost of $99 million. Licate indicated that his next step would be to

[82] Jane Bablak, "Licate wants to improve schools," *Star Beacon*, December 22, 1994, sec. A1.

convene focus groups around the community to see what should be done about the classroom facilities of the district and place a school construction bond issue before voters in the near future.[83]

The school board then moved forward to make a consolidated high school a reality. Four out of five school board members voted to place a new 5.88-mill bond issue before voters to build the consolidated high school on the 123-acre board-owned landing Saybrook Township.[84] Superintendent Licate said that the consolidated high school would be the first part of a broader district-wide building and renovation program that would span a number of years. [85] If the bond issue to build a consolidated high school passed, Licate's facilities proposal called for Ashtabula High to be used as a junior high, Harbor High to be used as a grade 5-6 building, and two of the districts oldest elementary schools (built in 1904) to close completely. Superintendent William Licate was the most vocal proponent of the bond issue and argued the main reason to vote for it was the deplorable conditions of school buildings in the district.

Once again, the school board left the two high schools unconsolidated to see if the bond issue to construct a new building would pass first.

A major supporter of the bond issue was the local *Star Beacon,* which said there was no excuse not to vote for it and called the existing facilities pathetic, depressing, and nightmarish.[86] Supporters of high school building bond issue argued that the poor conditions of the high schools resulted in many students leaving the school district through an open enrollment policy. Open enrollment was the policy of Ashtabula's neighboring district, the Geneva Area City Schools, and other districts around the state. Geneva's open enrollment policy, for example, said that a student living outside the Geneva district could attend Geneva schools. State funding followed the student so that for each student who lived in the AACSD but chose to attend Geneva, the AACSD would lose approximately $4,000 in state funding per child to Geneva. Many parents who had children in the AACSD kept them in the district until high school, and then enrolled them

[83] Lori Wetzel, "Crumbling city schools at the crossroads," *Star Beacon,* December 15, 1996, sec. C2-C3.
[84] Ibid.
[85] *The Citizen,* "Ashtabula Area City Schools Facilities Proposal by William J. Licate," September 1997, sec. A
[86] Ed Looman, Publisher and Neil Frieder, Editor, "New high school We suggest: No excuses not to vote for new school," *Star Beacon,* October 30, 1997, sec. A4

at Geneva High School at the start of their freshmen year. Geneva High School was located only 15 miles west of downtown Ashtabula and was perceived to be better academically and more safe than Ashtabula's high schools. School board member Angelo Candela insisted that the passage of the bond issue would end the flood of Ashtabula students (and the tax dollars attached to them) exiting the Ashtabula schools to take advantage of Geneva's open enrollment policy.[87]

Pro-consolidation forces also stressed that the new high school would offer new foreign language programs, communication and science labs, several large group instruction rooms, and a media center. They also warned that the longer the community waited to vote for the new consolidated high school, the higher the price tag would be, due to increasing construction costs.

The November 1997 bond issue faced opposition from the grassroots organization, Citizens of Ashtabula Revitalizing Education (CARE). The members of CARE bolstered their opposition to the bond issue with their 1995 report that concluded that the construction of a consolidated high school was unnecessary. CARE was formed one month after the November 1993 high school bond issue was defeated, by citizens who believed that the school board would continue to push for a consolidated high school bond issue. In 1995, CARE released a report based on their own research and surveys of the high schools and concluded that the two buildings could be renovated and a new consolidated high school was not necessary.[88] In their report, which was made public in the *Star Beacon,* CARE criticized the school board and administration for failing to maintain the two buildings. Specifically, CARE argued that Ashtabula High School needed minor repairs, and window restoration, but was, overall, structurally sound. CARE found Harbor High to be lacking in basic maintenance and upkeep, but argued that repairs to windows, ceiling tiles, and lighting could bring the school back up to par. CARE also argued that the school district could purchase property around the existing high schools if expansion was needed.[89] In their report, CARE also concluded that the

[87] Lori Wetzel, "City school issue on fall ballot," *Star Beacon,* August 6, 1997, sec. A1.
[88] "C.A.R.E. looks at school needs in future," *Star Beacon,* February 27, 1995, sec. C2.
[89] "CARE focuses on upper levels," *Star Beacon,* March 1, 1995, sec. B2.

two separate high schools provided more opportunity for students and the tradition of rivalry between the two high schools was a positive influence in the community.[90]

One school board member, John Roskovics, who campaigned against the 1993 bond issue also opposed the 1997 high school consolidation bond issue, arguing that the two neighborhood-rooted high schools were in the best interests of the City of Ashtabula because the proposed consolidated high school would be built outside the city limits.[91] The loss of the high schools, Roskovics argued, would hurt the economic vitality of the city and remove two important neighborhood anchors and sources of community pride.

The 5.88 mill bond issue was defeated on November 4, albeit by only about 200 votes—the closest margin a bond issue to construct a new consolidated high school had ever come in six tries. A post-election *Star Beacon* editorial said this to citizens who voted against the bond issue: "shame on you."

In the aftermath of the November 1997 defeat, Superintendent William Licate said he was going to ask the school board to consolidate Ashtabula High and Harbor High beginning in the 1998-1999 school year, despite the fact that a bond issue to pay for a consolidated high school building just failed. Licate said he was not angry about the November 1997 bond issue loss, but said the duplication of services at the two high schools has gone on long enough: "It's time we did something about it and ended the foot-dragging."[92] The Ashtabula Area City School Board did not agree with Licate that the high schools should be consolidated without a bond issue to construct a new school, and Ashtabula and Harbor high schools remained separate for the 1998-1999 school year.

1998: "I would like to try it again." –Board member Steve McClure[93]

Proponents of the high school consolidation issue were disappointed but not dejected after the November 1997 defeat. In fact, the narrow margin of defeat in November 1997 encouraged the school board to put a near identical bond issue on the

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[90] C.A.R.E. looks at school needs in future," *Star Beacon,* February 27, 1995, sec. C2.
[91] Brian M. Ewig, "No to high school," *Star Beacon,* November 5, 1997, sec. A1.
[92] Charles A. Altonen, "Harbor's final graduation in Spring '98?," *The Sentinel,* November 14, 1997, sec. A1.
[93] Brian M. Ewig, "New school issue not dead yet," *Star Beacon,* November 6, 1997, sec. A1

May 1998 ballot.[94] This time, school board unanimously supported placing the 5.89-mill bond issue on the ballot. This move marked the eighth time the school district attempted a bond issue to construct a new consolidated high school since 1963. Once again, the school board decided to get voter approval on a bond issue to finance the construction of a physically consolidated high school building before making the move to legally consolidate the two high schools.

A united school board, Superintendent William J. Licate, members of the Business Advisory Council (BAC), the editors of the *Star Beacon,* and other parents and community leaders joined together to support the high school consolidation bond issue and educate the public about why it was needed. Proponents of the bond issue were hopeful because they knew they were only 200 votes shy of passing it a few months previously. Proponents of the bond issue cited arguments used in the past such as the crumbling conditions of the existing high schools and the educational benefits that a new facility would garner for high school students. They insisted that the poor conditions of the buildings were a distraction from the learning process and that the bricks and mortar were prime ingredients in a good education.[95] Realizing that the selection of the Sanborn Road property as the site of the proposed consolidated high school fueled opposition in past bond issues, pro-consolidation forces tried to take the focus off the property and stress that the issue was what is best for students, and that no matter where the high school was built, everyone in the school district would benefit.

However, City of Ashtabula leaders disagreed about the universal benefits of a high school built in Saybrook Township. They emerged as a key opponent to the high school bond issue. City solicitor Thomas J. Simon led the charge in a February 1998 report that prompted Ashtabula City Council to pass a resolution formally opposing the bond issue to construct a consolidated high school in Saybrook Township because it would damage the economic and social viability of the City of Ashtabula.[96] Even though the school board had purchased the Sanborn Road property in 1993, this was the first time the City of Ashtabula officially voiced its opposition in public to the location of a

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[94] *Star Beacon,* "City will get school vote again, November 25, 1997, sec. A1
[95] *Star Beacon,* "Ashtabula school issue" (editorial)," April 28, 1998, pg. A4
[96] Diana Lewis, "Ashtabula council: No to school issue," *Star Beacon,* February 3, 1998, sec. A1

new high school outside the city limits. One board member thought the city had been silent since 1993 out of "professional courtesy."[97]

Solicitor Simon indicated that since the failure of the 1997 bond issue, he had been in contact with the school board regarding the construction of a consolidated high school on property within the city limits near the Kent State—Ashtabula Branch complex. Simon reported to city council that his efforts were rebuffed by the school board. Simon was adamant that a new high school stay within the city limits and declared Ashtabula city government was ready, willing and able to help build within the city limits.[98] Simon argued that if the high school were built on the Sanborn Road property in Saybrook Township, it would be the beginning of the end for neighborhood schools and a negative blow to Ashtabula city property values.

The pro-consolidation advocates saw that they could not deflect opposition to the high school location issue. School board members publicly stood by their purchase of the Sanborn Road property and criticized the city for meddling in school district affairs in the local newspaper. Board members also noted that the city would benefit no matter where the new consolidated high school was built, Saybrook or the city.[99] But some argued specifically for the benefits of the Sanborn Road property. BAC member Jeff Brodsky defended the group's 1993 recommendation of the Sanborn Road property to the school board precisely because it would take the two high schools out of Ashtabula's inner city and allow better control of security.[100] Brodsky reminded the public of the school board's stipulation of 70-acres, which essentially precluded any city sites. Brodsky admitted that BAC members had not considered the political ramifications of moving the high school out of the City of Ashtabula when it selected the Sanborn Road property. The school board also defended the 123-acre Sanborn Road property arguing that: "Sites that could be easily accessed by walking up to were not desirable. For safety and security reasons, schools are no longer built in areas where they are easily accessible."[101]

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[97] Diana Lewis, "Ashtabula council: No to school issue," *Star Beacon*, February 3, 1998, sec. A1
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Brian M. Ewig, "Site selection fuels debate," *Star Beacon*, April 28, 1998, sec. A1
[101] Brian M. Ewig, "Site selection fuels debate," *Star Beacon*, April 28, 1998, sec. A1

Proponents of the high school bond issue developed a new tactic to help ensure that it would pass. Superintendent Licate indicated that with or without the passage of the May 1998 bond issue to construct a consolidated high school building, he would ask the school board to legally consolidate the district's two high schools beginning in the 1999-2000 school year.[102] Licate said that even if the bond issue failed, he would house the consolidated high school at the Ashtabula High building and use Harbor High as a 5th and 6th grade building. Licate said this move would save the district about $150,000 per year.

The threat of consolidation with or without the passage of the bond issue inflamed the opposition. CARE member John Carlson presented Superintendent Licate with a petition against high school consolidation and asked if high school consolidation would mean a refund to students the letterman jackets from each high school.[103] CARE objected to claims that a new consolidated high school would improve education and solve the district's many problems. In addition, CARE member Earle Kolita also asserted that it could be very expensive to drain the wetlands at the Sanborn Road to make it suitable for building a high school. The opposition to the 1998 bond issue was grounded in the manifesto of CARE written in 1993, which asserted: "We oppose the school board plan to unite the two high schools under one roof; because the two high schools provide wider opportunities for more students. Cross town community rivalry is good for the students and the community."[104] The fact the two high schools sustained two different community identities within the City of Ashtabula reinforced and sustained resistance to past bond issues as well. But 1998 was the first time that the issue of community identity tied to the two high schools was articulated so clearly in public as a reason to oppose the high school construction bond issue.

Another opponent of the high school consolidation bond issue, Ashtabula resident Rudolph Jones, was featured in a *Star Beacon* forum just before the election. Jones noted that there was no need for a new consolidated high school since the student population was shrinking. He also stressed that it was a falsehood that a new high school would improve teaching and learning. Jones asserted that it was "unethical" to tax

[102] Suzanne Bair, "Schools will be joined by 1999," *Star Beacon*, April 17, 1998, sec. A1
[103] Suzanne Bair, "Schools will be joined by 1999," *Star Beacon*, April 17, 1998, sec. A1
[104] Brian M. Ewig, "Panel: New school not needed," *Star Beacon*, April 27, 1998, sec. A1

citizens of the City of Ashtabula for a high school that would be placed outside the city limits; he argued that the money used to purchase the Sanborn Road property could have been used to renovate the existing high schools. Jones said that removing the two high schools from city neighborhoods would distance parents' participation in their children's education. He concluded:

> The citizens of Ashtabula will do well after defeating this bad levy to turn their attention to rid the community of this school board who thinks it is above the people. It has the audacity to threaten the people with consolidation and school closings if they do not vote for their levy. This form of fascism must be removed before we lose our democratic system. We must return to the concept of neighborhood schools and parent participation of their children's education.[105]

On May 5, 1998 voters again defeated the high school consolidation bond issue. It was defeated by about 1000 votes—a wider margin of failure than in 1993 or 1997 (see Table 1 below). AACSD Board President Steve McClure indicated that the school board would rethink the whole consolidation issue.[106] John Carlson of CARE said that the defeat showed his organization was giving voice to the majority of voters who did not think a new consolidated high school was the best way to solve the academic and facilities problems of the Ashtabula Area City School District.[107] Contrary to what Superintendent Licate had promised, with the failure of the bond issue, the school board did not go through with the plan to consolidate the two high schools for the 1999-2000 school year, although the school board continued to consider this option.

The May 1998 defeat of the high school consolidation bond issue highlighted the political muscle of the opposition to high school consolidation, past and present. This was the eighth time Ashtabula's two neighborhood high schools had beaten the possibility of consolidation. The opposition's success was an anomaly because, in 1998, given the school district's 5000 student population, it was one of two Ohio school districts operating two separate high schools instead of one large high school.[108]

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[105] *Star Beacon,* "Issue: Consolidate and build new school," April 26, 1998, sec. A4

[106] Brian M. Ewig, "High school gets 'F'," *Star Beacon,* May 6, 1998, sec. A1

[107] Brian M. Ewig, "Schools ponder next move," *Star Beacon,* May 7, 1998, sec. A1

[108] The other school district of about 5000 students operating more than one high school was in Adams County, a district of about 450 square miles compared to the AACSD's territory of 55 square miles.

However, the political forces favoring high school consolidation were not completely defeated.

Post-Script: Consolidation and the Racial Politics of the Morrison Offer

Robert S. Morrison owned a large factory in Ashtabula, and was partly responsible for organizing the Ashtabula Industrial Corporation in 1941 which, "preached the gospel: Come to Ashtabula," and lured many industries to Ashtabula during the late 1940s and 1950s.[109] Morrison first entered the new consolidated high school fray just prior to the November 1993 bond issue vote, when he offered the Ashtabula Area City School District $200,000 **if** they built the new high school on a site of his choosing. Morrison proposed two sites but the school board did not accept his proposal or money.[110]

Then, in July 1998, following the defeat of the May bond issue, Robert Morrison made a surprising proposal regarding Ashtabula's high schools.[111] Morrison offered $3 million to the AACSD to acquire land and construct two separate new high schools, one in uptown Ashtabula and one in the Ashtabula Harbor because, as he said, "I believe that a separate high school should be provided for the Harbor school district."[112] Morrison's offer came at a time when the pro-consolidation school board was reeling from its third defeat in five years of a bond issue that would build a single new consolidated high school on Sanborn Road. At that time, they were considering Superintendent Licate's proposal of consolidating the two high schools, without the bond issue to build a new building.[113]

The school board met with Morrison in early August 1998 and the *Star Beacon* reported that Morrison said he wanted two schools because:

> Harbor has a different type of student than at Ashtabula. I like the idea of keeping the groups separate." Asked by board member Martha Shippy what he meant by

[109] Feather, 1998, pg. 29-31.
[110] Suzanne Bair, "There's catch to $200, 000 for school, *Star Beacon*, September 11, 1993, sec. A1
[111] See editorial in *Star Beacon*, July 24, 1998, sec. A4.
[112] Brian M. Ewig, "…Millions to schools," *Star Beacon*, July 24, 1998, sec. A1
[113] Brian M. Ewig, "Schools ponder next move," *Star Beacon*, May 7, 1998, sec. A1

> "different type of student," Morrison indicated that he believed minority students at Ashtabula High School cause "trouble." [114]

School board member Jim Brady was shocked by Morrision's racist comments as were others. On August 12, the 89-year-old Morrison withdrew the $3 million offer stating: "Unfortunately, my proposal has become embroiled in a larger debate over consolidation. It has resulted in misunderstanding that has caused some to view it as having strings attached, or worse, as being 'tainted money'."[115] Morrison's daughter called the situation unfortunate and painful for the family and defended her father as having donated money to a predominantly-minority congregation.[116] In an editorial to the *Star Beacon*, teacher Daisy Baskerville stated: "My pride as a teacher under this Board of Education is showing today! I want to thank them, especially Mrs. Shippy, Mr. Brady, and Mr. McClure for not tolerating the antiquated, unenlightened racial remarks of Mr. Morrison."[117]

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[114] Diana Lewis, "City school board worries about Morrison's comments," *Star Beacon,* August 8, 1998, sec. A1
[115] Diana Lewis, "$3M offer withdrawn," *Star Beacon,* August 13, 1998, sec. A1
[116] Ibid.
[117] *Star Beacon,* "Pride in education," August 19, 1998, sec. A

Table 2.
AACSD Bond Issues to Build a Consolidated High School, 1963—1998[118]

Election Date	*Ashtabula City*	*Ashtabula Twp.*	*Saybrook Twp.*	*Plymouth Twp.*	Total	%
5-7-1963[119]						
FOR					**1854**	**23.3**
AGAINST					**6083***	**76.6**
12-9-1969						
FOR	1658	160	556	150	**2524**	**33.6**
AGAINST	3627	202	862	288	**4979***	**66.3**
11-7-1972						
FOR	3822	284	1139	316	**5561**	**40.2**
AGAINST	5699	416	1620	524	**8259***	**59.8**
5-8-1973						
FOR	1674	98	416	139	**2327**	**28.3**
AGAINST	4138	291	981	470	**5880***	**71.6**
11-3-1987[120]						
FOR	1929	170	665	191	**2955**	**32.1**
AGAINST	4376	268	1178	423	**6248***	**67.8**
11-2-1993						
FOR	2636	279	1103	359	**4378**	**45.6**
AGAINST	3564	229	1056	375	**5229***	**54.4**
11-4-1997						
FOR	2462	283	1120	375	**4241**	**48.5**
AGAINST	2749	231	1076	435	**4495***	**51.4**
5-8-1998						
FOR	1745	236	827	254	**3062**	**43.0**
AGAINST	2523	197	969	360	**4054***	**56.9**

[118] Information was compiled from records of the Ashtabula County Board of Elections, Jefferson, OH. See note below regarding small discrepancy in totals.

[119] Voting breakdowns for the 1963 bond issue were unavailable from the Board of Elections. Election data provided here is from *Star Beacon*, "No Votes Swamp Schools," May 8, 1963.

[120] For the first time in this bond election, one precinct of Kingsville Township became included in these vote totals. They were not included here because their numbers were insignificant. In 87, zero voted for and 3 voted against. In 93, 1 voted for and 5 voted against. In 97, 1 voted for and 4 voted against. In 98, 0 voted for and 5 voted against. These votes account for the small discrepancy in vote totals.

Conclusion

The high school consolidation process that began in 1963 was stalled in 1998 because leaders who advocated for and the leaders who opposed the process both failed at the basic leadership task of mobilizing a viable community consensus behind their vision. Although the anti-consolidators forces succeeded in defeating eight different bond issues over the 35-year period, they were unable to extinguish the political will of leaders who wanted to build a consolidated high school.

