

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ABOUT THE GREENWOOD LAKE AND TUXEDO CONTRACT DISCUSSIONS

GENERAL INFORMATION:

To have additional questions considered for this FAQ, please email

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QUESTIONS 1 – 23 posted March 2nd

1. What is happening between Greenwood Lake Union Free School District and Tuxedo Union Free School District?

We are nearing the end of our current 5 year contract with Greenwood Lake UFSD. Greenwood Lake UFSD has reached out to neighboring districts to see if there is interest in these districts receiving their high school students on a tuition basis. These districts included Monroe Woodbury Central School District, Chester Union Free School District, Florida Union Free School District and Warwick Central School District. The districts who are currently interested in creating a potential tuition agreement with Greenwood Lake UFSD are Warwick CSD and Chester UFSD. Tuxedo is very interested in continuing our long standing relationship with Greenwood Lake UFSD.

2. When does our current contract with Greenwood Lake UFSD end?

Our current contract is a five (5) year contract that ends in June 30, 2013. We are currently in the 4th year of this 5 year contract.

3. What is Seneca Falls?

“Seneca Falls” is a term that is used to describe a formula that the New York State Education Department has devised to determine the maximum amount that any one district can charge another district for tuition. There are many considerations in this Seneca Falls formula including, but not limited to the wealth of the district, size of the district, the district’s state aid, transportation costs and teacher salaries. The Seneca Falls formula provides an annual tuition rate for grades K-6 and 7-12 for both general education and special education. Seneca Falls establishes a tuition “ceiling” and districts may choose to tuition students in for less. Tuxedo UFSD has always charged less than our Seneca Falls tuition for both general education and special education students from Greenwood Lake.

4. What is Tuxedo UFSD's current Seneca Falls tuition rate and what tuition amount does Greenwood Lake UFSD currently pay?

Our current Seneca Falls tuition rate for the 2011/2012 school year is \$16,372 for 7-12 general education students and \$41,102 for 7-12 special education students. Our actual tuition charges are \$13,456.45 for general education students and \$26,912.90 for special education students. These are based on the tuition formula included in current contract between GWL and Tuxedo. This formula was negotiated in the last contract negotiation.

5. How is the difference between the Seneca Falls tuition rate and the actual tuition charged for Greenwood Lake students made up?

Cost saving measures have been implemented and are actively sought on an ongoing basis to maintain our comprehensive educational high school program for all our students and still be fiscally responsible. Our community has demonstrated their commitment to both our program and the partnership between our two districts for the past 30+ years.

6. What are the Seneca Falls tuition rates for the two districts, other than Tuxedo, who are interested in a tuition agreement with Greenwood Lake UFSD?

The 2011/2012 Chester UFSD Seneca Falls tuition for 7-12 general education students is \$11,015 and \$33,269 for 7-12 special education students. The 2011/2012 Warwick CSD Seneca Falls tuition for 7-12 general education students is \$7,986 and \$34,459 for special education students.

7. Have there been any tuition proposals from any of the 3 districts involved (Tuxedo, Chester and Warwick)?

The Tuxedo Board of Education has provided a tuition proposal to the Greenwood Lake Board of Education. This tuition proposal reflects the tuition costs as they existed in the 2008/2009 school year. The general education tuition would be \$12,800 and the special education tuition would be \$25,600. These represent a reduction from the current Seneca Falls tuitions of \$3,572 and \$15,502, respectively per student.

Chester has proposed \$9,500 for both general education and special education students. Special education services are proposed as "bill for services" in addition to this base tuition cost. This represents a reduction from Chester's current Seneca Falls tuitions of \$1,515 per general education student. Special education costs, either in total or as an average, are unclear at this time.

Warwick has proposed between \$7,500 and \$8,000 for both general education and special education students. Special education services are proposed as "bill for services" in addition to this base tuition cost. This represents a reduction from Warwick's current Seneca Falls tuitions of \$0 - \$486 per general education student. Special education costs, either in total or as an average, are unclear at this time.

8. Why do both Chester and Warwick want our Greenwood Lake students?

For the first time in 30 years, other districts are expressing interest in the tuition that would be generated by accepting GWL students. Tuxedo has always demonstrated our commitment to our nationally recognized programs and long standing relationship between our two districts.

