

## MY TURN

# K-8 option is right answer for Coronado area

It's tough being a Scottsdale Unified School District parent these days.



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While supporting your child's school is easy, things get much more complicated when a school district challenges its parents to find solutions to ease a budget crisis as it dangles the threat of school closures over everyone's heads.

We at Pima have certainly learned this, and we have committed ourselves to the process of being not just Pima parents, but involved and productive district parents.

Some would like us to believe that our

Granite Reef schools are half-empty shells where tumbleweeds blow through unused classrooms. Those of us who attend these schools certainly know better.

The district is fully aware that

there are no two schools that could simply be consolidated as one. In Pima's case, the option is to rip in half a community of friends, sports teams, and Scout troops, and somehow ignore the fact that at least 130 students will not fit into the two neighboring schools.

This number assumes that the traditional and math/science programs proposed for Hohokam and Navajo do nothing for enrollment and their numbers decrease.

Overcrowding these two schools will jeopardize the success of these programs, and make it that much harder for these two schools to achieve the "excelling" label the district hopes for.

During the last board meeting, it was estimated that closing a school would save \$850,000. Closing Pima would displace at least 130 students. As Pima is the only excelling school in the area, and other comparable schools are either full or too far away, it's a safe assumption the district will lose those 130 students.

That means the district will lose at least \$810,160 of state funding, leaving

taxpayers with a grand total savings of only \$39,840. What will we have gained – one less excelling school, two overcrowded schools, and no room for growth? It doesn't sound like a bargain to us.

The city projects accelerated population growth for our area and has pumped \$3.3 billion into its revitalization. SkySong is expected to bring thousands of new jobs, and we have the most affordable housing in Scottsdale for young families with children.

All we seem to need now are desirable public schools. How can we have that, and still save the district money? The answer is in a K-8 configuration for the Coronado Complex.

Numerous districts throughout the country have returned to a K-8 configuration based on cost savings and parents who prefer the community-friendly schools.

Studies show that K-8 schools have fewer discipline problems and higher attendance rates than middle school. K-8 students show higher levels of achievement in math and reading, better scores on standardized tests, higher GPAs in ninth grade and more

opportunities to play team sports.

Within two years, a middle school campus could be eliminated with zero student displacement.

It is now time for the school board to be daring. Making one school K-8 in the Coronado Complex won't solve our problems. It will simply drain our middle school and do nothing to help stem the flow northward of our students after sixth grade.

There is a great deal of support for K-8. The district has two K-8's now and both have waiting lists, and this plan has the potential to bolster Coronado High's enrollment. For those families wanting a middle school experience, open enrollment gives them the choice of Tavan/Ingleside or Navajo/Mohave.

As board President Karen Beckvar stated at the community forums, "We're all in this together." Let's be sure that, together, we make not only the tough decisions, but the right tough decisions.

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