

Step Back

From Reconfiguration

To the Editor:

The reconfiguration of Region 14 schools will create more problems than it solves.

Currently the Mitchell Elementary School needs renovation and is overcrowded. It houses grades K-4. Grade 5 is housed in the middle school across the street and is able to ride the same buses as the elementary school and follow the same schedule.

Reconfiguration will bring the fifth grade back to Mitchell, which will become an intermediate grade 3-5 school. The Mitchell building will have more total students and still need major renovations.

Bethlehem Elementary School, a smaller building on less land, could serve some additional students, although an increase of 100 students under reconfiguration seems excessive.

Currently Bethlehem has about three classes per grade level and Mitchell has about five. A proposal to build three more classrooms in Bethlehem will help, but it will take several years to accomplish. There is also a serious question whether Bethlehem's septic and water systems can support 100 more people.

Reconfiguration requires running three rounds of buses, necessitating shortening the school day by about 30 minutes at both the high school and middle school. How is that better for our students?

The proposed schedules have K-2 children riding the second round of buses, leaving home very early and arriving back before grades 3-5, which will be riding the third round.

Besides adjusting to a school with only three grade levels and about eight classes per grade, children will have to change their sleeping habits between kindergarten and sixth grade from the middle to the latest to the earliest schedule. How is that better for our students?

We need to take a step back from this controversial plan which has divided our region. Give us a chance to pass a referendum to fix the Mitchell building, separate from funding other projects.

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