



# **FUNDING PREK-12 EDUCATION**

COMMUNITY TOWN HALL  
FINAL REPORTS

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# **“Funding preK-12 Education”**

**Community Town Hall Report**

**Prescott, AZ – October 26, 2017**



# FUNDING PREK-12 EDUCATION

## AASBO Community Town Hall Report

October 26, 2017

Participants of the Arizona Association of School Business Officials (AASBO) Community Town Hall make the following findings and recommendations. This report reflects the consensus achieved through group discussions by Community Town Hall participants.

### **ARIZONA'S PREK-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM GOALS**

Our preK-12 education system should create critical thinkers and good civic citizens who have the life skills they need to be productive member of their communities. Even though all students may not choose to pursue higher or who simply leave the profession to make more money education, students should be ready for higher education, whether it is college, trade school or a different path. Overall, we should create an educated and flexible workforce that is ready for an ever-changing global economy.

Our education system should consider school boards that are appointed instead of elected. We should find ways to support more family involvement in the classroom and focus on creating a positive environment for all children in the classroom. We should also look at creative methods to address the teacher gap and how to make our curriculum more flexible to meet the needs of different students.

### **IMPACT OF PUBLIC FUNDS**

The amount of funding provided is simply inadequate to meet our needs. The most obvious result of low funding is the inability to attract and retain quality teachers and other staff, who can easily cross the border to other states and receive greater pay or who simply leave the profession. Our facilities are also deteriorating and we are unable to purchase the technology needed to prepare our student for the future workforce.

The system of distributing funds is also problematic. While the pie has shrunk as far as the amount of funds provided, the bureaucracy and requirements tied to the funds have increased. The school funding system in Arizona is overly complicated and overly restrictive. Funds are provided with requirements and limitations on how they can be spent which does not allow schools to use funds where they are most needed. This also creates a lot of confusion with the public.

The recent method of funding based on current year enrollment creates unpredictable funding and makes it almost impossible to properly budget. We need to pull the plug and blow this system up. We should return to the system of funding based on the prior year.

The funding system needs to be simplified to allow school districts and administrators the flexibility to use the funds where they are most needed. We should follow best practices from other states—for example instead of approximately a hundred restrictive funds we should have 5 or 6 fundamental funds.

This new system needs to be implemented in a way that provides equal access to quality education throughout the state. Some communities simply do not have the wealth or political will to pass bonds or overrides to obtain much needed funding. Others do. This creates a system across the state that does not provide an equal opportunity for education for Arizona students.

### **IMPROVING FUNDING FOR ARIZONA'S PREK-12 SCHOOLS**

Increasing funding for our education systems and improving the method of distribution requires education, communication and political action. We need to find ways to communicate to all Arizona voters—but especially those who have retired and moved here from other states –We need to communicate to them why properly and adequately funding our education system should matter to everyone. We need to frame our message in terms of an investment—an investment that pays dividends in fewer people in prison (and less tax dollars spent), a more skilled workforce that will be meeting their needs for medical and other services and a more robust economy.



We should explore additional or expanded revenue sources. These should include a statewide funding source dedicated to education. It could be a property tax or an excise taxes on energy

We should study the impact and effect of tax credits and consider eliminating them which would allow for more funding for education.

We also need to develop relationships with legislators and their staff so that we can help them to better understand the results of the decisions they are making.

## **INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS**

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions at the AASBO Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

### ***I WILL...***

- Attend the January 25th day at the legislature.
- Bring back to my district the ideas suggested in our group to educate the community regarding issues in school funding in Arizona.
- Invite legislative leaders and elected officials to visit schools, attend the Legislative Day at the Capitol, and remind the community to register to vote.
- Continue to stay involved in the discussion of educational funding as well as actively participate in the reformulating and accounting for the funds that are currently provided.
- Continue to support efforts to improve and restore funding for schools.
- Continue to educate myself on issues concerning public schools.
- Make more concerted effort to speak in layman's terms about the funding issues we face. My hope is that it will educate and inform more folks to make better decisions.
- Create a process in our district and community to encourage and educate on the importance of voting.
- Participate in advocacy to educate students, parents, staff and legislators about our current funding issues facing schools.
- Take the information that has been presented back to my people at my school and community, and attend the Legislative Day.
- Work to educate parents, educators and legislators on the funding formula. At my job, I will continue to fund programs within the constraints of the funding formula.
- Have my regional finance directors contact our local Arizona elected officials to come to our meetings.
- Continue educating myself about how school funding works and participate in more groups that are trying to make a change in education through the change of laws.
- Focus on educating the public on educational funding.
- Educate myself and my staff about the challenges of education funding in Arizona.
- Attend the Legislative Day at the Capitol on January 25, 2018. Share the discussion we had here with coworkers, family members, and committee members and encourage them to find their voice.
- Attend the January 25<sup>th</sup> event. Create a budget of what would be an ideal budget for my district to show budget shortages.
- Educate our working community and keep them in the know. Do what I can with what I have!
- Plan to attend the Town Hall event scheduled on January 25, 2018.
- Attend the January 25th day at the capitol.
- Share with PTA/PTO families, attend Superintendent community conversations, and join the budget community at the District.

- Focus on educating everybody around me, including family and coworkers, about the importance to take action instead of just discussions about the importance of the school system to receive sufficient funds to provide our students with a quality education in our community.
- Speak with anyone who will listen about district funding issues and needs in our state. Try to attend some portion of the “Funding preK-12 Education” Town Hall.
- Work with staff to educate them about school funding and the importance of them becoming involved and how we can be involved.
- Look into the nonprofit status. Has there been significant increases in this designation to avoid paying taxes? Learn more about tax cuts and the impact and make graphs of this information.
- Try and attend the “Funding preK-12 Education” Town Hall, work on educating the community on funding education in Arizona.
- Attend the luncheon in January and be more active in educating others on public education challenges.
- Attend Arizona Town Hall events, follow their directions to improve Arizona education funding.
- Communicate with my legislators and work with other districts to communicate our story regarding struggles and achievements to our community (voters) and the legislature.
- Be more vocal and more involved in educating others about funding issues in education.
- Educate the community and employees and contact representatives.

# “Funding preK-12 Education”

Community Town Hall Report

Phoenix, AZ – September 22, 2017



# FUNDING PREK-12 EDUCATION

## Arizona Hispanic Chamber Community Town Hall Report September 22, 2017

### **ARIZONA'S PREK-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM GOALS**

There are many goals we want to achieve with Arizona's preK-12 system.

First and foremost, it is important to create students who are ready to learn, and who become critical thinkers, lifelong learners and problem solvers—students who are empowered to overcome challenges with creativity, independence and determination.

It is also important to prepare our students for the workforce, whether it's a career right after high school or preparation for post-secondary education, such as a trade school, college or other forms of higher education. Preparation for higher education is critical because higher education is the key to the high paying versatile careers of the future. We should ensure that all students have the opportunity to maximize their potential whether it is through higher education or other means. Our students need to have the skills to be able to sustain themselves and their families.

We also want to prepare our student to be active citizens of the world, but we should not neglect the importance of preparing them to be active and productive members of their local community. We want our children to be empowered to be leaders who give back to their community.

We want these opportunities for *all* students regardless of zip code, race or other background.

### **IMPACT OF PUBLIC FUNDS**

To achieve the goals we want, we need good teachers. To attract and retain good teachers we need more funding for pay and benefits. To obtain the funding we need, the state legislature needs to provide significantly more funding. The funding should also be equalized across communities so that every student, regardless of zip code, has access to equal funding. The voucher system can create inequities, especially for rural communities.

Arizona has not been at the forefront of funding public education. On the contrary, we're at the bottom and the equity of how the funding is distributed should be investigated. For example, the tax credit system does not provide equitable opportunities for students to participate in important extracurricular activities.

In some areas, communities raise additional funds with local bonding elections, but even these efforts have not remedied the severe crisis Arizona is experiencing with teacher shortages and other needs—such as security, technology and facilities.

In addition to action by the legislature, we need participation and partnership with businesses and community partners. As a community we should be prioritizing education. We need to lead by example and demonstrate through our actions as a community that education is a priority. We need to communicate to all leaders and stakeholders that investing now in education is an investment in the future that has major returns to our community, including a reduced prison population. The "prison pipeline" needs to be transformed into a "higher education" pipeline. We need to create the opportunity for our children to maximize their potential with our education system. To accomplish our goals, we need to raise additional revenue. Simply put, we need to grow the pie to create the best future for our state.

### **IMPROVING FUNDING FOR ARIZONA'S PREK-12 SCHOOLS**

#### **What Legislators can do:**

- Think about the future. The decisions you make today will have a significant impact on the Arizona of the tomorrow.
- Since 2007, Arizona's elected leaders consistently and significantly cut funding for public education. Restore these funds.
-



- Stop cutting corporate taxes. It's not working. Find other innovative ways to partner with business to fund education.
- Show us how schools are funded. The system is complicated, unclear and it appears inequitable. Provide us with the information that demonstrates where our public funds are going, especially funding that goes to charter and private schools. Schools and school districts also have a role in educating parents about these issues.
- Invest in innovative approaches to improve schools. Incentivize the involvement of the business community in schools with private-public partnerships.
- Codify long-term school funding measures so that funding is consistent, predictable and equitable.

## **SETTING PRIORITIES AND TAKING ACTION**

- We need to act together to leverage public, private and government resources.
- We need to collaborate and work together as one, taking action instead of just rattling our sabers. Creating accountability for actions is important.
- All of us should celebrate teachers and support increasing their pay--pay that matches their importance and that provides them with similar pay and benefits as other similar professionals.
- It is important to vote.

# **“Funding preK-12 Education”**

**Community Town Hall Report**

**Phoenix, AZ – October 28, 2017**



# FUNDING PREK-12 EDUCATION

## Asian Pacific Community Town Hall Report

October 28, 2017

Participants of the Asian Pacific Community Town Hall make the following findings and recommendations. This report reflects the consensus achieved through group discussions by Community Town Hall participants.

### **ARIZONA'S PREK-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM GOALS**

In considering what we are trying to accomplish with respect to Arizona's preK-12 education, we need to recognize that this issue affects everyone in Arizona because we all live in a community that is built upon educational investment. Paying for schools is not a matter of gifting an education to other people's children—it's a matter of investing in ourselves because a well-educated population is critical to quality of life for all of us.

### **IMPACT OF PUBLIC FUNDS**

Embracing our first statement requires us to consider whether all students, and in particular those at the edges who have the most challenges, have the opportunity and the support to unleash their potential. This goal does not imply that we want to create dependencies by throwing money at the problem—economic investment must be tied to results, meaning that a focus on the results we want to achieve is as important as a focus on the problems we are trying to solve. By way of example of setting priorities, China has focused its educational investment on technical education. They have prioritized this over funding of extracurricular such as sports and music, which are seen as the parents' responsibility to provide to their children. China has decided that it wants to produce engineers and it is not relying on local educators to do so, instead it takes advantages of recorded lessons from the best educators in the world.

Our system should invest appropriately based on the needs of students, being mindful that different students will have different needs and that it is counterproductive to ignore the children who are least likely to succeed. In helping those who are challenged succeed, it is useful to draw a distinction between what people need versus what we want to give them. We perceive many school board members as not being truly invested in education and instead planning to use their positions as a stepping stone for political ambitions. One solution is to perhaps require that people who are running for elected school board positions be barred from running for a different office for a certain period of time to ensure that they are solely focused on their current role and what is best for the schools, not their careers. We are concerned that Arizona's current voucher program—which pulls money from public schools—leaves behind those students whose parents cannot afford to make up the difference and this will have counterproductive consequences, such as de facto segregation of students based on economic status.

