

2011

CAVE CREEK UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Override Campaign Q&A

Who is LearnYES.org?

LearnYES.org is a political action committee (PAC) formed in 2009 by parents and community members who were concerned with the repeated election losses in the Cave Creek Unified School District (CCUSD), and how this loss of voter-controlled funding has impacted our classrooms. LearnYES.org was established to communicate district budget facts and the importance of preserving elective funding in CCUSD.

Why do we need LearnYES.org?

Once an election is called by the CCUSD Governing Board, state law requires that school or district personnel refrain from discussing the election during school hours or on school property. Many school districts form PAC's like LearnYES.org to inform the community on the importance of preserving education funding for this reason.

How are our schools currently funded?

All K-12 public schools in Arizona are funded by the state at the same rate per enrolled student (the Arizona funding rate per student is the lowest in the country, over 40% lower than the US state average). In Arizona, an additional 15% of a district's budget may be approved by the voters in the district. These "overrides" are controlled by the voters and must be renewed every 7 years or they are lost.

“Override funds currently pay for over 50 CCUSD teachers (1 in 6 teachers) and support 6,000 students.”

CCUSD currently has 2 overrides in place. The first, a 5% K-3 override, is reducing and will be gone by 2012 because we failed to pass a renewal in 2008 and 2009. The second, a 10% Maintenance and Operations (M&O) override, has been in place since 2007 and must be renewed this year, or it too will reduce by 1/3 each year until it is gone in 2014. Override funds currently pay for over 50 CCUSD teachers to support the education of almost 6,000 students annually.

Why does LearnYes.org believe this election is needed?

Simply put, should current funding measures expire, the way our district operates will change dramatically.

Class sizes will increase and programs we value as a community will be cut (such as all-day Kindergarten, Art, Music, PE, world language programs).



The average CCUSD homeowner pays around \$3 per month for current overrides.

If approved, a combined 15% override would cost \$5.62 per month

(see reverse)

Why does the school district continue to need more money?

The state-provided portion of our budget has been reduced by 23% since 1990 by lagging inflation and budget reductions, thus resulting in the current budgetary problems we face. This cumulative deficit makes voter approval of overrides a necessity to bring funding back to acceptable levels and to keep our schools competitive. Over 85% of school districts our size or larger in Arizona operate with budget overrides in place.

In addition, the current budget crisis in Arizona has increased the stress on schools. In the last few years, teachers in CCUSD have seen reductions in salary, classroom sizes increased, and many resources, such as nurses, librarians and aides were eliminated and/or reduced. Because the state continues to cut education funding in order to balance the budget, schools must continue to make difficult decisions about which programs to cut.

The November override request isn't really about asking for "more" money. With the repeated state budget reductions and the failure of recent override renewals, it's more about replacing money we used to have in the budget. Even with a 15% override approval in 2011, our schools will still be funded at around \$350 LESS per student than they were in 2008.

“Even with passage of a 15% override in 2011, the school budget will still be \$2 million below 2008 levels. This equates to \$350 LESS per student.”

For these reasons, LearnYES.org supports approval of an override funding request. The only way to keep our schools competitive is through a local funding election.

Projected Monthly Cost for Homeowner – 2011 CCUSD 15% Override Campaign and Election

		Monthly Cost for Homeowner at Secondary Assessed Value of:			
	Secondary Tax Rate	\$250,000	\$500,000	\$750,000	\$1,000,000
2010 Current Overrides <i>(K-3 @ 2/3 + 10% M&O)</i>	0.1496	\$3.12	\$6.23	\$9.35	\$12.47
Projected 15% Combined Override	0.2696	\$5.62	\$11.23	\$16.85	\$22.46

Why can't the money being spent on the high school renovation be used to reduce class sizes and keep programs?

There are two types of funding requests that school districts in Arizona can make, Bonds and Overrides. Bond proceeds are reserved for facility needs (buildings) and override funds are reserved for operations (teachers). In the sole case of technology, school districts can request either a capital override or bond. Elective funding for Bonds, Overrides or Technology cannot be transferred from one fund to the other. They are mutually exclusive.

Why does LearnYES.org need financial contributions?

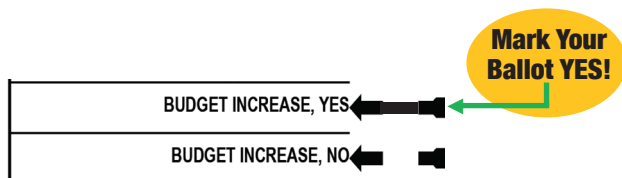
The last two CCUSD override elections failed by narrow margins, so we must increase our outreach to bridge this gap. It is a reality that well-funded campaigns are essential in reaching voters, and the risk of another election loss is too great to short-change our efforts. In addition to asking parents for a \$10 donation per student, LearnYES.org is also seeking contributions from education supporters in our community, including local business owners. To date, we are at 20% of our campaign fundraising goal. Visit LearnYES.org to contribute.

How does the CCUSD tax rate compare with nearby school districts?

The Governing Board's tax philosophy is to keep the tax rates as low as possible while maintaining the highest quality education for district students. CCUSD property owners enjoy one of the lowest tax rates in Maricopa County (for example, the CCUSD tax rate is 1/3 the rate that a homeowner pays in Paradise Valley School District), and our schools maintain the highest test scores in the area.

What will the ballot question look like?

Because a budget override is permission to spend above the level appropriated by the legislature, it will always be called a "budget increase" on the ballot, even though we have lost significant ground in per pupil funding due to inflation and current economic conditions.



How much will taxes increase if the override request is passed?

Since CCUSD has two expiring overrides still in place, a 2011 combined override request will primarily include taxes you already pay. On an average home valued at \$250,000, a request for a 15% override would cost an extra \$24 per year. For just \$2.50 in additional property tax per month, CCUSD will be able to maintain 50 teacher positions and remain competitive with surrounding school districts, which ultimately helps preserve property values.

If the override request is not passed this November, what might happen to our schools?

The override request will represent 15% of the district's current operating budget. Without this funding, we would be faced with the loss of over 70 teachers from our classrooms, elementary art, music and PE, world language programs, librarians and additional cuts. Class sizes would need to increase and programs that have been proven to advance student achievement would be eliminated. Schools and students aren't the only ones impacted when local school funding fails, property values are also impacted as the strength of local schools is a primary consideration for many who seek homes in new areas.

LearnYES.org supporters strongly believe that \$30 more per year is a worthwhile investment in order to keep our schools strong and our community healthy.

What can we do as parents and concerned community members?

1. Register to vote and sign up to receive your ballots through the mail so you don't miss the election:
<http://recorder.maricopa.gov>
2. Stay informed of the funding FACTS and needs in CCUSD.
3. Talk to at least 3 friends or neighbors in the district about why you support the override and the impact a loss would have on our classrooms and community. Ask them to join you in voting YES and asking others to do so as well.

4. Vote YES for the 2011 CCUSD Override



LearnYES.ORG