

**NOTE – PRESSING F5 ON YOUR KEYBOARD WILL ENSURE YOU ARE VIEWING THE LATEST REVISION.**

**UPDATE: 2.4.14**

Frequently Asked Questions

Bond Referendum 2.4.14

- **What is the class size in Congers vs. the class size in the other schools?**

<u>Congers</u>	<u>Average of other Elementary School</u>
K: 16-17	K: 20-21
1: 12-13	1: 19-20
2: 18-19	2: 19-20
3: 15-16	3: 22-23
4: 23-24	4: 21-22
5: 21	5: 22-23

- **Congers has 234 students and Woodglen has 491. How can they say there is no overcrowding if there is one school that has more than double the enrollment of another?**
  - School enrollments are a factor of building size. Bigger buildings have more room for students, so they can have larger enrollments and still not be overcrowded. Woodglen is significantly larger than Congers. None of the schools in Clarkstown are overcrowded.
- **When the plan was devised to house students in New City and Lakewood, did you forget to count the resource rooms?**
  - Resource rooms were included in the count of rooms. They legally must be available for students whose IEP specifies that need.
- **What happens to BOCES/SPED students who were housed at Congers?**
  - Mr. Fucci and his staff will plan for all special education students' placements in the district. This will be completed in the same manner as it always has been done.
- **Are we underestimating the savings, \$1.25M, from closing the Congers School?**
  - Yes, deliberately so. Costs include salaries and medical/pension costs for staff. Teacher Assistants are not included in this total, nor is the utility costs, which will be reduced by approximately one half. Also, not included, is the tuition costs for St. Augustine's. Insurance is not reduced, and busing costs will be reduced in some areas while increasing in others resulting in a neutral result.
- **What is the Board's intention for the Congers School if the bond does not pass? Can the community be guaranteed that it will not be sold outside of our town?**
  - The Board has no intention to sell any of its properties. The property is more valuable than price for which it could be sold, and, depending on the buyer, the value of the community could be negatively impacted. The Board members are all residents of Clarkstown, and they would not want to ever move in that direction.



Birchwood School	4	8	2	3	7	3	7	6	8	10	5	9	14	86
Clarkstown High School North	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	328	379	397	370	1474
Clarkstown High School South	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	351	339	388	389	1467
Congers Elementary School	33	25	41	36	56	43	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	234
Felix Festa Middle School	0	0	0	0	0	0	656	733	705	0	0	0	0	2094
Lakewood Elementary School	70	63	50	55	64	70	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	372
Laurel Plains Elementary School	59	72	65	65	56	70	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	387
Link Elementary School	56	57	72	71	78	79	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	413
Little Tor Elementary School	36	50	38	43	48	42	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	257
New City Elementary School	43	42	56	49	62	75	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	327
Strawtown Elementary School	58	36	45	45	63	52	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	299
West Nyack Elementary School	46	40	61	49	61	58	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	315
Woodglen Elementary School	75	82	74	97	83	80	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	491
District Total	569	539	562	571	637	629	663	739	713	689	723	794	773	8601

- **Has CCSD ever sold a school that has been closed in the past?**
  - Yes, Street School was sold to the Town of Clarkstown.
  
- **If Congers Bond passes, is CCSD at risk of being ineligible for future aid to renovate or repair other elementary schools in the District if we do not close another school?**
  - Anytime state aid is requested, the state agents will consider the concept of capacity. Depending on the project, excess capacity may be factor.
  
- **Once the demographic and space study is completed, how long should it take to develop a plan for redistricting and the most efficient use of our infrastructure?**

- The demographic study should be completed in the spring. This document, along with other factors (the passage or failure of the bond, for instance), will be the basis for any space utilization plans. At this point in time, there are too many unknown factors to make a time prediction.

