



PTA and PTSA
Support Our Schools
Handbook

Dear PTA/PTSA President,

In the coming 2-3 weeks, our state legislature and governor will be making decisions about school funding that may severely impact our schools next year, and for decades to come. We need you to engage your parent community today and join us in making sure our state leadership hears from parents, students and business leaders from across the state, that our schools must be protected.

Here are the 4 things you need to know and share with others:

1. Our state is facing a budget crisis of epic proportion, due to a “perfect storm” of the current Arizona tax revenue structure, spending, and the worldwide economic crisis.
2. To meet this crisis, our state leadership is looking to make cuts to school funding. These cuts will likely take us from being 49th in the nation in per student spending, to dead last.
3. Our organization understands that in our current economy we face tough choices, and that all must share in the burden. That said, we are concerned that the state legislators are not seeking innovative solutions to the problem nor do they appear to be willing to identify alternative sources of funding. Currently our leadership seems to be set on deep cuts to Education. Our group believes that there are a number of potential revenue streams (other than increases in property taxes) that could make a significant difference.
4. Despite the ongoing efforts of members of our organization, the legislature and governor are still not listening to these voices in the community as we asking them to stand up for our schools. We need large numbers of parents to act, if we are going to protect our schools during this crisis.

As the PTO/PTSA for your school, we need your help in engaging parents. We need them to let their legislators know that we expect them to provide us options other than just more cuts. We want them to approach this challenge with innovative ideas, and that, as a community, we want them to give the voters of Arizona the opportunity to approve innovative, revenue generating, fees that can save our schools.

The pages that follow are tools you can use with your parents and students to get in the game! Thanks for your help and dedication to our kids, it is time well spent!

Regards,

Beth Jordan

Litchfield Elementary PTSA President

Sample Parent Letter:

Note: This can be sent in hard or soft copy. At Litchfield, we sent it to the electronic list and posted it on our PTSA Bulletin Board.

Parents,

As the president of your PTSA, I have been tracking the school funding issues that are currently before our state legislature. Sadly, our legislature is not taking care of our kids and is proposing funding cuts that will likely drop Arizona from 49th to 50th in the nation on student spending! In Litchfield Elementary School District alone, we have already lost more than \$2.3 million in **THIS** school year.

Our schools have already had to cut aides, teachers, and other important programs to limp through the rest of this year. Even if we do get through this year without increasing class sizes, if the legislators and Governor follow through with announced plans, the district will face even larger cuts next year – 15- 20% of the total annual budget. That is somewhere between \$5 and \$10 MILLION for the Litchfield District! Say good bye to full day kindergarten, class sizes under 30, music, P.E., and ANY sort of special programs and hello to absolute chaos!

It is time that we, as parents and voters, rise up and tell our legislators “NO”. The quality of Education and a robust economy are inextricably linked. We are already 49th in the nation¹ in terms of the funding the state provides for the teaching of our kids, do we really want to descend to 50th? If you agree that our current standing is shameful, you have to stand up now and together we will make our voices impossible to ignore. Please join with us to make sure the state legislature and our governor are very clear on our priorities. We cannot afford to be passive and let this just happen to us. We are taxpayers and we have a right to guide the spending priorities of the state.

Regards, (Your name)

(your PTSA)

¹ This ranking is based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau. Be advised that there is a politically driven effort to claim that we are approximately 29th, we prefer to rely on an unbiased, objective source.

What can you do today?

- ❖ **Join Hands for Education:** This is a campaign that is originating in LPSD, that we hope will pick up steam state wide and is a very simple thing you can do with your child(ren).
 - Trace both yours and your child's hand and cut them out.
 - Have your child write to Governor Brewer. On one side, have them write "**Please don't leave me empty handed.**" On the other side write a simple personal note. My daughter wrote "Dear Governor, when I grow up I want to be a scientist."
 - Do the same with the adult handprint, but on one side write "**Give me a chance to 'raise' my hand,**" indicating you want additional possible revenue sources to be on the next ballot. If you are a registered Republican, please include that information, we want the Governor to know this is not just a Democratic issue or campaign.
 - Place both hand prints in an envelope and mail them to Governor Brewer's Office at, 1700 West Washington, Phoenix, Arizona 85007.

- ❖ **March 4 for Education Statewide Rally:** Join parents, teachers, and students from across the state as we make our voices heard at the Capitol. These rallies can be very effective when they are well attended.
 - The Rally will start at 4pm, but there will be events from 11am-5pm.
 - We hope to draw a large crowd so come early, bring water and portable chairs if you have them!
 - Your local AEA can assist you in renting school buses for the afternoon if you are interested in going down "en masse". Buses will park at the Fairgrounds, and dropoff and pick up at the Capitol.
 - This is great opportunity to expose your kids to democracy in action – we hope you will join us.

- ❖ **Email Campaign:** Attached are the email addresses for every member of the state house and senate. So with very little effort, you can send a single blast email(s) to them. I will be using this to remind them every day, until the budget for next year is resolved, that they will be held accountable for their actions when it comes to education. A single line will do, use the talking points and key messages in this document.

