

## Representative Stories from “Is it OK?” Letter to State Leaders



“It is not OK that my 3 elementary age kids are being taught in small groups for core subjects such as writing/reading/math by parent volunteers that have NO teaching experience because their classroom teachers are trying to deal with such huge class sizes and differentiated needs among students.”

– A.S. Aurora

“My 4th grader attends a charter school already limited to just over \$7800/student, with constant fundraising activities. A \$500 cut per kid, even in that small environment, will mean loss of teaching staff. We don't have a bus system, and parents pay for hot meals, the staff is bare-bones, we have no band or theater or science labs, so what else could possibly go? Meanwhile, my middle school student has experienced what a complete waste of time classes are with a teacher:student ratio of 1:30 because of discipline problems. We need more teachers with smaller classes at that age, not less and larger, to keep students learning and motivated, if we are to see improved results in performance as adults.”

– H.C., Avon

“It's not OK that we have to cut positions from our Warren Tech program, the only recourse tech-arts-minded kids have in our district. It's also not OK to deny concurrent educational opportunities for our GT kids--these are some of the programs our district says it will cut.” – T.H., Bailey

“It's not OK that my daughter's classroom is bursting at the seams with 28 students already, that the PTA has to pay for photocopying and toilet paper, that literacy and math paraprofessionals hours are being cut while the number of students rose by 20% last year!” – J.M., Boulder

“Over the last three years, my district has lost approximately \$2500 in PPR. Since we are very small, the impact has been very large. We have already gone to a 4-day week, and teachers and staff have not had any kind of raise in at least 5 years. And now we are told we have to cut another 15% of our budget. We have made all the big cuts. At the state level, I have heard that legislators have said that they do not want this decreased funding to impact students in the classroom. Please wake up! This will impact our students negatively.” – C.F., Briggsdale

“My son's public school Gifted/Talented IEP recommends that he learn a second language at school. However, those classes were axed at the middle school level, last year due to budget cuts. His class sizes are large. At his neighborhood high school, students sit on the floor because there aren't enough chairs to go around. For several years, students could not bring home textbooks for studying because they had to stay in the classroom and be shared.” – K.D., Brighton

“It's not OK that my wife teaches high school English and does not have enough books for the kids to do their reading at home. Half of their class time, which should be used for instruction and discussion, is wasted reading the book in class because the school cannot afford enough copies of any of the books they are using.” – S.H., Broomfield

“We had to cut four teachers last year due to the budget cuts. We can no longer offer many electives and my class sizes have grown from 17 students per class to 26 students per class in one year. I am sure that it will go up even more next year with these proposed cuts. I am a social studies teacher who works very hard to have students take exams that include essays. This allows me to see if they really understand the material, while also being able to help them get better at writing, critical thinking, and problem solving. I fear that if the class sizes continue to grow I will have to go away from this method of helping my students to a method multiple choice testing, just to be able to handle the huge number of students that I will have in a day.” – J.K., Byers

“It's not OK that I have a total budget of only \$360 to purchase all of my classroom supplies, lab equipment, lab materials, etc. for my science classroom that serves about 120 students. It's not OK that I am stuck with mid-20th century technology to teach my 21st century students and prepare them for their futures. It's not OK to have class sizes so big there is little to no empty space in our classrooms.”  
– J.K., Canon City

“It is not OK that our school has to rely on donations and fund raisers to pay for hands-on science education and other learning opportunities. It is not OK that children who need extra help in learning the basics of reading, writing, and mathematics have to go without, or with much less help than they need, and continuously struggle in these subjects in the classroom. I volunteer in my sons' classrooms and have first-hand experience with everything about which I've written.” – D.T., Carbondale

“I will have 3 boys in college beginning Fall 2011 and I have no idea how I can afford it! It is cheaper to pay out of state tuition in WY than to pay instate at CU, but that is where they want to go (CU, CSU, Mines). We need to find a way to support affordable, quality higher education as an investment in the state's economic promise.” – C.S., Centennial

“It is not OK that I have 2 of my own children in Colorado colleges, I work as a school bus driver in Cherry Creek, our department took HUGE budget cuts last year AND this year...and as I am making less money, I have to pay more for my children's education. There has to be something wrong with a system that takes money out of my pocket at work and charges more money for my kids in College. This is insane. – R.H., Centennial

