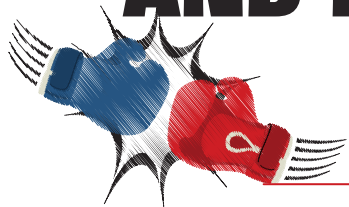


EDUCATION FUNDING

AND THE NEED FOR REVENUE

Combatting false narrative by understanding

FACT VS FICTION



Fiction: Wyoming spends too much money per student, and we don't get enough "bang for our buck."

Fact: Wyoming spent \$18,090 per student in 2019, ranking third in the nation, behind Vermont and New York. While it's true that Wyoming's spending per pupil is amongst the highest in the nation, per-pupil spending isn't an appropriate metric for an "apples to apples" comparison. Because of the rural nature of our state, Wyoming students are unable to capitalize on the economies of scale benefiting students in more urban, populated areas of the country.

It is also important to note that Wyoming schools lead the nation in terms of student achievement and equity. Wyoming has consistently scored in the top ten states in the nation for equity, student achievement, and school finance.*

**Numbers and rankings referenced come from Education Week's Quality Counts Report.*

Fiction: Legislators can make cuts to education without impacting students, teachers, or classrooms.

Fact: Close to 85% of the dollars utilized to fund education go to salaries in school districts. Cuts to education will reduce personnel and/or reduce the salaries used to attract and retain quality candidates. Draft legislation looking to "find efficiencies" in school funding has proposed measures directly harming students, including increasing class sizes and reducing or eliminating funding for student activities. Conforming education funding to the drastically reduced amount available in the wake of current and projected shortfalls without new revenue streams will directly harm Wyoming students.

Fiction: Education hasn't "come to the table" to take cuts like other state agencies. Any cuts made to other agencies are immediately absorbed by education.

Fact: Public education has taken more than \$100 million in cuts since 2017. The Wyoming constitution clearly mandates that the state provide a high-quality, equitable education to all Wyoming students and that the legislature may not forego doing so because of budgetary insufficiencies.

Fiction: Diversifying the economy will solve the funding shortfall threatening education.

Fact: Diversifying the state's economy away from an overreliance on extraction industries is a step in the right direction. But, diversification alone is not the answer. Wyoming must first reform its regressive tax structure to benefit from tax dollars generated from diverse industries flourishing in Wyoming.

CONTINUED ON BACK

Fiction: Cutting administrators' salaries will solve our education funding problem without impacting students or classrooms.

Fact: A proposal to cut administrator salaries by 10% was explored during the 2020 legislative session. Doing so was found to yield only \$3 million per year in savings. The funding shortfall threatening education is upwards of \$300 million per year. Additionally, the 2020 Recalibration report revealed that administrator salaries, even superintendent salaries, are in line with those in similar roles outside of education. For some leadership roles, including assistant principals, the salaries paid to education employees were actually less than those paid to comparable middle management positions in the private sector outside of education.

Fiction: Districts can use "slush funds" to cover funding shortfalls.

Fact: Districts need to have a certain amount of 'savings' to cover any cash flow issues and ensure that all necessary payments for schools' safe and effective operation can be covered if the dollars from the state or federal government don't arrive in time. Districts do not have "slush funds" that will insulate them from millions of dollars in cuts.

Fiction: Education advocates are "tax and spend" liberals who need to find a more efficient way to spend my tax dollars.

Fact: According to the Wyoming Economic Analysis Division, as of the latest data available in 2017, the average Wyoming household pays just \$3,070 in personal taxes and, in return, enjoys \$27,600 in public services—including \$7,360 in services from K-12 public schools. Quality public education cannot be maintained in the face of budget cuts, and cuts cannot solve the funding crisis, which stems from a lack of tax revenue.

Fiction: Wyoming families can't afford to pay more in taxes to support education.

Fact: A recent study conducted by Wyoming's Center for Business and Economic Analysis at Laramie County Community College showed that Wyoming citizens have the financial ability to afford an increase in taxes.

A University of Wyoming study conducted in the first quarter of 2021 showed that the most significant concern of Wyoming citizens during the 2021 legislative session was implementing cuts to K-12 education. This approach garnered the least support.

Additionally, that same study by the University of Wyoming revealed that cutting K-12 education funding resulted in the steepest dropoff in support for lawmakers, with overall approval rates dropping approximately 10% if cuts were to be made to education versus no action being taken to resolve Wyoming's budget crisis.

Please help dispel these myths about education funding by sharing this information with your social circle.

Interested in getting more involved in WEA's political and legislative action advocating for public education? Reach out to the WEA Government Relations department to learn how at tmullen@wyoea.org.