### **IMPROVING FUNDING FOR ARIZONA'S PREK-12 SCHOOLS**

In order to improve the amount or methods of funding for Arizona's preK-12 schools we recognize that the government should not have complete responsibility for funding education; stakeholders should also take responsibility for funding education so that they are not at the mercy of government budget limitations. Government can encourage endowments through tax incentives and also enhance education through corporate participation. Corporate participation seems to be trending towards global general investment but we are optimistic that corporations are also recognizing that they are stakeholders at the local level too by virtue of their workforce being directly impacted by local education. A tremendous amount of money can be introduced into education by piggybacking on technological innovations such as the Kahn Academy videos, which have so engaged students online that Google and the Bill Gates Foundation has invested billions in making those videos accessible online. Although technology is a valuable tool, it is not the only one, as there remains a tremendous amount of value in human interaction. Not everyone can take advantage of technological advances and in introducing these tools it should not be to the detriment of those who lack access, as that will only result in a greater divide based on socioeconomic status.

## **SETTING PRIORITIES AND TAKING ACTION**

Instead of luring corporations to Arizona through front end whole sale tax cuts (which considering Arizona's budget might take money away from schools), what if we gave corporations economic incentives to invest in the community once they're here through tax credits? Also, the voucher system needs to be revisited and at minimum revised to better ensure a level playing field, if not completely repealed. Finally, we need to change the narrative from education being a personal issue for parents to a societal issue. Arizona's children will eventually become Arizona's adults and the choice is ours as to whether these adults will be a benefit or a detriment to the State.

## **INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS**

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions at the Asian Pacific Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

### ***I WILL...***

- Become a member of Arizona Town Hall and participate as an observer in the coming statewide town hall. Within Arizona Private Lender Association (APLA) I will work on reframing the narrative as we've discussed.
- Learn more about educational funding and resources. I will volunteer in the educational field based on whether my abilities
- Chastise the people I know who are running for school boards to focus on their schools and not on themselves while they hold that position.



# **“Funding preK-12 Education”**

**Community Town Hall Report**

**Douglas, AZ – September 23, 2017**



# FUNDING PREK-12 EDUCATION

## Douglas Community Town Hall Report

September 23, 2017

On September 23, 2017, diverse residents of Douglas gathered to consider funding prek-12 education. The report below represents the consensus of participants.

### **ARIZONA'S PREK-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM GOALS**

Opportunities should be available for all children to receive an education that prepares them for higher education and the workforce. Funding in Arizona should be analyzed and re-prioritized to meet children's individualized needs. In addition, we need to support families by providing them with education and opportunities that raise awareness about educating the whole child and the need to compete globally. Community outreach and parent involvement is critical to the development and future success of our education system.

Critical thinking skills and life skills are critical for future careers. In Arizona, a significant emphasis is placed on standardized testing. When Arizona's test isn't consistent with other states, we need to ask: is this truly a value to the student or the education system as a whole? Testing has a place in the education system to ensure the development of student success but it should focus on the growth of the student.

The landscape of employment opportunities is constantly changing. The education system needs to be proactive in delivering services that take account of these changes and that meet industry needs. Industries and job sectors need to be considered when developing educational curriculum to ensure individualized success. Funding for education systems in Arizona should consider Career Technical Education (CTE) programs, workforce internships and higher education.

Our education system should ensure that all children understand their options and opportunities for career readiness and higher education.

### **IMPACT OF PUBLIC FUNDS**

The education funding formula should be simplified so that it can be better understood by the public. Funding formulas also should be updated to reflect current needs—not the needs of the 1980s which is when the current system was implemented.

Investments in the prek-12 education system should be higher than what is currently provided by the state. We should look at phasing out the current funding model and focus on a system that better considers the needs of individual schools. Reliance on local communities and organizations should not be the only way to supplement state-funded education. Funding should be provided by the state but controlled locally by school staff and administration. Funding should not be tied to test scores but should be tied to teacher performance, teacher qualifications and the growth of the students.

Inconsistencies in the funding of schools are draining local budgets with mandated requirements tied to state-funded dollars. Restrictions on the use of funding hurt the success of all students. Long term efforts and success are being hampered by yearly budget issues and day-to-day challenges. Schools should be funded equitably and equally regardless of whether they are located in the State's rural or urban geographic areas.

### **IMPROVING FUNDING FOR ARIZONA'S PREK-12 SCHOOLS**

There is a shortfall in government revenue. The funding formula should be updated to match current trends and to compete in the 21st century. There needs to be a combination of politics, policies and networking to inform and raise awareness regarding the need to better fund preK-12 education.

A dedicated tax source is one way to supplement funding for the preK-12 education system. State and local elected officials must be in support of funding education and we must elect candidates who support funding and who do so in the current year and do not delay payment of needed funds.

Economic development must also be examined and reevaluated in local communities to ensure industries are investing in our preK-12 education system.

Perhaps out of the box collaborative efforts could help—philanthropic fundraising, state and national grant opportunities and other efforts could help supplement funding in local communities.

Equitable preK-12 education funding should be available for all children, including rural areas and small school districts. Funding in our state should be prioritized for preK-12 education versus state corrections and public assistance because prioritizing the funding of a robust preK-12 education system will cost less in the long run.

## **SETTING PRIORITIES AND TAKING ACTION**

The state of Arizona should prioritize education for the betterment of all residents. A priority that needs to be addressed is securing a dedicated funding source—one that cannot be swept and used for other purposes, that is protected, and that is not tied to testing. This could be accomplished through legislative action. We should also allow more local control for critical decisions on how to spend funding provided by the state.

We should take actions individually and as a community to honor educators—to lift them up and show them that we value and respect them. These types of actions will allow us to better recruit and retain good teachers.

We all need to take action to raise the consciousness of all Arizonans about the need to adequately and equitably fund preK-12 education

## **INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS**

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions at the Community Town Hall. Some of the ideas shared are set forth below:

### ***I WILL...***

- Encourage people to vote for officials who are committed to improving education funding.
- Discuss other funding sources for schools – contact local legislators and educate myself.
- Make sure I attend more events like this and also share everything that was discussed today with as many people as possible.
- Be more involved in community with our elected officials – local and state and promote awareness of the importance of being involved in educational decisions and influences.
- Be more conscious of people that are elected from Cochise county to the state legislature.
- Work to educate elected officials of the results of this Town Hall.
- Regularly contact my state representative and state senators during the legislative session.
- Continue to act in the community to ensure more people are aware of the issues affecting education.
- Reach out to our legislators more.
- Educate people to support education and school funding and to vote for education.
- Become more publically involved in developing policies and network more to actualize this work.
- Promote candidates for office who support education.
- Vote and educate the public.
- Elect individuals who see education as a priority.
- Do better research in casting my ballot for my local and state elected officials.
- Share the message with those who I know about funding issues in Arizona for preK-12 education.

- Apply myself to finding ways: to advocate more as an informed voter; to communicate more; and, to network more with organizations and communities to share awareness of the educational climate and programs that would help our local communities.
- Help to reduce the 16-21-year-old population who is not attending school. In spite of the scarce funding for education, I will do my best to provide them with the skills to go onto higher education or enter the work force.
- Continue to be informed about the education funding issues, situations and processes.
- Be proactive legislatively, making sure that my local state and federal representatives understand the impacts that education funding cause.
- Brainstorm ideas on valuing teachers in Douglas.
- Try to educate people on school funding and the importance of voting.
- Find ways to help inspire my students to seek their passion in life so that they will make the most of their education and seek to be lifelong learners.
- Research candidates specifically to see their views on education funding to help build a culture that celebrates educators.
- Engage in discussions with members of the community about this meeting.
- Do my best to support education funding and see that our lawmakers really care for education and see that they do their work.
- Work with others to promote educators.
- Help to recruit and retain good educators for our community.
- Promote a dinner to show we value teachers.
- Try to educate people on school funding and the importance of voting. I would like to propose an update on how the legislature works, the funding formula and our constitution.



# DOUGLAS COMMUNITY TOWN HALL SPONSORS



# ARIZONA

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION  
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*Dr. Alfred and  
Mrs. Annabelle Wu*



# **“Funding preK-12 Education”**

**Community Town Hall Report**

**Mesa, AZ – September 27, 2017**



# **FUNDING PREK-12 EDUCATION**

## **East Valley - Mesa Community Town Hall Report**

September 27, 2017

Participants of the September 2017 East Valley - Mesa Community Town Hall make the following findings and recommendations. This report reflects the consensus achieved through group discussions by Community Town Hall participants.

### **ARIZONA'S PREK-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM GOALS**

We want a wholistic, interconnected system; a continuum that begins with family preparation and engagement, leads to preK ready children, and ensuring that preK-12 education is focused on ensuring each child is career or college ready. We must maximize the success of every student and reduce the quality disparity between educational institutions. The success or failure of every student matters.

We know that students of today are our community of tomorrow. Every child deserves access to top quality educational opportunity. Our community deserves career or college ready students who will enrich our communities and fuel our workforce. We need to ensure our children are ready to walk through any door and keep Arizona competitive.

We understand that we must focus on preparation at each level, so each child is prepared to succeed in each level from prek-12 and each child is ready for the next level until they are career or college ready. We must prepare every child to have high quality choices in life.

We know funding is important, and the current system is insufficient. We cannot continue to ask our educators to do more with less. We need to consider fundamental, wholesale, and even revolutionary changes to our funding model and our entire educational system. Leadership is key to accomplishing these goals.

### **IMPACT OF PUBLIC FUNDS**

"It's the funding, stupid." You get what you pay for. Education funding is not an expense, it is an investment in our future. We must increase funding at all levels and ensure that private, charter, and public schools are not cannibalizing each other for limited funds.

We must prioritize teacher compensation and ensure it is competitive. Low teacher compensation increases teacher turnover, reduces retention, and directly affects the quality of teachers in your child's classroom. We must prioritize preK funding.

More money is not the only answer. Parts of our current funding system unreasonably restricts funding priorities for school districts. More freedom for schools to allocate funds for local priorities is important. Additionally, we must reduce waste and duplication of efforts. Our system should encourage district cooperation, not competition. We need to promote equity in funding between different education delivery systems and among rural, urban, and tribal districts.

No one system of education delivery is perfect and different systems may promote better results for different students and different needs. However, education funding must be fairly allocated so that each Arizona child has quality education choices and opportunities. Arizona must focus on incenting outcomes and improvement at every level and in every school. Public funds require public accountability.

Funding for charters and private schools should be subject to the same transparency requirements as public schools if they accept public funds.

### **IMPROVING FUNDING FOR ARIZONA'S PREK-12 SCHOOLS**

We need an educated citizenry who values and votes for leaders who support robust, quality, outcome-driven education for all Arizona students. Voters must educate themselves by researching candidates and considering candidate and legislative scorecards focused on education funding.

We need strong, education-supporting leadership at all levels of Arizona government. Arizona leaders must enact policies that support their Arizona constitutional mandate to establish and maintain a uniform public school system. Advocates will be more effective for education by demonstrating the return on the public funding investment and not focus entirely on education as a public good.

We need to broaden the tax base to adequately support Arizona education funding. Excise and sales taxes may present opportunities for increased education funding. Excise taxes, property taxes, toll roads, grant funding, and other funding sources should be explored. Increasing existing funding sources should also be explored. We should encourage schools to engage in entrepreneurial activities and in-house revenue generation. All forms of revenue should be considered.

Education funding should be equitable for all education delivery systems. We need to reduce all costs that do not lead to an outcome-driven education for every Arizona student. Every effort needs to be made to eliminate red tape, duplicative expenses, ineffective or over-testing, and unfunded mandates. Districts should engage in effective cooperation and competition to increase educational outcomes and local innovation.