“It is not OK that my son will not have the same opportunities that I've had. He will not have a well-rounded education that includes music, the arts, adequate physical education, or athletic opportunities. My husband and I are actually considering moving out of state. The dismal state of education makes us believe that our family's future is not in Colorado, despite the fact that we've called this state our home for over 37 years.” – A.F., Colorado Springs

“It is not OK that you are trying to close our school and make more people lose their jobs . . . Our community is small and our people struggle constantly to make ends meet. Our school is one of the only things we currently have going to help us. My kids go to school there and my husband is the only custodian. He works 60+ hours a week to pull in a mediocre salary with mediocre benefits - we can't afford to opt in on his medical plan, so we go without insurance. The nearest school is 50 miles from here. Home schooling is not an option since I already have 3 jobs trying to make ends meet. How can you think this is ok?” – C.B. Creede

“It is not okay that some of my children's core classes this year have 43 students... how do we expect our kids to learn when they don't have a desk... I am terrified to think of what could happen next year.” – J.R., Denver

“It is not OK that my 3rd grade son with dyslexia has no intervention reading teacher this year because her position was eliminated in budget cuts LAST YEAR. Due to the cuts NEXT year, he still will not receive intervention to help him read, plus he will be in a class of 34 children with no teacher assistant. Tests show that my son has an IQ in the highly gifted range, yet has dyslexia. My son could be in the workforce in a mere 10 years. Is this how we prepare our children?” – T.L., Denver

“It's not OK that our PTA has to raise money for basics like books because our school doesn't have enough money to buy all the books we need.” – C.B., Dolores

“I work with over 200 students with special needs each year who are in dire need of more individual and small group intervention. The Individuals with Disabilities Act has never been fully funded since its inception in 1975 and the lack of trained educational professionals to work with the increasing numbers of students with special needs is devastating. Furthermore, as populations have become more educationally heterogeneous (e.g. families with parents having high levels of education and families with parents having dropped out of high school) the elementary schools are extremely challenged to teach the range of students - even the basic literacy skills required by third grade to become a functioning student thereafter. This issue could be eliminated with sufficient student teacher ratios in the preschool through 3rd grade levels (10:1 needed at that level). For the 4th through 12th grade, class sizes could be increased, but we still need trained staff for intervention purposes ...” – H.S. Durango

“It is not OK that my daughter was put in a first grade literacy class with 27 students. It is not OK that my child has technology class once a month to accommodate large class sizes and monthly standardized testing. It is not OK that schools have been forced to shorten the school day so that we can pay our teachers. It is not OK that teachers spend their own money in their classrooms to provide for students' basic needs, like tissues and cleaning supplies...” – J.S., Eagle

“It is NOT OK that my daughter's Kindergarten class has 25 students! It is NOT OK that I have 48 students in my middle school classes! It is NOT OK that I serve 150 students and am only on a 67% contract! It is NOT OK that I may lose my job altogether next year because of budget cuts!”  
– L.G., Fort Collins

“It is not OK that my students, who already struggle in school due to generational poverty, will have to survive an education with less funding and fewer teachers. We moved here from Minnesota, where our daughter received a top notch education. We have since found that the educational system here is not up to par and it is due to a lack of funding. This new cut has made us rethink our decision to remain here in Colorado. We are not alone.” – K.P., Fowler

"It is not OK that we had to cut a teacher from our school last year. My son is now in a 4th/5th grade combination class because of it. We cannot afford to lose another teacher at our school!"

– L.M., Franktown

"With the proposed cuts my district will lose \$3 million in per pupil funding. That's 60+ teachers' salaries! There's no way we can "re-work" our budget without letting staff go - and hurting the educations of our future leaders." – K.T., Glenwood Springs

"It is not OK that my daughter is seven and she overheard the news of the proposed budget cuts and got scared. "Will I lose my teacher?" she said. As a father, I wanted to tell her it will all be alright but I also wanted to be honest with her because she deserves that. I told her I don't think so but I don't know what the budget cuts will mean to her school. As children often do, she then summed up the problem very simply and eloquently by asking, 'Why don't they care about us and our school?'" – B.B, Golden

