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## upset by class "right-sizing"

1 message

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**Hnotchuk, Elizabeth** <Elizabeth.Hnotchuk@kniferiver.com>

Wed, Mar 12, 2025 at 8:07 AM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

To whom it may concern,

I was made aware of the recent classroom disruptions in MCPS by Mrs. Trowbridge (K) at Chief Charlo last night during our Parent/Teacher conferences. Per the changes, she would be forced to move schools. This would be detrimental for Chief Charlo because she has such a strong presence in the school and is actively advocating for more technology such as coding for our children. She has been pivotal in helping our school remain a strong STEM school.

In addition to her possible dismissal, we are worried about creating larger classes with many of these teacher firings. Not only will students get less one-on-one time with their teachers, but these poor teachers who are already overworked will be stricken with even more stress. Both my mother and I were teachers in the past and know how much more difficult classroom management gets as the student-teacher ratio gets bigger and bigger.

None of this "right-sizing" is good for anyone.

Please reconsider this reduction of staff.

Sincerely,

Liz Hnotchuk

2228 East Vista Drive

Missoula MT 59803

406-531-8270

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## Proposed cell phone policy

1 message

**Beau Larkin** <beaularkin@gmail.com>

Wed, Mar 12, 2025 at 9:43 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Trustees,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I was not able to attend the school board meeting on March 11 because my kids were in activities that I needed to attend.

I am persuaded by my own experience and from reported research that cell phone use has many negative effects. For students, these effects are related, but not limited, to decreased attention, bullying, anxiety, distraction, and behavior problems. While I support the proposed high school policy, as it is a step in the right direction, I have two concerns. One, because the policy allows for phone use during passing periods, the negative effects I've listed will still occur, though possibly not as often. My second, and greater concern is that students, with phones in their hands during every passing period, will want to continue their use in the classroom. How will these phones be put away, and how will compliance be enforced? How much time will be wasted negotiating over phones at the beginning of every class period? In my view, "phones away for the day" is the best plan, however, if you must allow for phone use as you are considering under the current policy, I sincerely hope you will require a consistent method for phone storage in every classroom, that you will hold teachers and students accountable for following the policy. Kids will want to keep their phones in their hands, which is where they will be at the start of every single class period, every single day, setting up literally thousands of daily interactions where teachers will be required to get phones away from students. That sounds like lots of opportunity for failure.

I support the proposed middle school policy. My kids are 9 and 6. Soon they will be in middle school, and then high school. I'm concerned about the environment where they will learn.

Thank you,

Beau Larkin  
115 Takima Drive  
Missoula MT 59803

Parent of Lewis and Clark Elementary School students

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## Follow-up after the meeting held at Prescott School in September of 2024

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Jeanne Joscelyn <jeannejoscelyn@hotmail.com>

Mon, Mar 17, 2025 at 1:50 PM

To: Burley McWilliams <bmcwilliams@mcpsmt.org>, "scourtney@mcpsmt.org" <scourtney@mcpsmt.org>, Micah Hill <mhill@mcpsmt.org>, Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Cc: "davedjosc@hotmail.com" <davedjosc@hotmail.com>

DATE: Spring 2025

TO: Burley McWilliams, Scott Courtney, Superintendent Micah Hill, and to Public Comment for MCPS Board of Trustees

FROM: Jeanne Joscelyn, Prescott School advocate

RE: Maintenance of Prescott School in Missoula, Montana (Located in the Rattlesnake Valley in the north-eastern part of Missoula)

For those of you who do not know, my husband, Dave, and I met at Prescott School in September of 2024 to discuss the maintenance of the school with Burley McWilliams and Scott Courtney. Both men are in charge of maintenance for the Missoula County Public School district, which includes Prescott. Prescott School has fallen through the cracks as far as maintenance is concerned (and in other areas as well). We are thankful to Burley and Scott for meeting with us on a very rainy morning!!

**History:** Prescott School was established in 1892, one of Missoula's earliest schools. The present school was built in 1951 along with Jefferson and Washington Schools. Prescott School served the children in the district for more than a century until 2004 when it was closed in the early morning hours of March 25, 2004. Only a couple of months after the closure Prescott School was leased to a private school, Missoula International School; this lease was disapproved of by many people both within the district and other members of the public. There were serious concerns that lease extensions were approved for so many years. There were clearly conflicts of interest involved in lease business and was definitely not in the interest of the beneficiaries of the school district, the public school children.

**NEED FOR MAINTENANCE:** It is up to the district to make up for the poor maintenance by Missoula International School. MIS did not live up to the bargain agreed to by the district, written up in leases throughout the years. (This need not be a surprise to anyone as MIS did not leave a past property in good condition.) Missoula International School trashed Prescott School, showing extreme disrespect for this wonderful school building. Poor maintenance by MIS need not be a reason to abandon this very popular school, serving children for generations as mentioned. A child said to me recently about Prescott, "that a school should not be closed because then the school is taken care of poorly!" Out of the mouths of babes! So true!

That aside, the priority now is to get Prescott School to the pre-2004 maintenance level.

In the conversation with Burley and Scott in September as mentioned above, we discussed many outside maintenance issues that could be accomplished which would not require a lot of expenditures.

**To start the outside maintenance here a few basic items** that were discussed with Burley and Scott:

**\*SECURITY** - Prescott School needs security measures installed around the entire building. This would include motion lights and cameras around the building. Prescott School needs and deserves to have what

other schools in the district have as far as security is concerned. Prescott School has been the victim of rampant vandalism in recent years. Police have been summoned to Prescott School many times, with chases of the vandals taking place. I have brought this up to the police and others have as well.

**\*LIGHTING** - As mentioned under the security needs Prescott School needs more lighting. The school is in drastic need of light replacement in existing light fixtures and also more lighting fixtures in general with fairly bright bulbs. Lighting is a priority as it is extremely dark at night in this area - there is very little lighting for the school from outside sources such as streetlights (some in front of Prescott, however, not enough) or neighbor's lights. Many people are aware of the extreme amount of vandalism at Prescott School, especially in the back of the school where about 13-14 windows have been broken! Additional lighting needs to be installed as soon as possible! As mentioned above police have been called on several occasions.

**\*FILLING IN OF THE PLAYGROUND south of Prescott School with soil** - After the sprinkler installation in the summer of 2023, the project was not entirely completed. The trenches where the pipes were laid were not filled in adequately. These trenches need to be filled in as soon as possible. The playground needs to be leveled so that children can play sports in a safe manner (and people in general). As of now the playground presents a serious tripping hazard. This actually happened to a neighbor boy who was running while playing a game and did not notice the trench with a spool of wire or piping - it is quite a large hole. This boy sprained his ankle.

**\*WATER FAUCET SPICKETS need to be connected in the front and on the side of the Prescott School building** - There is a need for water for the front lawn (which unfortunately has been greatly diminished due to neglect by the private school, MIS!) The faucet spickets need water to get the lawn reestablished with the addition of some grass seed. Additionally, the planter in front of the building needs water for the plants that are being planted there by concerned citizens. For many years neighbors of Prescott School have taken it upon themselves to plant flowers in the planter. Moreover, the Prescott School building suffers from mold growth on the bricks and concrete. The mold can be sprayed with a type of bleach solution and then sprayed off with a hose. Also, the playground asphalt needs to be sprayed off with water using a power washer. Our family has a power washer we could use for this purpose and would be glad to do this.

