



Dr. George J. Barnes
Superintendent

February 19, 2026

Dr. Michael Halpert
Chief Academic Officer

Dear Balsz Families and Community,

Governing Board

Col. Vic Grace
President
Member since 2022
Past Member 2010-2018

This letter provides an update on the district's budget planning process, and a decision made by the Governing Board. The district recognizes the difficulty of these discussions and appreciates the thoughtful input shared by students, families, staff, and community members throughout this process.

Sidra Zaidi
Vice President
Member since 2024

Like many school districts across Arizona, Balsz continues to face significant financial challenges. To remain fiscally responsible and protect core programs and services, the district must reduce its budget by approximately \$3 million.

Todd Schwarz
Member since 2010

Over the past several months, district leadership and the Governing Board have reviewed multiple budget reduction scenarios while gathering and reviewing feedback from students, families, staff, and community stakeholders. Public comments, written correspondence, and community discussions were considered part of the decision-making process.

Dr. Gail Q. Knight
Member since 2012

At its regular meeting Tuesday, Feb. 17, the Governing Board voted unanimously to repurpose Brunson-Lee School beginning in the 2026-27 school year. The school will be renamed Brunson-Lee Academy and will serve students while offering a science, technology, engineering and mathematics instructional curricular addition. Brunson-Lee Academy will be the district's only K-5 campus offering a dedicated STEM special or elective.

Jacob George
Member since 2024

Balsz Schools
Balsz Online Academy
www.balsz.org/
balszonlineacademy
4825 E Roosevelt Street
(602) 629-6400

Under the approved plan, Griffith and Crockett will continue serving K-5 students within current district boundaries. Music and art will not be offered at Brunson-Lee Academy. Families seeking fine arts programming may enroll their child at their neighborhood school, with district-provided transportation.

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

The plan also includes further research into adding a preschool program at Brunson-Lee in partnership with a community provider. Additional steps must be completed before that component can be finalized.

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

Even with these changes, staff reductions are anticipated across several roles districtwide. The approved plan is designed to address the district's approximately \$3 million budget shortfall while preserving as many direct student services as possible.

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

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

District leaders understand that decisions of this magnitude affect real people and real relationships. Schools are more than buildings. They are communities. The district remains committed to transparent communication and to supporting students, families and employees as implementation planning continues.

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

Thank you for your continued engagement and partnership during this challenging time.

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

Sincerely,

George J. Barnes

Dr. George J. Barnes

www.balsz.org

Mission: The Balsz District nurtures the unique skills and abilities of all learners.

Vision: Students empowered to be globally competitive and innovative thinkers who contribute to their community's sustainability.

Values: Excellence. Achievement. Innovation. Community



Superintendent

Qoysaska iyo Bulshada Balsz ee Qaaliga ah,

Warqaddan waxay bixineysaa cusboonaysiin ku saabsan qorshaha miisaaniyadda degmada iyo go'aan ay gaartay Guddiga Maamulka. Degmadu waxay aqoonsan tahay in wada-hadalladani ay adkaan karaan, waxayna uga mahadcelineysaa aragtiyaha iyo talooyinka ay wadaageen ardayda, qoysaska, shaqaalaha iyo xubnaha bulshada intii lagu jiray geeddi-socodkan.

Sida degmooyin badan oo ku yaalla Arizona, Balsz waxay wajahaysaa caqabado dhaqaale oo waaweyn. Si loo ilaaliyo masuuliyadda maaliyadeed loona dhowro barnaamijyada iyo adeegyada muhiimka ah, degmadu waa inay dhimtaa miisaaniyaddeeda qiyaastii \$3 milyan.

Bilaha la soo dhaafay, hoggaanka degmada iyo Guddiga Maamulka waxay dib u eegis ku sameeyeen dhowr qorshe oo dhimista miisaaniyadda ah iyadoo isla markaana ururinaya oo falanqeynaya aragtiyada ardayda, qoysaska, shaqaalaha iyo daneeyayaasha bulshada. Faallooyinka dadweynaha, waraaqaha qoraalka ah iyo doodaha bulshada ayaa la tixgeliyey intii lagu jiray go'aan qaadashada.

Kulankii caadiga ahaa ee Talaadada, Febraayo 17, Guddiga Maamulka ayaa si wadajir ah ugu codeeyey in dib loo habeeyo Dugsiga Brunson-Lee laga bilaabo sannad-dugsiyeedka 2026-27. Dugsiga waxaa loo bixin doonaa Brunson-Lee Academy, wuxuuna sii wadi doonaa adeegga ardayda isagoo ku daraya manhaj gaar ah oo ku saabsan sayniska, tiknoolajiyada, injineernimada iyo xisaabta. Brunson-Lee Academy wuxuu noqon doonaa dugsiga kaliya ee K-5 ee degmada oo bixiya maaddo gaar ah ama doorasho la xiriirta STEM.

Sida uu qabo qorshaha la ansixiyay, Griffith iyo Crockett waxay sii wadi doonaan inay adeegaan ardayda K-5 ee ku jira xuduudaha hadda ee degmada. Muusig iyo farshaxan laguma bixin doono Brunson-Lee Academy. Qoysaska doonaya barnaamijyada farshaxanka waxay iska diiwaangelin karaan ilmahooda dugsiga xaafaddooda, iyadoo gaadiid uu bixinayo degmadu.

Qorshuhu wuxuu sidoo kale ku jiraa cilmi-baaris dheeraad ah oo ku saabsan ku darista barnaamij xannaano carruur (preschool) ah oo laga hirgeliyo Brunson-Lee iyadoo lala kaashanayo bixiye bulsho. Tallaabooyin dheeraad ah ayaa loo baahan yahay in la dhammaystiro ka hor inta aan la go'aamin arrintaas.

Inkasta oo isbeddelladan la sameynayo, dhimista shaqaalaha ayaa laga filayaa doorar kala duwan oo degmada oo dhan ah. Qorshaha la ansixiyay waxaa loogu talagalay in lagu wajaho hoos u dhaca miisaaniyadda qiyaastii \$3 milyan iyadoo la ilaalinayo inta ugu badan ee adeegyada tooska ah ee ardayda.

Hoggaanka degmadu waxay fahamsan yihiin in go'aannadan ay saameynayaan dad iyo xiriirro dhab ah. Dugsiyadu waa ka badan yihiin dhismayaal; waa bulshooyin. Degmadu waxay sii wadi doontaa isgaarsiin furan oo daahfuran iyo taageeridda ardayda, qoysaska iyo shaqaalaha inta qorshaha hirgelinta la wado.

Waad ku mahadsan tihiin ka qaybqaadashada iyo iskaashiga aad sii waddaan inta lagu jiro xilligan adag..

Si xushmad leh,

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George J. Barnes

Dr. George Barnes
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