



Franklin Central School District

Message to the Unatego and Franklin Central School District Communities

March 31, 2022

Dear Members of the Spartan and Purple Devil families,

For several years, Franklin and Unatego have been working together to continue to provide opportunities for our students. For years, the two school districts have shared a school prom. For the past decade, Franklin student-athletes have competed on a merged football team and more recently, the two schools have merged for wrestling as well. Several years ago, when declining interest threatened to eliminate boys' soccer at Unatego, Franklin welcomed Unatego students to join their soccer team, and last year, when Franklin failed to have a sufficient number of players to field a baseball team, Unatego welcomed these youngsters to become part of a merged varsity baseball team. As enrollments at both school districts have declined and will likely continue to decline going forward and, in an effort to maintain opportunities for students from both schools to participate in extracurricular activities, stakeholders from both districts started meeting this fall on a regular basis to study continuing athletic mergers between the two schools.

The committee, consisting of a student-athlete, school board member/parent, athletic director, and superintendent from each district, began meeting in the late fall and has been meeting at least once monthly to develop a process and protocols surrounding the athletic merger process. The overriding mission of the committee has been to maintain as many opportunities as possible for student-athletes from both districts. Although the committee continues to work through logistics in areas such as transportation, practices, home games, uniforms, and a process for when the two schools should merge. **The committee members remain committed to each school retaining their stand-alone athletic teams as long as they have sufficient numbers of students to maintain their own team.**

In order to maintain a robust interscholastic program with multiple opportunities for student-athletes, sports mergers must be given serious consideration. **It is equally important to note that the sports committee does not support a takeover of any kind.** While we all take great pride in our student's accomplishments on and off the field, we believe that maintaining opportunities for students to compete is equally important. We want to make it clear—each school will maintain their own sports programs as long as they have the students to do so. But both schools are seeing a declining enrollment which threatens teams from all sports. Our goal is to continue to provide opportunities for students from both schools.

Although both Franklin and Unatego continue to maintain their own programs in most sports, this year we are merged in all levels of Football and Wrestling, as well as Varsity Boys' Soccer. This spring, athletes from the two schools will be competing on merged teams for all levels of baseball, modified softball, and modified track. As a result of the work of the committee, these sports will practice and play games in both districts on an equitable basis.

There is no consideration of a full consolidation between the two districts. What is currently being studied is the efficacy of continuing to merge interscholastic athletic teams now to sustain extracurricular opportunities for our students. Going forward, each school will maintain their own sports programs, if possible, but continue to plan for the possibilities of further mergers if the situation warrants it. The purpose of the survey was to hear the thoughts, questions and concerns of all stakeholders from both school communities. The Superintendents from both districts will be presenting this information in the next few months

"Educating and empowering students to maximize their potential as learners and citizens"

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Sincerely,

Dr. David Richards
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Unatego Central School District

Bonnie Johnson
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Franklin Central School District