## **INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS**

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions at the East Valley - Mesa Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

### ***I WILL...***

- Contact the Mesa School Board to advocate to change funding to the K-3 years of school. Front load it so that students can move on from there.
- Actively and intentionally volunteer and fundraise for candidates who support increasing the Arizona General Fund, regardless of party.
- Work to help others in my neighborhood get more information about candidates who are serious about restoring public education funding.
- Investigate legislative actions that are proposed to inform my choices as a voter and share my knowledge with friends and family to inform their decisions as well.
- Work to keep myself and others I know educated on funding needs for education. I will be an informed voter on all initiatives related to education funding.
- Vote for additional funding for PreK-12 education, sales tax, increasing graduated income tax, or property tax.
- I will provide passionate focus on helping 17-year-old Jacob progress in his educational achievement.
- Support education through the Chamber Education Committee and our work with the City of Mesa.
- Contact my state legislator to speak on the importance in fully funding PreK-12.
- Become more educated about educational voting records of Arizona legislators. Share information from report and today's conversation with my communities.
- Work with business leadership organizations to elect more education friendly legislators.
- Work with the many educational partners to more clearly articulate funding needs in P-20 systems. Talk to legislator about the need for consistent accountability for charter schools.
- Work to educate and advocate for pre-education legislators with the business community. Work to have statewide tax base to fund special education. Raise "hell" at the legislature for these things and advocate for extension and expansion of Proposition 301.
- Support my local override. Vote for elected officials who support education.
- Continue to be the face of grassroots. Working on campaigns for the state legislature and especially the governor. #dg4AZ SOS Arizona!



- Support early childhood education by serving on Mesa Early Learning Network, the Chamber's Education Committee, and help our mayor and vice mayor implement a successful K-readiness program free or low cost for families.
- Actively support and promote candidates who support education
- Continue to work with families in providing early intervention to children. I will strive to direct families to resources that they need to help their children thrive.
- Participate and be more engaging to teachers, creating a strong bounding that about to empower to vote and fight for teacher rights.
- Serve on the Mesa Chamber of Commerce Education Committee to advocate for additional PreK-12 education funding. And serve on Mesa's Early Learning Network to promote options and tactics for a better education system & citizenry.
- Support and vote for pro-education candidates; be a resource for factual information and outcomes data for public education; promote the value of public education.
- Vote for David Schapira for State Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- Post on social media about the need for more public education funding in Arizona.
- Help educate friends, neighbors, and public to help them understand the need to improve Arizona state education.
- Educate my local community on the importance of understanding the current education issues.
- Take advantage of social media as an opportunity to educate the community about the importance of supporting and funding education initiatives.
- Design an education model in partnership with EVIT, Mesa, and Chandler that works for all students and begins next school year.

# **EAST VALLEY - MESA COMMUNITY TOWN HALL SPONSORS**



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# “Funding preK-12 Education”

Community Town Hall Report

Flagstaff, AZ – October 1, 2017



# FUNDING PREK-12 EDUCATION

## Flagstaff Community Town Hall Report

October 1, 2017

Participants of the October 2017 Flagstaff Community Town Hall make the following findings and recommendations. This report reflects the consensus achieved through group discussions by Community Town Hall participants.

### **ARIZONA'S PREK-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM GOALS**

Arizona's preK-12 Education system is designed to achieve many goals. It should be a nimble system which helps to build a vibrant community. We want to maximize the potential of students in our preK-12 system, as well as prepare them from ages zero to five, by creating quality education that is flexible and meets their unique needs, while ensuring that it serves the needs of ALL students. Our students should leave the preK-12 system with a sense of achievement, ready to respond with passion to an unpredictable life that will be full of changing technology and careers. It should be designed in a participatory way that engages students themselves and ensures they come to school ready to learn and develop skills of lifelong learning.

In particular, our schools should:

- Create critical thinkers who are self-sufficient, productive members of society.
- Prepare students for post-secondary education—whether it is college or trade schools, or other post-secondary pathways for success.
- Address the whole child and prepare students to be a whole person, providing important life skills—including having a cooperative mindset, being able to work in an environment of diversity, a strong work ethic and communication skills.
- Identify their strengths as an individual and engage students in the process.
- Create good citizens, who will be an educated electorate.
- Respond to the needs of industry and prepare students to be innovative contributors in the world of work.
- Create critical thinkers and people with open minds.
- Teach strong math skills.
- Help students find their passion, giving them options, such as Career & Technical Education (CTE) and other alternatives, to pursue their individual passions.

Our preK-12 system should offer incentives to teaching, including higher salaries, to keep and attract the best possible professionals in our schools. It should contribute to a goal of reaching a 60% post-secondary education attainment rate.

### **IMPACT OF PUBLIC FUNDS**

In order to achieve the goals for preK-12 Schools outlined above, Arizona must identify and secure the resources required to be successful. Overall, the preK-12 funding formula is too complex and creates confusion which produces unnecessary challenges for schools. It does not address all rural and tribal schools, and leads to inequities across the state. It also is not meeting all of the State's needs for early childhood education, and a sustainable source of funding should be provided for that part of the system. Local schools should have more flexibility in how they spend funds—restrictions and unfunded mandates prevent them from meeting local needs. Funding should be based upon different criteria than just test scores, and should address issues such as how engaged students are and how much passion they leave the classroom with. It should address the unique needs of students, and when the formula provides funding for specific needs, those dollars should clearly address all of those needs, which doesn't always happen today.



We need funding that addresses the poor pay and high stress levels now affecting our teachers. It should include funding to pay adequately for supplies, appropriate class sizes, modern textbooks and other supports required to prepare students for the 21st century. When funding for teachers is inadequate, it discourages people from entering the profession and translates into stresses to students in their classrooms. We should also be providing adequate funding to repair and maintain facilities. We need to address the funding currently provided by Proposition 301, and ensure that funding solutions create a more equitable, sustainable and understandable basis of support for long-term needs that can be joyfully supported by the State's citizens. Ultimately, we would benefit most from a clear definition of how much it costs to accomplish the goals we described above, and then find a fair and sustainable system of funding that citizens can understand and support.

## **IMPROVING FUNDING FOR ARIZONA'S PREK-12 SCHOOLS**

Many opportunities are available to address the methods and level of funding for Arizona's preK-12 schools. First and foremost, the community needs to be actively engaged in understanding the funding system, how it benefits individuals and communities, and translating its support for the goals into voting for lawmakers who agree. The community needs to consistently make their voices heard at the legislature. We should actively engage stakeholders in the community to make the case for the value and importance of investing in the preK-12 system, especially including the business community which relies upon the system for its workforce and which can be influential with lawmakers. We should consider ideas such as a marketing campaign to educate people on the system and tools like a financial map that helps people understand the system. In our campaign, we need to help people understand the return on our investments, and not just frame the discussion around costs.

We should also evaluate the tax credit system to determine whether it is consistent with our other preK-12 funding goals. Vouchers should be evaluated against these goals as well. An underlying principle that should be considered in these examinations is the impact on equity.

We should launch a voter initiative to address the expiration of the Proposition 301 tax and address the underlying tax base available to preK-12 schools, including the mix of sales and property taxes appropriate to meet our goals. The tax base needs to be established in a way that does not produce inequities. We should consider all elements of our economy, such as our reliance on tourism, as sources of revenue.

Our efforts to address the funding needs of our system need to be creative. We should look at best practices in other states, and consider ideas that address puzzles, such as why we might be giving schools more money who are already doing well instead of schools which need help. Another example of creative approaches would involve businesses and people in the community directly in the classroom, through internships, apprenticeships and new sponsorships, which could be a new way of expanding resources. We need thinking out of the box: if what we have isn't working, we need to find creative ways to build a system that accomplishes our goals.

In order to advance the goals and recommendations above, Arizona and each of its communities, such as Flagstaff, should create priorities for action which lead us to the day when our education system becomes a bragging point, not a sore spot. Our top priorities should be to:

- Launch a community education campaign that informs citizens about preK-12 funding needs, how to address them, and how citizens can become involved. This campaign should not be framed simply as a request for "more money," but instead make the case for what resources actually do and provide for in our schools.
- Raise teacher pay to a level that makes it an attractive and respected profession, and which addresses stress, class sizes, and keeps young teachers in the classroom.
- Involve more volunteers in the classroom to reduce pressures on teachers, and explore the possibility of introducing more paraprofessionals as well.
- Launch a voter initiative to replace Proposition 301 with new stable funding sources that raise the investment to a level necessary to achieve our goals.

- Evaluate the current testing regime and determine whether measures other than test scores can be incorporated to demonstrate quality and achievement to the taxpayers.
- Review where current funding is allocated to determine if priorities can be shifted to more effectively address our goals and ensure that we are educating the whole child.
- Research other states where funding is more robust and capture ideas which are relevant to Arizona.
- Identify what our community, including businesses, need from our system and involve them in designing the funding system to meet their needs and build a quality of life that all residents expect.

## **INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS**

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions at the Flagstaff Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

### ***I WILL...***

- Work with my student council and my school administrators to help brainstorm solutions to our problems with funding there
- Work to learn more about increasing teacher salaries at the local level.
- Share the Arizona Education Progress Meter on social media.
- Speak louder about the funding issues.
- Continue to work for students in our community and make them more aware of LAUNCH.
- Research community educational models that are successful.
- Incorporate the answer to #1 in our ParentEd night.
- I will become more involved in our local community on education.
- Support my fellow students in their education and push them to find a passion that leads them to an improved and enjoyed life.
- Encourage and better the people around me to all our future generations a chance to make the world even better, through education and leadership.
- Work to get an override for FUSD on the ballot and passed.
- Attend school board meetings and continue to advocate for students.
- Educate the current and younger generation of people of the problems in the Arizona education systems face. As well as communicate the points that they are pieces in the change needed.
- Begin to educate my peers on the education system and how it works so our future generations are given an exciting and passionate learning environment.
- Ask others to consider increasing funding and support for our schools as an investment in the future of our students and the creation of thriving communities, state and democracy.
- Tirelessly hound my elected officials in support of education investment and its urgency.
- Tutor a student in math this week.
- Meet the legislators this year (in person).
- Host a parent education advocacy night.
- Participate with LAUNCH.
- Attend January 25, 2018 Legislative Day at the Capitol.
- Volunteer at CHS
- Attend FUSD PAC.
- Have a conversation about where our tax credit goes.

- Create an adult civics class for residents of Flagstaff to educate citizens so they can be involved in the most effective way.
- Vote with education in mind.
- Advocate for increased education funding specifically for teachers.
- Continue to be an early childhood advocate.
- Engage in school board meetings.
- Work to engage educators and community members in promoting education as an investment not a cost.
- Work for increased preK-12 access.
- Support and vote for candidates and initiatives that adopt a fair and sufficient funding formula.
- Advocate for increased teacher pay and support.
- Participate in LAUNCH Flagstaff.
- Inform others about what I've learned and how it affects everyone in the community.
- Advocate for education and increased funding.
- Continue to participate in LAUNCH and other community-level advocacy based efforts.
- Continue to advocate for the education pipeline.
- Attend the statewide Town Hall.
- Participate in LAUNCH.
- Work with LAUNCH to create increased public support of education.
- Organize a van pool for education day at the state legislature.
- Educate our parents/community about how amazing our school protocols are for students.
- Work to raise awareness among voters about the impact of public education.
- Study the funding formula for schools in Arizona.
- Contact my legislators.
- Work towards solutions.
- Continue to speak up for education, serve on boards and rally the troops.
- Work on getting out the vote through voter registration.
- Volunteer on campaigns of leaders I believe in.
- Celebrate what's right in education and ask people to enhance education.
- Continue to push for an assessment system that aligns with what students, teachers, business/industry sectors are asking for to be/measure success.
- Thank teachers daily for their service.
- Promote education to all of my community connections.
- Be a positive beam of light on education.
- Host Paper Tiger and American Teacher for teachers at my school.
- House party for pro-education candidates.
- Build LAUNCH's relationship with Flagstaff Education Association.

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# **“Funding preK-12 Education”**

**Community Town Hall Report**

**Scottsdale, AZ – August 24, 2017**





# **“FUNDING PREK-12 EDUCATION”**

Global Chamber Community Town Hall

August 24, 2017

Participants used the Arizona Town Hall process to create the following consensus report of their discussions and recommendations for action on how best to fund preK-12 education.

