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Member since 2024

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Member since 2010

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Member since 2012

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Balsz Schools

Tillman Middle
Grades 6 – 8
4309 E. Belleview Street
(602) 629-6500

Brunson-Lee Elementary
Grades K – 5
1350 N. 48th Street
(602) 629-6900

Crockett Elementary
Grades K – 5
501 N. 36th Street
(602) 629-6600

Griffith Elementary
Grades K – 5
4505 E. Palm Lane
(602) 629-6700

Orangedale Early Learning
Center
Preschool
5048 E. Oak Street
(602) 629-6800

Balsz Online Academy
Grades K-8
balsz.org/balszonlineacademy

District Office
4825 E. Roosevelt Street
(602) 629-6400

Dear Balsz Staff, Families, and Community Members,

We are writing to share an important update regarding the district’s ongoing budget reduction process and the next steps ahead.

As previously communicated, due to declining enrollment, the Balsz Elementary School District must reduce its budget by just over \$3 million. This reality has required the Governing Board and district leadership to carefully review a range of options while prioritizing students, staff, and the long-term stability of our schools.

Over the past several weeks, the district has continued working with the Arizona School Boards Association (ASBA) in a consulting role to support the district and Governing Board throughout the budget reduction process. Together, ASBA and district leaders engaged staff, families, and community members through surveys, forums, and conversations to better understand concerns, questions, and priorities. We are grateful to everyone who has taken the time to participate and share their perspectives.

What We Heard from Our Community

Through surveys and community meetings, families and staff shared several consistent themes. Many emphasized the importance of maintaining student support services, minimizing disruption for students and families, and receiving clear, timely communication throughout the process. Families also highlighted the need for culturally responsive outreach and opportunities to stay informed and engaged before decisions are made. This feedback continues to guide the Board’s discussion.

Additionally, families expressed concern about potential reductions to student support services and emphasized the importance of maintaining resources that help students feel safe, supported, and successful. The district is grateful for this feedback, which has helped inform ongoing discussions and considerations.

Engagement With the Somali Parent Community

As part of this outreach, ASBA and district leaders met with members of the Somali parent community to listen and better understand their perspectives regarding the budget reduction process. Families shared appreciation for the district’s support and educational resources and expressed a strong commitment to keeping their children enrolled in Balsz schools through graduation.

Parents emphasized the importance of transparency and clear communication, noting that misinformation can easily spread and impact enrollment decisions. Families also shared preferences for more direct, personal communication methods such as in-person meetings, phone calls, and voicemail messages in Somali and highlighted the value of culturally responsive engagement and trusted liaisons to support communication and understanding.

At this time, no final decisions have been made. The Governing Board has not selected an option and is not leaning toward any specific plan.



Budget Reduction Options

The options currently under consideration include:

- **School Closure or Repurposing**, which could involve consolidating students at another Balsz school, adjusting school boundaries and transportation routes, and potentially repurposing a facility for another educational or community use; or
- **Staffing and Program Adjustments**, which could include reducing positions to align with enrollment, limiting certain programs or services, or pausing annual raises.

Each option presents different impacts and challenges. Any actions taken would follow all applicable laws, contracts, and district policies, and families would be informed if student services were affected.

How the Board Will Make Its Decision

In making its decision, the Governing Board will consider student impact, financial sustainability, staff and community feedback, transportation and boundary considerations, and the district's long-term stability.

Next Steps

The Governing Board will meet on **Tuesday, January 20, at 6:30 p.m.** During this meeting:

- The Board will be presented with the most up-to-date survey results from staff and the community.
- Board members will review feedback gathered to date and discuss the available options.
- The Board is scheduled to take action and make a decision on a budget reduction option.

Families and community members are welcome to attend the meeting in person. Check the district website at balsz.org/agenda for a specific meeting location.

Following the January 20 meeting, the district will provide a summary of the Board's decision and outline the next steps for staff and families.

We recognize that these conversations are difficult and personal, and we understand the uncertainty they can create. Our commitment is to continue listening, communicating clearly, and supporting our students, families, and staff throughout this process.

Thank you for your continued engagement and partnership as we work together to navigate this challenging moment for our district.

Sincerely,

Balsz Elementary School District Governing Board

District Leadership Team