



Message: Who Pays for Cuts to Public Education

By taking on the unpopular plan to gut public education, we empower members and allies to transform their unease into action that protects and strengthens public schools. Seize this moment to make clear that gutting the Department of Education means gutting public education for the children and students in our communities. Share how it will affect day-to-day lives of people we know: larger class sizes, less support, and fewer opportunities for students - especially students with disabilities and students from lower income families. Updated Feb 13, 2025

Bring home the impact of gutting public education by making it personal and student-centered

No data, statistic, or acronym is more powerful, meaningful, or persuasive than helping people understand what gutting public education means in their children's lives and their own, in our communities and in our states. Focus on individuals (not institutions) and on people (not policies) when discussing what's at stake.

- As the proud product of public schools in [CITY], I know how much our neighborhood depends on...
- I attended [XXX Elementary], and every student there now should have the same opportunities I had...
- My child has a disability and qualifies for an Individualize Education Plan. I am terrified my kid won't be able to reach their full potential if we lose the support we worked so hard to receive.
- My [niece] is in high school. She deserves the same Pell Grants that helped me achieve my dreams to...
- 90% of students in American learn in a public school classroom, but I want you to think about just one student you know and the opportunities that they deserve but will lose if they gut public education.
- Growing up, my family didn't have a lot of money, but school was a place where I could dream. Students in lower-income families today deserve even more than dreams, they deserve to succeed.

Insights from message tests in mid-February

- Mention Trump and McMahon's efforts to dismantle public education but keep your focus on the dire effects of their radical policy changes on public schools and students, specifically.
- The most effective messages center on the taxpayer, students, and public schools as policy losers, while billionaires like Elon Musk benefit from tax cuts.
- Students with disabilities, students from lower-income families, and students applying for Pell grants remain key groups to highlight as important beneficiaries of Dept of Education programs.

Core Message

Most Americans believe that every student deserves opportunity, resources, and support to reach their full potential no matter where they live, the color of their skin, or how much their family earns.

- Public schools & the Department of Education exist because students, with and without disabilities, in every state & neighborhood have the right to an education that imparts academic lessons, life skills, and a lifelong love of learning.

Educators and parents know that America's students need more opportunities to succeed, and we need to strengthen our public schools where 90% of students - and 95% of students with disabilities - learn.

- All students benefit from programs run by the Department of Education, especially lower-income students and their families in rural, suburban, and urban communities, students and families who qualify for federal grants or loans to receive career training or attend 2- and 4-year colleges, and students with disabilities.

Donald Trump is letting Elon Musk and his billionaire friends raid the Department of Education to fund their tax cuts. But we will pay the bill.

- If they stop the work the agency does to support students, public school class sizes will get larger and rural schools will close. Students with ADHD, autism, or other disabilities may lose programming, leaving their parents without support. We can't afford to pay for billionaires' tax cuts.

Together with parents and allies, we have the power to defeat the effort to dismantle our public schools. We will stop a handful of anti-public education politicians who support an agenda that will have devastating consequences for our students, families, and educators.

- Our union stopped Trump's cuts before, and we stopped voucher proposals at the ballot box in November. We will be heard from the school board to the Senate to protect students and schools.

Linda McMahon's Nomination

Donald Trump wants to put Linda McMahon at the top of the Department of Education so that she can dismantle the agency and stop the work it does to support students and public schools. Students with disabilities, students from lower-income families, and students applying for Pell grants will pay the price.

What We're For

- We believe that every student deserves opportunity, resources, and support to reach their full potential no matter where they live, the color of their skin, or how much their family earns.
- Public schools & the Department of Education exist because students, with and without disabilities, in every state & neighborhood deserve an education that imparts academic lessons, life skills, and a lifelong love of learning.
- America's students need more opportunities to succeed, and we need to strengthen our public schools where 90% of students - and 95% of students with disabilities - learn.
- Educators are deeply committed to the success of every color, background, and ZIP code. Students and their needs are at the center of everything we do. Because all students deserve a high-quality education, safe and welcoming public schools, and the support they need to thrive.

Describe how *students & families will pay if we gut Public Education*

If Congress doesn't stop the effort to dismantle the Department of Education, American families will pay for it:

- Public education cuts lead to larger class sizes and less support for students and educators.
- Public schools that serve lower income students and their families in rural, suburban, and urban communities in every part of the country would lose needed funding.
- Students and families who receive support to attend college could lose Pell Grants or federal student loans, leading to more students dropping out, fewer choices, and less options for families.
- Students with disabilities and their families would lose the support they need at school and at home.
- Students with disabilities and lower-income students and their families would lose access to Upward Bound, TRIO and other programs that encourage them to participate in higher education.

Show how *members' daily lives will change if we gut the Dept of Education*

- Greater burdens and more daily stress with even less support and resources.
- Fewer trained colleagues and modified instruction materials to deal with student mental health and behavioral challenges, with less support for school-based mental health services.
- Cuts to afterschool and summer programs will undo the progress educators make with tutoring, reductions in chronic absenteeism, and providing skill-building programs.
- Our neighbors and communities will hurt as Trump's cuts mean public school employees lose their jobs.