## **PRINCIPAL GOALS FOR ARIZONA’S PREK-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM**

The environment in which today’s children must function and compete is global in scope and subject to rapid change. In that environment, there will be many individual pathways to success, and traditional assumptions about education may no longer apply. Traditionally education has been depicted as a ladder, which is narrow and competitive. We should reimagine education as a tree, which provides support through a strong trunk with many branches and pathways from which students may choose according to their individual interests and abilities.

The focus of education should be career readiness, which does not necessarily mean college readiness. Instead of focusing on the “what”—the substantive facts that students need to know—schools should teach them “how”. We should be teaching students how to learn and analyze, and develop their problem-solving abilities, so that they can acquire the substantive knowledge that they need in a changing world. For example, instead of teaching students to solve math problems in the abstract we should, use basic math concepts to teach problem solving skills. Students should be helped to develop the soft skills they will need in business and in life.

There is currently a dangerous atmosphere in which fear, prejudice and disunity are working against student success in a global world. To counteract these factors students should be taught to see themselves as members of a diverse and global community, and to understand their situation from a broader perspective. Students also should be taught critical thinking, and encouraged to raise questions as well as learn answers. Schools and teachers should have more freedom to develop curriculum to meet the diverse and changing needs of students.

Successful education will do more than simply prepare students for their careers. Education is essential to prepare students to become voters, to prepare for military service, and to function successfully in life. Because students come from many different circumstances, and some do not arrive equipped to learn, schools need to be prepared to address a wide spectrum of needs and abilities.

## **IMPACT OF CURRENT AMOUNT AND METHODS OF FUNDING PRE-K-12 EDUCATION ON PRIORITY GOALS**

Adequate funding of PreK-12 schools is critically important to Arizona’s future. We should address funding for public education holistically. By some estimates current funding for Arizona’s K-12 schools provides \$1.5 billion per year less than is needed to adequately pay teachers and provide for Arizona students. Just to catch up to Nevada would require an additional \$1 billion per year. Inadequate funding leaves Arizona ill-prepared to compete for business, economic development, and talent in a rapidly changing and competitive world.

Arizona provides virtually no funding for preschool. Other than the First Things First program, which is not a comprehensive system of public preschools, Arizona does not provide funding for preschool education.

Arizona’s teachers are underpaid relative to teachers in other states. Although taxpayer groups argue that this is justified by the fact that Arizona is a relatively poor state and teacher pay is commensurate with the low pay earned by other workers, that argument ignores the fact that labor is mobile, teachers are highly educated professionals and they can and do move to other states or other professions to increase their incomes. If we want to attract and retain good teachers we must pay them and treat them as professionals. Using salary increases as a “carrot and stick” is tantamount to treating teachers more like retail sales clerks than professionals. Public sentiment that disrespects teachers, from miniscule increase in teacher

compensation to calling teachers “crybabies” for wanting competitive salaries, contribute to Arizona’s inability to attract and retain qualified teachers.

The funding system for public education is not readily understood by the public. Discussion about education funding often devolves into mumbo jumbo that does not move the needle on the question of how public funds should be distributed. Although having a clear understanding of our common goals for public education should help to guide investment of public funds so that they are spent more effectively, it cannot make up for the overall significant shortage of funding for public schools. On the other hand, perhaps Arizona should reexamine current assumptions about what schools should provide, and how the money is being spent now. For example, some students may be ready to move on to postsecondary education a year or two sooner than other students, yet we require all students to remain in school for the same length of time regardless of need or ability. We should actively seek ways to assure that the funding we have is being spent appropriately.

The issue of school funding is highly political, which results in policies that are not ideal. For example, Arizona is using the success of its high performing charter schools in response to concerns about the underfunding and low performance of its public schools. However, charter schools do not serve the majority of students. Furthermore, district schools do not operate on an even playing field, in terms of funding or student populations. Although there are charter schools that serve special populations, many charter schools do not proportionately serve students with special needs or low income students. Many students have no meaningful access to charter schools. Charter schools are not necessarily required to follow the same policies and standards that apply to district schools. On the other hand, district schools receive more funding, and different sources of funding, than charter schools. In rural Arizona, there are relatively fewer opportunities for students to attend charter schools. Charter schools do not address the needs of families for preschool education.

The issue of funding for and operation of preK schools is entirely different from the issues affecting K-12 schools. PreK education is essential for both students and parents. Many children who have suffered adverse life experiences are coming to school unprepared to learn, and they may never catch up with other students. Although there is evidence that investment in preK education pays huge dividends, Arizona does not fund preK education. Arizona should provide free public preK education for all students.

We should value public education no matter what building it is provided in. We need to critically evaluate the real costs of education based on actual needs, and fund appropriately to meet those needs. These costs include more than just the physical facilities and teacher salaries. The public education system must cope with a large number of students who have special needs, different language abilities, refugees, and other special populations, and addressing special needs have real costs.

## **HOW TO IMPROVE THE AMOUNT OR METHODS OF FUNDING PREK-12 EDUCATION**

Apparently, Arizonans cannot depend upon the state legislature to adequately fund public education. Arizona should look more broadly for monetary and other forms of support for public schools. Business entities often claim to value and support public education; we should hold their feet to the fire and ask them to become more involved in providing financial and other support for schools. We should consider how state agencies other than the Department of Education might contribute to and support public education.

Voters do not have ready access to all information they want or need to make good decisions about education funding. Although the information may be publicly available if you know where to look, the sheer quantity of sources and the amount of data that must be analyzed can be overwhelming. Education funding advocates should figure out how to package that information so that it is more accessible and digestible for the average persons whose busy lives are not conducive to doing that work on an individual basis.

Arizona voters are not likely to increase education funding to the level required if they do not believe and understand why overall funding is inadequate. It may be helpful to keep the message about funding clear and simple: we need to pay for teachers, classrooms, computers, and other education costs, and all students should have equal access to quality education. Instead of taking on too many complex issues and sub-issues, which can distract from the need to provide funding for a general and uniform system of public education, we should focus on the basic functions that must be funded if the system is to operate effectively.

## **INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS**

At the conclusion of the Community Town Hall, participants committed to personal actions they would take as a result of the discussions. Each participant completed a card beginning with the statement “I will...” Participants retained the cards with their individual commitments. Those that were shared are listed below.

### ***I WILL:***

- Draft 3-4 sentences that might help communicate the problem, the needs and vision to the public.
- Consider champions in the business world that are committed to developing community
- Communicate it! And attend the November Town Hall.

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# “Funding preK-12 Education”

Community Town Hall Report

Phoenix, AZ – September 28, 2017





# FUNDING PREK-12 EDUCATION

## Phoenix – South Mountain Community College Community Town Hall Report September 28, 2017

Participants of the September 2017 Phoenix – South Mountain Community College Community Town Hall make the following findings and recommendations. This report reflects the consensus achieved through group discussions by Community Town Hall participants.

### **ARIZONA'S PREK-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM GOALS**

Education should focus on promoting traditional and alternative learning, civic responsibility, critical thinking, as well as, diversity of backgrounds and points of view. Education should prepare our students for diverse futures, including higher education, trade schools, arts, etc. Our education system should help integrate all students and avoid creating “outcasts.” Our children need to learn how interact among diverse people and ideologies to be good global citizens. This goal could be realized by including a required ethic civics class and other classes that emphasize the contributions of our diverse communities to our state. Education should be the great equalizer among our children, creating an equitable playing field across the state. Schools must go beyond traditional education and include such things as health services. Encouragement of diverse learning styles is necessary because children learn differently. Education systems outside of the US might offer models from which Arizona can learn. Including mentors and parents in the process is necessary to foster these goals. Increased funding for education is also a necessary component.

### **IMPROVING FUNDING FOR ARIZONA'S PREK-12 SCHOOLS**

#### **What Legislators can do:**

- Testing results should not be a prime factor in determining funding.
- Don't be scared to propose additional tax increases in order to fund K-12 education.
- Listen to the community, teachers and school administrators about what their true on the ground needs are, rather than pouring money into things the schools do not really need.
- Invest more funds in education as opposed to prisons.
- Focus on equitable distribution of funds across all school districts.
- Share information among legislators to understand the positives/negatives of their respective school districts in order to reach common ground on state funding policy for education.
- Revise the state public school funding formula to account for student income levels at the next legislative session.

### **SETTING PRIORITIES AND TAKING ACTION**

The number one priority needs to be reallocation of tax funds from prisons to schools – particularly given that Arizona is ranked 48th among all states for school funding. Equitable distribution of state education funds across the state is needed. Existing funding formulas do not address existing needs because they are based upon equal funding, not equitable funding. The formulas need to be reconsidered in order to provide more equitable funding across all schools within the state.

Beyond funding of traditional educational programs, extracurricular activities are a critical component of student development and learning. Funds must be allocated to extracurricular activities as well. Providing incentives to recruit and retain teachers is a critical component of educational funding. Such incentives will make it less burdensome for teachers to pursue a career in K-12 education. Parents also need to take the initiative to better understand how funds are distributed and then how they are used by their child's school district and school. Educating people within the community who do not have children about the importance of educational funding is important to foster support for educational funding goals.

## **INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS**

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions at the Phoenix – South Mountain Community College Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

### ***I WILL...***

- Advocate on behalf of the importance of evaluating and revising our funding priorities for education.
- I will fight for a transparent school funding in Arizona
- Get involved in future Town Halls.
- Commit to spend more personal time finding out what public schools need to survive and subsequently to flourish in Arizona.
- Tell elected officials to increase funding for education and donate more to schools in need.
- Continue to research the issues and use data to put all sides in perspective.
- Commit to spend more personal time finding out what public schools need to survive and subsequently to flourish in Arizona.
- Continue to be involved in my community as a “millennial” and student.
- Contact my legislators to share my opinion and concerns.
- Continue support the Arizona Town Hall through membership and engagement.
- I will attend the Legislative Day on January 25, 2018.
- I will attend vote in my primary.
- Shall the Town Hall recommendations with my office, family, and neighbors
- To let more students at ASU to get involved with the Arizona Town Hall.
- Educate parents about the importance of uniformity themselves and being an active voice for children’s education.

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# “Funding preK-12 Education”

Community Town Hall Report

Prescott, AZ – October 17, 2017





# FUNDING PREK-12 EDUCATION

## Quad City Community Town Hall Report

October 17, 2017

Participants of the October 2017 Quad City Community Town Hall make the following findings and recommendations. This report reflects the consensus achieved through group discussions by Community Town Hall participants.

### **ARIZONA'S PREK-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM GOALS**

Goals of Arizona's preK-12 Education System include:

#### **Outcome goals:**

- Career preparation, college preparation, and development of technical skills.
- Personal and character development, including encouraging students to recognize and develop their own personal passions.
- Development of life skills including general skills like critical thinking, collaboration, listening, problem solving, and also more specific, practical skills such as budgeting.
- Development of an informed electorate and inclusive community.

#### **Systemic goals:**

- Equity in students' access to opportunities.
- Proper school funding.
- An emphasis on preK education.
- Stronger business and family relationships.
- Improved student engagement.

### **IMPACT OF PUBLIC FUNDS**

The current funding system creates “have and have-nots,” “winners and losers”—aka, the public school hunger games. Lack of funding for preK creates inequity right off the bat. There is also a lack of equity between charter, private, and public schools.

Overall, there is simply not enough money. Single use funding streams and limitations on how money can be spent disconnect funds from the greatest needs. Temporary funding sources affect and limit long-term planning. School financing is too confusing. Capital cuts affect buses and facilities; there is insufficient funding for necessary tools such as textbooks and supplies, and teachers are not adequately prepared or compensated. There is also a lack of local control, which inhibits local planning.

