

# “Sensible Solution” Offered

for State High renovation

A team of local volunteers has put forward an alternative proposal for the State College Area School District to consider before moving ahead with its \$98 million, one-building, high school renovation.

The report is provided to help board and community members understand important aspects of this project and to demonstrate a better alternative. Called "The Sensible Solution," the idea is to fully renovate and renew the two existing high school buildings.

This plan includes additional new construction to match the program size and function of the one-building plan. Every square foot is either replaced or remodeled to the same quality and building code standards as the one-building plan.

The critical consideration is whether we should house our large enrollment of 2,700 high school students in one building or continue with the two-building configuration that has served us so well for the past 25 years.

Moving to one building would be a radical change in the delivery of education -- the consequences of which have not been comprehensively considered until this report.

As the report demonstrates, the Sensible Solution is superior and less risky for these reasons:

1. Delivery of education
2. Flexibility for the future
3. Cost
4. Community consensus
5. Safety, security and comfort

The Sensible Solution comes in at a much lower cost of between \$62 million and \$67 million, primarily because it does not require rebuilding the South Building. Even the most extensive renovations are less expensive than new construction. When you add in debt-service costs, taxpayers would save more than \$42 million under this proposal.

Cost, however, is not the main issue. This is really about education.

The Sensible Solution preserves our unique two-building design that has housed the successful high school program for decades and which offers two smaller-scale, developmentally appropriate learning environments to break up our large enrollment.

Researchers today simply do not recommend creating a high school building for more than 1,500 students.

Building a high school that modern educators say is not optimal for learning due to its size and scale -- especially when there is no compelling reason to do so -- is risky and unnecessary. And it does not prepare us well for the future.

Change is certain. The one-building plan is not being built for any growth at all. The district admits that the new building is not designed to accommodate even modest enrollment increases.

The large one building is less adaptable to potential changes in educational delivery in that it is organized by department rather than student-focused groupings.

Two beautifully renewed, moderately sized and fully equipped buildings are simply more flexible to adapt to whatever the future holds.

The Sensible Solution provides increases in space for all program areas and, in fact, provides more total program areas and classrooms than the district's one-building plan.

The Sensible Solution adds an enclosed walkway to connect the two buildings and eliminate street crossing. Of course, further stakeholder input would be gathered to determine more specific requirements of each department and to ensure optimal space assignments and layout.

The district's one-building project is advanced and may soon go out for bids. The time to act is now.

There will be an informational discussion on the merits of the Sensible Solution at the next board meeting (7:30 p.m. Monday at Mount Nittany Middle School). The proposal is available for review at [www.sensiblesolution.org](http://www.sensiblesolution.org).

We ask the district to pause and to compare fairly the inherent benefits of the two-building solution, and we urge supporters of our proposal to encourage the board to make an admirable leadership decision for the benefit of our youth.

*David Paterno, of State College, is president of Sage Life Technologies LLC and spearheaded the effort that led to "The Sensible Solution" report and proposal.*