### **UPDATE 1.29.14**

#### Frequently Asked Questions

#### Bond Referendum 2.4.14

- **Have you done a demographic study of the town?**
  - The board has already contracted a demographer to make projections for the next 2 to 5 years.
- **If Congers is consolidated and we realize a \$1.25M savings, what will we do with the money?**
  - The money will be used to offset the budget deficit that the district has experienced for many years.
- **What is the maintenance plan for the schools, specifically North High School?**
  - The board has a five-year facilities plan in place. However, for many years the funds allotted to address these needs have been removed from the budget. North High School is included in this plan, as well as all of the other schools. During the current year, \$1M was kept in the budget to begin roof work on district buildings.
- **If we have a number of buildings not being used to full capacity, doesn't it make sense to do some consolidation and then put those savings into improving the schools we are using?**
  - The school district has chosen to have smaller class sizes than the state's recommended size. With that being said, the Congers students can be placed into classes at Lakewood and New City Elementary Schools and still maintain the district class size guidelines. The money that is saved from that action could be used to offset other district costs, including improving other schools.
- **Why is it recommended to redistrict other schools if the bond passes to fix Congers and not recommended if the bond does not pass?**
  - The Board of Education asked for a short-term (1-2 years) recommendation regarding the outcome of the Congers bond. That was done.
  - If the bond passes there will be ten elementary schools operating in Clarkstown with class sizes ranging from 12 to 26. It was the recommendation that the board have serious discussions regarding the disparity of class size and building usage. These discussions will impact all the elementary schools.
  - If the bond fails, it was recommended that the Congers students be integrated into the Lakewood and New City Elementary Schools. The class sizes in these schools would range between 18 and 26. There was no recommendation to redistrict the other seven schools whose class sizes ranged from 17 to 26.

- **Is it true that redistricting the entire district is being recommended by the superintendent regardless of the bond outcome?**
  - That recommendation was never made. Full town redistricting was to be considered by the board only if the Congers bond was approved.
- **Could there be redistricting that would eliminate the need for Congers Elementary School?**
  - The superintendent has recommended that Congers students be redistricted into Lakewood and New City Elementary Schools if the bond is unsuccessful. Students can be enrolled in these schools under the district class size guidelines. In doing so, there would still be two empty classrooms available in each school to accommodate future growth.

### **UPDATE 1.28.14**

Frequently Asked Questions  
Bond Referendum 2.4.14

Dear Parents:

Additional FAQs have been generated by community members. This grouping contains the New York State response to funding, a special education question, and excess facility questions. As promised, these responses will be posted with other FAQs.

J. Thomas Morton

- How can you put this thing to a vote when you have no plan in place or idea where you will put special education children?
  - Special Education classes are governed by IEPs and law. Executive Director of Pupil Services Arnold Fucci and his staff, with parental input, will determine where and how students in his department will be educated. That will happen in due course, as it has every year. That aspect of the program is not changing. As continues to be our practice, teachers, principals and administrators are pulled from their regularly scheduled day to plan the future of special needs children. The Superintendent will not intervene in that process. The Board and the Superintendent cannot overrule Mr. Fucci's decision on placements. Mr. Fucci will be the leader of any of those discussions, not simply a committee member whose input is requested. As far as special education costs are concerned, they are a function of the special education students' needs. That cost issue is really unrelated to the building in which those services will be delivered, as assigned by Mr. Fucci.
- If declining enrollment is anticipated and Congers is no longer needed, then why move ahead rehabilitating a redundant facility?
  - The Board of Education has voted to let the community decide through a referendum whether or not they want to spend the money to fix Congers

Elementary School. The ramifications of the outcome of that vote have been addressed in other FAQs in this document.

- Did the meeting with the state officials take place yet? What did they say about funding for Congers?
  - Mr. Carl Thurnau, NYSED Director of Facilities Planning, met with district officials on Monday evening, January 27. Mr. Thurnau indicated that the state would not provide funding for the Congers project under the current enrollment conditions in the district. He indicated that funding may be available if the district closed one or two other schools. Mr. Thurnau provided a letter to the district indicating his decision. The letter follows:



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY,  
NY 12234

Office of Facilities Planning, Room 1060 Education Building Annex  
Tel. (518) 474-3906  
Fax (518) 486-5918  
Website: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/facplan/>



January 24, 2014

Dr. Thomas Morton  
Superintendent  
Clarkstown Central School System  
62 Old Middletown Road,  
New City, NY 10956

Re: Denial of State Building aid for renovations at  
Congers Elementary School

Dear Dr. Morton:

Thank you for providing this office with the district enrollment and floor plan information as requested. We have reviewed the information and determined that there exists significant excess capacity within the district's remaining elementary schools to provide adequate space for the entire elementary school population.

Our analysis indicates that if the Congers elementary school is renovated and all other buildings remain open, the district would have 60 classrooms in excess of Department Standards. State building aid cannot be paid to renovate excess classroom space. If the district chooses to proceed without state building aid, a building permit is still required from this office.

