

Chebeague Island, Maine

Polly Haight-Frawley Chair
MSAD51 Board of Directors
P.O. Box 6A
Cumberland Center, Maine 04021

February 24, 2005

Dear Ms. Haight-Frawley,

We are parents of children at the Chebeague Island School. We understand that there is a proposal to move the 4th and 5th grades from the Chebeague Island School to North Yarmouth Memorial School and to reduce the Island school to one classroom. We do not support this restructuring proposal and have a number of concerns about the impact of this proposal on our children, our school, and our community.

We were not notified of this proposal and have not had an opportunity to participate in the discussion concerning such a significant change to our school. Two years ago, parents and the administration worked openly and collaboratively to restructure the island school to its current K-2 and 3-5 configuration. This grade redistribution successfully addressed the concerns repeatedly expressed by CIS teachers about the K-3 classroom, and aligned us with the new middle school configuration. This current proposal does not address the instructional problems previously identified in the K-3 classroom, and if implemented, it would negatively impact the quality of our children's education. While we understand the financial pressures faced by the District, we feel that the impact of this proposed restructuring is more than a question cost-savings, and we are requesting the opportunity to meet with the Board and the administration outside of the budget process to discuss this important matter.

Removing the 4th and 5th grade from the island school would require young children, aged 8 to 10 years, to complete a lengthy daily commute on a bus, a boat, and a second bus. This commute can present significant challenges for even our middle and high school students, who are much more mature and independent. Requiring the 4th and 5th graders to commute to the mainland is asking for stamina and maturity that is beyond their years. This situation would undoubtedly have a negative impact on their schooling. In addition, the schedule and logistics would result in them being isolated from their peers.

A reconfiguration of the island school impacts the entire island community and this news has caused concern that extends well beyond just parents of children at the island school. We have enclosed a petition with about 100 signatures of Chebeague residents who share our concerns. As stated in the petition, we are requesting the

MSAD51 Board of Directors convene a meeting on Chebeague Island within the first two weeks of March to clarify and discuss the status of this proposal for the Chebeague Island School.

In the past we have worked together effectively to address concerns relating to the Chebeague Island School. The success of our combined efforts at the Chebeague Island School is evident in our terrific staff, the abundance of community support, our exciting community projects, and the achievements of our students. We would appreciate it if you would share this letter and our concerns with the Board of Directors. If you desire, you may respond to us through either Carol White (846-4769) or Beth Dyer (846-6522). We look forward to continuing this dialogue at your earliest convenience, and we thank you for all of the time you willingly give to support the children in MSAD 51.

Sincerely,

Rick and Paige Boisvert
Tom and Virginia Calder
Doug and Denise Campbell
Glenn and Cindy Coombs
Ed and Julie Doughty
Mark and Beth Dyer
May Hall
Jason and Jill Hamilton
Leland and Karen Hamilton
Jeff Hamilton and Susannah Speidel
Darren and Cheryl Hillicoss
Ed and Alison Manion
John and Kim Martin
Herb Maine and Carol White
Gordon and Meagan Murphy