



**J. Michael Clára**  
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District Two  
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6 August 2013

**OPEN LETTER**

District 2 Neighbors  
Glendale Community  
Poplar Grove Community  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84104



**Re: Truth in Taxation**

Dear Neighbor,

I am presenting this letter to those of you that have expressed concern over the School District's proposed tax increase.

**I am voting against the proposed tax increase** recommendation presented to the School Board by the Business Administrator Janet Roberts and Superintendent McKell Whithers. In large part because there was never any clear reason presented to require an increase. The information presented by the Business Administrator was contradictory and inconsistent throughout the budget process. The Business Administrator either refused or was unable to answer budget questions with any amount of clarity.

While I could cite many examples, I present one for your consideration. At the **May 7, 2013**, School Board meeting we were presented with a document titled:

• **IMPACT OF 2013 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

This same document is presented in the **August 6, 2013**, school board meeting agenda as justification for the proposed tax increase. One of the school programs listed on the document is **Enhancements for Accelerated Students**. The document states that this program lost a total of **\$255,676.00** and will require a tax increase in order to maintain this program at its current level. There are two reasons stated, both of which are attributed to a failure on the Utah State Legislature's part:

- #1 – Failure to Fully Fund Growth (Required to not cut the current programs)
- #2 - WPU Shortfall to Cover State Retirement and Associated Employee Cost

"Local school boards are the bedrock of our society, yet they are too often..."

Board Business Meeting: 8/06/2013  
Addition to the Official Minutes  
Agenda Item D1

When comparing last year's State funding to this year; the District actually received an increase of funding for this program.

In the previous budget cycle the State gave the Salt Lake City School District **\$204,620.00** for the **Enhancement for Accelerated Students** program.

In the current budget cycle the State is giving the District **\$205,638.00**, which is as you can see, an increase from the previous year. Not a 'shortfall' as we have been lead to believe.

Yet, our Business Administrator is telling us that this program is **\$255,676.00** short this year because of the legislature's failure to 'fully fund growth' and a 'WPU shortfall'.

As you can see, the numbers as presented simply don't add up. Any effort on my part to receive a credible and believable explanation to this discrepancy met with negative results.

At this point, all I can do is act in the office to which you elected me and exercise my part of the '**power of the purse**' (*Federalist 58 & 70*) and cast a **NO VOTE** on the proposed tax increase.


Shalom,



J. Michael Clára  
**Board Member, District 2**

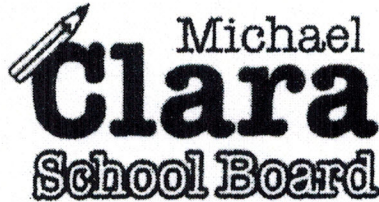
cc: Board of Education Meeting

Enclosures (2)

 P.S. I am also troubled by the fact that this year, the School Board awarded a 6% increase to the Superintendant and voted to give our employees a meager 1% increase. In an effort to rectify this disparity, I proposed an amended to the budget in our June meeting that was voted down.

For more information please refer to my blog: [www.MichaelClara.com](http://www.MichaelClara.com)





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25 April 2014

DELIVERED VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL  
Kristi Swett, President  
Salt Lake City School District, Board  
2256 South King Street  
Salt Lake City, UT 84109

Re: School District Budget Priorities

Dear President Swett,

In this letter, I am requesting that the issue of **class size reduction and providing our employees with a 3% increase in salary**, be part of our budget discussion for the school board meeting of May 6, 2014.

I recognize that in previous years, you and other members of the board, voted to balance the budget by reducing the teacher workforce, which in turn, increased the number of students per teacher. It is now becoming painfully clear to parents and educators alike, that we have reached the point in which we can no longer afford to balance the budget on the backs of our students. Research clearly demonstrates the unmistakable correlation between class size and student achievement. You will recall, at our April 1, 2013, school board meeting; our very own, Ms. Rebecca Pittam, principal of Washington Elementary, introduced the school board to the term, "*buying down the class size*". Ms. Pittam went on to explain that the School Community Council made the decision to utilize Title I and other discretionary funding to hire additional teachers. Ms. Pittam made the point that the smaller class sizes were a significant factor in her school achieving the student outcomes that they now enjoy and the distinction of being a Title I school with a "B" letter grade.

As to our employees, you will recall that in the June 4, 2013, school board meeting, I proposed an amendment to the budget, which would have given our employees a 3% increase in salary. Although, that motion failed, I nevertheless pointed out that I believed it was grossly unfair to offer our employees a 1% increase, while giving the superintendent a 3% annual bonus on top of his salary. I still maintain that if 3% annual bonus is good enough for the superintendent, then it is good enough for all of our district teachers and employees. Frankly, I am a bit dismayed that previous boards have perpetuated this type of salary inequity. I trust these are two issues the board is willing to deliberate.

Shalom,

J. Michael Clára  
Board Member, District 2

Addition to the Official Minutes  
Agenda Item: D1

"Local school boards are the bedrock of our society, yet they are lavish in their spending."

Señor Florez --Deseret News

Board Business Meeting: 05/06/14