9. What are the voting requirements for both Greenwood Lake UFSD and Tuxedo UFSD concerning a new contract?

The sending district (GWL), if they choose to enter into a greater than one year contract, must conduct a public vote and gain public approval. Public voter approval is not required for a one year contract.

The Boards of Education of both districts must approve the new contract before it is implemented.

Both Chester and Warwick have indicated that they would not provide their public with a voting opportunity about whether GWL students should be “accepted” in their schools.

10. Why does Tuxedo UFSD want the relationship with Greenwood Lake UFSD to continue?

The Greenwood Lake students, together with our Tuxedo students, make the George F. Baker High School the great school that it is. The Greenwood Lake student population makes up about 75-80% of our total student population. Our high school program is created to meet the needs of all our students with the Greenwood Lake students being the majority. The Greenwood Lake students bring enrollment and diversity to our high school that makes it possible to run a comprehensive program, including sports and extracurricular activities. Together our high school student body numbers about 400 and is smaller than most high schools in our region, allowing for a personalized private feel. It is this partnership that has helped to establish and maintain a reputation as one of the best high schools in our region and one of the Most Challenging High Schools in the country according to *Newsweek* magazine.

11. What would happen to Greenwood Lake students when Tuxedo Reserve is built?

Currently, there has been no movement on the development of the Tuxedo Reserve. The Tuxedo UFSD has always considered our Greenwood Lake high school students as part of our school community. All conversations, projections of high school students and designs for the projected high school, should this development proceed, currently include, and have always included all Greenwood Lake and Tuxedo high school students.

12. Why would Greenwood Lake UFSD want to remain with Tuxedo UFSD?

Greenwood Lake and Tuxedo have been partners in education for the past 30+ years.

Our educational program and extracurricular activities are built around the needs and interests of all our students, with Greenwood Lake students being the majority.

The small school environment found at George F. Baker High School provides both the Greenwood Lake and Tuxedo students with opportunities that would not be found in a larger high school. Students from both Greenwood Lake and Tuxedo benefit from small class sizes in our advanced, elective and support classes. For example, our AP and college level courses

average around 15 students, our electives average about 12 students and our support classes average about 7 students. Our small class sizes allow our student's to have access to the individualized support that they need, the advanced classes that they request and areas of interest that they pursue. Our small student body allows for opportunities in sports, performing arts and activities that may not be available in a larger setting because of limited positions and competitive numbers. Eight out of ten students in a class, on a team, in a performance are from GWL. George F. Baker High School is – in reality – a Greenwood Lake High School.

13. Can Greenwood Lake have a voting member on our Board of Education?

A school district is similar to a municipal government. Members of a school board can only be elected by people who live in the community. We can, and have, given Greenwood Lake UFSD an unofficial voice on the affairs of the governing body, but it is not legal to grant a vote to someone who is not elected by members of the Tuxedo electorate. Currently, a Greenwood Lake liaison participates at our board meetings by representing GWL. This individual, however, by law, does not have voting rights.

Greenwood Lake, by the nature of being 80% of our high school student population, has a strong voice in the high school. Our program, activities and sports are created around the needs and interests of all our students – with GWL representing 80% of that voice. Greenwood Lake students would be approximately 19 percent of the student body in Warwick and 49% of the student body in Chester.

14. What issues, from a legislative standpoint, have hindered a longer-term commitment?

Current education law allows for up to a five (5) year tuition agreement between districts. There is legislation that has been passed in the Senate that allows for these contract periods to be up to fifteen (15) years. This bill (S4013-2009) has not yet passed the Assembly.

15. Are there other legislative issues that hinder this relationship from continuing?

State aid ratios have often been the .focus of concern over the Greenwood Lake and Tuxedo relationship. There is currently a bill introduced by Assembly Woman Annie Rabbit (A2238-2011) that could address these concerns.

However, during the 2007 GWL/Tuxedo negotiations, Tuxedo was criticized for the loss of \$186,188 in state aid for out of district special education students. This dollar amount, presented publically in 2007, is inaccurate and inflated. The difference in state aid between the Tuxedo and Greenwood Lake state aid for special education out of district placements for this 2007/2008 school year was \$7,404.18. The same aid differential for the 2010/2011 school year will be \$17,201.84. An analysis of this state aid concern has been provided to the Greenwood Lake Board of Education President and Superintendent.