- ❖ **Letters to the Editor:** We need to keep a steady stream of letters to the editor in both the West Valley View and the Arizona Republic. The Arizona Republic has a 200 word limit, and letters can be emailed to opinions@arizonarepublic.com. Letters to the West Valley View cannot exceed 300 words and can be submitted via email to: editor@westvalleyview.com.

IDEAS FOR KIDS LETTERS TO GOVERNOR BREWER AND THEIR LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES

- I am ___ years old and I am a student at _____.
- I have learned (from my parents) that Arizona has money problems.
- But I already have ___ students in my class; we only have art, PE, music, and media once every seven days; we don't have any foreign languages.
- Still, I love my school because _____.
- School is a place where people care about me and my future.
- My school is the one place where I meet other kids who don't look like me, and who are from different cultures.
- Education is important for my future and for my friends.
- I want to be a _____ when I grow up.
- Please do whatever it takes to protect my school and my future.

DISTRICT 12 ELECTED OFFICIALS

Rep. Steve Montenegro

smontenegro@azleg.gov

602-926-5955

Arizona House of Representatives, Rm 309

Capitol Complex

1700 West Washington

Phoenix, AZ 85007-2890

Senator John Nelson

jnelson@azleg.gov

602-926-5872

Arizona State Senate Complex, Room 305

Capitol Complex

1700 West Washington

Phoenix, Arizona 85007-2890

Rep. Jerry Weiers

jpweiers@azleg.gov

602-926-5894

Arizona House of Representatives, Rm 223

Capitol Complex

1700 West Washington

Phoenix, AZ 85007-2890

Governor Jan Brewer

(602) 542-4331

1700 West Washington

Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Toll Free 1-(800) 253-0883

Fax (602) 542-1381

LEGISLATOR ADDRESSES FOR AN EMAIL BLAST (COPY AND PASTE THEM INTO THE TO LINE)

Senate:

paboud@azleg.gov;aaguirre@azleg.gov
;callen@azleg.gov;sallen@azleg.gov;malvarez@azleg.gov
;rburns@azleg.gov;mburtoncahill@azleg.gov;kcheuvront@azleg.gov;jgarcia@azleg.gov;pgorman@azleg.gov;rgould@azleg.gov;cgray@azleg.gov;lgray@azleg.gov;a
hale@azleg.gov;jharper@azleg.gov;jhuppenthal@azleg.gov;llandrumtaylor@azleg.gov;bleff@azleg.gov;llopez@azleg.gov;dmccunedavis@azleg.gov;amelvin@azleg.gov;rmiranda@azleg.gov;jnelson@azleg.gov;jpaton@azleg.gov;rpearce@azleg.gov;spierce@azleg.gov;rrios@azleg.gov;jtibshraeny@azleg.gov;tverschoor@azleg.gov;jwaring@azleg.gov

House:

tboone@azleg.gov;dbradley@azleg.gov;jbrown@azleg.gov;jburges@azleg.gov;oc
ajerobedford@azleg.gov;chcampbell@azleg.gov;clcampbell@azleg.gov;tchabin@azleg.gov;scourt@azleg.gov;rcrandall@azleg.gov;scrump@azleg.gov;cdeschene@azleg.gov;adriggs@azleg.gov;sfarley@azleg.gov;pfl Fleming@azleg.gov;mgarcia@azleg.gov;dgoodale@azleg.gov;dgowan@azleg.gov;mheinz@azleg.gov;lhendrix@azleg.gov;rjones@azleg.gov;jkavanagh@azleg.gov;bkonopnicki@azleg.gov;dlesko@azleg.gov;plopes@azleg.gov;dluan@azleg.gov;lmason@azleg.gov;jmccomish@azleg.gov;bmcguire@azleg.gov;nmclain@azleg.gov;emeyer@azleg.gov;rmeza@azleg.gov;bmiranda@azleg.gov;smontenegro@azleg.gov;rmurphy@azleg.gov;wnichols@azleg.gov;lpancrazi@azleg.gov;dpatterson@azleg.gov;fpratt@azleg.gov;dquelland@azleg.gov;mreagan@azleg.gov;dschapira@azleg.gov;cseel@azleg.gov;ksinema@azleg.gov;dstevens@azleg.gov;atobin@azleg.gov;atovar@azleg.gov;rwaters@azleg.gov;jweiers@azleg.gov;jpweiers@azleg.gov;vwilliams@azleg.gov;syarbrough@azleg.gov;nyoungwright@azleg.gov

MESSAGING POINTS FOR DISTRICT 12 ELECTED OFFICIALS

- Identify yourself as a constituent. Email from Republicans will be especially effective.
- The State of Arizona clearly faces an enormous challenge in addressing the budget deficit. Significant cuts to public education, however, when Arizona is already 49th in the nation for funding for educational operations, are short sighted.
- Public education is inextricably tied to the future of our state's economy, and we are willing to invest in it. Investing in education will do more for our economy than any corporate tax cut.
- We should prioritize the protection of public education above subsidies for private schools.[1]
- Our elected officials must be creative in addressing this crisis and consider every option to protect public education, including revenue enhancements (tax increases, etc),[2] and permissible accounting adjustments.[3]
- Given the tab we appear to be leaving to our kids, don't we at least owe them a chance of a high paying job?