The Department recommends that the district conduct a demographics and space analysis to inform how to utilize existing space in the most efficient manner. If the district determines that Congers should remain a viable instructional facility in the future, renovations could be eligible for aid if other schools were taken off line to align enrollment with available space. While I understand these are very difficult discussions within communities, it is incumbent on the district and the state to utilize resources as efficiently as possible.

My staff and I are available to meet with the district to discuss plans and options in an effort to help the district meet its obligations. Jean and I may be reached at (518) 474-3906.

Sincerely,

Carl T. Thurnau, PE  
Director

**UPDATE 1.24.14**

**FAQs**

**CONGERS BOND REFERENDUM**

**February 4, 2014**

**7:00 am to 9:00 pm**

**Superintendent’s Recommendation To The Board Of Education – January 9, 2014**

Superintendent Tom Morton presented a proposed redistricting plan relating to the Congers Referendum at the January 9, 2014 Board of Education meeting. Congers’ 234 students have been attending classes in the former St. Augustine’s School in New City since October 15, 2013, due to the emergency closing of the Congers Elementary School building in August 2013.

The proposal provides a transition plan for Congers and an outline for all district schools long-term if the bond passes; and for a long-term plan for Congers if the referendum fails. The Superintendent does not recommend the expenditure of additional funds to lease St. Augustine’s following the end of the current school year.

The proposed redistricting plan would reassign Congers students to the New City and Lakewood Elementary schools either on a permanent basis or temporarily, given the outcome of the referendum. Given current student registration, Congers Elementary students would attend New City or Lakewood Elementary schools as outlined below. All assignments will be made to ensure the needs of all students are met, siblings attend the same school and efficiency in transportation services. Special Education students will be placed based on the services needed in their IEPs.

**Where Will The Congers Students Go?**

<b>Congers Class 2013</b>	<b>Congers @ Lakewood 2014</b>	<b>Congers @ New City 2014</b>
Pre-K TBD	Kindergarten TBD	Kindergarten TBD
Kindergarten 33	First Grade 13	First Grade 20
First Grade 25	Second Grade 17	Second Grade 8
Second Grade 37	Third Grade 28	Third Grade 9
Third Grade 32	Fourth Grade 16	Fourth Grade 16
Fourth Grade 47	Fifth Grade 29	Fifth Grade 18

**Action Plan If Bond Referendum Does Not Pass**

If the Bond does not pass, students from Congers would permanently become New City or Lakewood Elementary School students in the 2014-2015 school year, as outlined above. There will be no more Congers Elementary School. The distribution of the Congers students among the two schools will be done to ensure siblings attend the same school. Special Education students will be placed based on the needs outlined in the IEP under the direction of Arnold Fucci, Executive Director of Special Education. No students from New City or Lakewood Elementary schools would be reassigned to another school.



## Action Plan If Bond Referendum Passes

If the Bond passes, the reconstruction of the Congers Elementary school will take up to two years to complete. During the reconstruction phase and commencing at the start of the 2014-2015 school year, the Congers Elementary students will be reassigned to the New City and Lakewood Elementary schools as stated above. During the 2014-2015 school year, the Superintendent will make a recommendation to the Board of Education on a redistricting plan of all elementary schools, to take effect upon the opening of the Congers Elementary School building. Among the goals are consistency in programming, service delivery and class size throughout the schools.

## SUMMARY OF SUPERINTENDENT’S RECOMMENDATIONS

Factor	If Bond Vote is “Yes”	If Bond Vote is “No”
Redistricting	It will be recommended to the BOE that all elementary school districts will be rezoned. Elementary schools will see a shift in students as the neighborhoods are re-districted.	The only movement of children will be from Congers Elementary into New City Elementary and Lakewood. New City Elementary & Lakewood children will remain in their current home school.
Class Size	The goal of re-districting the schools is to provide more consistent class sizes <u>among All</u> the elementary buildings.	See below* for projected class/grade size in New City Elementary and Lakewood Elementary schools for the 2014-2015 school year. These class sizes bring New City Elementary and Lakewood Elementary schools to the enrollment numbers it is designed to hold and closer to those seen before the enrollment decline in the last four years.
Tax Increase	The Cost of the passed bond to the average Clarkstown homeowner: Per Year - \$26.00 (with no state aid) -Per Year - \$10.00 (pending approval of appeal for state aid) - (based on a home with an assessed value of \$140,000 approximate market value of \$440,000) - A Quarter of One Percentage Point of the Tax Levy.	There will be no additional increase related to this bond.