"It is not OK that my three sons will not have an art and music program in their school when it is exactly art and music that inspires them to learn and grow." – A.M., Golden

"It is not OK that schools and educators don't have sufficient basic resources in the classroom to teach our children in the 21st century (science books, math books, computers and projectors, etc.). I have no choice but to work part-time because I spend the rest of my time researching grant opportunities, planning school fundraisers and volunteering in the classroom because the very basic needs are not being met in our K-12 classrooms." – S.C., Grand Junction

"It is not OK that my two sons do not get to experience a hand-on curriculum due to cuts in education. It is not OK that our library cannot staff a librarian to assist kids in choosing appropriate reading material. It is not OK that we are not able to have a quality music, art and PE program - IF AT ALL!! It is not OK that my two sons will not be involved in ANY sports due to cuts in education." – J.M., Grand Lake

"It is not OK that this will have a devastating impact on our students' ability to learn. Last year, half of the gifted and talented programming was cut, class sizes were increased, buildings were closed and now we're going to have to cut 9 million more." – D.M., Greeley

“It is not OK that my 9-year-old son has started to struggle in school as a 4th grader because there is no longer ANY individual attention available at his school for a student who might lag behind others in managing concepts. Since he's not been labeled in any way, he doesn't qualify for an IEP, and since he doesn't have behavioral issues, no one can take any extra time with him. The reason there is no one available is due to the cuts the school district has had to make due to lack of funding.”

– S.M., Highlands Ranch

“As a Mental Health provider, I've seen an increase in social-emotional concerns with students; Threat Assessments, Suicide Assessments, diagnosis of anxiety and depression in students...increase in referrals to Community Agencies...the students are feeling the stress...they are being asked to meet higher expectations with less support, teachers are being asked to provide more with less, parents are feeling the strains on the home front. Educators, students and families are feeling the significant stress of these budget reductions on all fronts.” – J.D., Highlands Ranch

“Where do we cut? No buses, no Spanish, no French, no school nurse, no PE, no Wood shop, class sizes approaching 30 in all required classes, or maybe no sports? These are the only choices left and any of these will have a big impact on the quality of education we offer. It would require cutting several of these if not all of them to reach our budget shortfall.” – D.S., Idaho Springs

“It is not OK that 38 students gather around open flames in Chemistry class with one teacher to ensure their safety. That is this year; next year it will be worse.” – J.P., Kersey

“As a parent of two 2nd graders in Jeffco, I've worked tirelessly the past three years to coordinate the annual fundraising auction at our school. The money we raise is critical for our small school, and doubles our principal's operating budget. But funding our schools should not be left up to concerned parents alone. We're already in danger of losing good teachers, our librarian's time and teacher aide time, and classroom sizes continue to grow every year. And we're the lucky ones. Our community has parents volunteering in the classroom every day to help and parents who will sacrifice their time to make a difference in their children's education.” – K.O., Kittredge

“It is not OK that funding cuts will have the effect of having larger classrooms, less staff. My daughter has dyslexia and a smaller classroom has helped her immensely in gaining the ability to decipher words and also with her self-esteem.” – E.D., Lafayette

“My children are in school NOW. They can't wait several years for the economy to recover and revenues to increase. It is not OK that class sizes will increase yet again. It is not OK that excellent teachers will burn out and leave our schools. It is not OK that Colorado will become less attractive to talented people who might consider moving here from out-of-state because our education system is woefully underfunded. It is not OK that special programs for gifted and talented students may be cut due to budget decreases. Further cuts to public education will force us to re-evaluate whether our children can get an appropriate public education in this state.” – D.Y., Lakewood

“We'll never be competitive with a crippled education system. We've cut everything we can, no librarians, almost no electives, huge classes. Please don't do this!” – C.H., Lamar

“It is not OK that my son will not get the classes he needs to pursue his life long goal just because he lives in a rural area and educational cuts will cut out advanced classes.” – M.M., Limon

“It is not o.k. that I have 28 Kindergartners in a music class for 45 minutes without an aide, and my entire budget for the whole year is \$250.00 to cover instruments, repair, materials, sheet music, technology, office supplies, etc. It is not o.k. that many fellow music teachers will be out of jobs next year due to cuts in the middle schools and high schools. It is not o.k. that I teach choir to elementary students who cannot pursue vocal music in the upper grades because it is an elective that has been cut. Or that someday, I will be out of a job too, and I'm a single mom.” – A.K., Littleton

