

# Who Really Benefits from School Consolidation?

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Re: Letter to the Editor

It has been Five (5) years since Citizens Organization for Rural Education (CORE) embarked on its mission to help sustain local education in Danforth, Weston and the surrounding area of rural eastern Maine. Initial research found: Local education is the single largest contributor to whole community well-being in rural economies.

Not relying on others, in 2017 CORE hired Sunrise County Economic Council (SCEC) to undertake an economic impact analysis for Danforth and the surrounding area if all or part of the East Grand School closed. The results were dire.

East Grand School (RSU 84 Danforth/Weston) in its entirety contributes over \$3 million and 43 jobs to the Danforth-Weston economy; the high school portion alone amounts to nearly \$1 million and 13 jobs. Results were published in a report entitled, "Economic Impact Study – Danforth, Maine. It is available on the SCEC website.

Responsible citizenry expects meaningful and financially sustainable local education. East Grand School has made great strides to adapt to small class size and introduce active, place-based learning while holding costs in-check. Just this year, the School was recognized as one of two statewide MAMLE (Maine Association Middle Level Educators) Exemplary Practice Award winners, and received National recognition as a top five finalist for SETDA (State Educational Technology Directors Association) Student Voices Award. Teachers and students will be showcasing their project at a ceremony in Washington, DC, in November.

An article entitled, Strategies to Revitalize Rural America, may have said it best: *"State policymakers should not blindly force school consolidation that undermines both education and communities. Small schools can provide the best educational outcome for most children, and efficiency gains of consolidation often disappear when construction and transportation cost are counted. (Confirmed as the most likely outcome for consolidation at East Grand). A much better course is to seek opportunities for communities to work together in ways to help them keep and strengthen their schools while holding the line on cost."*

The 2017 National Forum to Advance Rural Education stated *"Schools matter to the economic, social and cultural vitality of a rural community; they are places where relationships are sustained, traditions are preserved and values are learned."*

Save our School - Save our Community!

Letters have been sent to the State Department of Education, area legislative representatives and congressional delegation.