**\*WEED EATING AROUND THE SCHOOL** in a more thorough manner - We have noticed that there has been some weed eating done in the last year. Thank you to the district for doing this. Our family has used an electric weed eater on the asphalt and around the grounds, including area around the swing sets, etc. We, along with another volunteer, did this chore quite often throughout the summer months. A lot of dirt was cleaned up on the asphalt as dirt accumulates in some areas of the property.

**\*STRIPING OF THE ASPHALT AROUND THE PLAYGROUND** - The striping of the asphalt needs to be re-done as it has faded over the years. This striping includes the four-square games, the hopscotch games, the basketball areas, the tether ball area, and parking area. I believe that Burley said this could be done, which would be great! Some neighbors are wondering if the basketball courts could be made safer as there is a concrete planter box near the courts. Additionally, basketball nets and a tether ball setup need replacement.

**OTHER IDEAS WERE TOUCHED ON AT THE MEETING WITH BURLEY AND SCOTT - These were:**

**+SOON INSIDE MAINTENANCE NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED** - After the many of the outside maintenance issues are accomplished, it will be time to concentrate on the **inside maintenance issues, or work on both simultaneously**. Mt. Jumbo School's gym was recently redone. As Mt. Jumbo was closed the same time as Prescott it seems proper for the gym of Prescott to be refurbished also: I noticed that the gym floor in Prescott was damaged.

**+NEED TO REOPEN PRESCOTT SCHOOL** - As advocates for Prescott School we expressed our desire that Prescott be reopened for classroom use, just as it was prior to the closure. Prescott School is a treasure and needs to be recognized as such. Preparations for reopening could take place steadily and incrementally. Many say that Prescott School was the most popular school in the district. Many students, neighbors, and parents were heartbroken when the district closed Prescott in 2004 and leased it to a private school. Many are still heartbroken.

**+ENROLLMENT ISSUES** - I mentioned that low enrollment is not a valid reason for closure which was backed up by an economist in 2004. Low enrollment was a reason for closure as put forth by the district. Demographic professionals state that enrollment is always in flux with ups and downs mostly due to the baby boomer generation and the subsequent generations. Closures cost money and cause future problems such as what we are experiencing now with Prescott School. In fact, there were serious discussions about moving boundaries in the northeast part of the city not long ago. This included busing some Rattlesnake and other northeastern area children to Paxson due to overcrowding at Rattlesnake School. A multitude of other problems occur when an important and beloved neighborhood school closes.

**+LOOKING INTO ALTERNATE MEANS OF FINANCING THE MAINTENANCE OF PRESCOTT SCHOOL** - I wondered if the district had looked at the state for maintenance funding such as a grant, perhaps fully funded or with matched funds. This needs to be looked into. What Prescott School needs is the delayed basic upkeep and repairs. There need not be any renovations. Perhaps the district and other citizens could reach out to the state and inquire about any funding available for Prescott School needs.

**+BLOG DISCUSSING PRESCOTT SCHOOL ISSUES** - I mentioned to Burley and Scott that I created a blog about Prescott School. Some issues touched on in the blog are: Why Prescott School ended up in its current predicament - closure, long-term private school leases, the lack of maintenance of the property, discussions and actions taken place in the spring of 2004, and conflict of interest issues. (The blog has not been updated recently and needs a lot of work; however, it has some valuable information that is still relevant to today)

**+In the opinion of advocates for Prescott School- Any discussions of using Prescott School for other than regular classrooms for the public school children need to be cancelled.**

**+We hope that our meeting ideas can be implemented soon** as spring is just around the corner! We look forward to working with the district, along with other volunteers, to make positive changes for Prescott School!

**Again, we appreciate the meeting last September with Scott and Burley**, especially during a huge downpour!

Since it is so close to St. Patrick's Day we wish everyone in the school district the luck of the Irish (and Prescott School too!); Also, I would appreciate any prayers (however one prefers to pray) for Prescott School! Prescott School needs a lot of prayers! Thank you!

Thank you!

Jeanne Joscelyn  
Prescott School Advocate  
1335 Clarkia  
Missoula, Montana 59802  
jeannejoscelyn@hotmail.com  
406-303-0703

From: Andrew Drobeck  
509 Simons Drive  
Missoula, MT 59803

Email: andydrobeck21@yahoo.com  
Phone: 406-240-0049  
Date: March 22, 2025

Missoula County Public Schools Board of Trustees

Subject: Opposition to the Elimination of a Third-Grade Teaching Position at L&C Elementary

Dear Members of the Missoula County Public Schools Board of Trustees,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed elimination of a third-grade teaching position at L&C Elementary next year. This decision would once again increase classroom sizes beyond the state-recommended guideline of 28 students for grades 3 and 4, creating an overcrowded learning environment that hinders student success. Additionally, the alternative idea of randomly relocating students to another school is not only disruptive but one of the most ill-conceived policies I have encountered. Both options would have a detrimental impact on our students' education and well-being. While paraeducators can provide some support in large classrooms, they are not a substitute for a dedicated, full-time teacher. The real solution is to retain and replace staff as needed to ensure quality education. This growing trend of reducing teaching positions cannot continue.

Research consistently shows that smaller class sizes lead to better academic outcomes, increased student engagement, and stronger teacher-student relationships. When classrooms exceed state guidelines, students receive less individualized attention, and teachers struggle to meet the diverse needs of their students. This is particularly concerning at the elementary level, where foundational skills are developed, and personalized instruction is essential. Are we truly putting students first with this decision?

Additionally, forcing a group of young children to transfer to a different school disrupts their education, social connections, and sense of security. Elementary students thrive in a stable environment, and abrupt school changes can cause emotional and academic setbacks. Such a decision also places an undue burden on families, creating logistical and childcare challenges that many parents may struggle to accommodate.

I am also concerned about the transparency of this decision-making process. While the elimination of this teaching position (and others) may have been discussed in an open board meeting, it appears there has been an effort to downplay or obscure this information from the public. Parents and community members must have the opportunity to provide input, which can only occur if they have been provided with knowledge as to what is being discussed. I recently saw there was a PTA social media post about this subject that was removed and I question why this subject would be censored in any way. Transparency should be encouraged.

The MCPS mission states:

*"At Missoula County Public Schools (MCPS), our mission is to ensure that each student achieves his/her full and unique potential."*

By allowing class sizes to exceed state guidelines, MCPS is failing to uphold this mission. As a parent, I have witnessed firsthand the difference class size makes. My oldest child thrived in a kindergarten class of just 14 students, while my younger child now struggles to receive the same level of education in a kindergarten class of 22 (even with a wonderful teacher). The impact is undeniable.

