

April 1, 2011

Dear Parents and Community Members,

While school consolidation is a concept that has been quietly talked about for many years, it has quickly become the new buzz word across the state of Illinois. Governor Quinn is hoping to use consolidation as an avenue to save the state millions of dollars. While consolidation may be a viable option in some situations, I contend that forcing it upon school districts in an unsystematic manner is simply irresponsible. School district organization should reflect the community's interests and values and not be dictated arbitrarily from the State's central government. Local citizens, and those elected locally to govern the school district, must have the authority to make those decisions which affect the educational well-being of the students living within their community.

Clinton County schools have a reputation for offering its students strong academic programming in a safe, caring learning environment. In fact, the small K-8 school districts in our area are recognized regularly for having some of the top test scores in the state of Illinois. Along with that, an overwhelming majority of our elementary school districts received the highest designation of "Recognition" for their 2011 financial profile score. This shows that our Clinton County Schools are working within their means to offer a quality education to the youth of our communities.

Governor Quinn claims that school consolidation will result in a savings of \$100 million dollars. While there are considerable doubts that these savings will actually come to fruition, at what cost to student education does this "savings" come? Hopefully the voice of reason will somehow resonate through the halls of Springfield and someone will inquire about the research behind school consolidation. Does the research overwhelmingly support the claim that consolidation will give State officials the answers they want? Actually, most recent research suggests the opposite.

When making decisions at work every day, the first and last thing I ask myself is, "What is best for kids?" Is forced consolidation what is best for kids? That question should be asked and answered with the community members at the local level based on circumstances surrounding their particular school district.

A public meeting on consolidation will be held in the cafeteria at St. Rose School on Thursday, April 7, at 7:00 p.m. All concerned citizens of Clinton County are invited to attend. The format will be an explanation of the proposed legislation and a discussion of its impact on the county. I will be in attendance at this meeting along with several other Clinton County administrators. Local legislators have been invited to attend as well. If you are unable to attend this meeting, and you have questions in regards to consolidation or any other school related topic, please feel free to contact me at beckerr@clinton.k12.il.us or 523-4253.

Sincerely,

Robin Becker, Superintendent
Germantown Elementary School