The educational leaders who advocated high school consolidation offered consistent arguments over the years including the argument that a better facility would improve education and reenergize the economics of the community. The arguments of pro-consolidation forces were enhanced because they included individuals in key leadership positions: the superintendent, school board members, and members of Ashtabula's business elite. The leaders who wanted to build a new consolidated high school bolstered their arguments with an engineering firm study that concluded the high schools were in poor condition, and with research that said new modern facility would improve educational opportunities for students.

Pro-consolidation leaders also made some critical missteps. To start, the 1960s and early 1970s bond issue attempts to build a consolidated high school were defeated largely because of the public's lack of confidence in the school board and administration. The 1987 bond issue suffered because the pro-consolidation school board members, a majority, failed to convince two other school board members to support the bond issue and failed to partner with City of Ashtabula leaders to generate public support for the bond issue. Pro-consolidation leaders in 1987 underestimated Ashtabula's poor economic climate and high unemployment as a factor in resistance to a bond issue that would increase taxes.

In 1993 and thereafter, pro-consolidation forces complicated their cause when the school board purchased the Sanborn Road property as the site where they wanted the high school to be located. This meant that pro-consolidation forces were trying to do two controversial things at once: build a consolidated high school and remove the high school enterprise from the City of Ashtabula to suburban Saybrook Township. The effort to do

both of these at once was also hindered by the fact that the school board used the Business Advisory Council (BAC), a group of community elites, to select this property. Assuming that purchasing the land for the consolidated high school before a bond issue passed was a sound strategy, the pro-consolidators could have chosen a more democratic means of choosing the property, for example, with town hall meetings, focus groups, or surveys of the public at large which may have increased public consensus behind the bond issue. While the Sanborn Road land was purchased to encourage voter support for a bond issue to build a consolidated high school, it ironically weighed the 1993, 1997, and 1998 bond issues down to defeat. Pro-consolidation leaders were negligent for not having anticipated the struggle they would face in trying to locate Greater Ashtabula's high school enterprise outside the City of Ashtabula corporation limits, where it had been since 1856. They also did not address that fact that voters in the City of Ashtabula consistently rejected the bond issue, and that residents of the Harbor area of the city were adamantly opposed.

Leaders who opposed high school consolidation bond issues argued that a new high school did not necessarily equal good education, and that locating the high school on a farmland outside the city limits did not make sense socially or for the environment. Opponents drew on public emotions around the fact that the two high schools had been beloved sources of community identity for several generations. Other bond issue opponents capitalized on the idea of having local control of neighborhood schools, a notion that carried great political popularity.

Leaders opposed to bond issues to build a consolidated high school did offer an alternative: renovating the two existing high schools. However, they failed at securing a broad coalition of support behind their vision for two renovated high schools. Opponents would have done well to elect several persons to the school board to add positional power behind their vision for renovating the two neighborhood high schools.

In addition, Ashtabula city solicitor Thomas Simon's 1998 opposition to the high school consolidation bond issue, because it would locate the school in Saybrook instead

of in the city, was hindered because it was perceived as being too little, too late.[121] Simon and other city leaders could have put up more consistent vocal opposition to the purchase of the Sanborn Road property in 1993.

Leaders of both sides of the high school consolidation bond issues failed to successfully engage the community in conversations about the racial divisions that were an important political factor during the process. Race polarized Ashtabula and was especially evident in residential patterns, which led to Ashtabula High enrolling most of the African-American population and Harbor High enrolling very few. Pro-consolidators may have done well to redraw the high school attendance areas, balancing the racial minority populations of each high school, before a high school consolidation bond issue was placed on the ballot. The comments of Robert Morrison in 1998 were likely shared by others in the community and were undoubtedly reasons some Whites opposed consolidation. Further, the proposal to locate the consolidated high school on the Sanborn Road property in Saybrook Township meant that it would be located in closer proximity to white middle class families and farther from the more racially and class diverse City of Ashtabula.

The consolidation process between 1963 and 1998 demonstrated the failure of leaders to build a civic coalition behind improving the Ashtabula Area City Schools high school enterprise, whether that meant building a new consolidated high school building or renovating the two existing buildings as a way to improve educational opportunities for children. The work of Clarence Stone suggests that there was a failure of leadership in Ashtabula to move one way or another on how to use school facilities to improve educational opportunity at the high schools. Leaders failed at defining a common problem and create a broad cross-sector coalition behind either consolidation or renovation. Stone notes that building cross-sector coalitions behind an educational reform "almost always involves a major dislocation of the existing ways of doing things. It means forging a viable consensus on some set of solutions to the complex educational problem." Stone asserts that building this cross-sector coalition involves bringing in

[121] School board minutes indicate that Tom Simon did speak about his concerns on the Sanborn Road property but there was no organized effort on the part of the City of Ashtabula in 1993 to oppose the Sanborn Road property.

educational and noneducational actors because schools, he argues, are not closed systems capable of being fixes without regard to their surrounding environment.[122]

The next chapter will focus on how the Ashtabula inertia was broken and how its two high schools were finally consolidated into one new institution.

[122] Clarence N. Stone, Jeffrey R. Henig, Bryan D. Jones, and Carol Pierannunzi, *Building Civic Capacity: The Politics of Reforming Urban Schools* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2001): 52-53.

CHAPTER 5

CHANGING STRATEGY ON A CONSOLIDATED HIGH SCHOOL

This chapter focuses on a new strategy taken by the Ashtabula area school board in 2000 in their quest to build a consolidated high school. The strategy was new but it only intensified the polarization and rancor around the high school consolidation issue.

Before the year 2000, the strategy was to first ask voters to pass a bond issue to construct a new building, while Ashtabula High and Harbor High remained separate. The school board's new strategy was to first legally consolidate Ashtabula High and Harbor High into one institution before asking voters to pass a bond issue to construct a physically consolidated high school building. Legal consolidation meant that the school board exercised their legal authority to merge Ashtabula High School and Harbor High School into one new high school, with one name, one budget, one athletic program, and one staff under the leadership of one principal. Legal consolidation meant that one consolidated high school, Lakeside High School, was legally created but was, for the time being, housed in two separate buildings. The old Ashtabula High was slated to house Lakeside High grades 10 to 12, and the old Harbor High would be home to the Lakeside High freshmen building. The school board felt that this new strategy would provide an incentive to citizens to vote for a bond issue to build a new physically consolidated high school building in the near future.

Legal consolidation, without the passage of a bond issue to build a school, had been mentioned in both 1997 and 1998, but never became a reality. Since becoming superintendent in 1994, William Licate asserted that the school board would be well advised to legally consolidate the two high schools before voters faced a bond issue to build a physically consolidated high school building. However, the school board did not embrace this strategy in either 1997 or 1998. This chapter chronicles the political prelude to the 2000 decision to legally consolidate, and then examines the sixteen months following it, in which the school board and administration laid the groundwork for

placing a bond issue on the 2002 ballot to build a new physically consolidated building for Lakeside High School.

Political Factors in Early 2000

Between 1963 and 1998, a total of eight bond issues to build a consolidated high school were soundly defeated by Ashtabula area voters. The last bond issue was defeated by 1000 votes on May 6, 1998. This defeat was especially disappointing for the school board because hopes were high after a similar November 1997 bond issue was only defeated by 200 votes. Citizens of Ashtabula Revitalizing Education (CARE), the group that opposed the 1997 and 1998 bond issues, felt vindicated and said the group gave voice to the majority of school district voters. Although the school board had promised that it would legally consolidate the two high schools no matter what the result of the 1998 bond issue, it did not follow through on this promise and the two high schools remained separate for the 1999-2000 school year. School board President Steve McClure and other board members said they wanted to move slowly and hold a series of community meetings about the high schools.[123] Between May 1998 and the end of 1999, there was no significant public discussion of high school consolidation, and the possibility of a new consolidated high school in Ashtabula seemed to be, once again, in a deep freeze.

Then, in early 2000, a number of political factors converged to heat up the consolidation issue. Most importantly, the Ashtabula Area City Schools Board of Education delegated to Superintendent William J. Licate the power to make a decision on whether or not it would be educationally sound to legally consolidate Ashtabula High and Harbor High into one consolidated high school, even without the bond issue to construct a physically consolidated high school building.

Superintendent Licate had to weigh a number of considerations in making his decision on legal consolidation. On the one hand, there was the consistent record of the majority of Ashtabula area voters saying "no" to a bond issue that would have built a consolidated high school building. Many people had voted against past bond issues because they wanted to retain the two small neighborhood high schools markers of

[123] Brian M. Ewig, "Schools ponder next move," *Star Beacon*, May 7, 1998, sec. A1.

community identity. The two most recent bond issue failures, 1997 and 1998, occurred during Licate's tenure as superintendent and he was familiar with the arguments against consolidation. On the other hand, Licate was a professional educator given the authority by an elected school board to do what he deemed best for the students of the school district.

Licate had a number of issues to contend with. First, he had to consider the poor performance of both high schools, which had about a 32% drop out rate in the late 1990s.[124] While 79% of white students graduated from Ashtabula's two high schools, only 52% of Blacks and 23% of Hispanics received a high school diploma.[125] Secondly, the school district was bleeding students. By 2000, school district enrollment was down by about 40% from what it had been in the early 1970s. With the loss of students came the loss of state funding dollars, at the same time that the cost of operating two high school physical plants was increasing. Enrollment was down because of the overall decline in population in the school district and, most importantly, it was down because students who lived within the boundaries of the AACSD chose other educational options. Some chose Catholic schools in Ashtabula while others took advantage of the open enrollment policy of the Geneva Area City Schools, just west of the AACSD. Open enrollment meant that the Geneva school district could educate students who lived outside its boundaries. In 2000, about 148 children in the Ashtabula school district voluntarily attended Geneva schools, and consequently, state-funding dollars for those 148 students that would have flowed into Ashtabula schools followed the students and flowed into the coffers of the Geneva schools.[126] The impact of the Geneva district's open enrollment policy had been a major concern of the school board since the mid-1990s. According to a survey reported in the *Star Beacon* in August 2000, parents said their children left the Ashtabula Area City Schools because of "a lack of high academic standards; a variety and flexibility of curriculum choices; low school pride among

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[124] Information accessed at the Ohio Department of Education's Data webpage (vital statistics by school district) located at http://www.ode.state.oh.us/data/extract_vitals.asp. Accessed on 11/6/05

[125] Urban Design Center of Northeast Ohio and Cobalt Group, Inc., "Ashtabula: Downtown and Harbor Disticts Revitalization Plan, December 2002, pg. 24.

[126] *Star Beacon,* "System broke," April 4, 2000, sec. A.

teachers and administration; lack of discipline and the quality of the sports and music programs."[127]

A third issue Superintendent Licate had to consider was the persistent racial divide between the two high schools. Due to segregated residential patterns in the Ashtabula area, the enrollment of Harbor High School averaged about 5% racial minorities, while 25% of Ashtabula High's students were racial minorities. Racial tensions at Ashtabula High School escalated in the mid-1990s and Black parents and community leaders pressured the district to recruit and hire more minority teachers, and expressed concerns about the high number of minority students suspended from school.[128]

Fourth, Licate had to consider a study released in late October 2000 by the Ohio School Facilities Commission (OSFC), a state agency that intended to partner with the school district and subsidize 70% of the cost of renovating or constructing school buildings to address all of Ashtabula's classroom facilities needs. After evaluating school buildings in the district, the OSFC offered the district five options to address their facilities needs. The least costly option, $83 million, was to renovate and expand Ashtabula High and Harbor High, and build a new junior high and all new elementary schools. The most costly option, $96 million, was to abandon the two high school buildings and all other district buildings and construct a new high school, a new junior high school, and five new elementary schools.[129] The significant point here is that before Superintendent Licate made a decision on whether or not to legally consolidate the high schools, he knew he had the option to renovate and expand Ashtabula High School and Harbor High School, with the state picking up 70% of the tab. Bond issue election results from 1997 and 1998 seemed to suggest that the majority of voters did not want a consolidated high school building, but wanted to renovate the two existing high schools.

Finally, Licate had to consider that, for a school district of its size (about 5000 students), the AACSD was unique in the state for operating two separate high schools. In 1999, the AACSD enrollment was approximately 5000 students, and of all the districts in

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[127] Survey conducted by Christina Brunn-Horrigan. Kelly Speer, "Students exiting city schools," *Star Beacon,* August 17, 2000, p. A1

[128] Julie Tagliaferro, "Parents want more of a role in kids' lives," *Star Beacon,* November 7, 1995, sec. A1

[129] Frank Obernyer, "State hits city schools with options," *Star Beacon,* October 26, 2000.

Ohio with an enrollment between 4900 and 5200, the AACSD was the only one that operated two high schools.[130] Most districts with enrollments similar to the AACSD operated only one high school.

From Financial Crisis to a Legally Consolidated High School

Financial straits increased the pressure on Superintendent Licate to legally consolidate Ashtabula High School and Harbor High School. In a five-year budget forecast released in March 2000, AACSD treasurer Darlene R. Farren projected a $2.2 million deficit for the fiscal year 2001. Farren cited the loss of students and state funding dollars due to the Geneva school district's open enrollment policy as a main reason for the budget shortfall.[131] The school board then charged Superintendent Licate with making the cuts in staff, services, and programs that initially resulted in 45 teachers receiving contract non-renewal letters. Then, in the midst of an April 19 board meeting to discuss the financial crisis, two additional items related to high school consolidation were put on the table. First, community activist and influential Pastor Elizabeth Eaton suggested that it was finally time to legally consolidate the two high schools to save money and move the district forward. Second, school board member Steve McClure suggested that the Board have the Sanborn Road land in Saybrook appraised so that it could be sold to generate money. McClure's suggestion was voted down 4 to 1, but Pastor Eaton's proposal for consolidation was taken more seriously and the movement for the legal consolidation of the two high schools gained momentum in the next few months.[132]

At a July 2000 board meeting, the number of school jobs cut was increased to 55. Also, at this meeting assistant superintendent Steve J. Candela put forth a plan for legally consolidating both high schools. The plan was for grades 10-12 to attend the larger

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[130] The exception and anomaly in this case was the Adams County—Ohio Valley Local School District in extreme southern Ohio. The district had a population of 5100 students and operated 3 high schools. However, this was likely due to its geographic size of 450 square miles compared to the territory of the AACSD, which was only 55 square miles. The evidence for this is from Ohio Department of Education "Power Reports" on school district enrollment located at http://ilrc.ode.state.oh.us/Power_Users.asp downloaded on 5/1/06.

[131] Crystal Ola, "Ashtabula schools 'broke'," *Star Beacon,* April 1, 2000, sec. A1

[132] Crystal Ola, "Everybody wants answers," *Star Beacon,* April 20, 2000, sec. A1

Ashtabula High building and grade 9 to attend the Harbor High building.[133] Pastor Elizabeth Eaton presented the school board with 1300 postcards from people who supported legal high school consolidation.[134] By mid-September 2000, the *Star Beacon* editorial page called for Licate to legally consolidate the high schools.

Then, Licate set a series of four public meetings on high school consolidation to take place in late September, after which he would make his decision.[135] Emotion ran high at these public forms. The anti-consolidation forces cited the number of times the bond issues for a consolidated high school had already failed, and asserted the importance of keeping the two neighborhood high schools. Those in favor of consolidation cited the need to change the status quo for the benefit of students and to stop the flood of students leaving the district. Superintendent Licate lamented: "I hear from pro-consolidation people, that if I don't consolidate the schools, they will take their kids out of the schools, and I hear from anti-consolidation people, that if I consolidate the schools, they will take their kids out of the schools. I'm in a no-win situation."[136] Opposition to consolidation during the four public hearings held in September 2000 came mostly from a loose coalition of citizens who had consistently opposed bond issues to consolidate the high schools; a majority of these were alumni or had students attending Harbor High School.[137]

Licate's Decision: "I believe it is time to take a bold step…"

On the morning of November 3, 2000, Superintendent Licate held a press conference attended by about 35 teachers, administrators, and citizens, and announced that Ashtabula High School and Harbor High School would be legally consolidated into one new high school beginning with the 2001-2002 school year. In December, all Ashtabula area students in grades 8 thru 11 students voted "Lakeside High School" as the new name of the new legally consolidated high school, gold and green as the new school

[133] Crystal Ola, "55 school jobs cut," *Star Beacon,* July 13, 2000, sec. A1
[134] Ibid.
[135] Frank Obernyer, "Consolidate or not—'Catch 22'," *Star Beacon,* September 14, 2000, p. A1
[136] Frank Obernyer, "And the debate goes on," *Star Beacon,* September 26, 2000, sec A1
[137] Frank Obernyer, "Consolidate or not—'Catch 22'," *Star Beacon,* September 14, 2000, p. A1;Frank Obernyer, "And the debate goes on," *Star Beacon,* September 26, 2000, sec A1

colors and the dragon as the mascot.[138] The school board then appointed Dr. Richard J. Bonde, the last principal of Ashtabula High School, as the first principal of Lakeside High School. The combined student population of the legally consolidated Lakeside High School was approximately 1200 students. However, because no consolidated high school facility had been built and because neither of the existing high school buildings was large enough to house all 1200 students, Lakeside High was split into two buildings. All grade 9 students from across the district, about 300 total, were placed at the smaller Harbor High School building, which was called "Lakeside 9." All grades 10 thru 12 students from across the district, approximately 900, were housed at the larger Ashtabula High building, which was called "Lakeside High." Both buildings were located within the corporate limits of the City of Ashtabula. The last official day for Ashtabula High School and Harbor High School was June 30, 2001—a date local historian Darrell E. Hamilton called the "death date" of each high school.[139] June 30, 2001 was also the last day of existence for Ashtabula High School, established in 1856, the oldest high school in continuous operation in the state of Ohio at the time. The consolidated Lakeside High School became legally official on July 1, 2001—the first day of the district's fiscal year.

Superintendent William Licate acknowledged the emotion his decision of consolidation would stir:

> The idea of consolidating the two high schools is an emotional one. Emotions run high when talk is afoot that school buildings may close or change. This is how it should be. Schools play a vital part in not only the educational process, but also in the ebb and flow of life in the community or neighborhood.[140]

In making his decision to consolidate, Licate acknowledged that consolidation meant the loss of two cherished institutions that had lived in the hearts and minds of generations of Ashtabulans: "I realize the end of two independent high schools, as we

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[138] *Star Beacon*, "Student votes are in," December 2, 2000, sec. A1. The name "Lakeside High School" won by a vote of 1172 to 716.

[139] See Darrell E. Hamilton, *The History of Ashtabula and Harbor High Schools.* Hamilton's phrase "death date" captured my attention and sparked my interests in the consolidation of the two high schools as a dissertation topic.

[140] "Licate speaks to Ashtabula," *Star Beacon*, November 4, 2000, p. D1

have known them since the early 1900s, can be compared to a human death. There will be sorrow, tears, anger, shock, disbelief, and grief."[141]

Superintendent William Licate cited two reasons why he decided to legally consolidate the high schools. First, he cited its boldness. High school consolidation was a way to signal a change and a fresh start, and he hoped this would reverse the negative attitudes and perceptions about the school district's educational program. Surveys dating back to the late 1980s had shown the public's negative perception about the Ashtabula Area City Schools.[142] Licate hoped this bold move of legal consolidation would bring people back to the district. Secondly, Dr. Licate indicated that by combining the two high schools, a "stronger program" would result, offering more curricular opportunities for students. This argument echoed a popular argument used to support consolidation historically.[143]

However, at the time of Dr. Licate's decision, there was an emerging body of research that cast doubt on the academic benefits of a larger consolidated high school. This research, often characterized as the "small schools movement," showed that curriculum of larger schools only added additional introductory courses in non-core areas and it found no relationship between school size and achievement levels. Research on school size conducted in the 1990s found that smaller schools improved student attitude, extracurricular participation, attendance rates, and the sense of belonging compared to larger schools. The research also argued that small schools were better for students who were poor and of a racial minority, promoted instructional strategies associated with higher student performance (e.g., team teaching and cooperative learning), and reduced the number of high school drop-outs.[144] Research that argued there was a cost savings

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[141] The phrase "cathedrals of culture" is the title of an article by William Cutler III (1989). Licate's words were sited from, "Licate speaks to Ashtabula," *Star Beacon*, 4 November 2000.