At the last board meeting, the superintendent acknowledged the human impact of these decisions and assured us that we should "trust the process." However, the process should not involve accepting larger class sizes as an inevitability. The process should be about holding the administration accountable—finding alternative budget solutions that do not come at the expense of our students' education. The process should involve listening to the teachers who see the impact of these policies firsthand. The trustees' role is not to simply accept the superintendent's assurances but to uphold the district's commitment to its students.

I urge the Board of Trustees to highly evaluate this decision and reject any proposals that push classrooms beyond state guidelines. It takes courage to go against the recommendations of the superintendent. However, our students deserve it. I encourage the board to explore solutions that preserve a stable, high-quality learning environment and prioritize their educational needs.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your response and further discussions on how we can work together to support our students.

Sincerely,

Andrew Drobeck

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## Chief Charlo Class Sizes Unacceptable

**April Sawyer** <april.sawyer@gmail.com>

Sun, Mar 23, 2025 at 10:01 PM

To: "mhill@mcpsmt.org" <mhill@mcpsmt.org>, "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>, "tlaboski@mcpsmt.org" <tlaboski@mcpsmt.org>

Dear Missoula County Public School District Superintendent, HR, and Members of the Board,

As a parent of a kindergartener and soon to be kindergartener in about a year, our family is very concerned to learn about the class sizes next year particularly in first and third grades at Chief Charlo. Our kindergartener is currently in a class with over 20 students, which was a surprise coming into the year understanding that there would be 3 kindergarten teachers, later down to 2 as the year began.

We understand that class sizes next may be in excess of 30 students per room in first grade, and in some cases exceed the state standards for class size. Our teachers pour their heart, energy, and resources into each class and this is an unfair burden on them to manage a classroom of that size. Our children will not be receiving the optimal and thriving attention of their teachers if they are overloaded and burning out. We are really worried that especially in these earliest years this potentially chaotic classroom environment could negatively affect our children's long term academic potential and success.

Class sizes in excess of 30 exceed the state standards for 3rd grade and under and should not be acceptable at our schools for our children's and teachers' sake!

We support the wonderful teachers at Chief Charlo Elementary. Please reconsider the scale of teacher reductions at Chief Charlo so that class sizes do not exceed state standards.

Sincerely,

April Mott-Sawyer and David Mott

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**April Mott-Sawyer**

*"...be like a river when a forest fire hits it...Just drown it, drown all the heat and let it wash away."*

*- David James Duncan*

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## Proposed Budget Cut Concerns

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Megan Woodruff <meganwoodruff@yahoo.com>

Mon, Mar 24, 2025 at 10:06 AM

To: "javgeris@mcpsmt.org" <javgeris@mcpsmt.org>, "ldavey@mcpsmt.org" <ldavey@mcpsmt.org>, "kgammill@mcpsmt.org" <kgammill@mcpsmt.org>, "chayes@mcpsmt.org" <chayes@mcpsmt.org>, "kmercerc@mcpsmt.org" <kmercerc@mcpsmt.org>, "woldperson@mcpsmt.org" <woldperson@mcpsmt.org>, "awake@mcpsmt.org" <awake@mcpsmt.org>, "awalker-andrews@mcpsmt.org" <awalker-andrews@mcpsmt.org>, "jwalsh@mcpsmt.org" <jwalsh@mcpsmt.org>, "mwhicher@mcpsmt.org" <mwhicher@mcpsmt.org>, "kwitt@mcpsmt.org" <kwitt@mcpsmt.org>, "mhill@mcpsmt.org" <mhill@mcpsmt.org>, "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Dear Members of the Board of Education and Superintendent Hill,

Our family is in the Lewis and Clark Elementary district and have recently been made aware of a potential reduction in staff that will eliminate a 3rd grade teacher. The impact is profound with class size growing from 22 students in 3 classes to 33 students in 2 classes! As a parent and member of the community, I feel it is critical to address the potential negative impact that such a decision could have on both students and teachers alike.

First and foremost, larger class sizes are detrimental to the individual attention that students require to succeed academically. Research consistently shows that smaller class sizes lead to improved academic outcomes. A study published by the National Education Association (NEA) found that students in smaller classes perform better on standardized tests and are more likely to graduate high school (NEA, 2016). Furthermore, the Tennessee STAR Study demonstrated that students in smaller classes had higher achievement levels and were more likely to attend college (Finn & Achilles, 1999). **When classes become overcrowded, it becomes significantly harder for teachers to give the personalized instruction and support that each student deserves. As a result, students may struggle to keep up with the curriculum, become disengaged, or even fall behind academically.**

Additionally, teachers are already managing considerable responsibilities in their classrooms. Increasing class sizes will only exacerbate the demands placed on them, leading to increased stress and burnout. A study from the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) found that larger class sizes contribute directly to teacher fatigue and burnout, with teachers in larger classes reporting higher stress levels and lower job satisfaction (AFT, 2017). Teachers are not only educators but also counselors, mentors, and disciplinarians. With more students to manage, it will be more difficult to foster the supportive and nurturing environment that all students need to thrive. As much as we value our educators, the reality is that without adequate support and manageable class sizes, even the most dedicated teachers will struggle to provide the quality of education our students deserve.

Furthermore, the social-emotional development of students could be negatively impacted. Smaller classes facilitate stronger relationships between teachers and students, as well as among students themselves. According to the Journal of Educational Psychology, students in smaller classrooms have better opportunities for engagement and social-emotional growth, as they can participate more actively in discussions and collaborate with their peers more effectively (Wang & Holcombe, 2010). In larger classes, students may feel more isolated and less inclined to participate in classroom discussions, which can hinder their overall growth.

It is also important to note that Montana law recognizes the importance of maintaining reasonable class sizes. According to the Montana Administrative Rules, class sizes in elementary and middle

schools should generally not exceed 25 students per teacher for grades K-3 and 30 students per teacher for grades 4-8 (Administrative Rules of Montana, 10.55.712). **This law reflects the state's understanding that smaller class sizes are essential for fostering a quality education.** Increasing class sizes beyond these standards could put our school district in direct conflict with state guidelines and compromise the educational experience for students.

We realize that funding is short, and cuts need to be made in tough places, but I urge the Board to reconsider the decision to increase class sizes. Do not accept larger class size as the inevitable. Find alternative budget solutions that do not come at the expense of our students' education. The lasting effects on the educational experience of our children will be substantial. These children are not just numbers on a sheet of paper, they are future doctors, teachers, caregivers, and community members. Their success depends on our ability to meet their needs when their young minds are developing. It is crucial that we prioritize the well-being of both students and teachers in our decision-making processes to ensure that every child receives the high-quality education they are entitled to.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. As community elected officials, I trust you will be committed to our students and carefully consider the implications of this decision and the long-term impact it will have on our community.

Sincerely,  
Megan Slivka

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## Support for Family Resource Centers and Jen Pfeiffer

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Alex Fregerio <alex.fregerio@gmail.com>  
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Mon, Mar 24, 2025 at 4:17 PM

Dear Missoula County School Trustees,

I recently learned that the Board of Trustees will be discussing the Family Resource Center and Families in Transition programs in an upcoming meeting. I am writing today to express my strong support for these essential programs and, in particular, for C.S. Porter's Family Resource Specialist, Jen Pfeiffer.