“It is NOT OK that my second grade twins are in classes of 30 and 31 students, and it is NOT OK that their classes may be even bigger next year. It is also NOT OK that we will pay \$440 a month next year for full-day kindergarten for our younger son, and his class will likely include half-day and full-day students. This is an unfair burden for the teacher, and is unfair all the students in that class.” – L.H., Lone Tree

“I will have to quit my job to educate my autistic son because his school cannot afford the cost of his education. I will have to pay school taxes all my life, but while my son is in school he is not going to get a decent education. A whole generation will suffer because of your choice to not stand by our kids and invest in our future.” – G.R., Longmont

“It's not OK that our school will even less resources to meet my child and others with special needs. Our child is dyslexic and ADHD. It is difficult enough for the skeleton staff to provide the accommodations needed for him to be successful in school. With budget cuts I am very concerned for his future.”  
– B.K., Longmont

“My daughter, who has gone from failing grades to a 4.2 GPA in high school because she was identified as gifted would most likely lose the additional programming she receives which supports the way her brain works. Children on both ends of the spectrum as well as traditional learners cannot be left behind due to lack of funding.” – C.H., Longmont

“It is not OK that we continue to lose funds to employee teachers and counselors for our schools. I work with the Gifted and Talented population and because of budget cuts students are going to be limited next year on the number of classes they can take. REALLY? We have motivated students that want to be in school and learning every available minute of the day and they are being told NO. They are being forced to have an open period. In my opinion, no student should have an open period.” – N.W., Loveland

“I work as a school nurse in a small rural K-12 school. Daily I see the struggles of the teachers/staff to overcome the budget cuts while maintaining quality education. I see the grief of teachers who have learned that they will probably lose their jobs next school year, and with the lack of other job opportunities, will undoubtedly end up on the welfare rolls. I ask myself how can our nation possibly succeed if we fail to educate our children? It is not our kids' fault, yet they are paying the price.”  
– K. B., Mancos

“It's not OK that we have to turn our backs, as a school board, on programs we know promote student achievement. We are forced to provide less for kids because we have a lot less with which to do it – and no way of increasing revenue. We are in the process of determining which cuts will least impact our students. The young people presently in school have only one chance at their primary and secondary education. They can't put it on hold until the economy recovers.” – M.S., Meeker

“Our district is already floor funded. We've closed a school, increased class sizes, put off all but the most critical maintenance to our buildings, can't replace buses that need to be replaced, frozen teacher salaries, laid off many more, and the fees keep coming.... both new and increased. IT'S NOT OK!” – K.A., Monument

“It's not OK that our school district has great teachers leaving the district because of budget cuts and new teachers will not even consider moving to our area because of our low teachers salaries. Our district needs to pay teachers more money so we can educate our students. Our district has no money for summer school. In this area we have a huge need for summer school because we have a number of children that need extra help to move on to the next grade level. Colorado State Standards keep getting tougher and the students keep falling more and more behind. The education of children needs to be the number one priority.” – C.S., Naturita

“It is not OK that middle school students in New Castle have only a partial science lab....running water only. They will reach high school never having conducted a chemistry lab experiment. While this situation represents a choice by the School Board, it is a choice they face because of limits on funding.”

– D.S., New Castle

“Adams 12 had to get rid of Outdoor Lab for the entire district. It is an educational experience that cannot be duplicated in the classroom. Adults throughout Colorado have fond memories of their experiences at Outdoor Lab. We have now deprived our kids of that same opportunity. It is not OK.” – C.T., Northglenn

“It is not okay that my sophomore and 7th grade sons were using the same history book for their respective classes not to mention that there were not enough books for each student to have one. Therefore, if one class took the books home for homework, the other class didn't have a book to study.”

