

# SCOTTSDALE REPUBLIC

## OPINIONS EDITOR

Grant Martin, 602-444-6805

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## Voters need to see the value in long-term education solutions

As a lifelong advocate for whole-child learning, I consider the impending cuts to Scottsdale classrooms and programs to all be horrendous options. It saddens me immensely, after advocating for quality education for over 30 years, to have hit this financial precipice in education support.

The Scottsdale Unified School District has diligently and thoughtfully made over \$20 million in cuts to our annual budget over the past few years, and we have been able to protect invaluable programs and classroom budgets — up until now.

We have cut administration by 22 percent and will cut more. Our administrative costs last year were at 9.1 percent, which is under the state and national averages, even though our funding increasingly depends on a plethora of additional unfunded administrative tasks that have been mandated by the state and federal governments.

However, low administrative costs



### My Turn

BONNIE SNEED

Most of that professional development is considered to be administrative expense. So are services by psychologists that exist solely for the benefit of students.

Increased accountability legislation recently passed at federal and state levels requires more data collection, and expense to decipher, store and report on required data. These measures result in better accountability, and will probably help to increase the educational quality for students, but without increased funding for these mandates, the money must come in the

are only a minute portion of criteria for an efficient district. True efficiency comes in the form of overall effectiveness over expenditures. Professional development for teachers is one of the tangible keys to success for our district.

form of more administrative costs. The teachers simply cannot provide these evaluation measures themselves, nor would we want them to take away valuable instruction time for these administrative tasks.

All public schools rely on voters and taxpayers — through their override votes and their choices of representation in Washington and Arizona, to determine the amount of financial support for education. Cuts have occurred at the federal, state and local levels simultaneously. The voters recently decided to say “no” at every level, regardless of results or efficiency.

Since the recession, SUSD has demonstrated a stellar reputation for overcoming financial obstacles, yet still maintaining a high level of excellence. I would expect local voters, especially, to see the value in supporting that efficient level of service, if for no other reason than to retain their home values and quality of communities.

The looming federal and state cuts

will affect all Arizona schools and will cause all classroom funding to drop in every district, although the Scottsdale situation will likely experience higher profile.

Please know that everything possible is being done to preserve the quality of education and safety for SUSD students. It is my fervent hope that our community will realize that our per-student base spending level is capped by our state Legislature.

It is my hope that concerned voters will become truly involved in finding long-term solutions to allow our public schools to demonstrate efficiency and excellence, and to help restore valuable programs. But, it will take decisive, cohesive and extended effort from all stakeholders in our educational community who truly value quality public education.

*Bonnie Sneed is serving her second term on the SUSD governing board.*