As a former president of the Parent-Teacher Organization at Jeannette Rankin Elementary, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact the Families in Transition program has on students and families in need throughout our district. Now, as the parent of a sixth grader at C.S. Porter Middle School, I can personally attest to Jen Pfeiffer's critical role—not only in managing the Family Resource Center and Families in Transition program but also in supporting individual students every day.

C.S. Porter serves a large population of low-income families, and many students rely on the additional support these programs provide to achieve both social and academic success. Given its designation as a Title I school, it is imperative that the Family Resource Center remains intact and that Jen Pfeiffer continues in her role. However, I recognize that, in these challenging financial times, even vital programs like these are at risk.

Jen goes far beyond simply managing these programs—she is an irreplaceable presence in the school. I have personally seen her coordinate efforts to provide families with housing, furniture, food, and other basic necessities that many take for granted. She carries out this work tirelessly, excelling despite a limited budget and without expectation of great compensation. Her dedication is driven by a genuine passion for helping students.

I understand that difficult financial decisions must be made. However, if cuts to Family Resource Centers are unavoidable, I urge you to prioritize keeping Jen Pfeiffer and the C.S. Porter Family Resource Center intact. The need in this school is immense, and Jen's commitment to students and families makes an undeniable difference in their lives.

Thank you for your time and consideration as you navigate these tough decisions. I appreciate the work you do for our district and hope you will recognize the vital role these programs and individuals play in our community.

Best regards,

Alex Fregerio

406-493-8607

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## Do not cut teacher positions

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**Joan Mattelin Garrett** <joanmattelin@gmail.com>  
To: Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Mon, Mar 24, 2025 at 4:59 PM

Good Afternoon -

I am so frustrated with MCPS. My son will be a 3rd grader at Lewis and Clark next year and he has had amazing teachers throughout. He had a small class for kindergarten and we were so happy that that was the case.

He ended kindergarten at or a bit above grade level. Since then each year a teacher at his grade level has been cut and the classes have grown in size. He started first grade at grade level and by second grade was behind. The first of my three kids to be in this position. We are working our tails off at home to get his reading to grade level. He likes reading but his classroom is so full he struggles to stay on task and focused. The result of these continued cuts is costing our kids - my son is lucky to have a family with the time and skills (I am a licensed elementary teacher) to help him out. That is not the case for all students.

Third grade is an incredibly tough year for students the shift in student responsibility from 2nd to 3rd is huge and increasing class size is going to make this harder for teachers and students. There has to be a better solution - long term this choice is going to lead to more students further behind that need more assistance down the road.

Do the right thing - don't add another obstacle for these kids who are still building the basic building blocks of their education.

Sincerely,

Joan Garrett  
Mother of a L&C 2nd and 5th students and a Washington 7th grader

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## concerns over cuts to teachers and FRC staff

**Erica Sandiland** <emsandiland@hotmail.com>

Mon, Mar 24, 2025 at 5:33 PM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>, "javgeris@mcpsmt.org" <javgeris@mcpsmt.org>, "ldavey@mcpsmt.org" <ldavey@mcpsmt.org>, "kgammill@mcpsmt.org" <kgammill@mcpsmt.org>, "chayes@mcpsmt.org" <chayes@mcpsmt.org>, "kmercer@mcpsmt.org" <kmercer@mcpsmt.org>, "woldperson@mcpsmt.org" <woldperson@mcpsmt.org>, "awake@mcpsmt.org" <awake@mcpsmt.org>, "awalker-andrews@mcpsmt.org" <awalker-andrews@mcpsmt.org>, "jwalsh@mcpsmt.org" <jwalsh@mcpsmt.org>, "mwhicher@mcpsmt.org" <mwhicher@mcpsmt.org>, "kwitt@mcpsmt.org" <kwitt@mcpsmt.org>

To Whom It May Concern,

At the last board meeting, the superintendent acknowledged the human impact of cutting teaching positions and assured us that we should “trust the process.” However, the process should not involve accepting larger class sizes as an inevitability. The process should be about holding the administration accountable—finding alternative budget solutions that do not come at the expense of our students’ education. The process should involve listening to the teachers who see the impact of these policies firsthand. This growing trend of reducing teaching positions cannot continue. The trustees' role is not to simply accept the superintendent's assurances but to uphold the district’s commitment to its students.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Erica Sandiland

Parent to children at Lewis and Clark and Chief Charlo

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## Oppose cuts to classroom teachers

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**Linsey Myers** <myers.linsey@gmail.com>

Mon, Mar 24, 2025 at 5:58 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Hello members of the Board,

I'm writing to express my concerns regarding the recent cut to classroom teachers in elementary schools. I understand that we are facing incredibly tricky budget challenges; however, the decision to cut positions that have the most impact on student achievement feels short sighted and will have major consequences. I urge the superintendent and the board to find alternative solutions that don't include cutting teachers. We've seen again and again (ie: returning to the classroom in fall 2020) that lower class sizes equals better academic outcomes, calmer learning environments, and less behavior struggles.

The thought of over 30 students in 3rd grade classes is hard to imagine. Less learning will happen, behaviors will rise, kids won't have their needs met, and teachers will be pushed to their max. This decision, quite simply, is not best for kids, and it's not fair to teachers.

Many people are wondering why we continue to cut teachers when we operate in a very administrative heavy district.

I'm writing these concerns as an elementary school counselor and as a member of our community. I urge you to reconsider and to find another solution.

Thanks for your time,

Linsey Myers

Sent from my iPhone

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## School Board Letter of Support for On-Site FRCs

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Ana Beard <ana.j.beard@gmail.com>

Mon, Mar 24, 2025 at 7:07 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Cc: javgeris@mcpsmt.org, woldperson@mcpsmt.org, ldavey@mcpsmt.org, awake@mcpsmt.org, kgamill@mcpsmt.org, awalker-andrews@mcpsmt.org, chayes@mcpsmt.org, jwalsh@mcpsmt.org, kmercer@mcpsmt.org, mwhicher@mcpsmt.org, kwitt@mcpsmt.org

Dear Members of the Missoula County Public Schools Board of Trustees,

I am writing to express my deep concern over the proposed changes to the Family Resource Coordinator (FRC) positions within our district, particularly the potential elimination of our dedicated FRC, Megan Myers (or lovingly known in our home and school as Ms. Meg) at Hawthorne Elementary. The Family Resource Center, alongside the Families in Transition (FIT) program, plays a critical role in supporting our students and families, and I urge you to explore alternative solutions that allow these essential positions to remain at their current school locations.

Ms. Meg's work is instrumental in ensuring that students facing hardship—including homelessness, job loss, medical crises, and other life transitions—receive the support they need to remain engaged in their education. By providing direct assistance, advocacy, and resource coordination, she fosters stability and well-being for some of our most vulnerable students and their families.