In the end, this equates to a lack of enthusiasm in teachers and lack of opportunities for students, rural students in particular.

### **IMPROVING FUNDING FOR ARIZONA'S PREK-12 SCHOOLS**

We need to engage in a grassroots effort that has a plan, a vision, and a champion which will educate the public—including students, teachers, business interests, and other members of the community. We need to get all of those interests engaged and invested in change, and encourage students in particular to take on leadership roles. We need to change the narrative: rephrase proposals from, for example, “we need money” to we “need to invest in our children and our future.” Change “we will survive” to “we need to thrive.”

We need to mobilize the movement through the referendum and initiative processes and hold elected officials accountable for their actions and inactions related to education.



We need to train teachers and parents how to make their voices heard at the state and local levels and to advocate and lobby on behalf of students. Trust can be built through transparency, demonstrating how this money is an investment in education, and by working directly with the stakeholders who will be most impacted by any proposed new or increased taxes.

The legislature should be held accountable. They could create a statewide salary schedule for a livable wage for teachers to reduce competition between districts. The legislature also should eliminate funding restrictions and restore local control; make realistic assessments of the funding needed for various programs (such as special education); and, close tax loopholes.

If all else fails: we'll hold a bake sale.

## **SETTING PRIORITIES AND TAKING ACTION**

Participants determined the most important priorities and goals for ensuring the best education future for the Quad City community. The top priorities that will have the most beneficial impact on the future of Yavapai County are:

- **First:** Increase revenue by:
  - Informing, educating, and uniting everyone in the community (from students to legislators) through a grassroots effort. Specifically, educate community members as to the specific benefits of funding education and change the culture to emphasize the value of good teachers and the importance of public education as a whole.
  - Developing short and long-term plans for putting reliable and dedicated revenue streams in place to benefit public education.
  - Holding elected officials accountable.
- **Second:** Use additional revenue to recruit and retain qualified teachers who are not overburdened. Also create and maintain a long-term and reliable funding stream for facilities, textbooks and other resources without strings attached.

## **INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS**

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions at the Quad City Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

### ***I WILL...***

- Continue to teach the disinvestment history and empower staff and parents and community members to engage and hold accountable our legislators to create a rural Arizona voice.
- Continue to commit to educating our community (and beyond) to change the narrative about public education and to fight for legislation that supports our students and our economy.
- Continue to stress to our legislators the importance of raising teacher pay and funding capital projects. I will also work towards educating the public on the needs of the school system.
- Continue to be politically and civically engaged to support education.
- Recruit my staff to become better advocates and more involved in being vocal at the legislative level.
- Continue to advocate for and support candidates for public office that support public education.
- Contribute to the “positive narrative” for education by educating the pre-service teachers I work with, which will lead to giving teachers a voice and tools to be a part of the systematic change.
- Create awareness for this issue by bringing it to my parents and pushing my school to make this problem known to the students.
- Vote in every election touching on school funding or school boards, and make the effort to talk with candidates out all levels about their views and plans for improving Arizona public school funding.

- Work through Prescott Indivisible's education group to raise awareness of the needs of Arizona public education by speaking to various civic groups.
- Reach out to the American Business and Education Coalition (ABEC) to volunteer to help their efforts.
- Use my voice more to advocate for what is lacking and necessary in the classroom rather than parroting what is popular.
- Make a concerted effort to share the information discussed today with stakeholders in my district.
- Engage in more educated and passionate conversation with any contacts about the investment in education—support candidates working to change the education system in Arizona.
- Discuss education funding issues with parents, parent groups and community stakeholders so we can take our collective concerns to the legislators and beyond.
- Contact Arizona politicians, advocating the issues discussed today.
- Strive to increase public awareness on the issues surrounding my education as well as contacting state legislators to make sure these concerns are heard and something is done about them.
- Promote future town halls and the ideas discussed in this Town Hall.
- Be a part of and help facilitate the organization of a grassroots group to advocate for increasing revenue for public education.
- Communicate with the PUSD Education Foundation the goal of dedicated revenue streams and possibilities of attaining that and see if anyone would volunteer with American Business and Education Coalition (ABEC) or speak to other groups.
- Educate those around me, helping others see how the issue impacts them and participate in efforts to change the way education is funded.
- Continue doing what I am already doing: work on bond and overrides.
- Notify general public of legislation impacting education.
- Act as an education ambassador.
- Register as an independent.
- Organize within Prescott Indivisible to educate and refer activists about investing in public education.
- Educate my stakeholders and people in the organization to which I belong.
- Change from my language from we need more money to this is an investment in our education and future.
- Share information I have learned today with staff, family, and friends.
- Support a movement in Prescott.
- Become an Arizona Town Hall member and register as an Independent (I've been a democrat for 50 years).
- Start educating my school stakeholders on the movement of increasing school funding with changing the verbiage.
- Start championing the movement at my level.
- Work to get a diverse group of people on board with the cause by spreading the word and convincing people how they and their community specifically will benefit.
- Work to inform fellow students and adults alike.
- Continue to attend and engage and partner with Arizona Town Hall in full faith that working together, we will affect change.
- Advocate for more transparency in the actual financial situation in public preK-12 education.
- Continue to help with the positive understanding of the education process in the Prescott Unified School District (PUSD) schools in our community.

- Be part of and help facilitate the organization of a grassroots group to advocate for increasing revenue for public education.
- Change my language from “we need more money” to “this is an investment in our children and future.” Share information I have learned today with staff, family and friends. Support a movement in Prescott.
- Plan to vote in the primaries as an Independent in the Republican side to vote for those politicians to support increased funding for schools and continue voting in regular sessions for those whose priority is education funding.
- Be willing to write and speak with groups about the issue of education and coordinate with local efforts. Partner with other agencies who support education.
- Talk with the government teacher at Prescott High School about how to motivate students to register to vote and vote at age 18.
- Contact my legislator—urge them to invest in education in significant ways. Ask media to emphasize and focus upon the crisis facing Arizona in education—create public awareness.
- Vote to renew and expand proposition 301. Register as an Independent so that I can have flexibility to vote for the most education-friendly candidates regardless of party affiliation.
- Write a column in the newspaper about Community Town Hall outcomes, take a crew to the statewide Town Hall and push the Arizona Town Hall topics in our advocacy community.
- Volunteer and financially support my local public school district.
- Use my voice to bring awareness to the subject of education.
- Use my voice to help bring awareness about this major issue to my fellow students and community.
- Educate and inform community members about funding preK-12 education.

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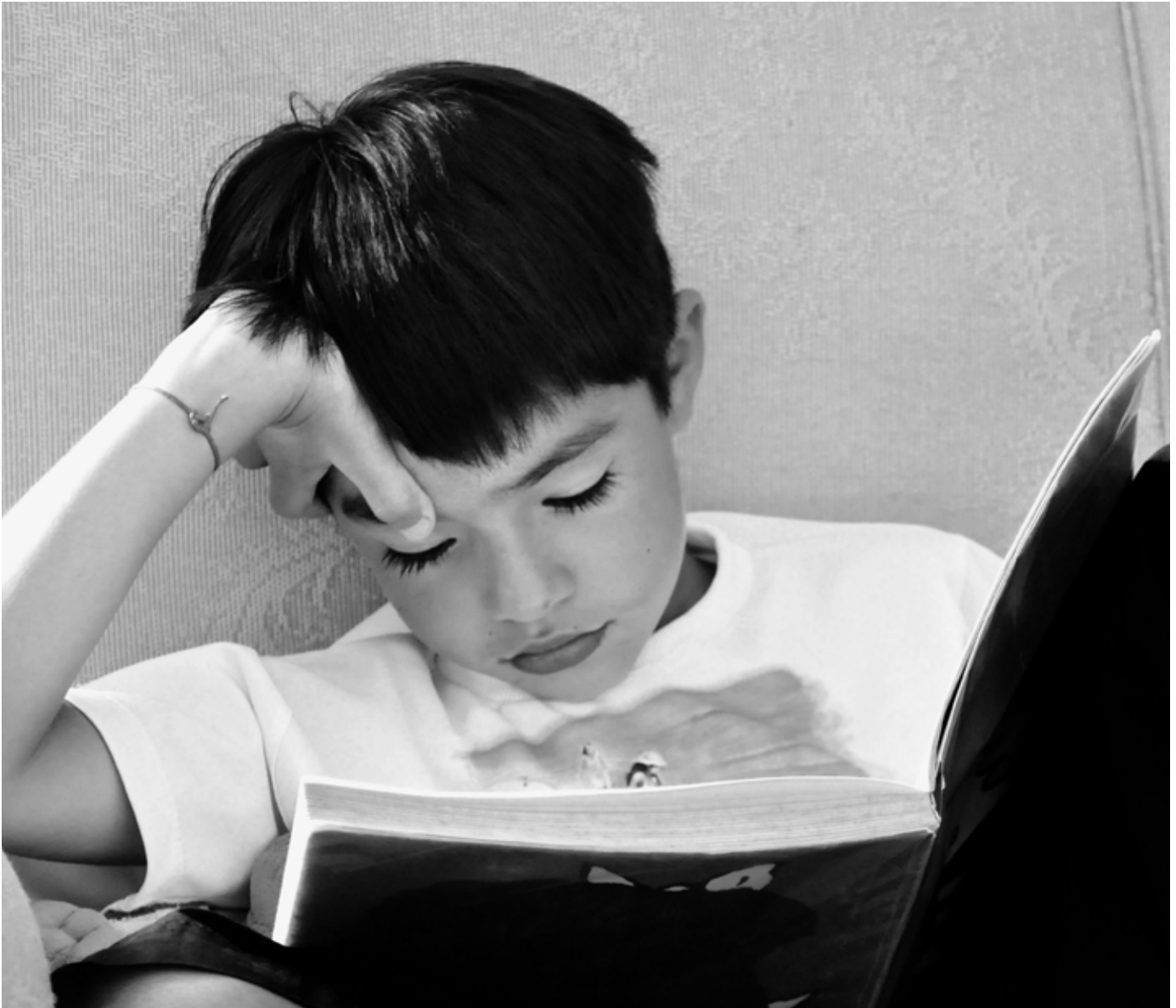
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# **“Funding preK-12 Education”**

**Community Town Hall Report**

**Payson, AZ – October 11, 2017**





# FUNDING PREK-12 EDUCATION

## Rim Country Community Town Hall Report

October 11, 2017

Participants of the October 11, 2017 Rim Country Community Town Hall make the following findings and recommendations. This report reflects the consensus achieved through group discussions by Community Town Hall participants.

### **ARIZONA'S PREK-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM GOALS**

The goal of our preK-12 education system should be to develop students into citizens with strong character and work ethic, who are prepared to contribute to society both as individuals and as part of the larger group. Each student should receive all attention they need to achieve their maximum potential and prepare them to succeed in an ever-changing world, to be successful lifelong learners who take personal responsibility for their lives. Education should address the whole child, producing well-rounded learners who excel and are prepared to think critically, use technology, and compete successfully in the world. There should be equal opportunity for all students and equal standards for all providers. Providing and funding preK and all-day kindergarten are critically important to the success of this system in meeting these objectives.

### **IMPACT OF PUBLIC FUNDS**

Our education funding system is fundamentally flawed. In simple terms, the pie is too small and the pieces of pie are not distributed equitably. In this Frankenstein of a system, money does not flow to the areas of greatest need, such as teacher pay increases, with occasional surpluses in areas of lower need that have dedicated funding. The way teachers are paid is archaic. Spending restrictions make it difficult for schools to fund basic needs. Despite increasing student populations, the Arizona Legislature has diverted over \$1 billion from education budgets. This leads to a host of problems, including cutting of classes, lost opportunities for students, inability to provide needed remediation, loss of qualified teachers, and a significant loss of skills development for graduating students.