[142] Carl E. Feather, "Ashtabula school board gets results of survey," *Star Beacon*, September 26, 1989, sec. A6. See also, Kelly Speer, "Students exiting city schools," *Star Beacon*, August 17, 2000, sec. A1.

[143] National Rural Education Association Executive Board, "Rural School Consolidation Report," Report dated April 2005 and located at http://www.nrea.net/awards%20&%20other/Consoldation_cover_sheet1.doc. For a expanded discussion of the pro-consolidation arguments, see chapter 2.

[144] This research is summarized in Close-Up #20 titled "School Size, School Climate, and Student Performance" by Kathleen Cotton in May 1996 as part of the *School Improvement Research Series (SIRS)* and published by the NW Regional Educational Laboratory. The document was accessed at

associated with larger schools, according to an economy of scale theory, was also called into question by this research. Educational researchers asserted that the cost-effectiveness of larger schools did not necessarily hold up to closer scrutiny because of the many factors involved in the school size-cost relationship.[145] Similarly, Malhoit and Black asserted that larger schools could be more expensive than smaller schools because of increases in discipline, drop outs, and absenteeism.[146] Malhoit and Black also suggested that the wider curriculum offering argument used to support larger schools was misguided and irrelevant because small schools offer a strong core curriculum and some advanced courses, and because new technologies allow students to inexpensively take advantage of advanced and specialized courses.[147] Ironically, as the research on the benefits of small schools was growing throughout 1990s, it did not seem to influence Licate or other school leaders because the nations public schools were getting modestly larger rather than smaller.[148]

Reaction and Consequences to Licate's Decision

The reaction of students was mixed. At Harbor High School, students reacted with tears and protest with some passing petitions around the halls in a "Stop Licate" effort; others skipped out on school and were rumored to be "partying down on the beach."[149] Reactions from students at Ashtabula High School were mixed. Christopher Evans said, "I think they should get together. They say we don't get along but I'm all for it." Christine Strubble also commented, "I think it will be good, but officials should have waited for a new school [building]. It's going to be really crowded here [at the Ashtabula High building]."[150] Justin Nigro, writing for the final 2001 Harbor High School *Mariner*, paid a tribute to his school: "Her vigilance will be everlasting, and her presence will be

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http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/10/c020.html on 2/15/04. See especially pages 1-8. See also, Jane Eisner, "Research: Smaller schools are better," *Star Beacon*, April 22, 2002, sec. A2.

[145] Ibid, p. 8 Cotton has also looked at the literature on the alleged cost-effectiveness of larger schools and found that it does not necessarily hold up to closer scrutiny because of the many factors involved in the school size-cost relationship.

[146] Gregory C. Malhoit and Derek W. Black, "The Power of Small Schools: Achieving Equal Educational Opportunity through Academic Success and Democratic Citizenship," *Nebraska Law Review* 82, no. 50 (2003): 88

[147] Mahloit and Black, 2003, pg. 80-81.

[148] See Eisner, 2002.

[149] Frank Obernyer, "Harbor students protest," *Star Beacon*, November 4, 2000, sec. A1

[150] Kelly Speer and Frank Obernyer, "Consolidated kids react," *Star Beacon*, November 4, 2000, sec. D1

forever felt. This last yearbook is dedicated to you, Harbor. The last-ship has come to port."[151] For its part, the *Star Beacon* called Dr. Licate's decision to legally consolidate the high schools without a physically consolidated building, "courageous."[152]

Significantly, Dr. Licate's decision to legally consolidate the two high schools into one was the critical step forward in the process of getting a new consolidated high school built. With legal consolidation done, the issue of retaining the two high schools to preserve community identity or the concern about racial integration of the two high schools was no longer up for debate. Beginning with the 2001-2002 school year, all high school aged youth in Ashtabula would attend the same high school. With the legal consolidation piece behind, the second piece of the consolidation process came into clear focus: building a physically consolidated home for Lakeside High School. The school board quickly moved forward to place a bond issue on the May 2002 ballot to build a physically consolidated Lakeside High building. However, the bond issue to build it, called Issue 1, did not sail to an easy victory because location of the new consolidated high school building became a key point of debate among leaders. Although the school board owned property in suburban Saybrook Township on which had wanted to build a high school since 1993, they delayed officially announcing where they intended to locate the high school, pending the passage of the bond issue, for several months.

Issue 1: A Consolidated Lakeside High Building—and More

Issue 1 was a bond issue to build a new physically consolidated Lakeside High School building, and much more. In fact, bond Issue 1 would finance a larger district-wide building initiative that would build a consolidated Lakeside High School building, as well as new junior high, and five new elementary school buildings, giving the Ashtabula Area City School District all brand new classroom facilities. The construction of a new Lakeside High building became wrapped up with a district-wide building initiative thanks to an Ohio School Facilities Commission offer. The Commission's offer to the Ashtabula Area City Schools was that if Ashtabula area voters would pass Issue 1 and raise $44 million, the Commission would pay the remaining $76 million, or 70%, of

[151] Justin Nigro, Harbor High School *Mariner,* vol. 89, pg. 1
[152] "Consolidation decision," *Star Beacon,* November 7, 2000, p. A2

the cost to build a new consolidated high school building, a junior high, and five elementary schools.

The Ohio School Facilities Commission (OSFC) was created by the Ohio General Assembly in 1997 for the purpose funding, managing, and facilitating the construction of school facilities throughout Ohio, beginning with school districts that had the lowest property value wealth. The state developed an "Eligibility Ranking List," based on a three-year average of local property wealth per pupil in the district, so that money would be dispersed in a fair and unbiased way. The OSFC partnered with the local school district and together they came up with a "full-district fix" to address all of a school district's facilities needs at one time.[153]

From 1997 to 2005, the OSFC spent $4.1 billion on school construction and renovation, making it the largest capital building program in Ohio.[154] As a financer of school buildings, the OSFC became co-owner of the project and had a great deal of construction project oversight, including the power to set certain acreage criteria for a proposed school construction project. For example, by OSFC mandates, a high school financed by OSFC was required to be built on a minimum of 35-acres, plus one-acre per 100 students the school would house. A high school built for 1400 students would require at least 49 acres.

In March 2001, the AACSD was accepted into one of the OSFC's building programs, called the Expedited Local Partnership Program (ELPP).[155] Based on the relatively low property wealth per pupil in the Ashtabula Area City Schools, the OSFC determined that it would pay 70% of the $109 million it would take to build a new Lakeside High School, a new junior high, and five new elementary school buildings; the school board had to raise the remaining 30% by passing the 7-mill bond Issue 1. Thus, passage of Issue 1 would raise $44 million locally and result in the state releasing $76 million so that the Ashtabula Area City Schools could build a new Lakeside High School

[153] As of 2005, a little more than half of the projects funded by the OSFC were renovations.

[154] Ohio School Facilities Commission, *2005 Annual Report*, pg. 32.

[155] The ELPP allowed the district to move forward with its building project using local money before OSFC monies kicked in because more impoverished school districts were eligible to receive OSFC funds before the AACSD. The AACSD was ranked 183 out of 612, meaning that 182 school districts in the state were ahead of the AACSD on the list to receive OSFC funding. It meant that unless the AACSD was accepted into the ELPP, it could not start building until 2004 via the traditional building program.

facility, a brand new junior high, and five new elementary school buildings. The school board indicated that a physically consolidated Lakeside High would be built first if Issue 1 passed. The only question that remained between mid-2001 and 2002 was: Where did the school board intend to build Lakeside High if Issue 1 passed?

The City of Ashtabula Lobbies to Keep Lakeside High School

Issue 1, a bond issue to raise the local share to build a new physically consolidated Lakeside High School and other school buildings, would face voters on the May 2002 ballot. The superintendent and school board touted the great deal Issue 1 was for the district and how it would improve the educational system, but they delayed the official announcement of where Lakeside High would be constructed, pending the passage of Issue 1. There was public speculation that the school board wanted to locate Lakeside High on the 123-acres it owned in Saybrook Township; this was property the school board had tried to build a consolidated high school on in 1993, 1997, and 1998. The Saybrook Township property had been an issue of resistance in past bond issues because it was located outside the City of Ashtabula limits. The school board waited until late February 2002—three months before Issue 1 faced voters—to officially announce it wanted to build Lakeside High on the Sanborn Road site in Saybrook, pending the passage of the bond issue. The school board's delay in officially announcing where they intended the high school to be located prompted City of Ashtabula leaders to engage in a futile effort, between the fall of 2001 and February 27, 2002, to persuade and pressure the school board to locate the high school within the City of Ashtabula corporate limits.

City leaders recognized that the Ashtabula area school board probably wanted to locate Lakeside High on Sanborn Road site since it had tried to locate a consolidated high school on that site three prior times. However, city leaders felt it was incumbent upon them to make the case to the school board and public-at-large for locating the high school within the city corporation limits, because they felt that the loss of the high school would mean the exodus of people and investment out of the city. In October 2001, Ashtabula City Councilman James Paulchel requested a meeting with the Ashtabula Area City Schools Board of Education to discuss options of locating the high school in the city.

However, school board President Martha Shippy rejected the meeting saying that talks about location were premature.[156]

Ashtabula City Council was in favor of constructing a new Lakeside High but wanted it located within the city limits. At a November 6, 2001 meeting of the Community Development/Recreation Committee of Ashtabula City Council, Councilman Paulchel argued that the city would be in "dire straights" if the new high school was moved out of the city. Paulchel believed that several of the school board members were against building the high school in the city and he stated that, "people are needed on the board that are going to be sympathetic to what's best for the City."[157] Paulchel suggested that Council approach the school board with a complete study that included acceptable building sites within the city limits; property near Kent State—Ashtabula Branch was suggested as a plausible site.[158]

The Ashtabula City Council Economic Development Committee played a major role in lobbying for a city location for Lakeside High. In December 2001, at a committee meeting chaired by Councilman Paulchel, city officials discussed the need to work diligently and present the AACSD Board with an "attractive package" that would entice the school district to locate the high school within the city limits. Members of the committee suggested that having the high school in the city would add to the economic viability of the city.[159] At a January 30, 2002 Economic Development Committee meeting, several city officials reiterated their commitment to getting Lakeside High located in the city limits.[160] Councilor Paulchel along with Ashtabula City Solicitor Thomas J. Simon presented the case for locating the high school and other schools in the city. First, they argued that the high school, junior high, and the majority of elementary schools were already located in the city and removing them would negatively alter the social and economic landscape of the city. Paulchel stressed the community nature of each of these school buildings and called them a cornerstone of social activity in the community: "If we lose that sense of community and neighborhood, the City, at some

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[156] Lisa Davis, "Ashtabula City Council wants a say in locating new Lakeside High School," *Star Beacon*, October 6, 2001, sec. A2.
[157] City of Ashtabula, Community Development Committee Minutes for November 6, 2001, pg. 2-3.
[158] Ibid, p. 3-4
[159] City of Ashtabula, Economic Development Committee Minutes for December 13, 2001, pg. 2
[160] City of Ashtabula, Economic Development Committee Minutes, January 30, 2002, p. 3

point in time, is going to be rolling up the carpet and seeing a lot more things leaving just like the schools."[161] He argued that schools enhance property values, help attract families to the city, and help stabilize city neighborhoods. Secondly, City Solicitor Simon argued that Lakeside High should be located inside the city limits because city residents and businesses contributed more tax dollars to the school district than any other local subdivision and the majority of the students who attended the AACSD lived in the City of Ashtabula.[162] Simon believed that the AACSD school board thought that their only viable option for building a consolidated Lakeside High complex was on land that it owned in Saybrook Township. Simon asserted that the city would have to come up with counter proposals, "and if the Board rejects the proposals then the citizens will have to act [to reject Issue 1] at the ballot."[163]

On February 6, the Ashtabula city manager and city councilors met face to face with the Ashtabula Area school board to press their case for locating Lakeside High School within the corporation limits of Ashtabula. City Solicitor Tom Simon, who was not invited to the meeting but participated anyway, insisted that since the majority of AACSD students live within the corporate limits of Ashtabula and because the majority of local tax dollars that flowed into district coffers came from city residents and businesses, the location of Lakeside High School should be within the city. [164] City officials said they believed the reason the school building bond issues in 1993, 1997, and 1998 all failed was because the school board intended to locate the consolidated high school in Saybrook instead of the city. Councilman Paulchel pointed out that 25 of 27 city precincts rejected the 1998 bond issue that would have built the high school in Saybrook Township.[165] Next, the Ashtabula City Manager argued that the school board should consider two sites that city leaders had identified within the City of Ashtabula on which to locate the high school.[166] The city manager also brought out the fact that bond Issue 1 would also build a new junior high and five elementary schools, but that the

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[161] Ibid, p. 2
[162] Ibid, p. 3
[163] Ibid, p. 3 Note that I am quoting from meeting minutes and that this is not necessarily what Solicitor Simon said verbatim.
[164] Megan Poinski, "Three hours of talk, no decisions," *Star Beacon,* February 7, 2002, sec. A1.
[165] Ibid. Poinski, February 7, 2002.
[166] These sites were on Columbus Avenue and Woodman Avenue.

school board decided not to reveal the location of these other buildings before the May 7th vote. The Ashtabula City Manager criticized the board for not saying where they wanted the junior high and five elementary schools located before citizens would vote on Issue 1 and likened it to buying a car without looking at it first.[167] At the meeting, the school board said they would soon officially declare where they wanted Lakeside High located, so that voters could have the information before they voted on bond Issue 1 on May 7th.

As a result of the city manager's proposal of two potential high school locations in the city at the February 6th meeting, the Ashtabula area school board made cursory tours of the two sites.[168] Finally, on February 21, the Board toured the 123-acres of land it already owned on Sanborn Road in Saybrook Township.[169] During the tour of the Board-owned property, Superintendent Licate let his feelings be known publicly to a *Star Beacon* reporter: "This land would be good for a school because it has sufficient acreage…The school won't be hemmed in and unable to expand. It's also pristine farmland and aesthetically very nice, and is at the geographic center of the district."[170]

Then in an eleventh hour tactic to influence the Board's decision about the location of the high school, Ashtabula City Council held an unusual Saturday morning meeting on February 22, 2002 and unanimously approved a resolution authorizing the city to loan the Ashtabula Area City School District up to $1 million to buy land for the construction of a high school and other schools inside the corporate limits of Ashtabula. The last minute resolution was in anticipation of a February 27th school board meeting to announce the choice for the location of a new Lakeside High complex. In a letter sent to AACSD Board President Gail L. Deligianis, City Solicitor Thomas Simon asked her to "seriously review" the city's proposal and said:

> It is the opinion of Ashtabula's appointed and elected officials that locating a new high school, middle school/junior high school, and 4 elementary schools within the corporate limits of Ashtabula is in the best interest of our district's school children. The majority of our district's children reside in Ashtabula. The majority of local revenue realized by the AACSB to capitally improve and operate the district's schools come from the residents of Ashtabula. In addition, the city

[167] Megan Poinski, "Three hours of talk, no decisions," *Star Beacon*, February 7, 2002, sec. A1.
[168] The sites were Columbus Avenue (toured February 13) and Woodman Avenue (toured February 20).
[169] All three February 2002 site visits are documented in AACSD Board minutes.
[170] Megan Poinski, "School board tours Sanborn Road site," *Star Beacon*, February 22, 2002, p. A2

> of Ashtabula has the ability to provide services and offer numerous incentives to the AACSB which would help insure the district's fiscal integrity.[171]

Simon indicated that the school district could repay the loan as it divested itself of the old school properties it owned in the city. He concluded, "It may take time (to repay), but the city of Ashtabula will wait. That's how serious we are about locating the (new) high school in the city."[172] The Board said it would consider the loan if they chose a building site in the city.[173]

Then, at the February 27th meeting, the Ashtabula area school board publicly declared that if bond Issue 1 passed, it would locate the consolidated Lakeside High School building on 123-acres of land it owned in Saybrook Township. The school board called the Saybrook site, "the most educationally compelling location." The school board did not release the location of the junior high or five elementary schools to be built if school building bond Issue 1 passed.

The school board gave four reasons why it intended to build the new high school at Sanborn Road. First, it was located outside of neighborhoods, which would eliminate walk-up and safety issues. Second, it was aesthetically pleasing and, at 123-acres, it provided room for future expansion. Third, the school board already owned the property so that there would be no additional costs to the taxpayers for land acquisition. Finally, they said the Sanborn Road property was the geographic center of the district and an area where the district population was shifting. The school board noted few new housing starts in the city and that, "Statistics show the greatest number of residential starts to be in Saybrook Township where the Sanborn Road Site is located." The school board noted that there was a 125-lot housing allotment already underway on the west side of Sanborn Road, and that one of the selling points for this new development was that it was located "just across the street from the new Lakeside High School."[174]

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[171] Thomas J. Simon, Letter to Patti Smith of the Ohio EPA, Attachment C: Thomas J. Simon, Letter to Ashtabula Area City School Board of Education, February 25, 2002. This communication was obtained from the Ohio EPA.
[172] Chris Foreman, "City offers $1 million to buy land for schools," *Star Beacon,* February 24, 2002, p. A1
[173] Ibid.
[174] BBC&M Engineering, Inc. Letter to Mr. Mike Smith of the Ohio EPA, February 18, 2004, Appendix A: Gail L. Deligianis, AACSD board member, and Superintendent William J. Licate, Letter to Mike Smith of the Ohio EPA, February 4, 2004, page 8. These communications were made available by the Ohio EPA.

Factors Contributing to the Failure of the City's Efforts

Advocates for locating Lakeside High in the city were not surprised by the school board's decision to locate it in Saybrook. When the Ashtabula City Manager heard of the school board's location decision, he admitted that he suspected the school board "knew where they decided the school was going to be long ago."[175] Between the announcement of legal high school consolidation in November 2000 and the AACSD Board's announcement on the location of the high school in late February 2002, it was clear that the school board never seriously considered other sites beside Sanborn Road, Saybrook Township. For starters, the school board already owned the property in Saybrook and the OSFC funding plan did not give money toward purchasing school property. Superintendent Licate and a school board member later described their early preference for the Sanborn Road property:

> Although the bond issue failed in November of 1993, again in November of 1997, and yet again in May of 1998, the purchase of the property at the Sanborn Road Site would prove to be a great asset when, in January 2001, the district applied for the Expedited Local Partnership Program (ELPP) through the Ohio School Facilities Commission (OSFC). Although the OSFC is in the business of rebuilding schools throughout the state of Ohio, there are no dollars allocated in the plan for land acquisition.[176]

The school board had strategically delayed their announcement. Instead of clearly stating that they wanted the high school to be located on Sanborn Road at the very beginning, the school board wanted to appear that they were open to other site options as a politically face-saving move. They did this because they knew that the Sanborn Road site was unpopular with many voters in past bond issue elections. When school board President Martha Shippy told Ashtabula Councilor James Paulchel that discussion of the high school's location was "premature" in October 2001, she effectively postponed the issue through the fall of 2001. If the school board were serious about considering other sties besides Sanborn Road, October 2001 would have certainly been the time to begin collaborating with the city on a location because of the time and energy it would have

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[175] Megan Poinski, "City officials: Voters will decide fate of schools," *Star Beacon,* March 1, 2002, sec. A1

[176] BBC&M Engineering, Inc. Letter to Mr. Mike Smith of the Ohio EPA, February 18, 2004, Appendix A: Gail L. Deligianis, AACSD board member, and Superintendent William J. Licate, Letter to Mike Smith of the Ohio EPA, February 4, 2004, pg.4. This communication was made available by the Ohio EPA.

taken to secure another site by negotiating with property owners on a price, divesting itself of the Sanborn Road property, and doing preliminary investigations on the suitability of the site for building.