The services Ms. Meg provides go far beyond what a regionalized model could effectively support. She builds trusted relationships with families, offering individualized guidance on accessing transportation, nutrition, healthcare, housing assistance, and educational rights under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Her presence within our school community allows for immediate and direct intervention, something that would be significantly diminished in a regionalized model. It is logistically not possible for a regional model to be able to address the needs of families in Missoula adequately and without risking burnout themselves. It is no secret that some of our school boundaries in the past were drawn with poverty in mind, and the impact this will have on each school is disproportionately skewed to create more challenges in our poorer schools. Schools like Hawthorne, Franklin, Lowell, and Porter will see a lasting impact on students and our most vulnerable neighbors if the School Board moves forward with eliminating these on-site, direct care model that we have had for as long as my kids have been in MCPS—maybe even since I was in school myself? Surely I remember my own interactions with my elementary school FRC when I was a student at Paxson, years ago.

I can only imagine the grief our school communities are facing at the thought of losing their FRCs. I, myself, have wept while trying to figure out how to put into words what Ms. Meg means to my family and I, and I can not imagine our school community without her in it.

Ms. Meg is often one of the first faces you see when coming and going, at Hawthorne, along with Ms. Lilah, our school admin who filled the FRC role before Ms. Meg came along. These are my two safest humans in our school system, and both of those relationships were built *because* we had an on-site FRC when my family needed it most. We have loved our teachers and found fierce advocates within the school, but nothing compared to the impact our FRC workers have had on us. Ms. Meg knows my family's favorite kind

of board game, because she has helped us get set up with Christmas gift support most of the years we have been at Hawthorne. She has delivered presents, and made sure every tag on the tree gets filled. A number of years, the time and energy she has put into making sure every need gets filled is the difference between my kids having colorful gifts to open on Christmas morning and not. I see Ms. Meg often during this season, dropping off forms, picking up gifts, attending holiday concerts, and she is always working hard to pull the Christmas support together for our families. It is truly a full time job, in addition to all the other ways in which she is supporting our families. I do not know how one or two regional FRCs can meet that need for each school, while also filling the rest of their duties, spread across the district.

Both my children, a current Hawthorne student and current Porter student, know Ms. Meg as a smiling, caring adult in their school experiences. My son detailed a day recently when Ms. Meg was covering the front desk while Ms. Lilah was sick. His friend had recently fractured his leg and was slow on crutches, and was struggling to get around. My son came home that day delighted by the fact that Ms. Meg had loaned them an office chair so that my son could wheel his friend to the lunchroom. While, at first glance, this may not mean much to someone who doesn't walk the halls of Hawthorne on a daily basis, to me it demonstrates the relationship Ms. Meg builds with the students and one of the many ways in which she is a person who brings joy to my child's life while also supporting our students in invisible ways. On an accessibility level, what a rad way to get a clumsy, newly-injured friend to lunch during what must have been a looong day on crutches. Ms. Meg is not only a relationship-builder, she is a dedicated problem-solver. She brightens our school environment, and her shine follows our kids all the way through and out of Hawthorne. You can't replace that with a regional model.

Beyond individualized support, Ms. Meg plays a vital role in school-wide initiatives, including:

- Coordinating EmPower Pack deliveries to ensure students have access to food.
- Organizing family engagement events to strengthen our school community.
- Maintaining the Hawthorne Little Food Pantry and clothing distribution services.
- Supporting students with behavioral health and chronic medical needs.
- Facilitating holiday assistance, which served 84 students and 46 families this past season, alone. This does not include gas cards, or the many other ways in which Ms. Meg coordinates supports for our Hawthorne families.

These contributions are irreplaceable and cannot be replicated through a centralized or regional approach. Our families need consistency, trust, and access to a dedicated support system within their school. Without the presence of an on-site FRC, many students will struggle to receive the help they need in a timely and meaningful manner. The students who are most affected by the things I've mentioned here, are typically from families who face relentless adversity in their lives, and may even be falling through systemic gaps (both within the school system and the community itself), which means these relationships require strong care, trust, and the ability to be a sturdy, safe landing pad. Ms. Meg *is* many of our students' and their families' safe landing pad. I don't know how I could have navigated some of the hardest years of my parenting life without her in our corner.

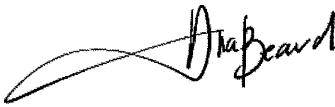
One of my areas of research interests as a Cognitive Neuroscience undergrad, and an incoming graduate student in the School of Public and Community Health-Community Health Prevention Sciences program, brings me into a lot of conversations about early childhood adversity and resilience. This topic inevitably includes meaningful discussions and curiosities about vulnerable students' interactions with the school system during the elementary school years. One of the things I often find myself reflecting on after my research meetings is a feeling of gratitude for the ways in which FRCs create a point of contact between homes facing adversity, and the school. When I think about system gaps and interventions, it is clear to me



that school is a critical point of contact with vulnerable families. It is impossible that our teachers can fill the relational role with every family in need (especially if the Board is also considering growing classrooms to the wild size of 30+ students-which I would also urge the Board to effectively reconsider for similar reasons), and as that point of contact and connection to programs like FIT, Ms. Meg's impact is not just for the individual student, but likely touches a number of areas of community health and some of the long term outcomes for many of our students. And on the day to day, she makes sure our students have access to food, warm clothes, and a safe adult connection. I trust that each FRC whose job is currently at risk also has a similar impact on each of their home schools.

I strongly urge the Board to reconsider the recommendation to eliminate individual school-based FRCs in favor of a regionalized model. Instead, I encourage the district to explore alternative budget solutions that preserve the existing structure of Family Resource Centers. The long-term success and well-being of our students and families depend on maintaining these critical positions at their schools. I would suspect that the potential gaps and overloaded caseloads could also create more harm and cost for our school family in the long-run, if schools were to lose out on this critical position, on-site.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope you will prioritize the needs of our students and families by ensuring that Family Resource Coordinators remain embedded in their school communities.  
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ana Beard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and a long, sweeping underline.

Ana Beard  
Two-time Hawthorne Parent Missoula, MT 59801

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## **FRC & Class Sizes**

**Chelsea Bellon** <chelseabellon@gmail.com>

Mon, Mar 24, 2025 at 7:48 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org, javgeris@mcpsmt.org, ldavey@mcpsmt.org, kgammill@mcpsmt.org, chayas@mcpsmt.org, kmercer@mcpsmt.org, woldperson@mcpsmt.org, awake@mcpsmt.org, awalker-andrews@mcpsmt.org, jwalsh@mcpsmt.org, mwhicher@mcpsmt.org, kwitt@mcpsmt.org, mhill@mcpsmt.org

I am the parent of three daughters currently attending Franklin Elementary—one in Early Literacy, one in 1st grade, and one in 4th grade. Franklin's Family Resource Center (FRC) is not just a support service—it's a cornerstone of the Franklin community. It serves families consistently, every single week, and the trust and relationships that have been built—especially among our immigrant and refugee families—with Kristine Asanovich, FRC staff are truly irreplaceable.