In addition, New York State Department of Education is interested in the consolidation of small school districts into larger regional school districts. Although this initiative for consolidation will most likely not be realized for many, many years to come, it is important for smaller districts to

begin to determine the organization or model that makes sense for their community(s) and begin to move in that direction.

16. What is currently being done about these legislative issues and the apparent need for a long term solution?

Tuxedo UFSD has provided a proposal to the Greenwood Lake BOE for the creation of a Joint Legislative Committee. The membership of this committee as well as the description of the "focus" for this committee is included in this proposal. It is only through a joint, committed effort that any change can be realized.

In addition, the Tuxedo UFSD has provided a proposal to the Greenwood Lake BOE for the creation of a Joint District Model Committee. The membership of this committee as well as the description of the "focus" of this committee is included in this proposal. In light of the fact that a merger of our two districts is not fiscally beneficial, the purpose of this committee would be to explore the various models of districts across the state of New York and analyze the feasibility of these models to our particular communities. It would be the charge of this committee to identify and recommend to both boards the models that are most feasible in providing a long term solution(s) and therefore realizing a long term commitment.

17. What other options has the Board of Education considered in order to keep GWL?

The Tuxedo Board of Education and administration have been working with Greenwood Lake in the identification and evaluation of cost saving measures in the form of shared services. These cost saving measures would prove to decrease the costs to Greenwood Lake UFSD and to Tuxedo, therefore assisting with an overall costs. An example of these cost saving measures would be the implementation of a High School early start time.

18. What efforts have been made to try to keep GWL?

Even though the joint committees (mentioned in question #16) are currently in proposal form and have not yet been established, the Tuxedo UFSD is proceeding with the investigation of district models throughout the state. Individuals in NYSSBA (New York State School Boards Association), NYSCOSS (New York State Council of School Superintendents) and SED (New York State Education Department) have been identified and will be contacted to begin gaining expertise in this area. Should Greenwood Lake agree to continue the relationship with Tuxedo, this analysis can and should continue as a collaborative effort.

19. What options have been considered by our Board of Education in the event that GWL leaves?

Our Board of Education has considered multiple options and preliminary analysis has been performed for each. All of these options include a major change to our school system as it currently exists. These options include, but are not limited to, the continuation of our district as a K-12 district and the continuation of our district as a K-8 district. Each of these options has serious implications on our programs, staff and faculty. Our businesses would be at risk since

our school district is the largest local employer. Depending on the option selected, we might no longer have voting rights in the decisions concerning the education of our students. However, the preferred option is currently, and always has been, the continuation of the 30+ year relationship with Greenwood Lake and the collaborative effort to find a more long term, mutually beneficial solution for an ongoing sustainable relationship.

20. If George F. Baker High School is forced to stop operation, what would happen to the building?

The buildings that make up the Tuxedo Union Free School District must continue to be used for educational purposes. If this does not occur, the building(s) revert back to the heirs, as specified in the existing deeds for the property.

21. Will current GWL high school students be able to graduate from Tuxedo – or will they need to change schools in middle of High School?

Should Greenwood Lake UFSD choose to tuition their high school students to another district beginning in September 2013, Tuxedo would need to implement a transition plan. This would include the GWL 9th graders beginning in the 2013/2014 school year going to the new receiving district and all or part of the existing high school students continuing on through graduation. The viability of our program throughout these years would need to be evaluated so that our remaining students, both Tuxedo and Greenwood Lake, would receive the benefits of a rich education.

22. What would happen to Tuxedo teachers and staff?

Should Greenwood Lake choose to send their students to either Warwick or Chester, many high school teachers and staff would no longer be employed at our district. The timing of these layoffs would depend upon the transition plan and the options selected by the Board of Education for the future of this district.

23. If Greenwood Lake chooses to send their students to Chester or Warwick, would the Greenwood Lake resident's taxes be reduced?

Laura Williams, the President of the Greenwood Lake Board of Education has publically stated at the GWL Community Forums on February 22nd and February 28th, that the school taxes of the Greenwood Lake residents would not go down and that there would not be rebates to the community.