In fact, the school board did not advertise the fact that before they made public their decision on where they wanted the new high school to be located, they had already began investing tax dollars in the Sanborn Road property. On January 22, 2002, the school board hired BBC&M Engineering, Inc. to complete a preliminary subsurface investigation at Sanborn Road.[177] This inspection was taking place on the very day the school board was making its cursory tours of sites in the city, February 20, 2002. There were no subsurface investigations planned the two sites in the city suggested by the city manager.

Opponents to Issue 1: The City Didn't Quit

After the Ashtabula area school board finally declared it would locate the consolidated high school in Saybrook Township pending the passage of bond Issue 1, the City of Ashtabula knew that it had one more tactic to keep the high school from going to Saybrook: appeal to the voters to defeat Issue 1. After the school board announced their location, Solicitor Tom Simon said:

> The decision [on where the consolidated Ashtabula-Lakeside High will be located] is not really up to the school board. It's up to the voters…If they vote it [Issue 1] down, it means they don't want the school in Saybrook and I expect the school board to put the issue immediately back on the ballot to build a school in Ashtabula.[178]

Simon's point was that citizens should not feel the Issue 1 vote on May 7th was a "vote yes or lose out" situation. He said if the May 7th bond issue was defeated, another school building bond issue could be put on the August or December 2002 ballot so that the district could still take advantage of 70% funding from the OSFC.[179]

School board members dug in and remained committed to the Saybrook site. School board member Maryann Stevenson complained about the opposition: "All the

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[177] Thomas J. Simon, Letter to Patti Smith of the Ohio EPA, January 15, 2004, Attachment B: Eric A. Angyal, project engineer, of BBC&M Engineering, Inc., Letter to Dr. William J. Licate. February 20, 2002.
[178] Megan Poinski, "City officials: Voters will decide fate of schools," *Star Beacon*, March 1, 2002, sec. A1
[179] Ashtabula City Council minutes, March 18, 2002.

trash they are saying about the site is just to complicate the issue and cast doubt. It's planned, deliberate obstructionism."[180] The school board denied criticism that the Saybrook site was a wetland and they claimed that high school sites in the city had been given a fair hearing. At a March 2002 city council meeting, school board member Jerry Allen insisted that the school board had fully considered all high school site options and had not predetermined the Sanborn Road as the site for the high school. At this meeting, the city manager and city solicitor both complained that unlike neighboring cities and school districts which compromised on locating new school buildings within their city limits, the Ashtabula area school board never approached the City of Ashtabula about coming up with a location in the city, with the exception of one meeting on February 6th.

Pro-bond Issue 1 forces formed a citizen group to support its passage and Superintendent William Licate set out to convince citizens of the city and their leaders that the 70% funding from the Ohio School Facilities Commission to build the new high school and other schools would be, "the best thing that has happened to this community in 50 years."[181] Licate hoped to minimize the location issue and stress the passage of Issue 1 as a universal good for the school district community.

On March 18, 2002, Ashtabula City Council openly defied the Ashtabula Area school board by passing Resolution 2002-32, which stated that voters should pass Issue 1 only if the high school remained "within the corporate boundaries of the City of Ashtabula, Ohio." The vote was not unanimous and some council members dissented. Most notably, city council President Jo Misener said she supported Issue 1 even though it meant that the high school would be located in Saybrook because it would still help the children of Ashtabula city.[182] The March 18th city council meeting was crowded with citizens and both the city manager and city solicitor were called on to explain their opposition to the Saybrook location and Issue 1.[183] Several citizens claimed they were troubled by the lack of cooperation between the city and school board. City Manager Pugliese then cited the over 120-year history of high schools in the city and announced

[180] Megan Poinski, "Board clarifies issues at meeting," *Star Beacon*, April 25, 2002, sec. A1.
[181] Megan Poinski, "Bond panel ready to work for new schools, *Star Beacon*, March 1, 2002, sec. A1
[182] See Ashtabula City Council minutes, April 1, 2002.
[183] Council President Misener apologized at this meeting for the few agendas available to the public because, "we are not used to having this many people." See Ashtabula City Council Minutes. March 18, 2002, p. 7

that taking the high school out of the city would be like taking the root and identity away from the city.[184] One Ashtabula citizen responded by criticizing the city manager as, "out to defeat the bond issue to get your way and sacrifice the children." City manager Pugliese retorted that he was actually doing what was in the best interest of the students of the city of Ashtabula and further criticized the school board for not collaborating with the city about the location of the high school.[185] Solicitor Simon concluded that he supported the idea of a new high school and other schools but opposed Issue 1 because of where the school board said they would locate the high school.[186] At a later meeting, some Ashtabula City councilors tried to pass a resolution supporting bond Issue 1, but failed by a 4 to 3 vote.[187]

Over the next few weeks, Superintendent William Licate made numerous public appearances promoting Issue 1. At a public forum held March 21, Licate warned that if voters did not pass Issue 1, building costs would go up because interest rates were starting to rise. City Solicitor Tom Simon also attended the forum to restate the city of Ashtabula's case about locating the high school in the city.[188] On March 31, 2002, Licate was featured in "Q & A With Dr. Licate" in the *Star Beacon* to answer frequently asked questions about bond Issue 1. Licate also answered questions about Issue 1 at two additional community forums in early April. At each of the forums, passions were high on both sides of the issue. Some people were angry that Superintendent Licate and the school board would locate the high school outside the city limits while others were frustrated with the on-going political disagreements. At one forum, a citizen opposed to Issue 1 due to location of the high school was armed with a copy of the preliminary soil test done at the Sanborn Road property, and asserted that costly work would need to be done to the property to make the land suitable for building a high school. The audience questioned this information and applauded when this citizen's time ran out.[189]

Superintendent Licate attempted to take the focus away from the location of the high school and stressed the educational benefits of the school building program, citing

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[184] Ibid, p. 9
[185] Ibid, p. 10
[186] Ibid, p. 15
[187] Megan Poinski, "Ashtabula City Council just says: NO," *Star Beacon,* May 1, 2002, sec. A1
[188] Chris Foreman, "Costs will go up," *Star Beacon,* March 22, 2002, p. A1
[189] Lisa Davis, "Licate warns attendees to listen to all," *Star Beacon,* April 16, 2002, sec. A5.

several research studies that indicate academic achievement increases in more modern buildings. In addition, Licate argued that new facilities would attract new teachers, which would address a teacher shortage, and that new facilities—high school, junior high, and five elementary schools—would help the district retain students who lived within the AACSD.[190] When asked what the district would do if Issue 1 failed in May, he said it was up the the school board, and stressed that, "If it doesn't pass now, I don't know if it will ever pass."

By April 2002, the two options on Issue 1 were clear: A "yes" vote on the 7-mill bond question would raise $44 million to match $76 million in OSFC funds that would build a new physically consolidated Lakeside High facility on Sanborn Road in Saybrook Township. The funds raised by Issue 1 would also pay for a new junior high and five elementary schools, to be built at an undisclosed location. The passage of Issue 1 would mean that property taxes on a home valued at $80,000 would increase about $74 per year.[191] A "no" vote on Issue 1 would mean that that the Sanborn Road site for high school was rejected and that the school board would have to name a new city site for the high school before placing the bond issue before voters again. The situation created two educational leaders who dominated the debate in April 2002, just prior to the May 7th vote: Solicitor Thomas Simon against the bond issue and Superintendent William Licate for it.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the Ashtabula area school board changing strategy on their goal of building a consolidated high school. Before 2000, the school board tried to first pass a bond issue to build a consolidated high school while leaving both Ashtabula High and Harbor High separate. In 2000, the school board changed strategy and legally consolidated the two high schools first, before they asked voters to approve a bond issue to build a physically consolidated high school. Beginning with the 2001-2002 school year, the legally consolidated Lakeside High School was split between the two old high

[190] Megan Poinski, "Q & A with Dr. Licate," *Star Beacon,* March 31, 2002, sec. A1.
[191] See Megan Poinski, "Q & A with Dr. Licate, *Star Beacon,* March 31, 2002, pg. A1.

school buildings: all grades 10 to 12 students attended the old Ashtabula High facility while all freshmen attended the old Harbor High building.

The school board quickly moved to construct a physically consolidated building for Lakeside High. In March 2001, the school board received a commitment from the Ohio School Facilities Commission to pay for 70% the cost of all new school buildings for the district, including a consolidated home for Lakeside High School. The 7-mill bond issue, Issue 1, would pay for the local share of the building project, 30% or 44 million dollars. From March 2001 to February 2002, the school board did not state where they had decided the consolidated Lakeside High School would be located, pending the passage of Issue 1. This encouraged the City of Ashtabula to lobby the school board to locate the high school inside the city limits instead of on land the board already owned in Saybrook Township. The city even offered $1 million to the school board to buy land in the city on which a high school could be built. However, the school board declared that it wanted the high school located in Saybrook Township because it was large enough for future expansion, and because it would be located in a growing suburban area of the school district.

The Ashtabula area school board's explanation that they wanted Lakeside High to be located in Saybrook Township because it was following development within the school district had been used by other school boards throughout the nation who wanted to justify their location of schools on the periphery of cities. W. Cecil Steward has argued that the justification for school building location following housing development is misleading and has devastating consequences for central cities, which are "bled dry" by the loss of schools to suburbs. Steward explains that school systems have similar interests as private developers—they want to be the first to acquire developable property in advance of other development interests to get a cheap price and good location. Steward has called this a "growth at the edges strategy." Steward asserts school systems that purchase land in suburban areas for the purpose of building schools do not just follow development, they create and spur the development. Steward argues that schools are in the position to create residential development because people want to live near schools, and concludes that school systems are the most influential planning entity, public

or private, in promoting the proto-typical sprawl pattern of American cities.[192] Myron Orfield has argued that school systems promoting suburban sprawl have several negative consequences including missed opportunities for central cities to use schools to revitalize neighborhoods, and the polarization of a metropolitan area between the poor who are concentrated in central cities and the upwardly mobile middle-class who are able to follow new schools to the suburbs.[193] Michael B. Katz asserts that as institutions like schools desert inner-cities, they "not only rob inner cities of the services they need, they knock out the props that sustain a viable public life and the possibility of community."[194]

The battle over Issue 1, which would build a consolidated high school and six other new buildings, was a conflict between the city government and the school board that focused on the location of the high school and its impact on the future development of the Greater Ashtabula area. Emotions ran high on both sides of the debate. While voters did not directly decide on high school consolidation because it was executed by order of the school board, they would have the final say on Issue 1, which would help shape the social life of the Greater Ashtabula area for generations to come.

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[192] W. Cecil Stweard, "Case 13: Lincoln, Nebraska, Public School Systems: The Advance Scouts for Urban Sprawl," In Richard K. Olson and Thomas A. Lyson (Eds.), *Under the Blade,* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999): pg. 370-372; Beaumont, 2002.

[193] Myron Orfield, *Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community Stability* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1997): 74-75.

[194] Michael B. Katz, "Reframing the 'Underclass' Debate," In Michael B. Katz (Ed.), *The "Underclass" Debate: Views from History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993): 477.

CHAPTER 6

LICATE VERSUS SIMON

"…the image of the public school, as the center of America's image of a utopian, better future, has given almost reverent power to public school planners to control the form and future of our cities."

W. Cecil Stweard[1]

Ronald Heifetz argues that, "someone exercising leadership will be shouldering the pains and aspirations of a community and frustrating at least some people within it."[2] Such was the case with the two leaders featured in this chapter, William Licate and Thomas Simon. By late April 2002, Superintendent William J. Licate was the main public advocate for the passage of bond Issue 1, which would locate a new physically consolidated home for Lakeside High School in Saybrook Township. Licate's adversary was Ashtabula city solicitor Thomas J. Simon, who emerged as the public leader opposed to Issue 1, primarily because it would relocate Lakeside High School outside the city limits. A debate between Licate and Simon was printed in the *Star Beacon* April 21 and April 23, 2002. *Star Beacon* editor Neil Frieder asserted that William Licate and Thomas Simon were "the most identifiable advocates for their positions [on Issue 1] in one of the most emotional education issues that I can recall in the 30 years I have been in the news business." Frieder also noted that "If it [Issue 1] passes, it will be a prime ingredient in shaping the greater Ashtabula area for perhaps the next 100 years."[3] While Superintendent Licate was successful in passing the bond issue, both leaders failed because they could not build a sufficient network of support behind their vision for a consolidated Lakeside High School that would unite and inspire the entire community instead of further polarizing it.

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[1] W. Cecil Stweard, "Case 13: Lincoln, Nebraska, Public School Systems: The Advance Scouts for Urban Sprawl," In Richard K. Olson and Thomas A. Lyson, *Under the Blade: The Conversion of Agricultural Landscapes*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999): pg. 370-373.

[2] Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994): 235-236.

[3] Neil Freider, "Issue 1: Licate vs. Simon," *Star Beacon*, April 21, 2002, pg. A2.

Bond Issue 1 was set to appear on the May 7, 2002 ballot and, if passed, would raise $44 million. This money would represent the local portion, 30%, of the financing to build a physically consolidated Lakeside High School, a junior high, and five elementary schools for the Ashtabula Area City School District (AACSD). The Ohio School Facilities Commission (OSFC) would pay 70% of the cost, about $76 million. The $76 million from the OSFC would only be released after the bond issue to raise the local portion was passed. The debate on Issue 1 was focused on where Lakeside High School was going to be located. In late February 2002, the school board publicly announced that it would locate Lakeside High on land it owned in Saybrook Township if Issue 1 passed. The school board refused to declare where they would locate other school buildings before the May 7th election date. At the time of the debate between Licate and Simon, the legally consolidated Lakeside High School was located in the City of Ashtabula—physically split between the old Ashtabula High (grades 10-12) and the old Harbor High (grade 9).

Both Licate and Simon agreed that Issue 1 would be a key element in community development. At the time of their debate, the 55 square mile territory of the Ashtabula Area City Schools was polarized with the declining post-industrial central city of Ashtabula on one end, and the burgeoning suburban area, Saybrook Township on the other. Saybrook was overwhelmingly White and middle-class, while Ashtabula was poorer, older, and home to most of the area's racial minorities. As in many other urban areas at the time, the spatial relationship between city and suburb was a major factor in the politics of public access to educational resources like school buildings. [4] In Ashtabula, the debate over the location of a physically consolidated home for Lakeside High was the debate over whether Lakeside High School would be located in and spur the development of a suburban area or whether Lakeside High would be located in a central city and be used to revitalize aged and declining city neighborhoods. Along these lines, Licate and Simon offered two competing visions during their public debate.

Superintendent Licate asserted that now was the time to take advantage of a golden opportunity: raise $44 million locally by passing Issue 1 to get $76 million from

[4] John L. Rury, "Race, Space, and the Politics of Chicago's Public Schools: Benjamin Willis and the Tragedy of Urban Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 117-123.

the OSFC to engage in a district-wide school building initiative, beginning with the construction of a new, consolidated Lakeside High School. Licate asserted that Sanborn Road in Saybrook Township was the best place for Lakeside High School because it was the fastest growing part of the school district, because the school board already owned the Sanborn Road property, and because the property was large enough to accommodate a high school, several athletic fields, and a stadium, with room to spare. Licate envisioned that the new high school would improve Ashtabula's educational system, and signal the beginning of the rebirth of the Ashtabula area. Licate believed that bickering over the location of the high school was short sited because the new high school would benefit not only the students and families in Saybrook, but those in the city as well.

Ashtabula city solicitor Simon saw the Licate vision as devastating to the City of Ashtabula, which is why he opposed Issue 1. Simon believed that removing Lakeside High School from the city and relocating it in Saybrook Township would be a damaging blow to the economic viability of the city. Simon was not opposed to Issue 1 in principle: He was not against the idea of being taxed to raise the $44 million locally to get $76 million in OSFC funds to build all new schools and acknowledged that it was a great deal to be taken advantage of. However, Simon did oppose Issue 1 because of the school board's intent to build a consolidated Lakeside High in Saybrook and not in the city. Simon's vision was to locate a new consolidated Lakeside High School within the City of Ashtabula and use it as a key asset to attract economic development to the city and to revitalize city neighborhoods. He urged citizens to defeat Issue 1 to send the message to the superintendent and the AACSD school board that the best place to locate the consolidated Lakeside High building was within the City of Ashtabula. Simon predicted that if voters defeated Issue 1 on May 7th, the AACSD school board and superintendent would realize voters did not approve of the high school's location in Saybrook and would soon put a similar bond issue on the August or December 2002 ballot and indicate that the high school would be located within the corporate limits of Ashtabula.[5]

[5] See Megan Poinski, "City officials: Voters will decide fate of schools," *Star Beacon*, March 1, 2002, sec. A1. See also Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 2), *Star Beacon*, April 23, 2002, sec. C8 where he made similar comment.

Introduction to the Debate and a Profile of the Leaders

The debate between Licate and Simon was important for several reasons. First, the forces for and against Issue 1 coalesced around these two leaders. In past bond issues to build a new high school, there was more than one leader on each side of the issue. Second, these two leaders were brought together for a thoughtful debate on the issues surrounding Issue 1, and their words printed in the local *Star Beacon* two weeks before the May 7th election. Each of the leaders made strong and passionate arguments supporting their position. Finally, the debate on Issue 1 showed how the high school consolidation process, begun in 1963, came to a leadership climax. The stakes were highest in 2002 because deciding on a consolidated high school also meant deciding on the direction of the Greater Ashtabula area given the fact that both leaders acknowledged that the new consolidated high school would spur development. Also in 2002, the heartbeat of the central city Ashtabula was weakening, the academics and financial situation of the school district were in peril, and a sense of urgency pervaded the arguments of both Licate and Simon. Thomas Simon and William Licate were both born and raised in Ashtabula, and would never be in a better position to impact the direction of their hometown as they were in late April 2002.

The debate between the two leaders represented the choice of two men to advocate for their position, but the debate also signaled that the decision to reach consensus was not made. The debate also signals the series of non-decisions prior to 2002 to build and enact a community vision in which education and metropolitan development were considered part of the same package.

Thomas J. Simon

Thomas J. Simon became Ashtabula city solicitor in December 1985 and became one of the most recognizable public figures in the Ashtabula area. The city solicitor is a position elected every four years and serves as the attorney and counsel to the municipality, as well as prosecuting attorney of the municipal court.[6] Solicitor Simon's opposition to Superintendent Licate and the school board on Issue 1 was ironic because,

[6] Interestingly, Clarence Darrow also held the position of Ashtabula city solicitor in the 1880s. Information accessed at http://www.ashtabulacountybar.com/famous_attorneys.htm. on 5/25/05. The primary author listed is Ashtabula County Judge Hon. Mackey.

according to section 3313.35 of the Ohio Revised Code, the city solicitor must serve as free legal counsel to the city school district in which it is located, if the school board requests the service. If Simon was called on to give the AACSD legal advice regarding Issue 1, he would have advised them to locate the new Lakeside High in the city instead of in Saybrook.[7]

Tom Simon was a graduate of Ashtabula High School, and said he was able to become a lawyer and serve as a city official because of the foundation he received as a student at Ashtabula High School.[8] While earning his law degree, Simon worked as an engineer for Conrail. Simon served as assistant city solicitor before becoming solicitor in 1985. Mr. Simon, a registered Democrat in an overwhelmingly Democratic city, had faced little electoral opposition since assuming office in 1985. For example, in both his 1999 and 2003 re-election bids, Simon faced no opponent and garnered 100% of the vote.[9] No elected Ashtabula city official in the last quarter of the twentieth century had a longer tenure in office than Tom Simon.

In addition to his duties as city solicitor, Simon had a private law practice in Ashtabula and had many business dealings in the community, including partial ownership of marinas and properties on Ashtabula Harbor's historic Bridge Street.