– P.M., Nucla

“I have been a teacher for over 20 years and never have I seen such low morale amongst students and teachers. Our small school had to cut over a million dollars from its budget last year and will have to do the same for next year. What will we cut next? Teachers, music, PE, the arts, sports. We will be cutting the very programs that motivate students to do well in school. It is not OK that we will be cutting into our future.” – M.C., Pagosa Springs

“It's not ok that class sizes are increasing, and basic classes, like physical education, are being cut. In Douglas County, the school district reduced the requirements for graduation because of budget cuts. Without education, we can't grow as a state.” – R.F., Parker

“It is not OK that I've had to move my special needs children to a school outside of our own neighborhood in order to make sure their educational needs are met. It is not OK that families that do not have the resources to move their children to a school without bus service have no choice but to stay at a school that doesn't serve their children's needs. It is not OK that a first grade classroom has twenty-eight 6-yr-olds and one very tired, overworked teacher. Those children are not getting a high-quality education - not because that teacher isn't qualified, but because that teacher doesn't have access to the resources she needs and must provide many of her own classroom supplies and materials. Every elementary school should have a GT facilitator if not several GT classrooms for combined grades (K/1, 2/3, etc). Our nation is not producing the quality of science and technology innovation as other countries because we are overlooking some of our most talented young minds at an age when they are most open to learning and eager to meet the challenge. We need to set the bar higher and allow these children to rise to meet it, and without adequate resources, we are faced with wasted talent and missed opportunity. We need to invest for our future to remain competitive in tomorrow's world.” – C.M., Parker

"I do not have reliable technology in my school in order to meet the 21st Century Skills that are required by Colorado Department of Education in their new standards." – R.C., Peyton

"These cuts will result in larger class size and less teachers employed. We are already using textbooks older than our students." – F.D., Pueblo

"It is not OK that teachers have to buy basic supplies like pencils for students out of their own pockets. It is not OK that elective classes are up to 45 students per class. It is not OK that as an upper middle income parent, my IN STATE tuition for my college age children keeps rising and rising. I'd be better off if my children had gone out of state to college." – S.E., Pueblo

"My daughter attends a charter school that receives the same cuts, if not more, than the district schools. The past cuts have resulted in teachers losing their jobs as well as cuts in programs. It makes me very upset that individuals who have dedicated their life work to teaching all of our children seem to be the ones that suffer most in our state. Their pay is already inadequate as it is and now they will have to fear for their jobs. The most recent statistics that were published in the Colorado Children's Campaign, Kids Count, is the best reflection of how education has suffered in Colorado. Our dropout rate is much higher than the national average and graduates are not ready for the workforce. How will our economy every recover if we do not target one of the root causes to the bigger problem: Poor funding for education = Poor quality of education and continued poverty in Colorado." – K.P., Pueblo

"It is not OK that Rosa no longer can afford to participate in sports which teach life lessons because of player fees required to make up for lack of funding. It is not OK that gifted Jessika gets limited education because we have to dummy down teaching to meet the needs of students that don't care about education but have been included in the same classroom for lack of funding more teachers." – C.R., Rocky Ford

"After three years of cutting, there is no more to cut! We are operating on bare bones supplies and equipment budgets, cutting into fund reserves to meet daily needs for text books, printer cartridges, and soon it will be fuel and energy needs. When does it stop? I have a new building which is meant to afford students opportunities in areas besides core content. I have a new career and family vocational classroom with little expectation of having the revenues to hire a teacher to put it to use! We have reached the point of diminishing returns and the only cuts available now are teachers! I am ashamed to speak to my colleagues in other states who see Colorado's wealth and then see how little we pay to educate our kids! We can and must reform our system before we destroy it!" – R.W., Rush

"It is not OK that my daughter's school is falling apart, that the number of students in her class is exploding and that the district is cutting even more positions. It is not OK that my child has to go out and sell a ton of products so the school can make money to just get by." – L.H., Salida

"It is NOT okay that my son, a senior at Steamboat Springs HS, wants to attend the University of Colorado in Boulder and is having trouble affording the tuition. In turn, he is being forced to make the hard decision of leaving the state for a college education. It is NOT okay that he has been accepted to three out of state university schools and that their out of state tuition is less than the University of Colorado in-state tuition. He could attend the University of Utah and pay \$15,000 a year out of state. He could attend Minnesota State at Manketo and pay \$17,000 out of state. It is a pity that my tax dollars will not provide my son with an opportunity to attend an in-state university at an affordable rate. Presently, CU-Boulder tuition is over \$21,000 for in-state residents. Will my son be forced to leave his own tax state to attend college at an affordable rate? Will Colorado lose his talents and economic workforce opportunities to another state? Shame on Colorado!" – M.C., Steamboat Springs