In a time when many of these families are carrying immense stress and navigating complex challenges in a new country, the FRC provides more than just resources—it offers a lifeline. The personalized support—like knowing when a child needs a warm coat or gloves and sending home exactly what's needed, labeled with their name so their parents don't have to worry—that kind of thoughtful care makes a real difference. Transitioning to a national model would jeopardize that connection, making it harder to truly reach families where they are. When the FRC food pantry is open and families are picking up their kids from school or after-school programs, parents are standing around the pantry talking, checking in with one another, and supporting one another by carrying food out to one another's cars. There's no shame in asking and receiving support at Franklin. Please, keep our FRC models intact—they are essential and deeply impactful.

Regarding class sizes, all three of my daughters are currently in classrooms with 19–21 students. Increasing those numbers would significantly reduce the quality of learning and the individual support each child receives. One of my daughters is autistic and has made incredible progress in learning to communicate when she feels dysregulated. That kind of growth takes time, patience, and one-on-one attention. She is now able to advocate for herself with minimal disruption—but what happens when there are 30 students in the room and multiple children need specialized support at the same time?

Class size matters. The state provides evidence-based guidelines for a reason. Schools that prioritize student outcomes must also prioritize maintaining manageable class sizes. Our children deserve no less.

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**Chelsea Bellon, MPH(c)**

*(she/her)*

cell: 406-396-9164

**My workday may look different from your workday. Please do not feel obligated to respond outside of your normal working hours.**

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## Vote NO on larger class sizes

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**Beth Morey** <eamorey@gmail.com>

Mon, Mar 24, 2025 at 8:45 PM

To: Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Dear school board members,

As an MCPS parent, I was troubled to hear that the board is considering expanding class sizes. In my experience, class sizes are already far too large for the types of social-emotional and academic needs students are grappling with. Instead of expanding class sizes, I urge you to make classes smaller. This is not only an academic issue, but a safety issue.

Relatedly, I ask you to not only create more paraprofessional jobs to help support such needs, but also to increase paraprofessional wages to help schools better attract candidates to fill these vital roles in our schools.

Please do not increase class sizes. This will decrease both academic outcomes and school safety. Our community deserves better than overfilled classrooms, over-burdened educators, understaffed schools, and overwhelmed students.

Thank you.

Elizabeth Morey

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## Investing in MCPS children's education

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**Michelle Scruggs** <mkolacze@gmail.com>  
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Mon, Mar 24, 2025 at 9:16 PM

Dear Misscoul County Public Schools Board Members,

My name is Michelle Scruggs and I am a resident of Missoula County, with 2 children enrolled in MCPS. I am writing to express my deep concern regarding yet another round of budget cuts to our schools. Last year you cut so many critical arts programs, now you're cutting more teacher positions, what is next?? How much more must our children endure because of mismanagement budgets? Please do not vote on any decisions regarding the elimination of positions in our schools. We need to look more deeply into this.

I have questions and would like answers:

- Why aren't critical budget issues brought up earlier? It feels like the information is being withheld from us, until it's too late for anything to be done.
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- I heard that there will only be two 3rd grade classrooms at Lewis & Clark, which means there would be 33-38 students in one classroom - is this true?
- Ultimately, who makes the final decision regarding what gets cut from the budget?
- What is the full list of considerations on how to best balance the budget?
- What can we as parents and community members do or who should we talk to to make a difference to fight for our students?

I also hear that this budget issue stems from low enrollment - but surely you must see how ridiculous it is to tell me this when my 2nd grader is going to be placed in a classroom with 30+ kids (which well exceeds state recommended limits) and already stretched thin teachers? How are our children supposed to grow and thrive in such conditions? This decision will have a lasting effect into adulthood, and that is something we can not afford!

And please do not tell me to "trust the process" - I don't know what that means. There is no transparency in "the process".

Our children's education should be a top priority, and we strongly encourage the district to take swift action in addressing this issue. We would appreciate an opportunity to discuss this matter further and look forward to your response outlining potential solutions.

Education matters, start treating it like a priority

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## MCPS Budgeting Decisions

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Gabrielle Coulombe <gabcoul@hotmail.com>

Mon, Mar 24, 2025 at 10:45 PM

Hi,

As a parent of children in a Missoula County public school, I am writing to express my deep concern about the potential for further erosion to the quality of our children's education and resources that help them thrive.

- I think it's important to better inform parents about upcoming changes and budgeting decisions that will affect our children.
- I would like to better understand why our schools are losing resources and how these changes originate.
- I would like to stress the fundamental importance of high-quality childhood education. This is something we value and should figure among top budgeting priorities, no matter what. Our children's education is not an area that should be up for sacrifice.
- Our dedicated, kind, thoughtful, and hard-working teaching and supporting staff should be valued, compensated appropriately, and provided with the means to successfully guide our kids through their learning journeys. For example, an ideal class size for 3rd graders is 18-22 students. Many states limit this number to 22-24 students. Anything above 28 students, for one teacher, for that age group, would be irresponsible. There is a lot of research and supporting evidence for these numbers. Additionally, the supporting staff is vital to the health and success of our children.

I am writing to ask you to please fight in every way you can for our children, and ensure that MCPS students don't get left behind.

Thank you,  
Gabrielle Coulombe  
Missoula, MT  
59801

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## Budget cuts...

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**Kenny Scruggs** <outofworkhero@gmail.com>

Mon, Mar 24, 2025 at 11:11 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org, "javgeris@mcpsmt.org" <javgeris@mcpsmt.org>, idavey@mcpsmt.org, "kgammill@mcpsmt.org" <kgammill@mcpsmt.org>, "kmercerc@mcpsmt.org" <kmercerc@mcpsmt.org>, "woldperson@mcpsmt.org" <woldperson@mcpsmt.org>, "awake@mcpsmt.org" <awake@mcpsmt.org>, "awalker-andrews@mcpsmt.org" <awalker-andrews@mcpsmt.org>, "jwalsh@mcpsmt.org" <jwalsh@mcpsmt.org>, "mwhicher@mcpsmt.org" <mwhicher@mcpsmt.org>, "kwitt@mcpsmt.org" <kwitt@mcpsmt.org>

Dear Missoula County Public Schools Board Members,

My name is Kenny Scruggs, I have 2 kids attending Lewis and Clark Elementary. Additionally, I am an active member of the community who cares about all of the children I see on a regular basis.

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding another round of budget cuts to our schools. Last year's cuts devastated and gutted our art departments across the district!

I need to hear other solutions and options to fix the budget besides cutting teachers/staff and creating less safe, less healthy and less productive environments for students.

I urge you to vote "no" for any staff cuts.

Thank you,

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Kenny S

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## **MCPS Public Comment - We need our teachers and staff!**

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**Nicole Benally** <benally.nicole@yahoo.com>

Mon, Mar 24, 2025 at 11:23 PM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Dear Missoula County Public School (MCPS) Board Members,

I hope this message finds you well. My name is Nicole Benally and I currently have two children in MCPS. I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed budget cuts that will result in a decrease in the number of teachers and staff at our schools.

My oldest child started their educational journey within MCPS during the COVID-19 pandemic through the Missoula Online Academy, also referred to as MOA. I have always been impressed by the high-quality staff and teachers that my oldest child has been able to have for the last five years within MCPS. As my youngest child joined MCPS for the first time this year, I found it worrisome due to my child's high energy and slight speech delay. However, the teachers and staff have been amazing at involving my child and working with him so that he is just as successful as his peers.

