



Teton County School District #1  
Betsy Carlin, Chair  
1235 Gregory Lane, Box 568  
Jackson, WY 83001  
[bcarlin@tcsd.org](mailto:bcarlin@tcsd.org)

October 15, 2020

Chairmen Sommers and Kinskey,

The Teton County School District #1 Board of Trustees is dedicated to providing the highest quality of education as required by the Legislature and the Wyoming Accountability in Education Act (WAEA). The three goals of the WY Accountability in Education Act are: 1) See Wyoming become a national education leader among states; 2) Ensure all students leave Wyoming schools career or college ready; 3) Improve teacher, school, and district leader quality. School Board Trustees are elected by the community and serve three main functions: hire and evaluate the superintendent, ensure policies are followed, and provide fiduciary accountability for educating the children within the county.

*Success 2022* summarizes the Teton County School District #1 strategic plan goals that by 2022; every 3rd grader will be a proficient reader and mathematician, every 8th grader will be a proficient writer, and every graduate will be life ready. Every expenditure, whether it is on an operational expense or personnel like a teacher, para, food service employee, office support, bus driver, custodian, coach or administrator, is in service of this lofty goal. We know that in order to meet the expectations of the Wyoming Legislature and our community, every one of our staff members and community members must be committed to this goal. Every expenditure is validated as an expenditure that is in service to students and meeting their needs. There are no positions funded in our school district that are for any other reason than serving students.

During a board meeting on October 14, 2020, the Teton County School Board posted your letter and the documents provided. We discussed the content and had a candid conversation with our community about some Legislators' lack of priorities in education. You asked that school districts share the operational impact of cutting education funding. The response is "priceless". Education is the foundation for the future. Cutting education today means increasing the poverty rates, incarceration rates, and health service costs in the future. Cutting education

equates to a less educated workforce for tomorrow and means as a state, our best and brightest will leave as there would be nothing available for them here. Wyoming communities thrive based on the strength of public education. The first question a potential home buyer or business owner wants to know is how good are the public schools. In Wyoming, we can proudly say that we outrank every contiguous state and we are nationally ranked among the top 5 as noted by NAEP.

The Basket of Goods and the Hathaway Success Scholarships are the basis of program offerings. In Teton County School District #1, a 10% reduction in our block grant equates to \$5,582,458. Our entire operational budget (no salaries or benefits) is \$7,673,651, leaving limited savings in this area. The only opportunity for reductions lie in personnel and programming. To provide data and context, this would mean cutting approximately 65 staff members. Annually we have an average of twenty retirees/resignations and hire replacements depending on need and enrollment. As the largest year-round employer in the community, reducing this many staff would ultimately leave no other choice but to leave Wyoming and seek employment out of state. In order to reduce by this magnitude, TCSD#1 would have to cut programming, which means we could not offer the Basket of Goods or the Hathaway Success Scholarship. To reduce 65 staff members would eliminate the possibility of offering pathways in career and technical educational programs and other legislatively required content in the Basket of Goods. Activities and extracurricular offerings would be eliminated or reduced. To be specific, HB0297, while important legislation which we support, has a cost to it which is not funded through our block grant. When WY-TOPP was introduced, the assessment budget line was zeroed out. Yet WY-TOPP cannot screen students for dyslexia nor provide the data that is required to report to WDE. In turn, we purchased screeners that enable us to diagnose and offer interventions to students. This requires testing, resource adoption, intervention tools, staffing and professional development in order to meet the requirements of HB0297. When examining the potential cuts to our block grant, a reduction of this magnitude would necessitate a return to a basic education centered around reading, writing and arithmetic, without the 21st century skills our students need and without the support that some students need in order to be functional with the basic requirements. When Legislators envisioned education in Wyoming, it is hard to imagine this is the educational program you can be proud of, nor is it the educational program that would entice you to hire a Wyoming public school graduate.


Due to COVID, we have seen an increase in out of state enrollment and a decrease in returning students enrollment. Some have decided to homeschool and others have enrolled in online programming not offered by the district. The change from October 2019 to 2020 has been a loss of 122 students, or approximately \$2,300,000 in decreased funding.

As a reminder, Teton County School District #1 sends \$15 million back to the state in property tax dollars to ensure equity of education for all Wyoming public school children. The last time education funding was reduced at 3.5%, we made reductions to our staffing and operational budgets. We shifted funding from the central office budgets to buildings' budgets to support the safety, educational and mental health needs of students and staff. This new threat compounds the previously legislatively enacted reductions; that means the only new reductions would come out of programs and the Basket of Goods. When state services are reduced, districts pick up the services to meet the needs of students and families for mental health, social and emotional health, counseling, medical services like hearing tests, eye glasses, and prescriptions, nutritional supplements, funding for extracurricular activities and materials, etc.

To quote Nelson Mandela, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Students enrolled in Wyoming public schools are not able to weigh in on Legislative decisions. They are not able to vote in elections or self-advocate for their needs. They are, however, victims to the impact of COVID and beneficiaries to Legislative decision making. When they graduate in a few years and in the next decades, they will be leading our country and our communities. Is our legacy as leaders that we cut education funding and sacrificed our future, or are we going to make the tough decisions necessary to prioritize education and honor the Wyoming Constitution that clearly places education as a top priority?

We will continue to focus on our priorities as elected officials and those priorities include offering the Basket of Goods and providing an education that meets our goals of *Success 2022*. Our hope is that the Legislature honors the role of funding education above all else and supporting school districts in meeting the requirements outlined by the Legislature.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  
  
E8518D14431045B...

Betsy Carlin - Chair

Cc: Teton County School District #1 Trustees  
Dr. Gillian Chapman, Superintendent  
Members of the Recalibration Committee  
Teton County Senators and Representatives