Tom Simon was unique in Ashtabula city government because of his long tenure and because he was not Italian-American. Most of the Ashtabula city managers from the 1970s to the beginning of the 21st century were Italian-Americans, each with relatively short tenures in office. *Star Beacon* editor Neil Frieder described Solicitor Tom Simon as, " a get in your face type person. If he believes in a cause he comes forward with guns blazing. If he truly believes in what he is doing he loads up on legal ammunition to win. There is a nervous energy about him. Simon's voice can rise to high decibel levels."[10]

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[7] For a discussion of this conflict of interest, see Kyle A. Knapp, One Cannot Serve Two Masters: Solving the Inherent Conflicts of Interest in Statutory Counsel for Ohio School Boards, *Capital University Law Review* (1997). 26 Cap. U. L. Rev. 141

[8] Megan Poinski, "City officials: Voters will decide fate of schools," *Star Beacon,* March 1, 2002, sec, A1.

[9] per Ashtabula County Board of Elections records.

[10] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 1), *Star Beacon,* April 21, 2002, sec. A2

William J. Licate

By 2002, Dr. William J. Licate's career with the Ashtabula Area City Schools had spanned 35 years; 7 of which were in the superintendent's chair. In his role as chief executive officer of the school district, Dr. Licate was charged with administering state educational policy in the local area.

William Licate had a long career with the Ashtabula Area City Schools. He began as a social studies teacher at Harbor High School in 1968, while moonlighting on the railroad, like his opponent Tom Simon. He later became a guidance counselor and assistant principal at Harbor High. In 1985, Licate moved on to other administrative roles within the AACSD. First, he was principal of State Road Elementary, then Columbus Junior High and finally, he served as principal of Harbor High School. In 1992, Licate became assistant superintendent of the Ashtabula Area City Schools.[11] When Superintendent John R. Rose resigned, Dr. Licate became interim superintendent in August 1994. Licate was officially hired as superintendent in December 1994.

William Licate was an Italian-American who was born and raised in the City of Ashtabula, in the Italian enclave in the Ashtabula Harbor called "Swedetown." He graduated from St. John Catholic High School in Ashtabula and earned a teaching degree from Kent State University. After teaching for several years, Licate moved into a home in a suburban Saybrook Township, near the lakefront. Licate was a well-known and respected public figure in the community. His rise up the administrative ranks of the district signaled that he earned the trust of the school board and much of the community.[12]

Dr. William Licate was a long time proponent of high school consolidation in Ashtabula, and it was he who recommended to the school board that Ashtabula High and Harbor High be consolidated for the 2001-2002 school year. *Star Beacon* editor Neil Frieder described Licate as laid back, "holding his cards close to his body," candid, and not the type of person who throws a lot of unsolicited words at you.[13]

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[11] Biographical information on Dr. Licate is courtesy of the district website located at www.aacs.net and accessed on 5/26/2005.

[12] Biographical information on Licate is also from Lisa Davis, "Ashtabula Area City Schools Superintendent William Licate Resigns," *Star Beacon,* May 11, 2006, sec. A1.

[13] Neil Frieder, "Issue 1: Licate vs. Simon," *Star Beacon,* April 21, 2002, sec. A2.

The Arguments of the Leaders

To help Ashtabula area voters decide how they would vote on Issue 1, *Star Beacon* publisher Ed Looman, editor Neil Frieder and reporter Megan Poinski invited William Licate and Thomas Simon to their conference room and asked each a dozen questions about their views on Issue 1. The newspaper printed these questions and answers of Licate and Simon in full form, in two parts. The *Star Beacon* called it "Licate vs. Simon."

In the debate, Licate's goal was to make the case why people should vote for Issue 1 on May 7. Licate's tone and perspective in this debate was that of an a-political educational expert who had the universal interests of the school district—present and future—in mind. He was involved in a political struggle with Tom Simon, but he attempted to put the passage of Issue 1 above political squabbling. Licate's case to voters was that if Issue 1 passed, the school district would construct a high school complex on 123-acres of land on Sanborn Road in Saybrook Township the school board had purchased in 1993. The land was about three miles from the inner city neighborhoods around Ashtabula's downtown civic district and about five miles away from the older ethnic neighborhoods in the Ashtabula Harbor. Licate was clear that if Issue 1 passed, a physically consolidated home for Lakeside High School would be built in Saybrook Township first. However, he did not reveal the location of the junior high and five elementary schools bond Issue 1 funds would also help build.

Dr. Licate explained that the passage of Issue 1 was urgent because the $76 million promise of funding from the state if Issue 1 passed was a "golden opportunity."[14] Citing low interest rates, Superintendent Licate urged, "We've got to take this opportunity now."[15]

Simon's goal in this debate was to urge the defeat of Issue 1, in its current form, which would build the consolidated Lakeside High School in Saybrook Township. Simon had always insisted he was for new schools but against Issue 1 because of the

[14] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate (part 1), *Star Beacon,* April 21, 2002, sec. D1
[15] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate (part 1), *Star Beacon,* April 21, 2002, sec. D1

location.[16] Simon tried to make the passage of Issue 1 now less urgent and he told voters not to fear losing $76 million from the OSFC if Issue 1 failed. Simon said he feared that people were being led to believe that Issue 1 was a now or never opportunity. If Issue 1 failed, Simon said he would support a similar bond issue to be put right back on the ballot, but with the commitment from the school board that the high school be located within the corporate limits of the City of Ashtabula. Simon further argued that he represented many Ashtabula city citizens and that a lot of people were not speaking out as publicly as he was because they didn't want to be harassed by people who were pro-Issue 1.[17]

To accomplish his goal, Tom Simon first pounced on the absence of a comprehensive school district building plan—aside from the location of the high school—as a reason to vote Issue 1 down.[18] Simon argued that without a plan that indicated the locations of the junior high and elementary schools, voters would not know what they were voting for. He concluded that Licate and the school district were asking voters to make a rush to judgment. Simon specifically highlighted that if Issue 1 was passed, the City of Ashtabula might also lose its elementary schools and junior high to Saybrook and he noted that, "once the bond issue passes, the leverage for negotiating with the school board is gone and we're completely at their mercy."[19] Simon attempted to build the perception that the school board could not be trusted to do what was in the best interests of the City of Ashtabula when it came to locating the junior high and elementary schools.

Licate responded by insisting that he and the school board were in favor of locating four of the five elementary schools within the city if Issue 1 passed, but Simon responded that Licate could not guarantee anything because the school board had the authority to name school locations. Simon argued that the school board seated in April

[16] Simon made this clear, for example, at a community forum to discuss Issue 1. See Chris Foreman, "Costs Will Go Up," *Star Beacon*, March 22, 2002, sec. A1.
[17] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 2), *Star Beacon,* April 23, 2002, sec. C8
[18] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 1), *Star Beacon,* April 21, 2002, sec. D5
[19] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 2), *Star Beacon,* April 23, 2002, sec. C7 [my italics]

2002 might not be the same school board that would make the decision on elementary school location.[20]

Licate issued the warning that if Issue 1 was defeated on May 7th for whatever reason, the young people working on the campaign committee to get it passed would become apathetic just like other people in the Ashtabula community and say, "The hell with it." Licate also said that if Issue 1 failed on May 7th, he would not recommend putting a similar bond issue back on the next ballot, thus undercutting Simon's claim that a latter bond issue would allow for the high school to be located in the city.[21]

Simon merged the theme of the city abdicating leverage to the school board with a second major theme of his case: that the move of the high school enterprise out of the city and into Saybrook would mean the loss of a critical asset to help revitalize the city and attract economic development. While industry and department stores had abandoned the City of Ashtabula from the 1970s through the 1990s, Simon argued that economic decline could be stopped by voting against the removal of the high school from the city. Simon's case rested upon building a coalition of voters around the territorial interests of the City of Ashtabula. He argued that if the high school exited from the city:

> There will be a population shift of the people who can afford it. (They) will leave the city and move to Saybrook, and the children raised in Saybrook will never have a reason to come into the city again. They'll go to the pre-school, elementary school, junior high school and high school in the township. They'll go to the mall that's out in a township, Ashtabula Township…Everything they do from football games to basketball games to Latin clubs to Spanish clubs to whatever it is children in school do, will be done at that cultural center, and there will be no need for them to come into the city.[22]

Licate fought back Simon's assertions by appealing to economic common sense, and the inevitability of burgeoning suburban development in Saybrook Township. Licate argued that studies showed that the demographic growth in the school district was happening in Saybrook and, "so we have to look at this, not just how it's going to affect us this year or next year. We have to look at how this will affect us down the road, 10, 15, or 20 years. Where is the population eventually going to be?" Licate also insisted that locating Lakeside High on Sanborn Road was also a good idea because the taxpayers

[20] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 2), *Star Beacon,* April 23, 2002, sec. C7
[21] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate (part 1), *Star Beacon,* April 21, 2002, sec. D5.
[22] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 2), *Star Beacon,* April 23, 2002, sec. C7

got a good price for the 123-acre site, and that the site was the geographic center of the school district. [23]

Solicitor Simon shot back at Licate's demographics study citing, "I think there will be a shift of population from the city to the township if the schools are built out there. I think the opposite is true if the schools are built in the city."[24] Simon tried to characterize Issue 1 and the construction of a high school in suburban Saybrook Township as a project of the middle-class elites from Saybrook who run the school district. Simon bolstered his argument by pointing out that, "all of the administrators, most of the teachers, and all of the board of education (members)…all live in the township [Saybrook]."[25] On several occasions, Simon struck the chord that the school district was unjustly abandoning the City of Ashtabula:

> There seems to be a hurry to abandon the city. And I question why. What is there about the city that's provided the school system with all these services all these years?… Why do they want to abandon the city?… And I haven't got an answer for that… There's property in the city. It may…(take) more of an effort to obtain it than it was in Saybrook Township, but it's there. They have to be willing to roll up their shirtsleeves and work at it. My concern is the abandonment of the city by the school board, where all the students live…I think they're doing a disservice to the students.[26]

Superintendent Licate responded by reminding people that while he currently lived in Saybrook, he was born and raised on Harbor Avenue, part of Swedetown—the Italian-American ethnic enclave in the city of Ashtabula.[27] Beyond this, Superintendent Licate did not directly counter Simon's assertion that it would be unjust to locate the high school outside the city limits saying, "I think the whole thing is a philosophical difference."[28] Superintendent Licate then told a story to appeal to the common sense of voters and to show how misguided Tom Simon's opposition was:

> People from throughout the state are looking at Ashtabula, Ohio on May 7. I went to a conference…a week ago…in Columbus. They gave you these name tags, (and mine said) Superintendent Ashtabula. It was like a magnet. People

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[23] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 1), *Star Beacon,* April 21, 2002, sec. D4
[24] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 1), *Star Beacon,* April 21, 2002, sec. D4
[25] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 1), *Star Beacon,* April 21, 2002, sec. D4
[26] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 2), *Star Beacon,* April 23, 2002, sec. C6
[27] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 2), *Star Beacon,* April 23, 2002, sec. C7
[28] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 2), *Star Beacon,* April 23, 2002, sec. C7

> were coming up to me and saying, "What's going on in Ashtabula?" I can't explain what the problem is. How do you explain (to) people (the) city fathers (are) leading the way to saying no to $76 million. Now you tell me who's going to locate what business, what industry, what prospective home buyer…will want to move into our area knowing that we said no to $76 million in state funds. That is my concern.[29]

Dr. Licate shifted the discourse by implicating Solicitor Simon's negativity and resistance to Issue 1 as exemplifying part of the problems with Ashtabula city. Licate explained that the number one ranked student in the first graduating class of Lakeside High School, who was also National Merit Semifinalist, who said he was not coming back to the community because of the negativity, and Licate declared, "We are losing the best of the best."[30]

The strength of Superintendent Licate's argument rested upon his perspective as an educational professional with the universal interests of the school district community at heart, and his ability to represent himself as a positive force to do something good for the community. Licate urged working together and decreed that a new high school complex in Saybrook along with all new school buildings in the school district was just the first step in "the renaissance and rebirth of this community." He envisioned that Ashtabula could be a dynamic community once again.[31]

Tom Simon was not buying it. As the debate winded down, Simon bluntly stated locating the consolidated Lakeside High School building outside the city, "will cause the demise of the city, and here's why. If you take a vital organ out of the body, and a school system is a vital organ in the body of a community…the body will die…"[32] Simon pointed to efforts the City of Ashtabula made to keep the district invested in the city including offering a loan of $1 million to purchase property in the city. Simon said the loan could be used to buy property for the new high school near Kent State—Ashtabula campus citing, "the transition from high school over to the university would be a natural transition."[33] Solicitor Simon also made a point of citing the school district's refusal to

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[29] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 2), *Star Beacon,* April 23, 2002, sec. C7
[30] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 2), *Star Beacon,* April 23, 2002, sec. C7
[31] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 2), *Star Beacon,* April 23, 2002, sec. C7
[32] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 2), *Star Beacon,* April 23, 2002, sec. C7
[33] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 1), *Star Beacon,* April 21, 2002, sec. D4

even discuss the $1 million loan offer and other incentives to locate the high school in the city and said the $1 million offer did not even warrant the courtesy of a response—one way or another—from the school board.[34]

Superintendent Licate dismissed the loan offer saying that the city did not have "$1 million sitting in the bank," and would have to borrow the money and the district would have to pay the city back at 10% interest.[35] As far as the property near Kent State—Ashtabula Campus in the City of Ashtabula that Tom Simon advocated as a site for the high school, Dr. Licate said that it was simply not available for sale.[36]

Superintendent Licate and Solicitor Simon both agreed that the new consolidated high school complex would not just serve traditional educational needs, but also serve as a community and performing center that would be open and accessible to the community in the evenings and on weekends. However, from the city's perspective, Simon had serious concerns about the access to this community center if it were located away from the demographic center of district in Ashtabula city. Simon asserted that locating the high school/community center in Saybrook Township would be unfair to city residents because the city will pay most of the costs for the new high school complex by virtue of their numbers but be largely dislocated—in space—from its benefits:

> If the high school complex and performing arts center is constructed out in Saybrook, it will become a cultural community center. The problem is it's far removed from the city of Ashtabula and its residents. The city of Ashtabula and its residents (will pay a) disproportionate share for its construction and a disproportionate share for the operation of it simply because we have 21,000 people in the city, versus 6,000 people in Saybrook and 2,000 people in Plymouth.[37]

Simon expressed concern over how students in the city will be able to take advantage of a community center located in suburban Saybrook Township and claimed that city youth who most needed the community center would be least able get there.[38] Simon argued that as a result the community center was going to be less responsive to the needs of

[34] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 2), *Star Beacon,* April 23, 2002, sec. C7
[35] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 2), *Star Beacon,* April 23, 2002, sec. C7
[36] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 1), *Star Beacon,* April 21, 2002, sec. D4
[37] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 1), *Star Beacon,* April 21, 2002, sec. D4
[38] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 2), *Star Beacon,* April 23, 2002, sec. C7-C8

families in Ashtabula city—where 73% of students enrolled in the school district lived—and more responsive to suburban youth:

> And if the community's going to move out there [to Saybrook], it's not going to be the bulk of Ashtabula city (moving). It's going to be the people who can afford to put their houses up for sale and move out in the vicinity of the community center, and it causes me a concern.[39]

Superintendent Licate dismissed Simon's concern noting that some how kids will find a way to the high school community center, citing the number of teens who find their way to the Ashtabula Mall on a cold February night, even though it was located in Ashtabula Township, east of Ashtabula city.[40]

As the May 7 election drew near, the community was still divided on Issue 1, and there was no groundswell behind either Superintendent Licate or Solicitor Simon. However, the debate did ignite several reactions.

The Ashtabula area school board's immediate reaction to the Licate vs. Simon debate was to reiterate their commitment to Sanborn Road as the location of the new high school. The school board president said she would not bow to pressure to change to a city location. Board member Maryann Stevenson asserted that those who opposed the Sanborn Road site were just trying to complicate the issue and characterized opposition to Issue 1 as "planned, deliberate obstructionism."[41]

In the days following the *Star Beacon's* publication of "Licate vs. Simon," Issue 1 was the topic that dominated the opinion page of the newspaper. Darrell Hamilton, a local historian and political candidate, was representative of those who were against Issue 1 as he explained: "I would like to see new schools. But they should not be built at the expense of the city's pride and dignity. The city has lost enough. We cannot afford to lose any more." A letter from Rosemary Bernato, an Ashtabula elementary school principal, was representative of those in favor of Issue 1 because, "Ashtabula students need to have facilities the same as or better than the facilities that I have visited. Our

[39] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 2), *Star Beacon,* April 23, 2002, sec. C8
[40] Megan Poinski, "Simon vs. Licate" (part 2), *Star Beacon,* April 23, 2002, sec. C8
[41] Megan Poinski, "Board clarifies issues at meeting," *Star Beacon,* April 25, 2002, sec. A1.

students are entitled to new buildings, modern athletic facilities, and state-of-the-art cultural facilities."[42]

Citizens of Ashtabula Revitalizing Education (CARE), the grass-roots group who successfully opposed building a consolidated high school in 1993, 1997, and 1998 had a lower profile in 2002 but were still actively engaged in passing out brochures explaining that Issue 1 should be defeated because existing facilities could be renovated, and that building new buildings are not the best solution for the school district. Echoing Simon's argument that Issue 1 was not a now or never deal, CARE explained that the school district had several years to pass a local bond issue to be eligible for Ohio School Facilities Commission (OSFC) funds. CARE members also indicated that the OSFC helps pay for the renovation of existing school buildings, not just new buildings. Most importantly, the members of CARE were frustrated with the school board's failure to involve the community in school facilities decisions. One member asserted: "When it comes to something like rebuilding the entire school system that will cost the taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars, the decision should not be made by just five people [the school board]."[43]

On April 30, the editors of the *Star Beacon* declared their support for Issue 1 citing the poor conditions of the district's buildings and suggested that passing Issue 1 and receiving $76 million from the state was a "great deal."[44] The *Star Beacon's* endorsement of Issue 1 represented the 9th time the newspaper endorsed a bond issue to construct a consolidated high school in Ashtabula.

Results

On May 7, 2002, the voters of the Ashtabula Area City School District passed Issue 1 by a margin of 57% for the bond issue. Within the City of Ashtabula, it passed by a smaller margin. Even wards one and two, the Harbor area of Ashtabula city, which in past bond issues overwhelmingly voted no, a small majority voted for Issue 1.

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[42] "Letters to the Editor," *Star Beacon,* April 27, 2002

[43] Megan Poinski, "Committee says 'no' vote is the best way to CARE," *Star Beacon,* April 25, 2002, sec. A2.

[44] *Star Beacon,* "New schools for Ashtabula district," April 30, 2002, sec. A2.

Table 3.
Issue 1 Election Results of May 7, 2002

	Ashtabula city	*Ashtabula Twp.*	*Saybrook Twp.*	*Plymouth Twp.*	Total	%
FOR	2379	323	1300	403	**4405***	**57.0**
AGAINST[45]	2170	142	736	272	**3321**	**43.0**

Source: Ashtabula County Board of Elections

Reactions

The Ashtabula area school board was overwhelmingly pleased with the bond issue's solid win. Superintendent Licate said the passage of Issue 1 was a "wake up call" for the community to do great things together. City Solicitor Simon and City Manager Pugliese called for fence mending and reiterated that in opposing the bond issue they were just fulfilling the duty they were elected to perform—to advocate for the interests of the City of Ashtabula in all decisions. However, the group CARE was less conciliatory. CARE member John Carlson criticized those who supported Issue 1 as fanatics who "badgered" and "threatened" public officials, and who caused more damage to the community than the loss of the districts neighborhood schools. Carlson added: "They'll have their school, but at what price? I fear that it has cost us much more than the $44 million bond issue.[46]

In addition, on May 10th, CARE member and former Ashtabula city councilor Ken Beacon filed a complaint with the Ashtabula County grand jury alleging that the Ashtabula area school board, administration, faculty, and some students were guilty of bribery on Election Day. Beacon's complaint cited a letter to Lakeside High School students from principal Richard Bonde that urged students to vote and offered them free pizza at school the day after Election Day if they brought in a letter signed by the poll worker. The grand jury dismissed the claim.[47] Clearly, Issue 1 left rifts within the community.