In rural and tribal areas, the transportation funding is inadequate and not appropriately adjusted for the distances and requirements involved. Poorer districts cannot afford to provide extracurricular services and elective classes. White flight is occurring as families with the ability to do so leave the district school system to attend charter schools. Schools in poorer districts do not have adequate resources or the ability to provide services that are comparable to the wealthier districts, and lack access to tax credit money on the same scale as wealthier schools.

Public, charter and private schools should be held to the same standards, have the same opportunities and be accountable for the same set of rules, including assessments, enrollment criteria, standards, certification, how funding is spent, and the services that are provided to students.

Elected officials who do not support adequate funding for education should be publicly shamed and voted out of office.

### **IMPROVING FUNDING FOR ARIZONA'S PREK-12 SCHOOLS**

Arizona should approach the issue of funding for education by first determining what it really costs to educate a child, consider what other states are doing, and then determine how to provide the funding that is truly needed. We should not under any circumstances shift the tax burden for education to lower socioeconomic groups.

Arizona should think outside the box and look at all options for funding. More impact funding is needed, for example to educate English learners. We should stop siphoning money from public schools and providing it to private schools. We must increase teacher salaries and provide reimbursement for teacher expenses, such as costs of obtaining fingerprints. We should eliminate unnecessary funding restrictions and allow schools more freedom in spending according to their needs.

Funding for schools should be equal across all types of schools and all regions.

Arizona's tax base is smaller than it once was because of the amount of non-taxable federal and state owned land. In addition, mines and utilities were able to secure significant reductions in their taxes; those reductions are no longer justified and should be reexamined. We should consider increasing the sales tax and dedicating it to education. Income taxes on the wealthy could be increased. Payments in lieu of taxes should be reinstated, which will be particularly significant in rural counties with relatively small areas of private lands. State trust lands should be leased and freed up for economic development, as the proceeds from such activities are dedicated to education. To process the applications for such uses, more staff is needed.

If these and other measures to fund education are to be successful, citizens must educate themselves about these issues, and about the position of elected officials in regard to education funding, and select legislators who will adequately fund education

## **INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS**

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions at the Rim Country Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

### ***I WILL...***

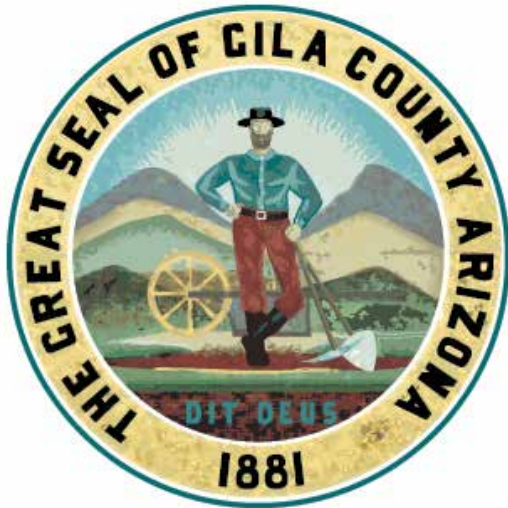
- Continue to be active in preK education learning to advocate for the needs of children.
- Try to educate the public about how funding solutions presented to us affect public education.
- Talk with students preparing to become teachers about the facts relating to education and education funding.
- As a member of the board of directors of Aspire Arizona, I will continue to support the dual credit program to help students earn college credit at a lower cost.
- Work with the local chamber to help students get experience outside the classroom.
- Continue to be an active community member who is concerned about seniors, students and the whole community.
- Meet with state and federal elected and educate them on public school needs. Talk about a one-cent tax on camping and fishing outdoor events with all money to go to public schools.
- Make my votes count and educate myself on how Arizona is spending our money.
- Continue to take proactive political advocacy on behalf of public education especially by calling our state representatives and senators to fulfill their constitutional responsibility for funding public education.
- Advocate for increased attention to be given to the goals of Arizona education in regards to life-skill development. Further advocate for equal funding between public and charter schools and same standards of accountability and transparency.
- Keep pressure on congress to give more money for education and teachers' salaries.
- Seek additional funding opportunities through state, local and grant resources to meet the educational needs of students.
- Continue to educate the public about the reality of funding for public education and the bias that we see between public and charter schools.
- Continue to be a positive and active community member that cares about our youth, seniors, families and whole community. Participate in opportunities such as the Arizona Town Halls to have my voice heard.
- Spread the word.
- Better understand how Arizona funds education and how the funds are spent.
- Continue to advocate with legislature for adequate funding for preK-12 public education.

- Talk to my students in my “Intro to Education” classes and prepare them for this topic. Share about the facts that were shared at this program.
- Continue to: support programs at Payson Unified School District (PUSD) to promote graduating students being productive citizens; support dual-credit programs allowing high school students to take college classes free or low cost; support new mentoring programs; and create partnership between Chamber and PUSD.
- Organize voters and write letters.
- Vote for education supportive legislators, talk more extensively to others about the needs of public schools, and support public schools through tax credit.
- Continue to promote education funding in my realm of influence.
- Research grant opportunities to help our district.
- Continue to try to “flip” the state senate so that the toxic education legislation can stop before it gets to the governor. I will also support organizations that litigate against inequity in school funding.
- Continue to research and become more educated regarding state legislative candidates.
- Continue to serve on school board and encourage the wealthy to consider education in their estate plan.
- Continue to reach out to our state elected officials to advocate for public education adequate funding, equity for public vs private institutions and allow local control over funds.
- Continue to visit every part of Arizona—listening to the different challenges of all schools so I can help develop solution to these challenges.
- Talk to staff, community and family members about Town Halls and funding for Arizona schools.
- Research “successful school districts” across the United States to see how they perceive funding and from whom.
- Continue to educate myself on our public-school funding. I will also be active in learning about politicians’ beliefs on education so that I can make the best decision for my community.

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# **“Funding preK-12 Education”**

**Community Town Hall Report**  
**Sierra Vista, AZ – September 23, 2017**





# FUNDING PREK-12 EDUCATION

## Sierra Vista Community Town Hall Report

September 23, 2017

Participants of the September 2017 Sierra Vista Community Town Hall make the following findings and recommendations. This report reflects the consensus achieved through group discussions by Community Town Hall participants.

### **ARIZONA'S PREK-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM GOALS**

Arizona's education system must prepare students for effective citizenship so students may fully participate in and contribute to an informed democracy. Our education system knits us together as a people, and creates a State that is unique and sustainable. Arizona's education system must foster students that are well rounded and prepared to be thoughtful, curious, critical thinkers that care about community. Arizona's education system should help a child and motivate them, and should help students actualize their potential within any career cluster. Arizona's education system must also help parents, who are the first educators, to make sure students do not slip through the cracks.

Arizona's education system must involve quality with measurable outcomes and academic rigor. This includes programs such as CTE (career and technical education) that provide students with skills to make them college and career ready. Arizona's education system must also address those students with disabilities to make sure they have skills for the job market and are prepared for life.

Moving forward, because of the importance of education funding, Arizona should focus on important practical and economic effects of an exceptional educational system. For example, when a family looks to relocate, parents often first look to the quality of the schools to help with their decision.

### **IMPACT OF PUBLIC FUNDS**

Funding for Arizona's education system is wholly inadequate. Arizona's schools are in crisis. Arizona must change its mindset: education is not an expense but an investment. Funding education in Arizona is often the result of competing ideas about the types and forms of education and how it is delivered. Our legislators are not invested in public education and often seek to dismantle public education.

The current rate of funding for our schools does not allow Arizona's education system to adequately pay our teachers. For example, the starting salary of Sierra Vista teachers makes it difficult to pay bills including student loans. At the current rate of funding for our schools, the pay provided to teachers provides a low standard of living that barely meets minimum wage. If this continues, our school system will not exist as we know it.

We must make sure our community and the legislators we elect support traditional public schools. We should look at best practices of other school districts to help stretch funding, but we must also address funding inadequacies by establishing priorities. We tolerate legislators who do not prioritize education and we need to change this or we will lose jobs to other states such as Virginia whose schools are better funded.

Across Arizona three fourths of schools operate on budget overrides for additional funding. Recently, Sierra Vista supported a \$28 million capital bond, which will make a big difference but cannot be used to pay salaries. Schools must help themselves because schools are not receiving the support from the State.

The current tax credit system takes money out of public education funding and is inequitable. Public schools must use tax credits for nonessentials whereas private schools may use tax credits for teacher salaries. The diversion of education funding through tax credits must stop.

We cannot approach the issue of education funding based on generalizations about political party or views. We must all work together to change the culture and approach to funding education in Arizona.

## **IMPROVING FUNDING FOR ARIZONA'S PREK-12 SCHOOLS**

There are a number of steps Arizona must take to improve education funding. First, Arizona must change the culture of education funding with every adult—including parents and childless adults—and within communities of interest to understand how education matters. We must promote civic engagement to encourage leaders who prioritize education or we will not see improvement.

Second, we can assist voters to enroll in the RTS (request to speak system), which is a tool used to communicate with the legislature.

Third, we must change how we view our students. Our views are skewed. The student next door may be our next mayor or doctor.

Fourth, we must renew Proposition 301. If Proposition 301 is not renewed or permanently extended, education will suffer a \$640 million loss annually, with \$500 million loss alone to K-12 education. We need to begin the discussion now about what we can do to support this measure.

Fifth, we should think outside the box and develop other funding sources including the involvement of the private sector, the use of tax credits, tax rebates, and we should stop using the large percentage of federal lands in Arizona as an excuse for inadequate funding of our education system.

Sixth, we need to change the tax credit laws to address the inequities and inadequacies in public schools.

Finally, we need to make systemic changes to how education is funded. We need predictable sources of funding. Currently, planning for education funding in Arizona is like planning in quick sand—it's always a moving target.

This hard work must begin with all of us. We must engage the governor, the legislators, and other civic leaders to make these changes and ensure these steps are accomplished. We are at a crossroads. There is no time for excuses.

## **SETTING PRIORITIES AND TAKING ACTION**

Participants first determined the most important priorities and goals for ensuring the best education future for the Sierra Vista community. The top priorities that will have the most beneficial impact on Sierra Vista's future are:

- We must recruit and retain quality education staff, we must value our education staff as professionals, and we must recognize the important place our education staff holds in our community.
- We must shift the paradigm in Arizona: education is an investment and not an expense. Arizona must recognize education as a driver of economic development.
- We must increase civic engagement and advocacy to elect civic leaders who understand the importance of investing in public education.
- We must reform education funding policy to address inequities and inadequacies in public school funding.
- We must invest in our schools to keep young adults and families from leaving communities.

## **INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS**

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions at the Sierra Vista Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

### ***I WILL...***

- Make the conscience effort to educate others about education funding (example current year funding, trends, spending power, etc.) This includes one-to-one conversations with random strangers. You have to make change one person at a time!
- Ask deeper questions of candidates from the municipal, county, and state level.

- Invite speakers to bring education issues to organization members.
- Vote and advocate for stopping expansion of ESA's and prop 301 renewal/permanence.
- Challenge misinformation about education funding.
- Let my voice be heard in a positive way.
- Be aware of what legislators are discussing that affect education and our students.
- Take advantage of RTS opportunities so that I am part of the community voice and will be heard a state committee meetings.
- Think globally and act locally to find solutions for my community, for students, and for my staff.
- Vote for and advocate for civic leaders who support and value public education.
- Continue to build a large, engaged network of Sierra Vista residents so that we are able to teach how to advocate for our public education district No. 68 and its students on a local, state, and federal level.
- Complete my doctorate dissertation and continue working toward opening my own high school geared to help steer our students to the next chapter of their lives.
- Enroll in request to speak.
- Continue to encourage people to join our Sierra Vista network.
- Communicate the importance of voting for legislators who support education.
- Vote for education friendly leaders in our state.
- Spread the word that education impacts everyone's quality of life.
- Support efforts that close the achievement gap in our State.
- Attend board meetings for my district.
- Become more active for votes (for public education).
- Vote for renewal of Prop 301 and against expansion of voucher program.
- Brief LFSA on this town hall topic and conversation.
- Vote for legislators who support education.
- Vote for governor who values K-12.
- Organize a County roundtable to continue to discuss these issues and concerns.
- Brief the organization with which I am associated.
- Praise the teachers and support them by attending the school board meetings.
- Find ways to increase teacher and volunteer morale.
- Continue to support (education) by challenging legislators.
- Vote!
- Encourage advocacy to be organized and to be more efficient and effective.

