

Community High School District 128

Position Statement Regarding Forced Illinois School Consolidation

As many of you are aware, Illinois Governor Pat Quinn has proposed forced school consolidation in Illinois that would eliminate nearly 600 Illinois school districts. Under his proposal, elementary and high school districts, such as District 128 and our elementary feeder districts, would be among the types of districts forced to consolidate.

Governor Quinn has mapped out a plan and timeline for school consolidation, and there are currently bills under consideration in the Illinois House that would execute his plan to implement school consolidation as early as July 1, 2012. Under the Governor's proposal and companion legislation, such consolidation would take place without local voter approval, and as a result, would essentially eliminate the majority of Illinois school districts and create new districts in their place. The proposal and legislation may require that the new districts be organized in new ways: 1) county, 2) drawing new boundaries based on 2010 census data, 3) overall area population, or 4) some other as now undetermined means. In such scenarios, District 128 and our feeder districts would likely be dismantled and subject to state mandated consolidation decided upon, and approved by, legislators in Springfield and not by the communities we serve.

While school consolidation may be necessary in some Illinois communities to ensure financial viability and quality curriculum, instruction, support programs, and co- and extra-curricular opportunities for students, the communities served by District 128, fortunately, do not fall into these categories. District 128 receives little state aid relative to the total budget, and based on our local tax base, the generosity of our local stakeholders, and effective financial planning and decision making, the district is in excellent financial condition. In addition, Libertyville and Vernon Hills High Schools are consistently ranked and recognized among the highest achieving academic high schools in the state and nation. Finally, the same can be said for the demonstrated excellence at our four elementary feeder districts: Oak Grove 68, Libertyville 70, Rondout 72, and Hawthorn 73.

As such, Community High School District 128 sees the concept of forced consolidation as a state versus local control issue, particularly in a school district such as ours that receives little state aide, is in excellent financial condition and continues to produce outstanding student achievement. In other words, we believe that the decision to consolidate or not to consolidate should rest in the hands of our local stakeholders and taxpayers and not in the hands of legislators meeting 215 miles away from our district. To that end, over the next few days, D128 will take three action steps: 1) develop and disseminate relevant information to educate our stakeholders regarding this important issue, 2) identify key questions that local state representatives, senators, and stakeholders need to consider in assessing and deciding upon consolidation, and 3) facilitate a comprehensive communication effort with our stakeholders to contact Governor Quinn, Senate President Cullerton, House Speaker Madigan and our local state legislators to assure that local voices are heard regarding the issue of school consolidation.

In closing, District 128 has a long history of outstanding fiscal responsibility and excellent student achievement. As such, any decision to alter or change the course of our district should be made by our local stakeholders and taxpayers and not by state mandate.

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