Congers School Building	Building will be repaired in a projected 18-24 month time period.	Building will be secured until a decision about its future is made.
-------------------------	---	---

\* Estimated class size in the **New City Elementary** building after integration of Congers Elementary students.

- 1<sup>st</sup> grade – 56 students – 3 sections of 18-19 students each
- 2<sup>nd</sup> grade – 46 students – 2 sections of 23 students each
- 3<sup>rd</sup> grade – 62 students – 3 sections of 20-21 students each
- 4<sup>th</sup> grade – 65 students – 3 sections of 21-22 students each
- 5<sup>th</sup> grade – 76 students – 3 sections of 25-26 students each
- Kindergarten (unknown as registration hasn't yet begun)

\*Estimated class size in the **Lakewood Elementary** building after integration of Congers Elementary students.

- 1<sup>st</sup> grade – 83 students – 4 sections of 20-21 students each
- 2<sup>nd</sup> grade – 80 students – 4 sections of 20 students each
- 3<sup>rd</sup> grade – 78 students – 3 sections of 26 students each
- 4<sup>th</sup> grade – 71 students – 3 sections of 23-24 students each
- 5<sup>th</sup> grade – 94 students – 4 sections of 23-24 students each
- Kindergarten (unknown as registration hasn't yet begun)

### **When Will Parents Be Advised As To What School Their Children Will Attend?**

Congers Elementary School parents will be advised of their child's school assignment at the end of the current school year. If the Bond passes and there is movement among students from all schools needed, that communication will occur following the announcement of the redistricting plan in 2014-2015 and prior to the start of the proceeding school year.

### **How Will Congers Staff Be Impacted By The Proposed Move To New City And Lakewood?**

The move will reduce the number of elementary classes needed. There are currently 45 classes running in the three buildings: Congers, Lakewood and New City. Under the proposal, there will be 38 classes in two buildings. Class sizes, by grade, will range between 18 and 26 students, with the average class size in the 38 classes between 22-23 students.

### **Will Congers Students Have The Same Teachers When They Transfer To New City And Lakewood?**

No. Congers students will become either New City or Lakewood students. These students will be assigned to the teachers who teach in these buildings.

### **What Is The Plan For The Congers Staff?**

The Congers staff will be reassigned throughout the district.

### **If The Bond Passes, Will the Congers Teachers, TA and Other Staff Return As A Group To Congers When The School Reopens?**

That decision will be made when the school reopens.

**The Superintendent States That the Redistricting Plan Will Only Affect Congers Elementary School. However, If There Needs To Be A Split And There Are No Available Rooms In Lakewood or New City Elementary Schools Then Where Are These Children Going To Be Placed? Which Additional Elementary Schools Will Be Impacted?**

Class sizes, by grade, will range between 18 and 26 students with the Superintendent's recommendation. The average class size in the 38 classes is between 22-23 students. Additionally, there will be two free classrooms in each building should there be a need to expand the number of sections. Those numbers, in no way, represent either building being filled to capacity. In fact, those numbers are significantly lower than we have in some of the other schools in our district.

**Are There Any Savings Associated With The Plan In Closing The Congers Elementary School Building?**

The anticipated budget reduction is approximately \$1.25 million. This accounts for the elimination of the costs for a Principal, a Nurse, seven Grade Level Teachers, two Custodians, one Nurse, one Greeter, 1.5 Clericals and 2.5 Non-Core teachers.

**Special Education**

**How Will The Superintendent's Proposed Redistricting Plan (1/9/14) Guarantee That All The Children's IEPs Be Met?**

Special Education classes are governed by IEPs and law. Executive Director of Pupil Services Arnold Fucci and his staff, with parental input, will determine where and how students in his department will be educated. That will happen in due course, as it has every year. That aspect of the program is not changing. As continues to be our practice, teachers, principals and administrators are pulled from their regularly scheduled day to plan the future of special needs children. The Superintendent will not intervene in that process. The Board and the Superintendent cannot overrule Mr. Fucci's decision on placements. Mr. Fucci will be the leader of any of those discussions, not simply a committee member whose input is requested. As far as special education costs are concerned, they are a function of the special education students' needs. That cost issue is really unrelated to the building in which those services will be delivered, as assigned by Mr. Fucci.