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# “Funding preK-12 Education”

## Community Town Hall Report

### Tucson, AZ – September 12, 2017





# FUNDING PREK-12 EDUCATION

## Tucson Community Town Hall Report

September 12, 2017

Participants of the September 2017 Tucson Community Town Hall, make the following findings and recommendations. This report reflects the consensus achieved through group discussions by Town Hall participants.

### **ARIZONA'S PREK-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM GOALS**

Arizona's preK-12 education system needs to create citizens who have the creativity, skills and understanding of the available opportunities that are necessary for them to add value to our community by being good citizens and by adding to the talent of our state.

Our students must be ready to contribute – to both the community and to the workforce – and must be prepared to pursue whatever career path they choose. Career paths include technical school, college and other careers. College readiness and job readiness entail the same skill set. To prepare students to pursue a career path, we should emphasize not just STEM, but Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math, giving students individualized educational plans, and encouraging participation in extracurricular activities.

In addition, we need to provide support for parents to help their students move forward in education and careers. Parents are a critical component in helping their students learn, develop life skills, hone critical thinking abilities, and acquire technical skills. Helping parents to help students requires us to tackle broader issues of poverty, parental literacy and challenges to the young adults in our communities. Education is an economic issue, and ultimately our educational system needs to support our citizens' ability to earn a living wage.

We are trying to create better, more responsible, more engaged citizens who will serve the state as its next generation of critical thinkers and problem-solvers.

### **IMPACT OF PUBLIC FUNDS**

Funding from the legislature for all levels of education, from preschool up, is woefully inadequate. This is critical because the method Arizona uses to allocate public funds for preK-12 schools, and the amount of funds we provide, both directly affect Arizona's ability to achieve our preK-12 education goals. We simply do not adequately fund education in Arizona: The pie is just too small to meet our needs. At the least, Arizona's education funding should be raised to the national median.

Cutting taxes has removed state revenues that could otherwise address disparities in school funding. Inadequate budgets have hurt our ability to meet Arizona's needs for school facilities maintenance and have improperly shifted the demands for providing school supplies and the costs of extracurricular activities to families and teachers. This problem calls for sweeping changes. It also calls for citizens and political leaders who recognize that increased funding for Arizona's schools is a wise investment: It strengthens families and our future workforce.

Arizona's current education funding system has regressed through the past 40 years into a complicated patchwork. The current funding system is difficult to understand and endangers the underlying goal of equalizing funding across school districts statewide. The funding system is not outcome-driven at any administrative level and uniformly fails to assess what financial resources are needed to achieve the educational goals we seek to attain.

Our current funding model does not adequately address the disparities between urban and rural areas or between poorer and more affluent neighborhoods. If anything, the model exacerbates the budgetary disadvantages that poor and rural districts already face. School choice may provide additional options for Arizona students, but some communities have fewer choices than others. Disparities in access to school choices, and the challenges presented by transportation, particularly in rural areas, must be addressed. Similarly, tax credits tend to disadvantage those areas already at a disadvantage – credits tend to flow to more

affluent districts instead of those districts that need them most.

In addition, results-based funding has questionable utility: The assessment system is still evolving, and there is simply not enough money to adequately reward successful schools.

Lastly, the imposition of additional regulatory and administrative requirements on schools has further challenged school districts' ability to stretch their limited budgets to meet their needs. These issues all impact Arizona's ability to attract and maintain highly effective educators.

## **IMPROVING FUNDING FOR ARIZONA'S PREK-12 SCHOOLS**

All Arizonans are responsible for acting to bring about an increase in education funding which includes expanding existing and creating new education funding sources: all options must be on the table. First, Proposition 301 should be renewed and expanded to one cent. Legislators should be encouraged by voters and by Arizona's business community to explore ways to increase tax revenue through tax reforms, including closing loopholes and eliminating tax exemptions and corporate tax credits.

Voters are Arizona's most powerful constituency, and they must make their voices heard. First, voters should demand that the legislature fully fund public education. Voters should also use ballot initiatives to improve funding and create new revenue streams. Such revenue streams should emphasize luxury, bed and export taxes that allow Arizona to tax out-of-state buyers rather than just shifting a heavier burden to Arizona's citizens. But we must also consider funding sources such as new excise taxes, increasing income taxes and statewide property taxes. The initiative process should also be used to oppose any expansion of vouchers beyond 2016 levels and to create a revenue stream for high quality early childhood education. Any new tax funds or funding sources allocated for education need to be dedicated to education only and protected against being swept or diverted.

Arizona's voters should be targeted through marketing and outreach campaigns to help everyone understand why education funding is important for all of Arizona's citizens, including people without kids in Arizona schools. Legislators and voters need to hear and understand that education funding will improve Arizona's economy. Voter participation and engagement can be improved if voters appreciate the benefits that can flow from improving our education system.

A key to improving our education system is to increase teacher wages and benefits to help districts recruit and retain talented teachers. Teacher pay should be at a level that allows it to be marketed to businesses seeking to expand or relocate. Teacher pay should become a feature that boosts Arizona's competitiveness in the global economy. The Arizona legislature should also institute a program to forgive the student loan debt of education graduates who become and remain teachers in Arizona. This benefit would boost the profile of Arizona and help our schools attract and retain highly qualified educators.

Lastly, neighborhood coalitions of businesses, non-profits and other organizations should develop relationships with schools to help not only with funding but also to provide services. Importantly, though, these partnerships must augment, but not replace, full government funding for schools.

## **SETTING PRIORITIES AND TAKING ACTION**

Participants first determined the most important priorities and goals for ensuring the best education future for the Tucson Community. The areas identified (in no particular order) are: early childhood education, support teachers through improved recruitment, retention and pay; voter engagement and legislative change; messaging and communication, and funding. Participants then self-selected into groups to develop outlines of action plans for accomplishing the identified goals. The action plans are set forth below.

- Early childhood education:
  1. Educate parents and the public about the value of preK and kindergarten education. Organizations like First Things First can help engage with people through county health departments, community health centers and schools.
  2. Determine the feasibility of an initiative to require kindergarten attendance and funding.

3. Unfreeze childcare subsidies with help of organizations like Children's Action Alliance, and Build AZ.
  4. Make preK-12 funding the first priority for the state budget.
- Support teachers through improved recruitment, retention and pay:
    1. Use media such as documentary film to show what the teaching profession actually is and does.
    2. Seek partnerships with higher education to help prepare teachers in training.
    3. Publish op-eds about how education funding impacts teachers.
    4. Examine state and local benefits systems to determine if benefits for teachers and their dependents can be improved by placing them in the state benefits pool.
    5. Campaign for renewal of Proposition 301, because a significant amount of that money is earmarked for teacher pay.
  - Voter Engagement and legislative changes:
    1. Support political action:
      - Support the campaigns of legislators and candidates who support education by volunteering, such as knocking on doors, engaging on social media, raising funds, and hosting in home events;
      - Get involved in local political party activities, such as recruiting precinct committee members;
      - Recruit new candidates for statewide office
    2. Craft key bullet points tailored to specific constituencies (e.g. retirees, busy parents) to convey simply and succinctly messages about why public education is important to each group. This will allow individuals to take talking points out to groups to educate voters/potential voters and candidates and to begin conversations, get people registered to vote, and get them out to vote.
    3. Attempt to influence sitting legislators by creating or seeking out opportunities for individuals to speak one-on-one with legislators on a non-partisan and non-lobbying basis.
    4. Using a scalable and successful model, help organize and promote workplace group meetings with sitting legislators.
  - Messaging and communications:
    1. The overarching message is that education is an economic development issue. The Arizona Legislature has cut taxes 22 years in a row – do you have the Arizona you want?
    2. Engage with voters and non-voters for whom education funding is not a priority.
    3. Identify partners and coalitions (faith-based groups, non-profit and community groups, etc.) to help with messaging and “de-silo” this issue.
    4. Promote civic engagement more generally.
    5. Tailor messages for legislative districts.
  - System-wide funding increases:
    1. Renew funding currently provided under Proposition 301. Without action, this funding will disappear in 2021. Funding should be renewed by legislative action. Enlist a broad coalition (including education groups, chambers of commerce, faith-communities, non-profits and local government) to lobby the Legislature and to explain to voters what the consequences of inaction will be statewide. Work to elect Legislators who support renewal, and seek to replace those who do not.
    2. Promote tax-credit reform to close tax loopholes and increase General Fund revenues. We need more data about the size, scope and effect of current tax credits, and an estimate of how closing loopholes would increase funding for education.

## **INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS**

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions at the Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

### ***I WILL...***

- Send letters to local business and Industry associations with information and a call to action from the Tucson Community Town Hall on Funding preK-12 Education. It is an economic development priority.
- Write an op-ed to help increase discussion about respecting and valuing teachers; recruit teachers to share their stories through op-eds and blogs.
- Put focus on the 50 percent of children who are not ready to succeed when they start kindergarten; work to fund preschool of quality.
- Help to educate my community on how the school finance system works and the impact of voter issues/legislative changes on our preK-12 system.
- Work on involving college students with Arizona Town Hall.
- Work on convincing the legislature to create loan forgiveness programs for people who want to become teachers and teach in Arizona.
- Put focus on the 50% of children who are not ready to succeed when they start kindergarten.
- Work to fund quality preschool.
- Encourage participation of students at the Tucson Future Leaders Town Hall.
- Advocate for increasing investment in education.
- Continue to advocate for uniting the community (education, government, healthcare, business) to drive data driven action through the cradle to career partnership. 1.) Kindergarten readiness; 2.) Grade level reading; 3.) Middle school math; 4.) High school education; and 5.) Post-secondary attainment.
- Consider champions in the business world that are committed to developing community.
- Continue to talk and engage in these heated and passionate discussions with a focus in providing solutions and using facts not anecdotal evidence while still honoring an individual's personal experience and view.
- Continue as part of the discussion to adequately fund preK-12 education.
- Work to educate others of the challenges schools face with lack of funding.
- Support public education.
- Advance messages about equity in education from a critical moral perspective.
- Work on bringing more global perspectives into k12 schools.
- Talk to influencers about these issues.
- Donate more.
- Try to work out more funding and help getting more resources which keeps motivation.
- Communicate it!
- Consider champions in the business world that are committed to developing community.

