



Duncan Public Schools

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Dear Duncan Schools Families,

Our teachers rally at the Capitol today for your children. It is an incredible circumstance, but it has been unimaginable cuts to the Oklahoma education budget that got us to this point. For teachers to leave their students, your children who teachers love as their own, we must recognize how dire the needs have become for properly funded public education in this state.

Here are some facts:

1. Oklahoma has cut funds to public education by 28% since 2008. These total the greatest cuts to public education in the nation. Investment in education is economic development. Our state is not nationally competitive in attracting business and industry under these conditions.
2. 1,917 emergency certified teachers are currently working in Oklahoma schools. Although we welcome those who have answered the call to service, emergency certified teachers are entering classrooms without the full teacher training that has traditionally been required. Additional training costs districts money, and more importantly, students do not have the benefit of being taught by a fully certified teacher.
3. The teacher shortage is not exaggerated. There are not currently enough future teachers graduating from our universities to fill the need. The district has had a special education teacher opening since school began in August. Schools have labored to find qualified math, science, world language, elementary, and English teachers since 2014. It is only getting worse, and as a result, schools do not offer courses for students because no teachers can be found.
4. Funds for instructional materials have dried up. In 2016, money distributed by the State Department of Education to schools for textbooks and other instructional materials was cut to zero. Zero dollars for schools to use to modernize learning materials. To compensate, teachers have been using their own money to make sure students receive the latest information to learn.

Our local community has rallied to provide additional supports during these tough budget years. I am continually amazed and inspired by the multiple ways Duncan steps up to support students and teachers. But, these cuts are not without consequences to Duncan children. This community

strives to be a beacon of excellence. Excellent schools offer multiple opportunities and services to students to support their growth and development.

It pains me to say that these are the things we want to offer Duncan students, but we cannot afford:

- Increased STEM curriculum so 100% of our students can participate in hands-on learning
- Additional, highly qualified teachers for math, science, and world language classes
- Staff and resources to properly serve special education and gifted and talented students
- Much needed counseling services to intervene when students are struggling with social or emotional crises such as bullying, trauma, or just the daily challenges of childhood and adolescent development
- Coaches, sponsors, and mentors for extra-curricular activities because we know students greatly benefit academically and emotionally when they are fully engaged, inspired, and encouraged
- And anything else Duncan can dream for its children to create the thriving community we know we are and can be.

Closing school for teachers to rally at the Capitol is extreme action. It is an inconvenience for families and likely many people will be left unsatisfied once this is over. Striving for excellence requires investment, and our community cannot do it without broader statewide support. Teachers are rallying at the Capitol to demand better for all Oklahoma children because it means better for Duncan's children.

I ask you to continue to support us although we are taking the walkout day by day. Teachers are conflicted knowing this civic action takes them away from our children, their classrooms, and the community. I would like to stop telling you stories about continued cuts to our budget (\$3.2 million since 2015), about losing elementary teachers to the Goodyear plant because pay and benefits are better working on the factory line than teaching first graders to read, and about not being able to provide current math materials because the textbook budget doesn't exist. Duncan teachers are standing on the line now to demand better.

Please stand by teachers this week. I know our families are making sacrifices and unexpected adjustments. We will post more information about school closings later today.

Thank you,



Melonie Hau