

Dr. Juliette Pennyman, Superintendent of Schools

Hudson Considering Football Merger with Chatham; Logistics Explained During Community Informational Presentation

The Hudson City School District is considering merging its football program with the Chatham Central School District, and an informational presentation for the Hudson community was held at Hudson Junior Senior High School Thursday night.

The presentation, led by Athletic Director Shawn Briscoe, was attended by about 60 parents and students, as well as Superintendent Dr. Juliette Pennyman, Hudson Senior High School Principal Derek Reardon, Board of Education Vice President Mark DePace and Board of Education member Selha Graham.

Solutions are sought because Hudson's varsity football team prematurely ended its last two seasons because it could not sustain the minimum number of players required.

Briscoe emphasized that numerous merger-related logistics still need to be worked out, and that no final decision has been made. However, he said, a merger with Chatham would provide a sufficient number of varsity players and strengthen the player pool for junior varsity and modified teams.

"The more kids we have, the more success we're going to see, the more success we'll have. There could be a lot of good that comes out of this," he told the crowd, noting that he has had numerous collaborative discussions with Chatham's athletic director.

Chatham, Briscoe said, has a sufficient number of varsity players, but has light participation in other levels of its football program. That's why Chatham is interested in a merger. "Chatham is more than just considering it as an option," he said. "They are really considering it."

Briscoe explained a range of logistics in response to more than two dozen questions from the audience:

- A merger would require approval by the Hudson and Chatham Boards of Education. Those approvals would then be reviewed and likely approved by Section 2, the league both high schools now play in. A rescindable application would have to be filed by Feb. 1.
- The goal would be to have 30 players from 11th and 12th grades on a merged varsity team.
- Any merger would be a one-year renewable agreement.
- Having varsity, junior varsity and modified teams after a merger would ensure that student-athletes compete on developmentally appropriate levels. For instance, Briscoe said, younger players in 10th grade would not play against seniors, who are more physically mature. And, he said, some younger players have been understandably reluctant to play vs. seniors.

If the merger occurs, the team would alternate practice sites, share home games and each school would



retain its own Homecoming game and celebration. Transportation would be provided by the school districts, and the same number of coaches in both school districts would be retained. Details such as uniform colors and districts' names on uniforms would be worked out in partnership.

A key component, Briscoe said, would be to cultivate a supportive environment for a merged team in both districts. "We would need to be one team, one family," he said. "We would have to make sure that as a community, we would be behind this 110%. I think we can do that as a community and as a school district. With Chatham, we can make this successful."

Briscoe also noted that 12 merged teams already compete in Section 2. These include Catskill/Cairo-Durham, Tamarac/Hoosick Falls and Watervliet/Heatley. In addition, one football team represents three schools: Rensselaer, Doane Stuart and Loudonville Christian.

As for next steps, Briscoe said he likely will develop separate surveys to gauge community and student sentiments about a merger. He also invited emailed questions and comments. He can be reached at briscoes@hudsoncsd.org.

Further updates will be provided as developments occur.

Thank you.

Hudson City School District
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