



351 Monroe Avenue
Phone: 307-872-5500

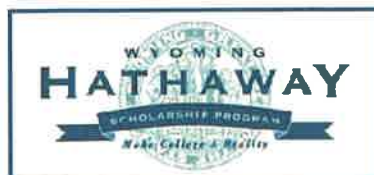
Green River, WY 82935
Fax: 307-872-5518
www.swcsd2.org

Date: November 10, 2020
To: Members, Select Committee on School Finance Recalibration
From: Steve Core, Chairman, Sweetwater County School District #2 Board of Trustees
Subject: Information in Response to Select Committee Request

The Sweetwater County School District #2 (SWCSD2) Board of Trustees welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Select Committee on School Finance Recalibration's recent request for feedback on what impact the estimated K-12 education budget gap to the School Foundation Program Account and the School Capital Construction Account would have on school district operations. Considering the economic impact from the shortfall in the mineral extraction industries and from the Covid-19 pandemic, the SWCSD2 Board of Trustees share the concern over the fiscal outlook for the current fiscal year 2021-2022 biennium and the future beyond. As requested, this response will address the impacts on school district operations if the projected 16 percent budget gap was borne by a reduction to school district funding.

SWCSD2 has been trending declining enrollment for six consecutive years due to contractions within the local economy. In 2020-2021 the decline is even greater as enrollment has decreased 185 students (-7.27%) with the added impact of COVID-19. We have had many families move away and families that have chosen not to send their children back to school by homeschooling or enrolling them in out of district virtual schools. This shortfall alone, estimated at \$865,000 or 2.2% of our guarantee, is forcing us to make difficult decisions for the 2021-2022 school year. An additional 10 percent reduction in resources represents approximately \$3,899,593 to SWCSD2 and would have a profound impact on every aspect of SWCSD2 operations.

Personnel costs represent approximately 81.6% of our budget. Consequently, the majority of the budget gap would affect personnel costs with an estimated loss of 37 full-time staff positions and will create rippling effects through the entire community of Green River. These job losses could inhibit the ability of Wyoming families to recover from this financial impact, weakening overall economic growth and slowing the recovery. Additionally, the fiscal impact of such a reduction would irreparably damage the school district's culture and ability to provide the expected level of education by eliminating education programming, increase class size, reducing personnel in the area of teachers, administrators, and support staff, decreasing or even eliminating investments in curriculum materials, staff development, and overall operational capacity.



As with any funding adjustments, SWCSD2 will strive to least affect students in the classroom and to continue the districts' mission to provide "Learning for All" and vision of "Inspiring Excellence Every Day". However, programs will be impacted by these reductions and could include summer school and extended day opportunities, extracurricular activities, fine arts, advanced student programs, course offerings and more. Wyoming cannot rely on spending cuts alone to close the K-12 education budget gap. The students of Wyoming are reliant upon the Legislature to consider a balanced mix of spending cuts and revenue generation to secure a long-term solution for education.

As you contemplate a school finance recalibration bill, we urge you to consider the following requests: 1) SWCSD2 Board of Trustees requests that the Select Committee support a recommendation to support a constitutional, cost-based level of funding. The K-12 education budget gap should not determine a new cost basis for K-12 education. 2) Maintain a block grant model and avoid the dissection of specific areas within the model via new mandates or restrictions on the use of block grant funds. Categorical components with restrictions and limitations would severely limit our flexibility and ability to serve our students in the best way possible. The block grant ultimately provides that 48 Wyoming school districts can deliver their educational program in a way that their community can be successful, thus ensuring local control. 3) Consider a temporary lifting of the maximum carryover for school district reserves in order that cost savings measures can be used to offset future school years potential loss in revenue.

SWCSD#2 Board of Trustees understands the gravity of the task that recalibration presents to the Select Committee, and we share your goal of ensuring excellence in Wyoming's education system. We support a multi-faceted approach of revenue generation, using rainy day resources to lessen shortfall impacts, and thirdly, budget cuts. SWCSD2 continually strives for improvement and values the importance of school funding in this endeavor. We value each of you for your service to the citizens of Wyoming and especially to the students of Wyoming. We encourage the consideration of these three suggestions to solve the current budget shortfall and secure the future of education funding in Wyoming.

Sincerely,



Steve Core, Chairman
Sweetwater County School District No. Two Board of Trustees

Cc: Sweetwater County School District #2 Board of Trustees
Craig Barringer, Superintendent
Members, Select Committee on School Finance Recalibration
Brian Farmer, Executive Director, Wyoming School Boards Association