

GRPS Board Meeting Talking Points

Choose one talking point that resonates with you and add your personal story. Pick a closing statement or use your own to wrap up your public comment.

Option 1: Budget Constraints

THE DISTRICT CLAIMS they face budget constraints and cannot afford competitive educator salaries.

THE TRUTH IS GRPS has a record \$40.6 million in their general fund balance with significant increases over the past 5 years. Tax dollars are sitting in accounts collecting dust instead of going into classrooms where they belong. You have the money; you're just choosing not to invest it in educators and students.

Add your story: Share how low pay has affected you personally, your family, or your ability to serve students...

Option 2: Commitment to Instruction

THE DISTRICT CLAIMS they prioritize student learning and classroom instruction.

THE TRUTH IS GRPS spends only 48 cents of every dollar on instruction while similar districts spend 58 cents. That puts GRPS at the bottom among large districts and means 91% of Michigan districts invest more in actual teaching than GRPS does. Do our students deserve 10% less than students in other districts?

Add your story: Describe what proper classroom resources or reasonable class sizes could mean for your students...

Option 3: Competitive Compensation

THE DISTRICT CLAIMS they are committed to attracting and retaining quality educators.

THE TRUTH IS Grand Rapids educators are the lowest paid in Kent County, **earning up to \$16,000 less annually than neighboring districts**. GRPS has the worst five-year educator retention rate among peer districts. Our community continues to lose talented educators to other districts that treat them as professionals and pay them fairly.

Add your story: Share examples of colleagues who left for better pay, or how being the lowest paid in the county has affected you...

Option 4: Educator Recruitment and Retention

THE DISTRICT CLAIMS they are committed to having qualified educators in every classroom.

THE TRUTH IS you ended last school year with 116 vacant positions - 87 empty teaching spots - while sitting on record fund balances. How does having millions in the bank help students when they don't have certified educators in their classrooms?

Add your story: Share the impact of vacant positions on your workload, student learning, or school climate...

Option 5: Efficient Operations

THE DISTRICT CLAIMS they run an operation focused on student outcomes.

THE TRUTH IS if GRPS had the same educator-to-administrator ratio as peer districts, you'd have 252 additional educators and 25 fewer administrators. Instead, you pay your superintendent nearly \$300,000 in salary alone - third highest among the state's largest districts - while educator positions go unfilled.

Add your story: *Describe what 252 additional educators could mean for class sizes, student support, or your workload...*

Option 6: Executive Leadership vs. Educator Investment

THE DISTRICT CLAIMS they make fair compensation decisions across all employee groups.

THE TRUTH IS your superintendent received a 9% increase and now earns almost \$300,000 in salary alone. Your deputy superintendent and CFO each got 16% raises last year while educators - who work directly with students - got only 1.5% last year. You are wasting taxpayer dollars on exorbitant executive compensation while disrespecting the educators who educate our children.

Add your story: *Share your frustration about struggling financially while watching administrators receive massive raises, or how this disrespect affects your ability to serve students...*

Option 7: Honest Communication with the Community

THE DISTRICT CLAIMS they are transparent and honest about district finances and priorities.

THE TRUTH IS the district is deceiving local parents and taxpayers with misleading press releases. Your bureaucrats are trying to distract our community from the reality on the ground: educators are severely underpaid, overstressed, and being disrespected by administrators while you waste taxpayer dollars on executive perks and pet projects that do not help kids learn.

Add your story: *Share your frustration with the district's messaging versus the reality you experience in schools, or how the lack of transparency affects community trust...*

Option 8: Cost of Living Reality

THE DISTRICT CLAIMS they have provided educators with regular salary increases to keep up with economic conditions.

THE TRUTH IS while educators got raises of 3.75%, 2.5%, and 1.5% over the past three years, inflation hit 6.5%, 3.4%, and 1.9% during those same years. **Housing costs in Grand Rapids have increased 34% over three years** according to Grand Valley State University research. Gas, groceries, utilities - everything costs more, but educator paychecks buy less. You are not giving raises - you're giving pay cuts disguised as increases. Meanwhile, you gave your superintendent a 9% raise that outpaced inflation while educators fall further behind every month.

Add your story: *Share how rising costs of housing, groceries, gas, or other necessities have affected your budget while your wages stayed flat...*

Choose a closing statement below:

- "Grand Rapids students deserve the best educators, and Grand Rapids educators deserve fair compensation. The money is there - stop hoarding it and start investing it where it belongs: in our classrooms and our educators."
- "Our children get one chance at their education. They shouldn't receive less investment than kids in neighboring districts just because GRPS administrators prefer to stockpile money rather than spend it on learning. It's time to demand better for the students in GRPS."

- "Strong schools create strong communities with strong property values. GRPS is failing on all counts - hoarding taxpayer dollars while driving away quality educators and families. This board must change course before irreparable damage is done to our community."
- "You pay taxes expecting them to be invested in education, not stored in bank accounts while educators leave and students suffer. This is fiscal mismanagement, not fiscal responsibility. It is time that we demand accountability."
- "The data doesn't lie, the money is available, and our students can't wait. End the excuses, stop the spin, and start putting Grand Rapids children first. The choice is yours."
- "Every day you delay, another child sits in an overcrowded classroom with an overwhelmed educator or a substitute who barely knows their name. Every day you hoard millions while paying educators poverty wages, another bright student loses the chance to be inspired by an experienced educator who could change their life forever. These children deserve the same opportunities as every other child. They deserve educators who can afford to stay, classrooms that are properly staffed, and a school board that values their future more than a bank balance. Our kids are counting on you. Don't let them down."
- "The data doesn't lie, and our students can't wait. Stop the excuses and start investing in the people who teach our children every day."