



# Uinta County School District No. Four

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[www.uinta4.com](http://www.uinta4.com)

October 27, 2020

Chairmen Kinskey and Sommers,

The Uinta 4 Board of Trustees values the opportunity to provide our perspective to the School Finance Recalibration Committee on the anticipated shortfall in funding for K-12 schools in Wyoming due to the significant declines in the mineral industries in Wyoming. In particular, we would like to discuss the impact this reduction in funding will have in our schools and, subsequently, to our entire community. We would also like to suggest a solution to mitigate the shortfall in funding.

A 16% reduction in school funding represents \$2.1 million to Uinta 4. Excluding salaries and benefits, our remaining operational budget is approximately \$2.3 million each year. Consequently, our most realistic opportunities for cuts will come from the areas of personnel and programs. However, to truly understand and appreciate the impact this would have in our school district, one must first understand and appreciate the crucial and complex role that education plays in developing the whole child and the benefits that education directly and indirectly provides our entire community. We aspire to develop healthy, productive, well learned individual students capable of becoming positive, contributing adults to a society that has an ever increasing need for quality and goodness. This development does include providing a great education for students. It also includes the obligation to attend to the social and emotional needs and challenges that our students and their families bring to our buildings. Whether you think this is the role of a school system or not doesn't matter. The reality is that society has passed this obligation onto schools and we as educators are not wired to say no to kids in need. We are committed to helping the whole child which in turn benefits an entire community and state. Simply said, the impact of cuts to school funding will ripple for years through each individual child to society as a whole. More specifically, this loss of funding would significantly impact all aspects of education in the school district. No program or employee would be insulated from its effect. Uinta 4's obligation and requirement to provide our students with the necessary instructional programs, high quality staff members and safe learning environments would be compromised. We would struggle to provide our students the required Basket of Goods and the programs needed to fulfill the requirements of the Hathaway Success Scholarship program. We would be limited in our abilities to hire and retain talented and skilled teachers. Talent costs! We would struggle to continue to support our Vocational/Career-Technology programs even though these programs provide many students a pathway to work force success and are valued in all

Board of Trustees: Mark D. Walker Kelly Q. Carpenter Aaron T. Rudy Dale Madsen Laura Jorgensen

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The State of Wyoming provides Hathaway merit and need scholarships to Wyoming students attending the University of Wyoming and Wyoming community colleges

communities across Wyoming. Programs to support our most at-risk learners such as summer school, counseling services, and highly trained interventionists would be jeopardized. The many support systems that society in general has passed off to school districts will, in part, be left unattended. We know a 16% reduction in funding would represent \$2.1 million in Uinta 4. We believe the long-term cost to society would be significantly more than that.

The best solutions to problems always involve teamwork, shared responsibility and compromise. We believe that the solution to this funding crisis includes a combination of reductions to school funding and revenue increases. To disproportionately rely exclusively on one or the other makes little sense during a crisis. As a Board of Trustees, we reviewed the Wyoming Estimated Tax "Capacity" worksheet provided by the Wyoming Legislative Service Office. This worksheet identifies many potential revenue streams that could be combined with cuts to education that could significantly reduce or completely eliminate the funding gap for education moving forward. The benefits of education transcend our school buildings. Therefore, the solution to this funding crisis needs to go beyond our school district as well.

As a Board of Trustees, we will continue to focus our priorities on doing what is best for kids and to be their voice. We believe that there is no better long-term investment for our community, state and nation than the investment we can make in K-12 public education. Thank you for your service to the citizens of this great state. We look forward to working together to best serve the needs of our students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Walker". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Mark Walker

Board of Trustee Chairman

Uinta County School District 4

Cc: Uinta County School District 4 Board of Trustees