[45] From Kingsville Twp., there were zero votes for and one (1) vote against Issue 1.
[46] Megan Poinski, "School issue not a big win in city," *Star Beacon,* May 9, 2002, sec. A1.
[47] Shelley Terry, "'Pizza for Votes' not a crime," *Star Beacon,* June 8, 2002, sec. A1.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the leadership of Superintendent William Licate, who advocated the passage of Issue 1, and the leadership of Ashtabula city solicitor Thomas Simon, who opposed Issue 1. Their debate appeared in late April 2002, two weeks before citizens would decide on Issue 1—a bond issue which would build a consolidated Lakeside High School building in suburban Saybrook Township. The debate focused on the location of the high school and the impact of it on the development of the Greater Ashtabula area.

The debate between Licate and Simon represented the leadership climax in the process to build a consolidated high school in Ashtabula, begun in 1963. After a process lasting nearly 40 years, the most critical issue became the location of the consolidated high school. Both Licate and Simon agreed that a new high school would become a community center and would be an important element for the development of the Ashtabula area. However, polarization within the Ashtabula Area City School District and the failure of leaders to come to a consensus on how to use the new high school to address it fueled more rancor and polarization. Licate attempted to reduce the importance of the political, socioeconomic, and racial divisions within the Greater Ashtabula area the school district served. He envisioned the passage of Issue 1 and the construction of a new Lakeside High School in Saybrook as a great deal that would benefit the entire school system. Simon attempted to highlight social differences within the area and grounded his leadership vision in the belief that school buildings are central ingredients in economic development; he asserted that locating in Saybrook would unfairly disadvantage the economic viability of the city.[48] Licate was doing what he thought was best for the school system and Simon was fulfilling his oath of office to do what is in the best interest of the city. Locating the high school in suburban Saybrook fulfilled the district's goals including utilizing 123-acres of land it owned, following a population shift to Saybrook Township, and getting in line with the nationwide trend of high school complexes complete with athletic fields on large, isolated parcels of land to facilitate the administration's responsibility of maintaining security on the site. On the other hand, city

[48] See Beaumont, 2002, Stweard, 1999, Rury, 1999, Cutler, 1989.

leaders like Simon would have been negligent if they did not attempt to keep Lakeside High School inside the city limits as research shows that schools are crucial assets for cities to leverage when undergoing revitalization efforts.[49]

Myron Orfield has discussed the polarization within metropolitan regions and suggested that since the forces of polarization operate throughout a greater metropolitan region, only a metropolitan solution can change them.[50] However, in 2002, no leader or coalition of leaders in Greater Ashtabula emerged to focus on a broad community solution on how the new high school could and should be used to make the Greater Ashtabula area into a more attractive and livable environment, to solve the issue of concentrated poverty in the central city Ashtabula, and to encourage land use patterns which conserve natural resources. While Orfield has suggested an elected metropolitan council to address these issues, Portz, Stein, and Jones take a less bureaucratic view and assert the importance of building cross-sector coalitions (business, educational, religious, and others), or "civic capacity," to articulate common goals and an action plan for how the new schools could be leveraged to revitalize the city.[51]

The conflict and polarization on Issue 1spilled over into the construction phase of a consolidated Lakeside High School.

[49] Beaumont, 2002.
[50] Myron Orfield, *Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1997): 74.
[51] Portz, Stein, and Jones, 1999, pgs. 1-21.

CHAPTER 7

WET POLITICS AND BAT LEADERSHIP

"Frustration is in the air as one obstacle after another keeps getting in the way of the school board's efforts to move forward with the new high school."

Star Beacon, June 29, 2004[1]

The polarization and conflict that resulted from the failure of leaders to build a consensus behind the consolidated Lakeside High spilled over into the construction phase of the school, even though funds to build the new school were already secured. Issue 1 netted the school district $44 million, which was coupled with $76 million from the Ohio School Facilities Commission to build all new school buildings for the Ashtabula district. The first school scheduled to be constructed was a physically consolidated Lakeside High School on a 123-acre site, at Sanborn Road, in suburban Saybrook Township. During the construction phase of a consolidated Lakeside High School, the school was split between the two old high school buildings in the City of Ashtabula. The construction process of a new Lakeside High School was plagued by leadership and legal challenges, which threatened to prevent the school district from building Lakeside High on the Sanborn Road property.

The Sanborn Road property had been a controversial factor in Ashtabula high school consolidation politics. The Ashtabula area school board purchased the Sanborn Road property in September 1993 with the intent of locating a consolidated high school on it. Bond issues in November 1993, November 1997, and May 1998, which would have built the high school at Sanborn Road, faced strong opposition because the location was not in the demographic center of the school district, and because it was outside the City of Ashtabula limits it would harm the economic viability of the city. Similar opposition was raised during the 2002 bond issue campaign, especially by Ashtabula city

[1] Traci Shuman, "Bat news for Lakeside," *Star Beacon*, June 29, 2004, p. A1.

solicitor Tom Simon. Once the 2002 bond issue passed, it seemed that there were no other obstacles that could stand in the way of building a consolidated Lakeside High School on the Sanborn Road property. However, the reemergence of Tom Simon as an opponent to the Sanborn Road property and the unforeseen presence of a pregnant Indiana bat on the property were two obstacles school leaders had to overcome if they wanted to move forward with the construction of Lakeside High School on Sanborn Road. This chapter presents the political and leadership dynamics of these two obstacles—the final two leadership challenges in the making of a consolidated Lakeside High School.

The Construction Phase of Lakeside High

On May 10, 2002, just after the passage of Issue 1, the Ashtabula area school board began planning the design of a consolidated Lakeside High School building with their architect. The design included the construction of a 234,000 square foot high school building, parking areas, five tennis courts, two baseball fields, two softball fields, a soccer field, two football practice fields, and a 5,000 seat football stadium with track on the Sanborn Road property. The school board was also considering locating a junior high school on the Sanborn Road site adjacent to Lakeside High School. The school board promised to finalize plans in May 2003, and hold a groundbreaking for Lakeside High School that June. The opening of Lakeside High School to students was tentatively set for August 2005.[2]

The school board's timeline was first delayed by wetlands that were on the Sanborn Road site. A "wetlands" is a low-lying area covered by water, or an area of land that is waterlogged during a substantial portion of the year. The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency has administrative rules and regulations in place to protect and preserve wetlands from destruction by developers. The Ohio EPA sought to protect wetlands because they are home to diverse plants, wildlife, insects, and because many endangered species inhabit wetlands during part of their life cycles. Wetlands are also critical to preserving water quality. The most common threat to wetlands was farming

[2] Megan Poinski, "Fun time for BOE," *Star Beacon*, May 10, 2002, sec. A1

and development. If a developer wished to disturb or "degrade" a wetland by draining it and/or filling it in with clean dirt, they were first required to make a formal application to the Ohio EPA to obtain a Clean Water Act Section 401/Section 404 permit.[3] To obtain a Section 401/404 permit, a developer's application must provide evidence that the disturbance and degradation of wetlands was socially and economically justified, and that no alternative to their destruction existed. A public hearing and public comment must also take place before the Ohio EPA could grant a Section 401/404 permit because the destruction of wetlands affects the public's interest in natural resources. Without the Section 401/404 permit, it was illegal for a developer to fill in more than 1.33 acres of wetlands.

The AACSD school board knew that Sanborn Road had wetlands before the property was purchased in September 1993. Before the purchase, the school board hired EDP Consultants, Inc., a construction consulting firm, to complete a preliminary wetlands evaluation at the Sanborn Road site. In their July 1993 report, EDP Consultants determined that there were three wetland areas on the property. The first and second wetlands were associated with an intermittent stream, and the third was associated with a man-made pond on the property. According to a drawing of the property in the report, 20 to 30 acres of the 123-acre site were covered by wetlands. In their report, EDP Consultants warned that if the school district wanted to fill in more than 1.33 acres of wetlands with dirt, the Ohio EPA would require them to first obtain a permit and then to mitigate the wetlands they destroyed. Wetland mitigation meant that for every acre of Sanborn Road wetland the school district destroyed for the purpose of constructing a high school, they would have to pay a significant fee to reconstruct that same amount of wetlands on another piece of land within the same watershed. For example, if 10 acres of wetlands were destroyed, the district would have to pay for the preservation of 10 acres of wetlands at a wetland mitigation bank in the same watershed.[4] On September 24,

[3] See ohiowetlands.org and Ohio EPA "Protecting Wetlands" located at http://www.epa.state.oh.us/pic/wetlands/html/wetland.html. Downloaded 6/4/06.

[4] BBC&M Engineering, Inc. Letter to Mr. Mike Smith of the Ohio EPA, February 18, 2004, Appendix A: Gail L. Deligianis, AACSD board member, and Superintendent William J. Licate. Letter to Mike Smith of the Ohio EPA. February 4, 2004, attachment #5:EDP Consultants, Inc. to Marr, Knapp, and Crawfis Associates, Inc. (architect of the Ashtabula Area City Schools), July 30, 1993, with carbon copy to Darlene Farren, treasurer, AACSD. These communications were obtained from the Ohio EPA.

1993, the school board purchased the Sanborn Road property knowing it contained wetlands, reasoning that "wetland issues were less prevalent at this site [Sanborn Road] when compared to the other two sites" the board considered purchasing.[5]

The school district did not publicize the July 1993 findings of EDP Consultants, which determined 20 to 30 acres of wetlands on the Sanborn property. However, some citizens raised concerns about wetlands on the Sanborn Road property beginning in 1998. In late April 1998, just days before the failed May 1998 bond issue election, CARE member Earle Kotila asserted that because of wetlands and drainage problems, it would be very expensive to build on the Sanborn Road site. The school board dismissed the claim and argued that the Sanborn Road site was suitable for construction. [6] In the Licate versus Simon debate in April 2002, one of Tom Simon's minor arguments was that to build a high school on Sanborn Road would be expensive because of drainage problems. Superintendent Licate maintained that Sanborn Road was an excellent building site.[7]

The Application for Clean Water Act Section 401/404 Permits

The school district's engineering firm, BBC&M Engineering, completed a more detailed evaluation of wetlands on the Sanborn Road site as the district began the process of designing the high school in late May 2002. The 2002 evaluation included representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and was supplemented by aerial photographs of the property. While a July 1993 report determined 20 to 30 acres of wetlands on the property, the 2002 evaluation determined a total of 37 acres of wetlands on the site.[8]

Once the school board and architect completed the design of the high school, it determined that it would need to fill in with clean soil a total of 7.47 acres of wetlands to complete the project. Given the amount of wetlands the school district would have to fill in, the school district was legally required to make an application for a Clean Water Act

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[5] BBC&M Engineering, Inc. Letter to Mr. Mike Smith of the Ohio EPA, February 18, 2004, Appendix A: Gail L. Deligianis and William J. Licate, Letter to Mike Smith of the Ohio EPA, February 4, 2004, page 2.
[6] Brian M. Ewig, "Site selection fuels debate," *Star Beacon,* April 28, 1998, sec. A1; Brian M. Ewig, "Panel: New school not needed," *Star Beacon,* April 27, 1998, sec. A1
[7] "Licate vs. Simon," *Star Beacon,* April 23, 2002, sec. C8.
[8] BBC&M Engineering, Inc., Letter to Ashtabula Area City Schools and MKC Associates (architect), August 20, 2003, page 2.

Section 404/404 permit from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA). The application for these permits was filed on August 18, 2003. As part of the application, the school district promised to mitigate, or replace, 7.5 acres of wetlands by purchasing 7.5 acres of mitigation credits from the Trumbull Creek Wetlands Mitigation Bank in western Ashtabula County, at a cost of $14,000 per acre.[9]

Simon's Campaign Against the Section 401/404 Application

In late 2003 and early 2004, Ashtabula city solicitor Thomas J. Simon waged an aggressive campaign against the Ashtabula Area City Schools application for a Section 401/404 permit to fill in wetlands on Sanborn Road. Solicitor Simon's goal was twofold. First, his opposition to the school district's application to obtain a Section 401/404 permit might lead the Ohio EPA to deny the permit. The denial of the permit to fill in wetlands might force the school board to abandon the Sanborn Road property all together. Secondly, if the school board was not going to build the high school on Sanborn Road, the City of Ashtabula could step in to help find a building site for the high school within the city limits. This strategy was the latest in Simon's leadership effort to get the school board to locate a consolidated high school in the City of Ashtabula, which he began in the late 1990s.

As an applicant for a Section 401/404 permit, the Ashtabula Area City Schools were required to explain why the destruction of wetlands was economically and socially justified. The school district's engineering firm, BBC&M Engineering, Inc, authored the application and asserted that the destruction of 7.47 acres of wetlands was justified because it would help the economy, be a catalyst for the revitalization of the community, increase property values, and be, "in sharp contrast to the existing urban setting that both existing high school buildings occupy."[10] BBC&M also asserted the destruction of wetlands would make room for the location of Lakeside High School, a junior high, and several athletic fields all on the same site, which would be a cost-savings benefit for

[9] BBC&M Engineering, Inc., Prepared for Ashtabula Area City Schools. Application For Clean Water Act Section 404 & Section 401 Authorization Proposed Lakeside High School Site Saybrook Township—Ashtabula County, Ohio, August 18, 2003, page 16.

[10] BBC&M Engineering, Inc., Prepared for Ashtabula Area City Schools. Application For Clean Water Act Section 404 & Section 401 Authorization Proposed Lakeside High School Site Saybrook Township—Ashtabula County, Ohio, August 18, 2003, pg. 13.

taxpayers. BBC&M also argued that if the district could not obtain the Section 401/404 permit, it would be able to construct only a high school building on Sanborn Road which would mean additional taxpayer expenditures for the purchase of land for athletic fields and a junior high.[11] Early informal talks between the Ohio EPA and the school district's engineering firm BBC&M were positive, and an Ohio EPA representative called the site design plan in the application a "reasonable approach."[12]

The AACSD application for a Section 401/404 permit was required to go through a 60-day public comment period, between late November 2003 and January 2004. This gave the public-at-large a chance to respond to the application for permits, which would lower water quality in the Ashtabula River watershed. Public review was intended to help the Ohio EPA make its decision whether or not to grant the permits. On January 8, 2004, the Ohio EPA conducted an information session and public hearing held at Kent State University—Ashtabula Branch in the City of Ashtabula. The meeting was attended by more than 100 people and elected officials.[13] The January 8 meeting was not contentious, as most of the citizens who spoke at this hearing were supportive of the school district's application. Tom Simon attended but did not speak at this meeting. In the days following the meeting, several people, including Ashtabula's state senator and state representative, wrote letters supporting the districts application for the Section 401/404 permits.[14]

Controversy erupted after Ashtabula city solicitor Thomas J. Simon sent a 21-page letter to the Ohio EPA on January 15, 2004, objecting to the Ashtabula Area City Schools application for a Section 401/404 permit. In his letter, Simon asserted that he spoke for himself and the citizens of the City of Ashtabula. In this letter, Simon asserted that the school district's application failed to justify the destruction of wetlands on Sanborn Road and argued that there were several alternative locations for Lakeside High

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[11] BBC&M, Ashtabula Area City Schools Application for Section 401/404 Permit, pages 7-20.

[12] BBC&M, Application for Section 401/404 Permit, pg. 1

[13] Shelley Terry, "Crowd packs EPA hearing," *Star Beacon*, January 9, 2004, p. A1

[14] Vincent E. Messerley, President, Ohio Wetlands Foundation, Letter to Michael Smith of the Ohio EPA, March 1, 2004; Senator Marc Dann (Ohio 32nd), Letter to Mike Smith of the Ohio EPA, January 14, 2004; Representative L. George Distel (Ohio 99th), Letter to Ohio EPA, January 14, 2004. Copies of these letters were obtained from the Ohio EPA.

School, especially in the City of Ashtabula.[15] Simon asserted that the school district's application failed in its responsibility to prove that there was no alternative to the destruction of wetlands on Sanborn Road.[16] Simon grounded his argument in the Anti-degradation Rule. The Anti-degradation Rule was an administrative rule of the Ohio EPA that must be adhered to in Section 401/401 permit applications. The Rule stated that if wetlands are to be destroyed, the applicant must demonstrate that no other, less environmentally damaging alternatives existed. Simon said that any assertion by the school board that alternatives did not exist somewhere within its geographical boundaries "is, at best, inaccurate." Simon went on to highlight the $1 million offer for the purchase of land in the city for the high school, which was made to the AACSD school board on February 25, 2002.[17]

Simon concluded that the Ashtabula Area City Schools' application for a Section 401/404 permit should be denied by the Ohio EPA because there were other locations, particularly within the City of Ashtabula, for the construction of a consolidated high school. Secondly, Simon concluded that the destruction of wetlands was not socially or economically justified as the school district argued. Simon asserted: "The best way to promote the social and economic well-being of the district is to locate the new high school near the homes and in the neighborhoods of the vast majority of the district's school children and residents. In that event, the location should be inside the corporate limits of the City of Ashtabula."[18]

Lakeside High Location in Limbo: January—May 2004

Tom Simon's January 15 letter to the Ohio EPA objecting to the school district's application for a Section 401/404 permit ignited a firestorm from several leaders within the Ashtabula area community. Days after Simon's letter was sent, Ashtabula City Council Vice President Josephine Miesner, who was one of the city officials that supported Issue 1 in May 2002, took exception with Simon's assertion that he spoke on behalf of all Ashtabula residents. City council President Robert Beacom said he was not

[15] Thomas J. Simon, Letter to Patti Smith of the Ohio EPA. January 15, 2004, p. 3
[16] Thomas J.Simon, p. 3
[17] Thomas J. Simon, p. 6
[18] Thomas J. Simon, p. 7

bothered by Simon's letter, but noted that he was not speaking on behalf of city council. City manager August Pugliese said that if the Sanborn Road property does not work out, he said that he hoped the high school would be moved to Massucci Field in the City of Ashtabula.[19] Superintendent William Licate asserted that if the high school had to be moved to another site, it would cost district taxpayers a couple of million dollars. School board member Martha Shippy said she would not vote for moving the high school location. As a member of the 2002 Issue 1 campaign committee, Messiah Lutheran Church Pastor Elizabeth Eaton was angry that Simon's letter to the Ohio EPA might delay school construction.[20] An Ashtabula attorney also wrote to the Ohio EPA warning that, "this man's [Simon] position is entirely political, and not environmental, in its motivation."[21]

Five days after Simon's letter was sent, on January 20, Mike Smith of the Ohio EPA required the Ashtabula Area City Schools to formally respond to five questions that resulted from the January 8 public hearing and citizen letters received on the matter. Four of the questions were technical in nature. However, one question the Ohio EPA asked seemed to result from Tom Simon's letter of objection. The question asked the school district to explain if alternative sites to the Sanborn Road property were considered for building the high school, to explain the criteria for selecting the site, and to discuss any sites in the City of Ashtabula that were considered.[22]

The Ashtabula Area City Schools response to the Ohio EPA's query came in an extensive February 4, 2004 letter from Superintendent William Licate and school board member Gail L. Deligianis. In the letter, Licate and Deligianis outlined the history of how and why the Sanborn Road property was purchased in September 1993. To bolster their claim that the school board did consider two building sites in the city, it produced school board minutes that verified board members made a cursory walking tour of two potential sites in the City of Ashtabula (Woodman Avenue and Columbus Avenue) in mid-February 2002. The Licate—Deligianis letter declined to mention that, besides the