Both my children love their school, because of their teachers and the school staff. Therefore, I feel that it is necessary for me to share that cutting, removing, and/or eliminating teachers in years to come is not the direction MCPS should take. Our educators (teachers and staff) are the backbone of our educational system, playing a crucial role in nurturing and shaping the minds of our children and future generations. Reducing the number of teachers not only compromises the quality of education but also places an undue burden on the remaining staff, leading to larger class sizes and diminished individual attention for our children (students).

Investing in education is investing in our future and communities. It is paramount that we prioritize the needs of our students by maintaining and, if possible, increasing the number of qualified teachers in our schools. The long-term benefits of a well-supported educational system far outweigh the short-term financial savings that these budget cuts might offer.

The community of Missoula is continuously growing and is home to many businesses as well as the University of Montana (UM). To remove teachers and staff from MCPC schools, does not make sense when meeting a large community. Many of my children's teachers are UM alumni and within my children's school I have seen college students work in their classrooms to grow their skills as future educators and advance in their degree programs; I have seen many local businesses support events and projects within my children's school; and as parents and family of students at MCPS we support our community including our children's teachers and school staff.

I urge you to reconsider this decision and explore alternative solutions that do not undermine the educational experience of our children. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter and please feel free to contact me and/or share resources on how I can stay up to date on this matter.

Sincerely the mother of two MCPS students,

**Nicole Benally**

benally.nicole@yahoo.com

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## FRC position

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**Lindsey Ogle** <linz123\_83@yahoo.com>

Tue, Mar 25, 2025 at 9:08 AM

Reply-To: Lindsey Ogle <linz123\_83@yahoo.com>

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Good morning! I wanted to submit my concern about combining many schools to utilize a single FRC position. We are at Russell and I can't tell you how much that position supports kids at school, families outside of school in addition to a wide variety of other school based needs.

I understand you have limited funds and cuts will have to be made at some point. This is preferable to cutting counselors or the Arts. However I think the suggested 3 Elementary school plus 1 middle school and also 1 high school is a LOT for once position to handle. Especially schools like Russell, Franklin and Hawthorne- they heavily utilize the FRC.

I would like for you to consider not making the cut at all but if it must be done- could you combine it to 2 elementary schools? I am not sure if Middle and high school utilize theirs as much- it would probably be a good thing to know and then combine based on work load. Combining Russell and CC makes sense as we are close in proximity. I just don't know how 1 person will service 5 school of all age ranges. That is a lot to ask.

It makes far more sense to keep them combined by elementary, middle school and high school. It also doesn't make sense to have 1 person serving more than 2 or maybe 3 schools. Even that will severely impact the program, but to add more and a varying age range might just break it.

I appreciate your time and consideration in this matter!

Lindsey Schultz

Yahoo Mail - Email Simplified

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## Budget cuts regarding family resource center employees

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Kim Anderson <kimandersonartanddesign@gmail.com>

Tue, Mar 25, 2025 at 9:24 AM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Hello Board Trustees,

It has come to my attention that your board is facing difficult decisions regarding budget cuts. While I don't envy your position to make these decisions, I felt it important to voice my opinion regarding how it may affect the family resource centers in the schools. As written, your mission is to **"ensure every student achieves their full potential, regardless of circumstance and ability..."**. Having worked with underserved youth in the past, I know that without basic needs addressed, including food, school supplies, clothing and touch points for parents in crisis, these youth cannot maintain day to day learning nor reach their fullest potential. If basic needs of children are not met, it is imperative our community ensures they do not fall through the cracks. Not just the moral "right thing to do" but also if we don't take great care in safeguarding these essential needs then larger problems are created for the schools in the future with greater drop out rates, increased academic failures and emotional, physical and behavioral health issues. All problems, unfortunately resting on the shoulders of overworked and underpaid (and undertrained for these issues) employees. I know you have impossible budgets. I know these decisions are daunting. But it is my hope you will see the funding for the staff that makes the most of the least amount of resources does go the furthest for the most needy in our community. And greatly because the family resource staff and the basic foundation they help to provide, a child who started with less is able to focus on school reach the potential referenced in your mission.

Thank you for your dedication,  
Kim Anderson

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## In Support of FRCs

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**C Tower** <celainethompson@gmail.com>  
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Tue, Mar 25, 2025 at 9:28 AM

Please see attached, a collective letter from MCPS Elementary Counselors, Behavioral Interventionists, Nurses and Secretaries: In Support of FRCs

Thank you for considering our input, Crystal Thompson-Tower

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MCPS Elementary Counselors, Nurses, Secretaries and Behavioral Interventionists write to express strong support for maintaining current funding of Family Resource Center/Families in Transition Coordinator positions. Coordinators are essential to schools' smooth operation, playing critical roles in assisting McKinney-Vento and at-risk families. The proposed reduction of Coordinator hours is significantly concerning, negatively impacting our most vulnerable students.

Coordinators fulfill numerous responsibilities directly contributing to the well-being and success of our students and their families, including:

- Building relationships with students and families, fostering a sense of community and belonging within the school environment, and enhancing confidence, academic and social-emotional growth
- Providing essential connections and resources for families in crisis related to food, housing, healthcare, school transportation and basic needs
- Collaborating with families to address chronic absenteeism and increase student achievement
- Supporting students with school supplies, clothing, shoes, winter wear, and holiday items
- Hosting in-school Markets for families and distributing weekly student EmPower Packs
- Establishing relationships with community members who provide additional aid to schools
- Helping guardians acquire necessary enrollment documentation
- Teaming with staff to ensure all students have necessary learning supplies
- Supporting multiple school systems to enhance overall school functioning
- Assisting with housing applications, energy assistance forms, and job applications
- Disseminating school and community information through a monthly newsletter

The impact of reducing these positions would be felt across the entire school community. Students dependent on Coordinators for basic necessities would face additional hardships, making it more difficult for them to focus in class and succeed academically. Families relying on Coordinator expertise for guidance, resources, and crisis support may struggle to navigate assistance programs on their own, leading to increased instability. Additionally, teachers and other school staff, already stretched thin with responsibilities, would be forced to take on additional duties outside their skillset, diverting their focus from instruction and student support.

Reducing the hours or availability of Coordinators would place additional burdens on other school staff, potentially leading to gaps in services that are crucial to student and family success. The impact of Coordinators extends beyond just providing resources--they create a foundation of stability and support allowing students to focus on learning and growing.

