

2020 Candidate Questionnaire - School Regionalization - 2 short questions!

As a 2020 candidate for Middletown or Newport Town Councils or School Committee - CITIZENS EXPLORING SCHOOL UNIFICATION is asking ALL candidates to REPLY to 2 questions below. The responses will be published on our website, social media, and with all local media outlets. CANDIDATES who DO NOT RESPOND to the survey - CESU will publish that you DECLINED to participate in the survey. DEADLINE to complete is August 31, 2020, *if you have questions about this survey - send an email to info@cesu.news We will reply within 24-hours.

Email address *

Rsylvania@mindspring.com

First and Last Name *

Robert Sylvia

What position are you running for? *

- Town Council
- School Committee

Do you support an updated study of school regionalization between Newport and Middletown? *

Yes

No

Other: MAYBE

Why OR Why Not? Please describe your position in detail (1,000-word limit)! *

It is my opinion, that under the current system, school consolidation only fixes budget shortfalls for communities that have mismanaged their finances. Consolidation may create better schools, but it also may destroy a sense of community and could very well adversely impact the solvent communities they partner with. School district consolidation will provide additional resources for a poorer district because of the current legislation that governs the revenue process, unfortunately this is accomplished on the backs of the community's taxpayers they partner with.

The issue of money and what makes a great school cuts both ways with me. Our neighbor to our north (Portsmouth) annually spends approximately five – million dollars less on education than we do, they educate more children and they have consistently shown higher academic results. This example of a functioning school district supports my observations over the years that money is not the issue. You can throw precious taxpayer dollars at a dysfunctional school district and you will ultimately see the same results, time and time again. The data clearly speaks volumes. I believe that leadership is the true issue with failing school districts. Businesses do not retain poor performing CEO's when businesses are failing. However, our local school committee's do. Why?

An absolute prerequisite to support continued discussion between Middletown and Newport regarding school regionalization for me would be to clearly articulate the boundaries of the conversation and to establish a council appointed committee with defined marching orders. It would have to be clear, that it is a discussion only, with no assumed or expected commitment to consolidation.

I have gone on record on a number of occasions in the past and I will again reiterate my position, which is that I will never support any school regionalization without first changing the existing legislation to ensure equal representation based on student enrollment, which would make Middletown and Newport equal partners in all administrative functions including financial management. The new legislation would also have to keep the allocation of all town funds to education exclusively under the full control of the individual city or town councils. No allocation mandates - No district board or school committee allocation authority.

We know that the Covid-19 school closures have affected our children and most likely it will have deep and lasting impacts on them. I suspect that some children going through a regionalization or consolidation of schools could possibly experience similar issues. Could the timing of any school regionalization or consolidation talks during this Covid-19 pandemic, increase our children's already fragile emotions? Could it potentially create additional anxieties and stress for them? These are questions that need to be addressed and discussed.

I believe that the effects of this pandemic on schools will ultimately inspire a total and complete overhaul of our current education system. Perhaps education going forward will be virtual and be administered, monitored, and controlled through designated offices throughout our State, or maybe it will return to some normalcy, who knows?

I am not an educator, my forte is business and finances, however since Covid-19 has turned our world upside down, school regionalization could conceivably offer some possibilities, that should be investigated. My focus has always been on our town's financial sustainability, maintaining a high quality of life for every resident, affording topnotch services, and establishing sound financial practices.

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