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[19] Greta Hale, "School site slugfest resumes," *Star Beacon*, January 27, 2004.
[20] Greta Hale, "School site slugfest resumes," *Star Beacon*, January 27, 2004.
[21] Michael Franklin, Attorney-at-Law, Email to Patti Smith of the Ohio EPA, May 5, 2004. This email was made available by the Ohio EPA.
[22] Mike Smith of the Ohio EPA to Jon Demarest of BBC&M Engineering, email sent January 20, 2004. A copy of this email was made available by the Ohio EPA.

walking tour, there was no further investigation of the two Ashtabula city sites. The Licate—Deligianis letter asserted that after making visits and "collecting information" on the two Ashtabula city sites and the Sanborn Road site it owned since 1993, the school board voted on February 27, 2002 that the best location for Lakeside High School was Sanborn Road.[23] The Licate—Deligianis letter concluded that even though a majority of students lived within the corporate limits of Ashtabula:

> That balance has the possibility of shifting in time as the district's growth potential is in the townships. This is evidenced by the large number of new housing starts in the townships compared to very little movement within the city limits. Statistics show the greatest number of residential starts to be in Saybrook Township where the Sanborn Road site is located. For example, there is a 125-lot housing allotment already underway on the west side of Sanborn Road. One of the selling points for this development is that is located "just across the street from the new Lakeside High School."[24]

The AACSD also defended the building of the consolidated high school on Sanborn Road based on three positive expert evaluations of the site including the district's architect MKC & Associates, a member of the Ashtabula County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Ashtabula County Engineer.[25]

Simon's letter to the Ohio EPA, the questions from the Ohio EPA, and the possibility that Lakeside High School might not be built at Sanborn Road because of wetlands on the property put nerves on edge and made for a contentious Ashtabula Area City School Board meeting on February 11, 2004. School board member Steve J. Candela questioned why Simon would send the letter to the Ohio EPA to threaten the possibility that the agency would refuse to grant their Section 401/404 Permit. Superintendent Licate answered that, "Simon wants to keep the battle going." Licate

[23] BBC&M Engineering, Inc. Letter to Mr. Mike Smith of the Ohio EPA, February 18, 2004, Appendix A: Gail L. Deligianis, AACSD board member, and Superintendent William J. Licate. Letter to Mike Smith of the Ohio EPA. February 4, 2004, pages 4-7. These communications were made available by the Ohio EPA.
[24] BBC&M Engineering, Inc. Letter to Mr. Mike Smith of the Ohio EPA, February 18, 2004, Appendix A: Gail L. Deligianis, AACSD board member, and Superintendent William J. Licate. Letter to Mike Smith of the Ohio EPA. February 4, 2004, page 8.
[25] BBC&M Engineering, Inc. Letter to Mr. Mike Smith of the Ohio EPA, February 18, 2004, Appendix A: Gail L. Deligianis, AACSD board member, and Superintendent William J. Licate. Letter to Mike Smith of the Ohio EPA. February 4, 2004, attachments # 18 and 19.

argued that more than $1 million would be lost if the high school had to be moved because money spent on the architect and design of the high school was "site-specific."[26]

After sending his letter, city solicitor Tom Simon continued his campaign against the Sanborn Road site in a *Star Beacon* article that appeared February 14, 2004. Simon bolstered his campaign against the Sanborn Road property with the help of community development specialist Patti Choby, president of Cobalt Group, Inc. of Cleveland, Ohio. Choby asserted that, "When you choose to build those [school] buildings outside the city, your setting up development patterns that are going to drain resources from the city." Simon again argued that the Sanborn Road site was wetlands and argued that it was not too late to move the consolidated Lakeside High School to another site. Simon concluded that if the high school was built on Sanborn Road in Saybrook Township, "socially and economically, the city will wither and die. There will be an economic flight to Saybrook Township because people will follow the schools." In the newspaper, Superintendent Licate responded: "Now it's up to the school district to save the city? Our job is to teach reading, writing and arithmetic, and we're struggling with that. Now we're expected to save the city? There's something wrong with that." School board president Charlie Hauff held out the possibility that the high school might not be built on Sanborn Road because of wetlands on the property.[27]

While Simon was still pressing his case why Lakeside High should not be built on the Sanborn Road property, Superintendent William Licate declared that he not only wanted a high school built there, but a junior high as well. Simon suggested instead that the school district turn Sanborn Road property into a wetland mitigation bank, and asserted that, "The ground [at Sanborn Road] is saturated with water. Dr. Licate and two members of the school board have an emotional attachment to that land for reasons I don't understand."[28]

Simon's campaign against the Sanborn Road property led to him being criticized by an editor of the *Star Beacon.* Special sections editor Robert Lebzelter suggested that Simon's efforts to locate the high school in the city are too little too late and that Simon

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[26] Shelley Terry, "Bickering dominates 'Bula BOE meeting," *StarBeacon,* February 12, 2004.
[27] *Star Beacon,* "Save the city of Ashtabula!," February 14, 2004, sec. A1
[28] Shelley Terry, "Simon plan all wet, says Licate," *Star Beacon,* February 17, 2004, p. A1

needs to "deal with it."[29] By late February 2004, Simon's campaign against the Sanborn Road site was getting stale and viewed as obstructionist rather than serving any greater purpose.[30]

By mid-March 2004, pre-construction activity at the Sanborn Road site grew to a halt because of uncertainty surrounding the application for a Section 401/404 permit. When a bid package was placed in front of the school board for their approval, some board members hesitated. Despite strong urging by the construction manager that costs would increase if the bid package was not approved, a majority of the school board decided not to approve the package because permits from the Ohio EPA were not in hand.[31]

Finally, on May 19, 2004, the Ohio EPA issued the Clean Water Act Section 401/404 permit to the Ashtabula Area City Schools so that they could fill 7.47 acres of Sanborn Road wetlands with clean fill dirt. Construction of the consolidated Lakeside High School on Sanborn Road was allowed to move forward.

Groundbreaking at Lakeside High School

The May 24, 2004 groundbreaking ceremony for the consolidated Lakeside High School was threatened by storms. At noon, the sky was dark and threatening, but by 1 p.m. the storm cell passed and the clouds dispersed. The Lakeside High School Marching Band, cheerleaders, the AACSD Board of Education, contingencies of each school building in the district and other invited guests began the festivities at the Windermere building on Sanborn Road, which was used as a preschool and for other central office personnel. At 2:00 pm, the parade marched the short distance from Windermere to 6600 Sanborn Road, the future home to a consolidated Lakeside High School. At the site Superintendent William J. Licate furrowed into the sandy soil with a decorative green and gold (the Lakeside Dragon's school colors) shovel. Large amounts of hay were put down to stabilize the soggy ground for the convenience of the dignitaries and audience. Licate then gave a speech to mark the occasion. He said:

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[29] Robert Lebzelter, "District can't believe its own luck," *Star Beacon*, February 21, 2004, p. A5

[30] Shelley Terry, "Consultant calls placing schools in Saybrook 'irresponsible'," *Star Beacon,* February 14, 2004, sec. A1.

[31] Shelley Terry, "New high school project suffers another delay," *Star Beacon,* March 18, 2004, sec. A1.

> Today is a day to rejoice—for after literally decades of denial—we have finally decided to build a new high school. After years of false promises, false starts, and false hopes, we have committed our community to providing a school building worthy of those who will teach and learn in—every day. And after what seemed like a never ending game of passing the buck, making excuses, and being negative, we stand together—on the threshold of a new era of educational excellence that our new school building will come to symbolize.[32]

The front page of the *Star Beacon* featured William Licate front and center with a hard hat on, holding a decorative shovel, and looking out on the crowd under the bold headline: "And the dirt flies." The day of Lakeside High's groundbreaking was peppered with good cheer, but when city officials were called on to stand and be recognized, only Ashtabula Council President Jospheine Misner was present; City Manager Pugliese and City Solicitor Simon were conspicuously absent.[33]

Indiana Bats Versus Lakeside High School

With Section 401/404 permits in hand and the groundbreaking ceremony past, it did not seem like anything, even Tom Simon, could stop the construction of a new consolidated Lakeside High School. However, in June 2004, one month after the groundbreaking ceremony, Indiana Bats, a species on the state and federal endangered species list since 1967, were found at the Sanborn Road site. According to the *Star Beacon*, the Indiana bat was rare in Ohio and their total numbers had decreased from 800,000 in 1967 to 350,000 present in 27 states in 2004.[34] Between June 17 and 18, the Davey Resource Group who was hired to survey the Sanborn property, discovered 13 endangered Indiana bats on the site, and one of them was a pregnant female.[35] On June 29, 2004, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service called the construction process of the high school to a halt because the presence of one pregnant bat indicated the presence of 25 to 100 other adult females in the area. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said the school district would need to obtain a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to continue

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[32] Licate's groundbreaking speech is located at http://www.aacs.net/Grndbrk/doc/doc.htm. and downloaded March 6, 2006.
[33] Margie Trax, "And the dirt flies," *Star Beacon*, May 24, 2004
[34] Leann Moore, "Bat bites Lakeside building project, *Star Beacon* online, June 24, 2004. Located at www.starbeacon.com.
[35] Leeann Moore, "Bat bites Lakeside building project," *Star Beacon* online, June 24, 2004. Located at www.starbeacon.com.

with construction. To obtain the permit, a 6 to 8 week "jeopardy analysis" would have to be completed to ascertain whether the Indiana bats would be put in danger by the construction project. The school district's project manager said he needed to make an assessment about whether to terminate the construction contract for the time being because of the delay.[36]

Ashtabula's congressman, Steven LaTourette, a Republican first elected in 1994, stepped in and expressed his frustration at the delay saying to the *Star Beacon*, "Right now, a 123-acre site and a $44 million project are being held hostage by one pregnant bat, and I can't believe local officials have to wait 10 days for a meeting."[37] Congressman LaTourette's intervention resulted in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service moving quickly to survey exactly where the bat lived. However, construction remained stalled.[38]

The story that the construction of a high school might have to be abandoned because of an endangered bat nesting on the property was reported by the Associated Press and published in several newspapers including the *Columbus Dispatch.*[39] On June 24, 2004, even a conservative California group got involved in the "bat news" in Ashtabula on their website titled: "Right Thinking From the Left Coast." In an article titled, "It's A Bat, Man," the unidentified California author called the happenings in Ashtabula an excellent example of "environmental lunacy" and concluded: Stopping production on this school because of a flying rodent is insane and utterly unjustifiable."[40] The *Star Beacon* reported that environmentalists believed the Indiana bat provided some benefit to the world, such as assisting in seed dispersal and pollination, and controlling agricultural pests and mosquitoes carrying the deadly West Nile virus. Scientists have used bats to help in the development of birth control, artificial insemination, navigational aides for the blind, and vaccine production and drug testing.[41]

On June 29, 2004, the best-case scenario for the Ashtabula school board was that the Lakeside High construction project would be on hold for at least 90 days while

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[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Mark Todd, "New bat time for session over rodent," *Star Beacon* online, June 25, 2004, Locate at www.starbeacon.com.
[39] *Columbus Dispatch*, "Bats on site endanger new high school," June 30, 2004, sec. B1.
[40] Right Thinking from the Left Coast. "It's A Bat, Man." June 24, 2004. Located at http://right-thinking.com/index.php/weblog/its a bat man/. Downloaded 7/12/05
[41] Traci Shuman, "Mysterious mammals valuable to environment," *Star Beacon*, June 29, 2004, sec. A1

surveys were completed. The worst-case scenario for the school board was that if surveys found that the endangered Indiana bat established a summer habitat on the Sanborn Road property, construction at the site would have to be permanently abandoned, and the AACSD school board would have to find and purchase another building site for the consolidated Lakeside High. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service asserted that a second survey, costing $7,000, would be needed to determine the habitat status of the Indiana bat. With $2 million already spent at the construction site, AACSD Board President Charlie Hauff was hesitant about investing another $7,000 at the site if they might not end up being able to build there.[42] The school board paid for the survey work as the construction of the high school remained idle.

By June 30, Superintendent Licate, school board members, the district's construction firm and representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife began formal negotiations aimed at protecting the Indiana bats' habitat and allowing the construction of the consolidated Lakeside High School to move forward. Ashtabula city manager Pugliese, seeing another opportunity for locating the high school in the city, asserted that if the construction project does not move forward in Saybrook, the city "would be glad to help."[43] Finally, an agreement was reached in late July 2004, which included a 55-acre conservation easement on the part of the Sanborn Road property near the Indiana bat habitat. The conservation easement required the construction project manager to reorganize athletic fields on the site, which increased overall construction costs by more than $34,000.[44] As a result of the agreement, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers issued a permit that allowed the construction of Lakeside High School to move forward.[45]

A relieved Superintendent Licate said, "As far as I am concerned, people of this community voted to build a new high school on this site, and I think it's about time we do just that."[46] A "bat celebration" was held at the Sanborn Road site in early August 2004,

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[42] Traci Shuman, "Bat news for Lakeside," *Star Beacon,* June 29, 2004.
[43] Traci Schuman, "Officials may have solution to Lakside bat woes," *Star Beacon,* June 30, 2004, sec. A1.
[44] Traci Schuman, "Lakeside rare bat problem resolved," *Star Beacon* online. July 22, 2004. Located at www.starbeacon.com; Leeann Carroll, "Ashtabula BOE worried about cost of bat delays," *Star Beacon,* August 29, 2004, sec. A1.
[45] Traci Schuman, "Army corps of Engineers issue permit—clearing can begin for Lakeside High School," *Star Beacon,* July 29, 2004, sec. A1.
[46] Traci Schuman, "Lakeside rare bat problem resolved," *Star Beacon* online. July 22, 2004. Located at www.starbeacon.com.

attended by school district officials, Congressman Steve LaTourette, and Deputy Secretary Steve Griles from the U.S. Department of the Interior, and there were congratulations all around. School board members thanked Secretary Griles, Congressman LaTourette, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife officials for coming together on an agreement that allowed construction of Lakeside High School to proceed. Tim Van Echo, vice president of the school district's engineering firm reflected on the two major political controversies that had taken place during the construction phase of Lakeside High School and concluded in the *Star Beacon*, "I've never had a project in 25 years with such a high profile."[47] Writing in a weekly column, Congressman Steve LaTourette commented: "During the decade I've been in Congress, I've been called on countless times to assist with local problems, but few have been as challenging, complex, and frustrating as the discovery of the pregnant Indiana bat at Lakeside High School."[48] The 240,000 square foot consolidated Lakeside High moved forward and was scheduled to be completed in August 2006, a year later than originally planned.[49]

In April 2006, the Ashtabula area community got their first look inside the new consolidated Lakeside High School during a weekend tour the district held. Lakeside High School was slated to be officially dedicated on August 19, 2006; 2006-2007 would be the inaugural school year for Lakeside High School.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the leadership struggles and negotiations involved in the construction process of making a consolidated Lakeside High School. Ashtabula city solicitor Thomas Simon continued his campaign against the Sanborn Road site by sending a letter to the Ohio EPA opposing a permit the Ashtabula Area City Schools needed to fill in wetlands and build Lakeside High School. Tom Simon's efforts were fruitless as the permits were granted and construction was allowed to continue. However, another obstacle to building the high school on Sanborn Road soon presented itself: an

[47] Traci Shuman, "Washington official joins Indiana bat solution celebration," *Star Beacon,* August 12, 2004.
[48] Steven LaTourette, "Victory for the Indiana bat and Lakeside High School," *The Gazette,* August 4, 2004.
[49] Lisa Davis, "Lakeside High School becoming a reality," *Star Beacon,* January 22, 2006, sec. C1.

endangered Indiana bat nesting on the Lakeside High construction site. An agreement was reached between the school district and U.S. Fish and Wildlife officials that provided for the limited protection of the bat's habitat. From August 2004 onward, the construction process of Lakeside High School faced no significant leadership challenges or delays and opened to students in August 2006.

The contentious construction phase in the making of a consolidated Lakeside High School was an appropriate conclusion to an overall turbulent 43-year process, which spanned the tenures of five Ashtabula Area City Schools superintendents and dozens of school board members and city officials. Congressman Steve LaTourette's words summing up his experience with the Indiana bat controversy can also be used to characterize the entire 43-year high school consolidation process that was driven by the push and pull of leadership: challenging, complex, and frustrating.[50]

[50] Steven LaTourette, "Victory for the Indiana bat and Lakeside High School," *The Gazette*, August 4, 2004.

Out With the Old…

The old Ashtabula High School building (above and middle), constructed in 1916, served as the home to Lakeside High School 10-12 from August 2001 to June 2006. Below, the old Harbor High, constructed in 1912, served as home to Lakeside 9. Photos by author.

…And In With the New

The new consolidated Lakeside High School in Saybrook Township near the end of the construction process, January 2006. Notice the waterlogged area in the top photo.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION: FAILURE TO FIND THE SMALL WINDOW OF SUCCESS

At the May 2004 groundbreaking ceremony for the consolidated Lakeside High School, Superintendent William Licate called the construction of the new school, "our generation's contribution to the education system." In the end, the contribution of a generation of leaders was a failed and misguided one fraught with conflict and polarization. Leaders failed to resolve their differences over a 43-year period, left the community fractured over the issue of a consolidation high school, and left a cloud of controversy hanging over the new school. Most importantly, the rancor and polarization of the 43-year process to make a consolidated Lakeside High will continue to fuel rancor and polarization within the school district.

The failure of leadership in the making of a consolidated Lakeside High School is shared by the city leaders, school leaders, school board members, and community leaders who participated in the debate over the years, as well as those potential leaders in the Ashtabula community who failed to rise up and broker consensus and cooperation. The failure of the 43-year process was made possible by a contentment on the part of two generations of Ashtabula leaders who sat silently by and allowed the different sides of the high school consolidation slug fest just fight it out until one was left standing. There were leaders in Ashtabula who could and should have said: "Wait, stop, this fighting is fracturing an already divided community—we must come to some consensus for the good of us all!" Advocates of building a consolidated high school eventually won their point; but winning came at a high cost of polarization and rancor. The citizens of the Ashtabula Area City School District deserved better. Leaders could have brought the consolidation process to a conclusion, one way or another, that would have had a positive impact on the community. This chapter examines the three specific areas of leadership failure in the consolidation process and how those failures could have been otherwise. The three areas of failure are: failure to consider alternatives to building a consolidated high school

complex, the inability to form a cross-sector networks to support the consolidated high school, and the failure to choose the right location of the consolidated high school. The chapter concludes with three suggestions for leaders and a discussion of the legacy of school consolidation in the American Midwest.

Alternatives to Consolidation Overlooked

The first front on which leaders failed was that they did not seriously consider the alternatives to building a new consolidated high school. One alternative that was raised, but never seriously considered in the public debates or in the media, was renovating both Ashtabula High and Harbor High. Another alternative could have been renovating both high schools and turning the smaller Harbor High into a magnet high school. Many other alternatives for improving the high schools, besides building a consolidated high school, existed. Leaders on both sides of the consolidation issue were responsible for not seriously engaging the community in debate about those alternatives. On the one side, consolidation advocates were blinded by the popularity of the school consolidation movement throughout the 20th century and by the example of large consolidated high school campuses in neighboring school districts, which were perceived to be academically superior to Ashtabula. Leaders who advocated consolidation unquestioningly accepted the benefits of high school consolidation, e.g., efficiency and a broader curriculum, while glossing over the fact that consolidation did not necessarily address the 30% high school dropout problem in Ashtabula. Leaders failed to acknowledge that a new physical plant was only one of several variables for improving academic performance. On the other side, leaders who resisted consolidation, most notably the grassroots group CARE, succeeded in the short-term of defeating several bond issues, but failed in the long run. CARE and others who opposed bond issues to build a consolidated high school were marginalized because they failed to go on the offensive and form coalitions or elect people to the school board who could push their agenda. As a result, they left consolidation advocates on the offensive: defeated at the polls during bond issues but motivated to fight for consolidation another day.

