

public citizens for children + youth

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Presented Donna Cooper
Executive Director
Public Citizens for Children and Youth

I am here tonight asking that you adopt three principles in curing the expected budget shortfall for the upcoming school year.

First, agree that cuts will not be made at the school level. Our students have gone through enough and so have the teachers and other school personnel. Press the smart administrators of this district to produce real savings options for your consideration that protect schools from any cuts.

Second, refuse cuts that will cost more in student learning losses than they save in direct expenditures. Basically, reject short term gains that cause long term pain to our students. Top of mind for PCCY are the important student support services that reduce violence and respond to trauma. Our kids are having the worst year of their lives, just as we are. It's simply the worst time, ever, to reduce the modicum of mental health and social supports already in our schools.

The same goes for arts instruction. Research tells us the arts impart essential 21st century skills of critical thinking, persistence, and problem-solving, all the while building self-confidence and a personal sense of agency. Core content teachers tell our Picasso Project staff that when their schools lean into the arts, their students are more centered and there is a marked increase in the receptivity to learning.

Our third principle is to keep the pedal down hard on the early literacy work. Children in grades k-4 have lost a lot of learning this year. I urge you to not simply hold that work harmless from cuts, but to please consider saving elsewhere so you can deepen that work to enable our students to catch up. Research tells us it's much less costly to teach a young child to be a strong reader than to remediate an older student in the basic tools of learning.



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Cutting the services that respond to the wounds of trauma our students carry, or reducing support for arts instruction, or failing to remediate for the early reading loss resulting from the shutdown are decisions that are far too shortsighted for this esteemed body to approve and far too harmful to our children for any citizen of this city to accept.

Thank you.