

April 28, 2026

An Open Letter to the Jenks Board of Education

To the Members of the Jenks Board of Education,

The decision to close, and repurpose the Jenks Planetarium is more than a matter of reallocating space or managing costs. It is a reflection of priorities, and more importantly, a statement about the direction of education.

A planetarium is not an auxiliary feature, it is an educational instrument. It is one of the few environments where students can directly engage with astronomy, physics, and the broader scientific framework that shapes our understanding of the universe. It is where curiosity is not only encouraged, but activated. For many students, it is the first place they encounter science in a way that feels immediate and real.

Removing that access is not a neutral act. It is a decision that narrows opportunity.

Oklahoma stands at a point where it can choose to lead in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) or continue to follow broader national trends of declining investment in STEM. Leadership requires intentionality. It requires preserving and strengthening the very spaces that make scientific engagement possible. This decision is movement in the opposite direction.

It is also worth acknowledging that resources are not absent; they are allocated. Significant funding continues to support athletics and other programs, which is not inherently problematic. But it demonstrates that when something is prioritized, solutions are found. The question, then, is not simply what is affordable but what is deemed worth sustaining.

The Jenks Planetarium has served not only students, but the broader community. It has hosted educational programs, public outreach, and moments of discovery that extend far beyond the classroom. Its impact is measurable not just in attendance, but in influence in the students it inspires and the paths it helps shape.

Its loss will be felt.

This is an opportunity to reconsider not only this decision, but the broader message it sends. You have the ability to set a precedent, to demonstrate that STEM education is not expendable, and to position Jenks as a district that invests in forward-looking education. That choice is still available to you.

On behalf of educators, students, and members of the greater Tulsa community, I urge you to revisit this decision and engage with those who are directly impacted by it. There is still time to lead.



Jonathan Fussell

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