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I must respond to the letter from board members Zelda Bruns and Tom Beaudry, which appeared in area newspapers this week. I won't speculate on the reasons behind the latest shift in Ms. Bruns' position on the school district's restructuring plan. She certainly has a right to change her mind again.

Those of us who recently formed the Coalition for Community Schools agree that more needs to be understood about the implications of any of several options which we would like to explore as alternatives to the St. Louis County School District's restructuring plan. We also believe an independent analysis of the financial calculations used by Johnson Controls to promote their restructuring plan is desperately needed. It is because more information is so critical that area communities have joined together to seek funding for an independent feasibility study. I am disappointed that Ms. Bruns and Mr. Beaudry appear to oppose getting a second opinion. I was brought up to believe that more information is better. Apparently some school board members disagree.

The study we propose would likely look at the implications of a division of ISD 2142, but it would look at other alternatives as well. We realize that any realignment of district boundaries would almost certainly require modifications of existing law. Ms. Bruns and Mr. Beaudry note that a split of the district could lead to the loss of some sparsity aid. That is certainly an issue which would need to be addressed, just as it was addressed when the district's own restructuring plan required special legislation to prevent the loss of sparsity aid. That's why we send effective legislators to St. Paul.

I would note one major difference between the view of Ms. Bruns, Mr. Beaudry and our organization. While the school board members have put their focus on the survival of ISD 2142 as a single school district, the Coalition for Community Schools is focused on enhancing educational opportunities in our communities. We're putting the interests of our children and our communities ahead of the interests of "the institution."

When we see ISD 2142 working in the interests of our communities and our kids, the district will have our wholehearted support. But when we see our communities and our kids sacrificed in a misguided effort to salvage the institutional integrity of a failing school district, we stand ready to fight. For us, it's a matter of survival.