A critical missed opportunity to consider alternatives to high school consolidation came in the fall of 2000 when the school board delegated its power to

decide on consolidation to Superintendent William Licate. Licate ended up deciding to legally consolidate the two high schools in November 2000, which led to him advocating for a bond issue to build a physically consolidated high school building in early 2002.

Several key variables in the fall of 2000 could have led Licate to making a decision other than consolidating the two high schools. First, eight bond issue defeats showed 35 years of consistent resistance to the consolidation of Ashtabula High and Harbor High. Secondly, by 2000, Ashtabula's two relatively small neighborhood high schools were unique in Ohio where the trend was large high schools located on a large sprawling campuses. The Ashtabula Area City Schools was the only district of its size in the state to operate two separate high schools, and Ashtabula High School was the oldest high school in continuous operation in the state. Third, Licate had to do something about the 30% high school dropout rate that had existed since the late 1990s. Fourth, in October 2000, the state was offering money to renovate the two high schools if the district wished. The Ohio School Facilities Commission (OSFC), a state agency whose purpose was to help finance local school building and renovation projects, assessed all the buildings in the district and presented the district five options, all of which the OSFC would have contributed 70% of the cost.[1] One of the options included renovating and expanding both Ashtabula High and Harbor High.

The renovation of the two neighborhood high schools would have been a unique opportunity to revitalize city neighborhoods, and the renovation of two small high schools would have been a unique calling card for Ashtabula to draw investment back into the city. In the competition between cities that has so characterized the post-industrial global economy, the two small neighborhood high schools could have set Ashtabula apart from the pack and offered something no other small city in Ohio could.

In addition, if Licate chose to leave the two high schools separate and renovate them, his decision would have been bolstered by a growing body of research that suggested small high schools improve student attitude and attendance rates, helped to lower drop out rates by giving students a greater sense of belonging, and improved

[1] Frank Obernyer, "State hits city schools with options," *Star Beacon*, October 26, 2000, sec. A1.

teacher attitudes.[2] Other research on the benefits of small schools suggest that they help build democratic education, create a sense of community, and could actually be more economical than larger schools because of the retention of high school dropouts.[3] Licate's decision to renovate the two high schools would have also been bolstered by historical analysis of school consolidation, which suggested that the economic and curricular benefits of large consolidated schools are inconclusive, and that the benefits of smaller schools deserve more attention.[4]

A decision by Superintendent Licate in November 2000 to retain and renovate the two high schools would have been a preferable alternative to consolidation because it would have better served the common good of the school district community. Serving the common good means addressing the needs of the most marginalized students and research suggested that small high schools help reduce dropout rates. Serving the common good also means, when possible, renovating old school buildings to spur the economic viability of central cities, which contributes to the quality of life of the entire urban area.

Failure to Build a Network

Leaders who pushed for a new consolidated high school failed at the task of building cross-sector coalitions, or networks, of support for the new consolidated high school. Beginning in 1963, school leaders relied on their professional expertise and an insufficient and limited network that included members of the Ashtabula business community and some religious leaders to campaign for a new consolidated high school. Portz, Stein, and Jones describe a workable "network" as a collection of individuals and organizations from business, educational, government, and nonprofit sectors united by a common purpose or goal. The authors note that networks are critical because they

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[2] Kathleen Cotton, "School Size, School Climate, and Student Performance," School Improvement Research Series of the NW Regional Educational Laboaratory located at http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/10/c20.html.

[3] Gregory C. Malhoit and Derek W. Black, "The Power of Small Schools: Achieving Equal Educational Opportunity through Academic Success and Democratic Citizenship," *Nebraska Law Review* 82 Neb. L. Rev. 50 (2003).

[4] Jonathan P. Sher and Rachel B. Tompkins, "Economy, Efficiency, and Equality: The Myths of Rural School and District Consolidation," In Jonathan P. Sher, *Education in Rural America: A Reassessment of Conventional Wisdom* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977): 75-77.

provide a bridge that spans the parochial interests of individuals and organizations in the community and can provide a critical forum for discussion and action.[5] One key group was conspicuously absent from the high school consolidation network: the leadership of the City of Ashtabula—the largest government in the school district. School leaders misguided desire to be hyper-independent of the municipality of Ashtabula seriously compromised the high school consolidation process because it led to city leaders opposing the effort to build a consolidated high school. The school district's independence from the City of Ashtabula was prudent to a certain degree to avoid corruption and educationally unsound practices. However, taking the idea of independence to an extreme and not meaningfully involving city leaders in the network pushing a consolidated high school proved to be foolhardy and educationally counterproductive. The *Star Beacon* has commented: "It is possible the inability of previous city administrations and school boards to talk with each other contributed to locating the high school outside the city. It is an understatement to say the sides were polarized."[6] If city leaders were brought into the network of support for high school consolidation in the late 1980s, the whole issue of school location may have been resolved within the network, the school would have likely been built much sooner, and the rancor and polarization could have been avoided. The authors of Ashtabula's revitalization plan concluded in December 2002 that, "the school's bond campaign [Issue 1]…are real time examples of a breakdown in the community's ability to agree on how to best meet its own needs through cross-systems of cooperation."[7]

Leaders also failed to get their internal house in order before placing a bond issue to build a new high school before voters. The first dozen years of the Ashtabula Area City School District's existence, 1961-1973, were marked by high levels of disunity, ethnic tension, and bitter internal struggles for power, which culminated in the 1972-1973 legal fight between the school board and an ousted superintendent. The failure of school district leaders to set the policy necessary to build public confidence in their leadership

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[5] Portz, Stein, and Jones, 1999, pg. 26-27.

[6] *Star Beacon*, Editorial, March 23, 2005, sec. A4.

[7] Urban Design Center of Northeast Ohio and Cobalt Group, Inc., *Ashtabula Downtown and Harbor Districts Revitalization Plan.* Prepared for: The City of Ashtabula, Division of Housing and Community Development, December 3, 2002: pg. 46

doomed the 1960s and early 1970s bond issues. The fact that school district leaders could not get their internal house in order in the 1960s and early 1970s squandered several advantages they had in getting a bond issue to build a consolidated high school passed. Those advantages were the lack of a prominent community leader opposing the bond issues, and the fact that the two high schools were overcrowded. Polarization and rancor within the school district dashed any hope that the limited network pushing a consolidated high school would succeed in the 1960s and 1970s. Economic decline and polarization between city and suburb hindered the pro-consolidation network in the 1980s and 1990s.

A Problematic Location

Third and finally, the school board's 1993 decision to purchase the 123-acres of property in Saybrook Township with the intent of locating a consolidated high school on that site was exactly the wrong move at the wrong time because it further polarized the community at a time when the community was already divided on the issue of high school consolidation. This decision to buy the land before a bond issue was passed to finance the construction of the high school encouraged school leaders to line up behind the land. The purchase of the property encouraged school leaders to hunker down and do whatever it took to get the high school located on the Saybrook Township property at a time when school leaders should have been building their network of support and being open to several possible sites for the high school. Even after three bond issues to build the consolidated high school in Saybrook Township failed, 1993, 1997, and 1998, school leaders refused to acknowledge that the purchase of the Saybrook Township property was a key mistake that prevented the high school consolidation process from moving forward.

In the end, leaders failed because they succeeded at locating a consolidated high school in suburban Saybrook Township. Locating in Saybrook Township was a failure because it added to the polarization between the largely white, middle-class Saybrook Township and the poorer, older, and large racial minority population in the City of Ashtabula. Locating the new high school in Saybrook Township meant that leaders failed to transcend the existing conditions of suburban development, and thereby reinforced a growing wall between city and suburb. The City of Ashtabula, not Saybrook

Township, was the best location for a new consolidated high school for several reasons. First, the city supported both Ashtabula and Harbor high schools for more than 100 years. The second reason is that about 70% of the district's population lived in the city. Third, the city needed the new high school to spur economic development, which would have been an important catalyst in beginning to ease the socio-economic divisions and tensions between the older central city and burgeoning suburb. Saybrook would continue to grow and sustain community whether or not the high school was located there, but without the investment of a high school in the city, the city would be mostly helpless to abate the socio-economic decline that had begun in the 1970s. If the city's school system would not invest public dollars in it, why would private developers risk investment there? Building the high school in the densely populated city would have also encouraged more environmentally friendly residential/commercial development patters.

One reason given by school district leaders in 2002 to locate the consolidated high school in Saybrook Township rather than in the city was because there was not a large enough piece of land in the city on which to build it. At that time, Ashtabula City Solicitor Tom Simon asserted that there was a large enough piece of land in the city if only school leaders had the motivation to work together to make it happen. Events in 2006 demonstrate that there was in fact land available in the city, or within easy annexation of the city, to build a consolidated high school on. In the summer of 2006, City Manager Anthony Cantagallo and Ashtabula schools superintendent William Licate were discussing the possibility of locating an elementary school campus on a 220-acre site in the harbor area of Ashtabula city, or just outside the city limits so that annexation would be easy.[8]

Because city leaders and school leaders failed to work together and find this large parcel of land for a high school, many of the tensions between the central city of Ashtabula and suburban Saybrook Township that came to the surface during the Licate vs. Simon debate were left unresolved. Community leaders, besides the ones involved, also failed to step up and broker consensus and cooperation to address the importance of locating the high school in the city and helping the craft a deal in which the school board could sell the 123-acres of land it owned in Saybrook Township for a reasonable price.

[8] *Star Beacon*, "Land for schools…We wonder: Where was this land before," June 7, 2006, pg. A4.

All leaders involved, and their followers that granted them authority, missed a unique opportunity to collaboratively make a consolidated Lakeside High School to address the polarization within the Greater Ashtabula area.

The withdraw of the public high school institution from the City of Ashtabula and its relocation to Saybrook Township that the decisions and non-decisions of leaders allowed to transpire will likely have severe consequences. Michael B. Katz has noted: "Institutional withdrawl and collapse not only rob inner cities of the services they need, they knock out the props that sustain public life and the possibility of community. They destroy the basis of 'civil society'."[9] Katz has argued that the collapse of central cities do not stop at borders but they "diminish the lives of everyone" because civil society becomes trumped by individualistic consumer culture.[10] Paul Kantor has asserted that suburban growth creates a wall of separation between city and suburb, which creates a mismatch of need and resources between city and suburb; "hard-pressed central cities must cope with the greatest demands for public services even as governmental revenues for meeting them increasingly lay in the suburban rings."[11] The presence of the scourge of the illicit drug trade and its attendant social misery in both suburban, urban, and rural neighborhoods is just one example of how the wall between city and suburb is porous at best, and a socially dangerous fantasy at worst.

Suggestions for Leaders

I propose three recommendations for leaders who are involved in, or who are considering the process of consolidating two high schools. First, a broad conception of educational leadership is required when attempting to make a consolidated high school. By "broad conception" of educational leadership, I mean that other community leaders including elected officials, social service providers, citizens groups, religious leaders, and others must be brought into the decision-making process on important and costly school reforms like high school consolidation. Because the high school impacts such a broad base of community identity, social interaction, and values, a broad consensus behind

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[9] Michael B. Katz, "Reframing the 'Underclass' Debate," In Michael B. Katz (Ed.), *The 'Underclass' Debate* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993): 477.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Kantor, 1995, pg. 162.

consolidation is required and the leadership required to build this network can only come when school district leaders shed the belief that educational experts should dominate educational policy. Tyack and Hansot have suggested that the "politics of lay acquiescence," in which expert school leaders alone decide on school policy, was no longer viable.[12] Kathryn A. McDermott has argued that expertise should inform educational decisions, but not all educational decisions should be based on expertise.[13]

Involving the community in the decision making process must be done through various public forums, round tables, and debates. High school consolidation should be considered along side other reform alternatives for improving the high school educational program. The benefits of high school consolidation should be rigorously vetted and current research on school size should be seriously considered. School leaders must engage the community and their leaders in public venues to consider consolidation and other potential reforms and refrain from using public forums to simply campaign for high school consolidation. In these forums, leaders must be both teacher and learner. While school leaders should provide professional expertise and ideas, they should keep an open mind, explore all possibilities, and see the full depth and breadth of the consequences of their decisions. If school leaders demonstrate to the community that they have seriously and open-mindedly considered alternatives to high school consolidation, they are more likely to support bond issues and operating levies to support the consolidated high school if it is the best choice.

As a decision about high school consolidation gets closer, school leaders must not be afraid to engage with a smaller group of influential community leaders to negotiate their differences and come to a consensus, a consensus that must ultimately meet the test of the public at large. School leaders "winning" a bond issue to build a consolidated high school alone is a recipe for shallow support, political rancor, and future political difficulties when it comes to supporting the consolidated high school.

My second recommendation is that school district leaders must be cognizant of their ethical responsibility to choose a school location that promotes the common good of the entire school district community and its social geography. The opposite of promoting

[12] Tyack and Hansot, 1982, pg. 252-254.
[13] McDermott, 1999, pg. 126.

the common good is hyperindividualism which, according to Bill McKibben, is thinking that one's particular interests are somehow divorced from everyone around us. McKibben argues that since the 1980s, hyperindividualism prevails over promoting the common good.[14] Therefore, the easy route today is for school leaders to embrace a school location advocated by powerful interests or leaders within the school system, such as middle class parents or the business community. The more courageous and ethical process for choosing the location of the school is to consider the interests of those at the margins of society and what is best for the common viability of the entire school district community. Taking this path may put the location of the school in opposition to development patterns. Leaders must understand that new schools do not just follow development—they set off patterns of development that privilege and marginalize certain groups. Thus, school leaders have a responsibility to keep an open mind and genuinely work with local governmental units and other community leaders about the best location for a school. For school leaders, it may be easy to follow the lead of private developers and locate schools on open parcels of land outside the central city, but as leaders of a public school system, whose aim is to serve the public good, one must be prepared to build a school at a location that serves the public good rather than serves to accommodate development trends. School leaders will have to be at their most courageous when deciding, for example, to build a new school in a poor and dilapidated part of town in need of an anchor to build community and economic investment. In addition, leaders must seriously consider the advantages of renovating older buildings and preserving them as community anchors in older neighborhoods over new construction.

The decision to renovate and/or expand stately old school buildings in central cities as opposed to new buildings on the edge of town or in suburbs can make or break revitalization efforts in central cities of the Rustbelt. Portz, Stein, and Jones have argued that "education and economic challenges that face central cities are intertwined…To strengthen the economic base of central cities, steps are needed to enhance a city's educational infrastructure; to strengthen the educational infrastructure, a vibrant

[14] Bill McKibben, "In Search of Common Ground," *Mother Jones*, May/June 2004, pg. 38.

economic base is needed to provide jobs and fiscal support."[15] W. Cecil Steward has argued that because of the importance of the public school at the center of the image of the ideal communities, school locations on the edges of urban centers encourage suburban sprawl, while hurting the city plans to use the schools to revitalize blighted areas of old inner cities.[16] Elizabeth Beaumont concurs, arguing that schools enhance the property values and stabilize the older parts of inner cities.[17] Beaumont added that schools are the "glue" that hold inner city neighborhoods together; they are the anchors of city neighborhoods. The investment of school construction, an investment of the state, becomes a key variable in the political control of urban space.[18]

My third and final recommendation is for leaders to understand that they can win at the short-term objective of building a consolidated school, but fail in the long-term. A shallow consensus behind a bond issue to build a new consolidated school could lead to a lack of community investment school, future resistance during the construction phase of those schools, and future resistance to the efforts of school systems attempting to pass operating levies. While it is impossible to get 100% support for a bond issue to build a consolidated high school, leaders should aim at two-thirds.

The Legacy of School Consolidation

Ashtabula and its neighbor Kingsville Township eight miles to the east provide bookends to the history school consolidation in the American Midwest. The consolidation of small one-room schoolhouses in Kingsville Township in 1894 was the first case of school consolidation in Ohio and inspired consolidators throughout the Midwest.[19] One hundred years later, Ashtabula was engaged in a bitter process of consolidating its two small high schools. Three threads run from the case of consolidation in Kingsville to the case of high school consolidation in Ashtabula. First is

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[15] John Portz, Lana Stein, and Robin R. Jones, *City Schools and City Politics* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1999): 6-7

[16] Steward, 1999, pgs. 370-372.

[17] Beaumont, 2002, pg. 9.

[18] See Marc Gottdiener, *The Social Production of Urban Space* 2nd Edition (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985). For an expanded discussion of the politics of school location and social space, see chapter 2 literature review.

[19] Albert F. Probst, "Consolidation and Transportation: The Rural School Problem," *The Elementary School Teacher* 9, no. 1 (September 1908).

state involvement. The state passed special legislation in 1894 to pay for the transportation of students to the centralized school in Kingsville and in 2002, the state's offer to pay 70% of the cost to build the consolidated Lakeside High School likely tipped the balance in favor of passing the bond issue. The influence of state government in school consolidation will likely continue in various forms. Second is the issue of location. The question of the location of Ashtabula's consolidated high school haunted the process of its making from the 1990s until 2004 and left bitterness and rancor in its wake. The location of Kingsville Township's centralized school in the southern part of the township led to bitterness and resentment on the part of residents in the northern part of the township. Angry that their students had such a long and dangerous ride to school, residents in the northern part of Kingsville Township created their own village in 1913—North Kingsville Village—which allowed them to create their own school and fueled a rivalry between the two Kingsville's.[20] Finally, the prospect of consolidating two (or more) schools means changing the community that the schools in question sustain and involves more than solving a rural school "problem" or an efficiency issue. Community tradition is often dismissed as tradition and backward thinking when one looks at the question of consolidation in terms of economic efficiency. This is a mistake. While resistance to school consolidation based on tradition can be based in racist or anti-democratic views, resistance to consolidation, at once, can be based on community tradition based in local democratic control and liberty. The story of consolidation between Kingsville 1894 and Ashtabula 2006 has shown that there exist no simple "sides" to school consolidation, but multiple layers intersected by complex social, cultural, and economic movements. This complexity means that there is a very small window through which leaders can take the school consolidation process in order for it to be successful. A successful school consolidation process can be defined as one that promotes the common good, unites the community, and inspires it to make the consolidated school a model of democratic education and participation. Finding that small window of success can be frustrating and challenging because that very small window is in a different place in different communities. The stakes are high because

[20] Carl E. Feather, "North Kingsville village formed out of township 92 years ago," *Star Beacon,* April 4, 2005, sec. B1.

missing that small window of success can be a disaster for a community. Thus, leaders who think that school consolidation is a good idea need to be savvy and enlist a broad network of support to help find that small window through which a school consolidation process succeeds. Leaders must also be savvy enough to abandon the push for consolidation when a broad network of support to help find that small window of success does not materialize.

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This dissertation has shown that a failure of leadership caused the long and tumultuous high school consolidation process in Ashtabula. This is not to suggest that the individuals in this dissertation were failed leaders, were lazy, had bad intentions, or were flawed as people. Many of the leaders focused on in this study did highly successful work in the community both before, after, and during the high school consolidation process. I had the honor of knowing and interacting with many of the leaders mentioned in this dissertation, especially those in the 1990s and early 2000s. I know that the two principal leaders this study has focused on, William Licate and Thomas Simon, were well intentioned and acted out of love for their community. In this way, I am sad for them that their efforts did not turn out better for the community. From the time I became aware of the high school consolidation issue as an adolescent in the early 1990s to the time of authoring this study, I had great respect for the leaders who shaped the high school consolidation process. Even though the high school consolidation process out of which Lakeside High School was made failed due to the cloud of rancor and polarization that hangs above it and the community, I am still hopeful. I am hopeful that the Ashtabula's current and future leaders, especially leaders who graduate from Lakeside High School and return to the community, can rise above the cloud of polarization and rancor hanging above the process that made the high school and use the school to initiate a politics of consensus and cooperation for the greater common good of my hometown—Ashtabula.

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