We urge prioritization of funding necessary to maintain all FRC/FIT Coordinator positions. Students, families, and schools rely on their essential work. Sustaining Coordinator efforts is an investment in student well-being and academic success, as well as the strength and future of our district.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Elementary School Counselors, Nurses, Secretaries and Behavioral Interventionists: Crystal Thompson, Paige Fallis, Robyn Edington, Linsey Myers, Rachel Gearheart, Monica Roscoe, Amanda Powers, Jamie Burgess, Erika Asay, Angie Tranel, Lilah Weston, Sierra Pannell, Amity D. Graham, Loretta J. Kane, Sonja Wolsky, Gayla Leibenguth, Aaliyah Woods, McKenna Gagner, Elia Ferruzzi, Shanna Dunbar, Brandy Gillespie, Stacy Holden, Sara Monteiro

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## Concern about Title One funding changes

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**Robyn Odegaard** <robyn.odegaard@macmissoula.com>  
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Tue, Mar 25, 2025 at 11:56 AM

Dear Trustees,

I oversee the Public School Outreach ministry at Missoula Alliance Church (MAC). The 3 partner schools we regularly minister to within MCPS are Franklin Elementary School, Chief Charlo Elementary School and Meadow Hill Middle School. For more than 15 years, our congregation has donated money to fund this ministry because we care about Missoula's kids and we know that the schools and their staff members work hard to provide an excellent education, which is not always easy.

Our ministry includes encouraging and showing appreciation for staff by making and serving them lattes, providing classroom snacks, recruiting volunteers for tutoring and school events, participating in "adopt-a-family" to ensure that families experiencing financial needs have Christmas gifts and helping out when there are special circumstances. A few examples of such circumstances are providing gas cards for families who are having trouble getting their kids to school because they can't afford gas, paying for car registration for a family living in their car so they didn't lose both their car and home, and paying for a few nights at a motel for families who are between secure living situations.

When I found out that Kristine Asanovich, the FRC and FIT coordinator at Franklin, and her colleagues were at risk for losing their jobs due to Title One funding changes, my heart sank. The FRC and FIT coordinators are some of the most caring and hard working people I've met. They are continually striving to ensure that vulnerable kids aren't slipping through the cracks and that each child is able to have their needs met so they are able to meet their individual potential. We rely on the FRC and FIT staff members to let us know how we can continue to be good partners in serving the school communities. Cutting their positions or overloading them with the responsibilities of several schools seems like it will keep the most vulnerable kids from having an advocate in their corner.

I know that budget cuts make everything more difficult and that there are too few solutions, but I respectfully ask that you retain the FRC and FIT coordinators at their schools so they may continue to do the good work of helping Missoula's kids become lifelong learners and.

Thank you for your leadership and time,

Robyn Odegaard  
MAC Outreach  
Missoula Alliance Church

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March 25, 2025

Missoula County Public Schools Board of Trustees  
909 South Ave. West  
Missoula, MT 59801

Subject: Opposition to Future Cuts to the Special Education Department and Elimination of a Third Grade Teacher at Lewis and Clark


Dear Members of the Board of Trustees,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to future cuts to the special education services provided at Lewis and Clark Elementary. I understand there has been a review of the special education services provided by MCPS conducted by an outside consultant, which heavily implies that there will be future cuts to the department. My daughter is deaf and receives services from the MCPS deaf education department, including access to Teachers of the Deaf, interpreters, and assistive technology. Data consistently shows that students who are deaf and hard of hearing are behind their peers, and without the deaf ed services that my daughter receives, she would fall further and further behind. This would not only detrimentally impact her education and social-emotional wellbeing but would also result in additional cost to the district, for more time pulled out of her general education classroom, supports required from additional specialists, and potential legal consequences from non-compliance with IDEA and ADA requirements.

I further would like to express my strong opposition to the elimination of a third-grade teaching position at Lewis and Clark Elementary for the 2025-2026 school year. This decision would increase classroom sizes beyond the state-recommended guideline of 28 students per classroom for grades 3 and 4, and would create an overcrowded learning environment that hinders student success. My youngest daughter will be in third grade next year and would struggle to thrive in a classroom with 30+ students. An alternative idea has been proposed to relocate students to another school to avoid class sizes over the state-recommended guidelines, however this would have a detrimental impact on our students' education and social-emotional wellbeing.

I urge the Board of Trustees to thoroughly evaluate these decisions and reject any proposals that reduce the special education services provided to students who need them, or proposals that push classrooms beyond state guidelines. I encourage the board to explore solutions that preserve a stable, high-quality learning environment and prioritize their educational needs. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Heidi Houck  
[Heidi.machel@gmail.com](mailto:Heidi.machel@gmail.com)

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## Letter to the Board

Paul Stonebraker <wpstonebraker@gmail.com>

Tue, Mar 25, 2025 at 1:55 PM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>, "javgeris@mcpsmt.org" <javgeris@mcpsmt.org>, "ldavey@mcpsmt.org" <ldavey@mcpsmt.org>, "kgammill@mcpsmt.org" <kgammill@mcpsmt.org>, "chayes@mcpsmt.org" <chayes@mcpsmt.org>, "kmercer@mcpsmt.org" <kmercer@mcpsmt.org>, "woldperson@mcpsmt.org" <woldperson@mcpsmt.org>, "awake@mcpsmt.org" <awake@mcpsmt.org>, "awalker-andrews@mcpsmt.org" <awalker-andrews@mcpsmt.org>, "jwalsh@mcpsmt.org" <jwalsh@mcpsmt.org>, "mwhicher@mcpsmt.org" <mwhicher@mcpsmt.org>, "kwitt@mcpsmt.org" <kwitt@mcpsmt.org>, "mhill@mcpsmt.org" <mhill@mcpsmt.org>

Paul Stonebraker  
3306 Hollis St  
Missoula, MT 59801  
wpstonebraker@gmail.com  
(301) 905-5599

Missoula County Public Schools Board of Trustees

Dear Board Members,

I hope this letter finds you well. Unfortunately, I find myself deeply troubled after learning about the potential elimination of a third-grade teaching position at Lewis and Clark Elementary, which would result in class sizes ballooning to potentially 35 students per room.

I fully acknowledge the immense challenges you face in making difficult decisions during these unprecedented times. I also believe that the individuals making these choices are not acting with ill intent but rather navigating complex and constrained circumstances. However, acknowledging difficulty does not justify making a decision that would be so detrimental to our children's education and well-being.

Third graders are at a critical stage in their academic and social development. These children, at just eight or nine years old, thrive in structured environments where they can receive adequate attention and support. As a parent, I know firsthand how challenging it is to manage even a handful of children at once. The thought of 35 young students in a single classroom is beyond concerning—it is simply unmanageable.

I urge you to pause and truly consider the feasibility of such a decision. Picture a third-grade classroom packed with 35 energetic and inquisitive children. Think about the space limitations, the strain on the teacher, and the inevitable decrease in individualized attention. This is not a conducive environment for effective learning, and it is not a reasonable solution to whatever budgetary or logistical issues have led us to this point.

Furthermore, I understand that another proposal involves uprooting children from their current school and busing them to a different one. These solutions seem reactive rather than strategic, and I respectfully question whether there has been adequate public discussion about these measures before they reach an imminent decision point.

I do not claim to have the perfect solution, but I do know that these current proposals are not in the best interest of our children, our teachers, or our community. I implore you to reconsider and seek a more viable and sustainable alternative. Please go back to the drawing board and explore solutions that prioritize the quality of education and the well-being of our students.

Thank you for your time and for the work you do on behalf of our schools. I appreciate your consideration and hope that together, we can find a path forward that serves our children better.

Sincerely,  
Paul Stonebraker

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