



P.O. Box 40, 146 N. Jefferson Street
Monument, CO 80132-0040

Administration Office:
Phone 719-488-4700
Fax 719-488-4704
www.lewispalmer.org

Lewis-Palmer School District 38 Stakeholders,

With the New Year upon us, all five members of the Lewis-Palmer School District 38 Board of Education seek to communicate with our community of families, students, staff, residents and stakeholders. While we ultimately communicate through our actions at each board meeting, we want our entire community to know that moving into 2023, we are resolute, now more than ever, that we must secure a solution for long-term sustainable compensation for our staff.

As many of you know, the teacher compensation ballot issue (4A) failed in November with 10,713 'yes' votes and 11,627 'no' votes, an approval gap of about two percent. Over the past five years this Board has worked hard to build a strategic roadmap, collaborate with our community, act with integrity and create solutions for concerns as they arise. We feel we have built trust with our community; we have worked to act transparently while saving and investing dollars wisely at every turn.

Still, we have much to do. We continue to approach our important work with a student-first mindset, grounded in recruiting and retaining the best staff to sustain District 38. Our challenge in this regard is unchanged – our revenue has not kept pace with surrounding school districts, as we have not successfully passed a budgetary tax increase in over 20 years, resulting in a roughly \$5 million gap in funding compared to our competing districts. Working to find that funding within current budgets will be impossible without drastic cuts to services, as District 38 utilizes more than 80 percent of its budget for staffing purposes.

While we look forward to state investments into PPR funding, our reality is that when we receive additional funds from the state, all school districts receive that allotment proportionally. In short, our funding shortfall does not change when our state funding goes up. The reality for all Colorado school districts is that the single way of creating adequate, sustainable revenue is through a mill levy override, approved by taxpayers. Each of our surrounding school districts has passed a funding increase over the past 23 years, and we're committed to working with our community to make eliminating our funding gap a reality.

With a turnover rate that has been growing for several years, and is currently greater than 20%, it is clear that our single most important challenge is hiring, retaining and ultimately valuing the staff who help our students grow and graduate, becoming productive members of our community. We are:

- *Working with our community to understand the existing funding needs/gaps and all opportunities at hand.*
- *Exploring all ways of cutting costs within our current budget with the goal of minimizing any future ballot measure.*
- *Possibly returning to our community in the future with a similar ask, as our need is unchanged.*

We invite you to be an agent of change and an involved constituent as we move forward on this path. We invite you to send us questions, get involved in this process and partner with us as we work to keep our school district as forward-leading as possible. Moving forward, here are a few ways you can get involved:

- *Come to or listen to our upcoming Board of Education meetings on [Jan. 23, Feb. 21 and beyond](#).*
- *Volunteer your time by participating in upcoming community surveys, and sharing them with your neighbors for broad participation.*
- *Sign up by reaching out to signal your willingness to help develop a plan of action that yields the desired lasting results. We can be reached at schoolboard@lewispalmer.org.*

It is in the best interest of our local and broader region to support D38, and as five members of this community, we will continue to do our best to model that now and in the future.

In your service and respectfully,
The Lewis-Palmer School District 38 Board of Education
Chris Taylor, Theresa Phillips, Ron Schwarz, Tiffney Upchurch and Matthew Clawson

