



Sheridan County School District #3

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Date: December 9, 2020

To: Members, Select Committee on School Finance Recalibration

From: Sheridan County School District #3 Board of Trustees

Subject: Information in Response to Committee Request

Dear Chairmen Kinskey and Sommers:

The Sheridan County School District #3 (SCSD #3) Board of Trustees would like to thank you for your service to public school students in the State of Wyoming and appreciates the opportunity to respond to the questions posed to the local school boards regarding the impact of budget cuts from the Select Committee on School Finance Recalibration. We understand that these are different/difficult times with revenues for Wyoming Education, but we also know that K-12 education plays an important role in the future of Wyoming.

In response to your first question about the impact the budget gap would have on school district operations, if the budget gap was resolved by a reduction to school district funding:

We have very real concerns with the impact of major cuts to our funding! Drastic cuts to funding will have a long term negative impact on the opportunity for an equitable education for our students and will adversely impact our community.

Key Points:

- Reduction in funding means the elimination of *programs* that support and provide opportunities for students.
- The past 3 years we have been doing our part to reduce expenditures.
 - We reduced Certified staff by 11% (2 Full-Time Teachers).
 - We reduced Classified Staff by 19% (2 Full-Time Employees).
- Current model generates funding according to ADM, and we have had an 8% decrease in ADM in the last 2 years, resulting in a loss of funding, even without additional cuts. We are looking to mothball the K-4 Arvada School, which will have a big impact on district funding. This will result in a \$300,000 - \$500,000 reduction because of how the formula calculates funding for the block grant.
- We have one of the lowest base salaries in the state (\$42,000) and we are struggling with recruiting and keeping quality staff. Talent Matters!



The State of Wyoming provides *Hathaway Merit and Need Scholarships* to Wyoming students attending the University of Wyoming community colleges. Every Wyoming student who meets the merit requirements can earn a Hathaway Merit Scholarship.

Your second question you posed is how to address the budget gap:

We have cut expenditures and recognize that it is the responsibility of the legislature to consider a balanced mix of spending cuts and revenue increases.

Key Points:

- Education funding must be cost-based
- Recommendations to support the cost-based level of funding
 - Continue to support the block grant model.
 - Continue to support Small School and District Adjustments.
 - Minimum Teachers
 - Continue to Support some type of "Hold Harmless" for Small School Districts
 - Adjustments to the model and the reduction of ADM could cause a 15-25% decrease in funding in one year. Hold Harmless would allow us to adjust over several years.
 - This also eliminated the funding cliff that exists in the current funding formula for Small School Districts.
- Eliminate new requirements or mandates that adds a cost to districts.
- Look at funding expenditures outside the funding model to reduce educational expenditures.
- Remove roadblocks that could impact how we can respond to the instructional needs of our students.
 - Eliminate the requirement that only Wyoming Certified Teachers can provide online instruction.
 - Temporary lift the maximum carryover reserve for School Districts from 15% to 25%.
 - Support Statewide Student Information System to manage student data and reporting.
 - Support Statewide insurance program for buildings and busses.
 - We have seen a 30% (+) increase in this cost over the last couple of years.

Economist Brimerly, Versteegen and Garfeiel in the book, *Financing Education In A Climate of Change* makes the following statement:


"Economists emphasized the value of education as a factor in stimulating economic growth. Today education is popularly referred to as "investment in human capital."

In the tough economic times facing Wyoming today, it is not time to de-invest in our students and our communities.

Sheridan County School District #3 Board of Trustees again appreciates the opportunity to provide your committee input. We understand the funding challenges the legislature faces. We advocate for the legislature to let the model work as designed to allow districts to make decisions at the local level regarding the operation of our schools. We respectfully hope our examples provide you with valuable insight to your challenge of funding the statewide school system necessary to deliver the full basket of goods for "All" Wyoming Students.

Sincerely,


Sheridan County School District #3
Board of Trustees



Amy Vineyard




Wade Betz



Misty Moore Stoll



Chris Schock



Trinity Lewis