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### Think About The Students

In my freshman year at North Branford High School, I remember thinking to myself “Good thing that this is a small school”. The thought of being in this school with more than 2,000 students scared me. I was very fortunate to be able to get my education in such a small, close-knit community of students. Class sizes are small, so it was easier for me to adapt in this new environment. It was easier for me to get involved in different activities and it was also easier for me to form a small group of friends and very close bonds with the people in my grade. So far, I’ve enjoyed the many opportunities that my school has offered me. I hope that I will continue to learn in small, controlled environments.

Unfortunately, some students don’t get this luxury. Public schools have started consolidating due to budget cuts. Recently, the state of Connecticut introduced two bills for the consolidation of suburban schools. The first bill considered consolidating schools that had fewer than 40,000 students in it. The second bill that was created stated that schools of 2,000 or fewer should be consolidated (Kramer). Advocators for school consolidation believe that these bills should be made final in Connecticut. They believe that it will positively impact the economy. On the other hand, people who are against the consolidation of schools are actually considering how these changes would affect the students both individually and as a whole.

I’ve been wondering if this decision is in the best interest of the students or if it’s purely to save the state money. In my opinion, consolidating schools will not benefit the students. In fact, It will make it harder for students to have one-on-one time with their teachers. By increasing the student count dramatically, this will increase class sizes and decrease the

opportunity for struggling students to ask their teachers for help (Fanning). When students don't obtain the help they need, they struggle to maintain their grades. I'm not the only one who believes that overcrowding classrooms would harm the students' education. In Wallingford Connecticut, there have been both students and teachers speaking against the consolidation of schools. For example, here is a segment from WTNH on the students' reactions to the possibility of school consolidation becoming reality: <https://www.wtnh.com/news/connecticut/new-haven/proposals-for-wallingford-school-consolidation-drawing-heated-reaction/1663809177>

If you noticed, in this video, there was a woman named Marianne Maloney who spoke for consolidating schools purely because of her desire for taxes to decrease (Hudak). As I mentioned above, I was concerned as to whether people who are advocating for the consolidation of schools were considering it for the student's sake or for the economic reasons. Although the money is important, it shouldn't be the deciding factor as to whether consolidating schools is the right thing to do or not. By only focusing on the financial aspect instead of the student needs, we are threatening the ability of the students overall learning. Betsy Gara, the executive director of COST, claimed that "Several smaller school districts have explored consolidation options and concluded that consolidation would not result in significant cost savings... Instead, consolidation raised concerns regarding whether the quality of education would suffer" (Kramer).

Some schools have just considered this as an option while others have completely made the transition. Schools in Arkansas have been consolidated since 2002, and they warn smaller schools that this "is not a universal fit" ("Distrust of Government"). They say that the consolidation of schools brings longer bus rides and it would break apart town sports teams. A student in Arkansas named Amy Kokoski, actually admits to liking smaller schools better ("Distrust of Government"). She says that smaller schools are better because "The kids know

each other from kindergarten. The parents all know each other. The teachers all know each other” (“Distrust of Government”). When students and teachers who have experienced the consolidation of schools speak against it, it proves that consolidation isn’t something that should be considered.

Furthermore, the consolidating schools, can break friendships apart and change a student's life. These students also have different responsibilities outside of school that would be impacted by long bus rides. Consolidation would also mean layoffs or firings of teachers and staff (Fanning). It is for these many reasons that consolidation shouldn’t be considered.

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