"It is not OK that schools have to use their librarian as a special ed para[professional] due to lack of funding. Soon we will not have either one while the number of severe needs autistic students continues to rise!" – S.M., Sterling

"It is not OK that students having trouble reading in the lower grades will probably not be able to get small group help because we will have to get rid of some of our teacher's aides. It is also not fair to those aides, who were forced to become 'highly qualified' even after they had done their jobs for 20 years. Now - even though they are more than qualified - they will be let go because of cuts to education. You may not remember the saying, 'If you think education is expensive, try ignorance!'" – C.H., Strasburg

"Here in Grand County, where jobs have decreased with the economic downturn and people have been forced to find jobs elsewhere, two of our elementary schools are in peril of closure due to lack of funding. If this occurs and children are forced to consolidate to Granby Elementary School, more families would move from our area since it would bring hardships for keeping their jobs with changes in scheduling, lack of after school daycare, the inability to get to jobs on time and the long bus rides that would affect children's possibility for sleep and inability to get to after school programs in their home communities. Our communities would be less attractive to new residents if there are not local schools. Potential for future growth and job creation would falter with people continuing to move away from our communities rather than into them. I implore you to provide better funding for our schools throughout the state. We can no longer turn our backs on our most important resource, our children." – D.M., Tabernash

“The world is changing daily and I know that unless my students have access to a computer and the internet, our school atlases, globes, and wall maps are not enough to demonstrate the world today. They do an excellent job of showing the world 15 years ago. With current and forecasted cuts, my students will not see the world and its cultures the way they are but the way they were. We complain that American culture is falling behind but we are not willing to keep classes sizes low, buy new texts or maps, or provide adequate buildings.” – K.H., Thornton

“Teachers’ wages especially in rural schools are low. Did you know that teachers’ children can qualify for, in some cases, free lunches and in most cases, reduced lunches? Education CANNOT be further damaged.” – K.H., Walsh

“I am a teacher in a middle school science classroom. Every day I have to balance the safety of my students and the educational experience I want them to have. Do I continue to have students participate in hands-on lab activities and risk injury? OR do I teach "old school" and stick to the text and worksheets? What provides the best education? Hands-on does, but increasing budget cuts and larger classes restrict a student’s learning experience.” – D.B., Westminster

“It is not OK that my school may lose their Teacher Librarian. They were awarded the Colorado Library of the Year this year and after working that hard, are now facing the possibility of losing this valuable person and position in their school. We can't afford to lose librarians; they are the gateway to 21st century learning and are demonstrating web 2.0 and higher level thinking skills to our children every day as they move to digital literacy.” – L.I., Westminster

“I am a residential realtor and as such, I have come across many individuals who have considered moving to our great state but have decided to move elsewhere when they see how far down we are in spending on and for our students compared to other states across the nation. This is not only hurting our students but it is also hurting our economy by driving away potential newcomers. Please do something to ensure we do not continue down this path.” – M.P., Westminster

“It is not OK that we continue to close career programs throughout the state and give our students no options for career training. This is a huge blow to the economy of Colorado and our future.”  
– D.G., Wheat Ridge

“It is not OK that my daughter currently attends a high school that can't afford to offer a gifted program to meet her needs. The only other alternative we have is to leave town and drive to another district, which we can't afford to do. America's best and brightest are being left behind now - is that really what we want or need for our country's future?” – W.N., Windsor

For more information contact Lisa Weil at Great Education Colorado at 303-722-5901 (Office) or 720-217-6239 (Mobile) or [lisa@greateducation.org](mailto:lisa@greateducation.org).

*Great Futures Colorado is a growing and diverse coalition of organizations that informs the public about the need for an education system – preschool through higher ed – that will prepare all students for the challenges of the 21st century. Together, the Coalition advocates for the investment necessary to implement that vision for Colorado. For more information, visit [www.greatfuturescolorado.org](http://www.greatfuturescolorado.org).*

*Great Education Colorado is a statewide, nonprofit, grassroots organization that is focused on improving education in Colorado through wise, increased investment in our schools, colleges and universities. For more information, visit [www.greateducation.org](http://www.greateducation.org).*