**What Process Will You Use To Ensure A Smooth And Appropriate Transition For Congers' Special Education Students?**

Principal Ryan and Mr. Fucci will meet with parents of each affected child and discuss their IEP and associated Transition Plan.

**Did The Superintendent Solicit The Input From Our Executive Director Of Pupil Services, Mr. Fucci In Creating The Redistricting Plan?**

Mr. Fucci is involved in all decisions that relate to special education children. Planning for special education programs does not affect only one school. Plans are and will be developed on a district-wide basis, as they are every year. Following existing practice, those recommendations will be forthcoming from Mr. Fucci's office by the end of the current year for the upcoming school year.

**What Actions Are Being Taken To Appeal The Decision By The State To Deny Aid On The Congers Reconstruction Project?**

The District was notified by the NYSED on January 6, 2014 that aid was denied. The Superintendent has been in contact with Senator Carlucci and Assemblyman Zebrowski. Meetings are planned with NYSED to review information and restate the District’s position.

**Is It True If The School Remains Vacant For Two Years It Needs To Be Sold To The Highest Bidder? What Are The State Education Department Regulations On Building Vacancy?**

Director of Facilities for the New York State Education Department Carl Thurnau confirmed that there is no limit to the amount of time a school district may retain a vacant facility. He added that “across the state, many districts are struggling with this issue. Some choose to leave vacant in the event it is needed in the future, while others try to sell or lease the property for other purposes. These are local control issues. There is no law, rule, regulation, or guidance that determines how long a district may leave a facility vacant.” The attorney for the district offered the same guidance following a review of applicable laws and regulations.

**How Will CCSD Make The District Aware Of The Vote Date, Poll Locations, etc? Will There Be Phone Calls, Emails, Flyers, etc? Who At CCSD Is In Charge Of This And When Will The Communication Be Made?**

The Superintendent and Board of Education will be responsible for all the communication regarding the Bond. To date, Notices regarding the bond have run and continue to run in the *Journal News* and *Rockland County Times*, for a total of four printings in each outlet. All Board of Education meetings with open discussion on the Bond are posted on the district website. An informational flyer was emailed to more than 10,000 Clarkstown residents including the entire CCSD school population on January 8, 2014. The flyer is posted on the district website and on the *New City Patch*. The Superintendent has given interviews to the *New City Patch* and the *Our Town* newspaper ran a full-length feature article. Signs are posted at all polling locations with the time and date of the referendum.

**May School Districts Provide Factual Materials To The Voters About The School Budget And Other Ballot Propositions?**

Yes. Districts may provide purely factual and strictly objective materials on the school budget or other ballot propositions through means aimed at reaching the electorate as a whole in order to help them make an informed decision.

**May A School District Urge Voters To Vote In Favor Of A Proposed School District Budget Or Other Ballot Proposition?**

No, School Districts are prohibited from spending public money to encourage voters to vote in favor of the school budget or any proposition. District funds may not be used to express “favoritism, partisanship, partiality, approval or disapproval...on any issue.”

-----

## **Voting Information**

**PLEASE VOTE ON: Tuesday, February 4, 2014, from 7:00 am to 9:00 pm**

Please be sure you are registered to vote specifically in SCHOOL elections and that you know where your voting district poll is located. It is most likely different than your general voting poll location.

If you have any questions about the voting process, please contact District Clerk Lilyane Lorusso at 639-6455 or at [LLorusso@ccsd.edu](mailto:LLorusso@ccsd.edu).

- Election District (1) Clarkstown Senior High School North, 151 Congers Road, New City
- Election District (2) Lakewood Elementary School, 77 Lakeland Avenue, Congers
- Election District (3) Link Elementary School, 51 Red Hill Road, New City
- Election District (4) West Nyack Elementary School, 661 West Nyack Road, West Nyack

## **Taxes and State Aid**

- The cost of the bond to average Clarkstown homeowner (assessed value of \$140,000 approximate market value of \$440,000) \*
- Per Year - \$26.00 (with no state aid)
- Per Year - \$10.00 (pending approval of appeal for state aid)
- The NYS Department of Education reimburses a school district for certain school construction projects. Currently, eligible projects qualify for a 55.1% state aid reimbursement over the life of the bond. On January 6, 2014, NYSED declared the project ineligible for aid. The district appealed this decision. If successful, the annual cost to an average homeowner will be \$10.00/year.

\*cost will vary depending on market value.

