

## Highlights from Mrs. Connor's Presentation on the Budget Crisis Facing Sierra

On February 10<sup>th</sup> 2015, Mrs. Connor spoke at the Sierra PTO General Meeting. She explained to us the budget shortfall facing Kyrene, which will significantly impact Sierra, as well as what parents can do to help. If you'd like to listen to a recording of her presentation, follow this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lx9qX6dNCBc>

### HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MEETING

\*Due in part to funding cuts from the Arizona Legislature, and the current lawsuit by the school districts over inflation funding, the Kyrene School District is facing a \$5.2 million dollar budget shortfall.

\*About \$3 million of that shortfall will be absorbed by the District Office.

\*Despite the fact that Mrs. Connor has been extremely fiscally responsible with Sierra's budget, ALL Kyrene schools are having to suffer budget cuts. They are not cuts across the board. Schools have each been given an amount that they need to cut from their budget. The amounts are determined, in part, on the amount of students receiving free or reduced lunch at a particular school. Sierra's portion of the budget cuts is larger than some schools, but not the largest.

\*Mrs. Connor has been tasked with cutting \$79,000.00 from Sierra's budget for next year (and probably will not get that money back into her budget any time soon.) Rather than the District telling Sierra what parts of its budget to cut, the principals of each school are going to have to make the decision where to cut money for their own school.

\*Mrs. Connor has formed a team to look at where they can cut spending. This team has a representative from each grade at Sierra, as well as special areas, resource, support, etc. Unfortunately, they cannot simply "trim the fat" in the budget and come up with \$79k. **Their primary goal is to consider what can be cut while still acting in the best interest of the children.** Mrs. Connor specifically rejected the idea of class sizes of 40+ kids as a way to cut spending because that is not what's best for the students.

\*Sierra costs about \$2 million to run each year. The majority of that is taken up by supplies, salaries and benefits, and the day to day operation of the school. Cutting \$79k will likely mean that they have to cut teachers and/or staff (likely at least one full time teacher).

\*Part of the difficulty in making cuts is because there are several "pots" of money that Sierra can use, but many of them have extremely strict guidelines as to their use. Mrs. Connor gave a detailed explanation of the various funding sources and

their restrictions, which can be heard in the You Tube video. For example, she can only use money from Maintenance and Operations to pay for teacher salaries, and cannot move money from another pot to add to M&O.

\*There may be two things that could lessen Sierra's burden. One is that Mrs. Connor is not yet sure how many teachers she will be allotted for next year. Mrs. Connor does not get to determine how many teachers she needs for each grade level. That decision is made by the District. It is possible that if the District assigns more teachers to Sierra than Mrs. Connor believes are truly needed, that she could cut money from the budget by simply not hiring any additional or "extra" teachers. The District is also strongly considering taking specials (music, art, library and P.E.) back to 45 minutes/class instead of the current 50 minutes/class. This would save each school (Sierra included) almost \$20k, but it would result in some special areas teachers in the district losing their jobs.

\*The District considered charging for all-day kindergarten and also not giving teachers and staff a raise. However, both those ideas were rejected for fear that it would make it difficult for Kyrene to compete with other districts, both for students and for exceptional teachers.

### **WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?**

- Unfortunately, despite the PTO having a decent amount of money, we cannot pay to fund a teacher. Laws designed to create equity across the board in any school district prevent that. However, the PTO will be financially supporting the school in any way they are permitted.
- One area that is a huge chunk of Sierra's budget is printing and supplies. Parents may be asked to help out by donating supplies, ranging from paper, to markers to hand sanitizer. Teacher salaries come from the same pot of money as supplies, so if families donate supplies, that frees up more money to keep a teacher's job.
- Look into corporate donations. Does your employer donate to schools? Do they make a product they could donate to the schools (dry erase markers, paper towels, etc.?)
- Write to the Governor and your State Legislators.

Here is the contact info for the Governor and our State Legislators:

Governor Doug Ducey:

<http://azgovernor.gov/governor/form/contact-governor-ducey>

Governor Doug Ducey  
1700 West Washington Street  
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Phone : 602-542-4331

[Facebook.com/dougducey](https://www.facebook.com/dougducey)

State Representative Bob Robson:

[brobson@azleg.gov](mailto:brobson@azleg.gov)

State Representative Jill Norgaard:

[jnorgaard@azleg.gov](mailto:jnorgaard@azleg.gov)

State Senator Jeff Dial

[jdial@azleg.gov](mailto:jdial@azleg.gov)