

Dear Editor:

Over the years, three hundred populated Maine coastal islands have imploded into unpopulated wilderness. In almost every case, the triggering event was closure of the island school.

Chebeague Island and fourteen others have managed to maintain year 'round populations, but it has been a struggle. Island living is not for the faint of heart. Nearby Cliff Island and further downeast Frenchboro both faced possible closure of their schools in recent times, but both demonstrated great ingenuity in developing creative solutions to rebuild their school age populations. By keeping their schools open, they narrowly saved their island communities.

MSAD 51, which oversees the two room school on Chebeague, has shockingly proposed closing down grades 4-5, which occupies one of our two classrooms. This follows on the heels of the recent closing of grade 6, as well as a deterioration in the quality of the educational experience at the school which caused some families to send their children off-island to school.

Chebeague's residents are, to a person, up in arms over this state of affairs. All are convinced that closure of one of our two classrooms is an irrevocable step toward ultimate closure of our school. Does not the School board have a responsibility to weigh the potentially devastating effects of their actions on our entire community?

Let us hope that placing the spotlight on this proposal will help bring it the fate it deserves.

Betts and Eldon Mayer
Chebeague Island