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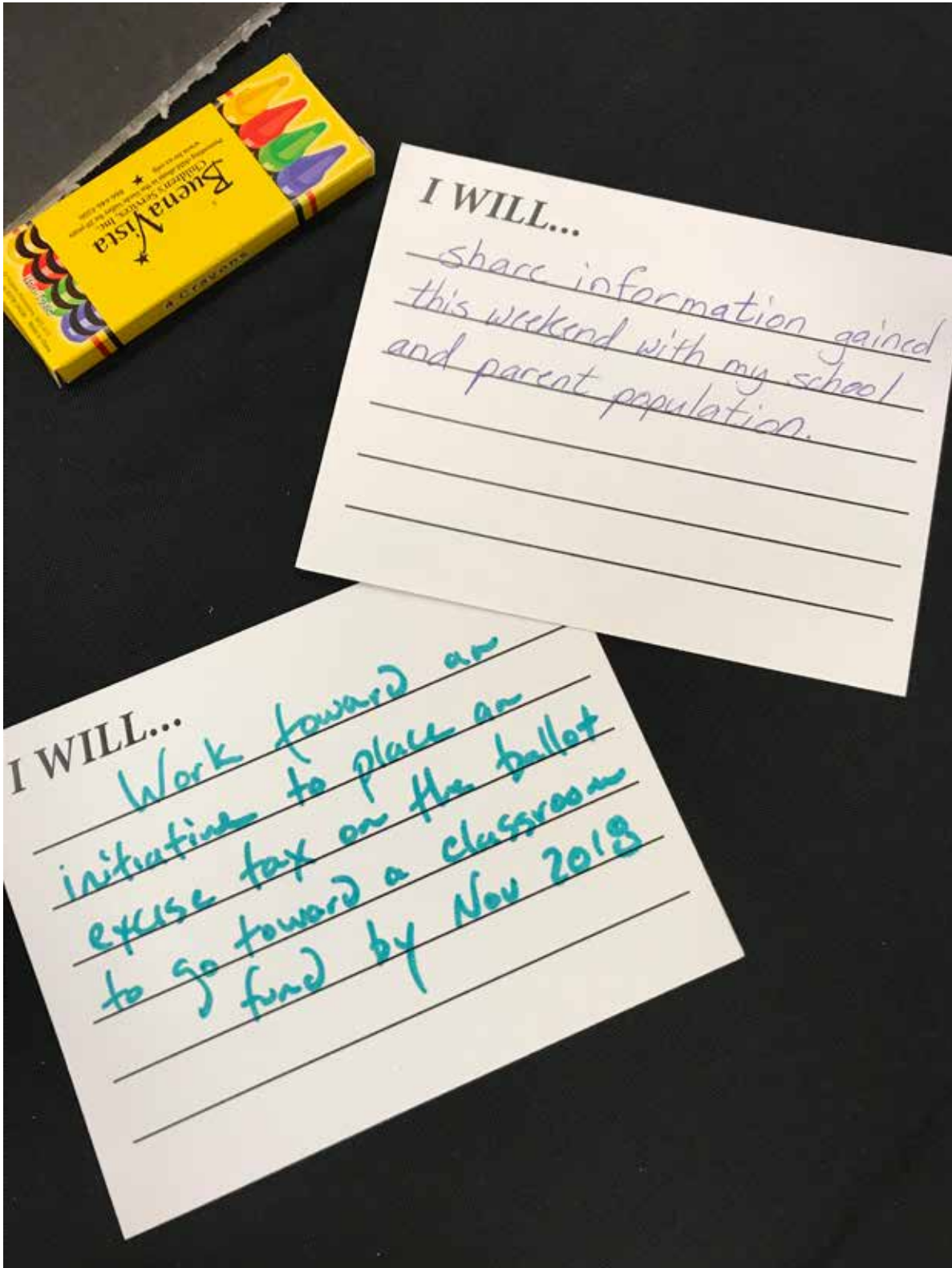




# “Funding preK-12 Education”

Community Town Hall Report

Rimrock, AZ – September 8-9, 2017



# **Verde Valley Forum for Public Affairs**

## ***Strengthening PreK-12 Education in the Verde Valley Region***

### **September 8 and 9, 2017**

Participants from across the Verde Valley gathered at the Beaver Creek School in Rimrock, Arizona to consider how best to strengthen preK-12 education in the Verde Valley. Participants developed consensus on the state of education in the region and the action steps that need to be taken to ensure a strong system for the future. The report of their recommendations and action plans is set forth below.

#### **THE STATE OF PREK-12 EDUCATION IN THE VERDE VALLEY REGION**

The staff and educators in the Verde Valley region are accomplishing remarkable things with the insufficient resources allocated to them. However, the system is under stress, and the Arizona legislature needs to understand the very different education realities faced by districts outside of the State of Maricopa. We are at a breaking point. Doing more with less is simply not a viable long-term solution to the problems we face and the outcomes we seek.

There is a disconnect between legislators and the electorate regarding education prioritization. The current funding system in our region, and statewide, is broken—even imploding on itself. There is an outdated paradigm, really a one-size-fits-all mentality, which must be modernized and overhauled. Sadly, educators are often in a perpetual state of crisis management.

Education funding in our region is wholly insufficient, whether it be capital funding or otherwise. The state legislature must allocate sufficient resources with particular focus on the special needs of rural and smaller-district communities. More paperwork and unfunded or underfunded mandates do nothing to increase student achievement.

There is a lack of quality pre-K opportunities, often leading to long waiting lists. While options for these young students have increased, they are still insufficient. In particular, pre-K educational opportunities are critical for all children, not just children from families with the capacity to pay.

Increasing assessment of students is often burdensome and ineffective. While assessment of student achievement is important, we must be concerned with the holistic development of each individual child while recognizing that much of that development cannot be accurately measured or quantified.

Teacher retention due to low pay, stresses of the job, and unrealistic expectations, is a critical issue that must be addressed. Other issues, especially problematic in rural and low-income communities, include transient student populations, high percentage of ESL students, and insufficient scale to provide needed educational opportunities and options for all students. There is a growing special education population without sufficient funding or teacher training to assist these students. With the increasing diversity of our student population, we should strive to have educators mirror that diversity. A diverse student population benefits from diverse teachers.

Cooperation between districts should continue to improve. Consolidation may be considered. At a minimum, Districts should create more opportunities to connect or support in cooperation and coordination to share services and funding. Additionally, cooperation with families will be critical moving forward. Educators cannot bear the entire burden.

#### **BUILDING ON EXISTING STRENGTHS TO ENHANCE PREK-12 EDUCATION**

The region should continue to tap into the strength and talents of the entire community and focus on all generations, including the retired generation. We must change any perception of “their kids” and make it all about “our kids.” We must focus on and communicate the benefits of educating each student for the whole community. We need to strategize and find ways to create intergenerational connections with our schools. We pay for it one way or the other. We can educate them now or incarcerate them later. We are each invested in the success of every student.

The region should work to break down any sense of isolation through more effective networking between schools. Communication should be about collaboration and sharing, not competition. Shared resources create opportunities for our kids and allows us to more fully leverage our limited resources. We need to speak with a more unified voice about the priority of education in the region. Unified technology sharing will help make this process efficient and manageable.

The region should work to build even stronger relationships with our community resources. We should work with municipal and other services, while being mindful that many unincorporated areas do not have this option and should not be left behind. Memorandums of understanding and intergovernmental agreements are in place and can be enhanced. We need to work hard to integrate our business community more fully in the educational process and make sure they know exactly how they can help us in ways besides funding. Work release programs to increase volunteerism would be particularly effective.

The region must continue to focus on teacher recruiting and retention. In addition to prioritizing political action, we should pursue grant opportunities and other funding mechanisms.

## **INCREASING ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION**

We need to build strong community relationships. We need to create safe social networking spaces for kids and the public to interact and recognize the successes of our schools and our kids' achievements. We need to increase our educational public relations and social media presence and efforts to accomplish this. Specific training for schools in how best to accomplish public awareness campaigns will increase their effectiveness. Sharing resources and staff will not only increase campaign effectiveness, but will allow us to promote the entire Verde Valley. We can change the conversation. We can raise expectations.

We must recruit and retain teachers through increasing salaries. We need to create a culture of appreciation and gratitude that recognizes all of the good our qualified and passionate teachers do for our kids and our overall community. We should work together to increase salaries fairly and across the board so Verde Valley schools are not competing with each other for highly effective teachers.

We should increase diversity in our education staff and faculty to more fully represent and embrace the diverse communities we serve. We should also work to increase engagement of diverse and underrepresented communities in our schools. We need to consider how to change the way these communities view and interact with our schools. We must declare and convince our communities that we embrace and value the education of all kids. Increased diversity in education has the potential to also increase diversity in all aspects of civic engagement.

We must encourage lifelong learning and bring community members into our schools to increase their overall engagement. We should utilize and leverage the talents of our community and create additional volunteer opportunities. A dedicated but shared volunteer/outreach coordinator could effectively identify volunteer talents and connect them with volunteer opportunities. We can do much more to unleash the untapped potential of our community for increased mentorship, volunteerism, and involvement in our schools.

We should support opportunities for after school programs, STEM programs, all summer programs, high school to college programs, College for Kids, career/vocational training, and others. We should partner with pathway programs, mentoring programs, and post-secondary programs, business partners, and other non-profits in any way to increase the benefit to our kids.

We should encourage our legislators and other elected leaders to regularly visit and spend time in our local schools so they can directly see what is working and what must be improved. We should encourage school leaders to more aggressively reach out to our legislators and elected leaders for the same reasons. We should lobby to decrease unfunded and underfunded mandates. We should ensure that we give our children voice in the process.

## **FUNDING**

- To improve the amount or methods of funding for Arizona's preK-12 schools, the following actions should be taken:

- Encourage an educated citizenry who understands the issues and takes advantage of the opportunity to vote.
- Find ways to communicate effectively and simply about the issues surrounding education funding.
- More frequently and more effectively communicate with the community—especially with residents who do not have any other connection to our schools.
- Educate our community about how to make their vote count in primary elections.
- Educate and train local parents to become education advocates and then connect them to our legislators.
- Ensure that urban families are not the only families heard and ensure that rural families are perceived as a majority, and not perceived as some insignificant special interest which may occur when legislators only hear from administrators.
- Identify candidates for public office who support education the way we want education to be supported. If they will not fund our priorities, we should pursue ballot initiatives.
- Each participant of this forum should individually engage their elected leaders on this subject. We must promote both political intelligence and political action.
- Ensure that education funding on a per kid basis is equal throughout the state without regarding for inequitable bonding capacity of various communities.
- Earmark a funding source for PreK-12 public schools that cannot be swept by the legislature.
- Implement a specific dedicated excise tax to support education, with appropriate protections for low-income families.
- Renew and expand Proposition 301 to specifically support education.
- Increase the threshold for the individual and marital tax credits contributions for education. Allow schools to use those funds more broadly.
- Eliminate waste or redundancy collaboratively and cooperatively with other Verde Valley schools.

## **SETTING PRIORITIES AND TAKING ACTION**

Participants first determined the most important priorities and goals for ensuring the best education future for the Verde Valley community. The areas identified (in no particular order) are: teacher recruitment, retention and pay; funding; collaboration; public relations; and civic engagement. Participants then self-selected into groups to develop outlines of action plans for accomplishing the identified goals. The action plans are set forth below.

### **Teacher Recruitment, Retention and Pay**

Create a 2018 citizen's ballot initiative to have a \$00.0175 excise tax on per kilowatt hour energy generation. Eliminate Proposition 301.

### **Funding**

Create a 2018 citizen's ballot initiative for an excise tax on energy with the money to go to a classroom fund. Matt Kelley, Stephanie Orbe, Jamie Woodard, Ruth Wicks, and Jessica Williamson will meet in October 2017 to begin this process. Matt Kelley will take the lead.

Learn about what Tempe did to fund their Prek-12 programs and see if the Verde Valley can adopt a similar program. Ruth will accomplish by January 1, 2018.

### **Collaboration**

Verde Valley Education Consortium will be structured as an umbrella organization to encourage collaboration, look for common ground, share resources and services, coordinate schedules and transportation, and design and implement briefs to present to all stakeholders with separate action groups representing: (a) public, private, and charter school representatives; (b) business leaders; (c) parents and citizens; and (d) students.

District, private and charter school leaders will develop an inventory of resources across districts and schools including (1) what your school/district can share, (2) what your school/district needs, and (2) areas of current collaboration.

Leverage Verde Valley Education Consortium to get stakeholders including business and community leaders, government, Valley Academy for Career and Technology Education, and Yavapai College to create centralized Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs in the Verde Valley.

### **Public Relations**

Gioia Quisumbing will immediately join an education consortium and research existing public relations positions within other Arizona schools.

The education consortium will seek grant funding for Verde Valley public relations position with the Verde Valley education consortium.

Gioia Quisumbing will provide a list of resources to schools for positive public relations in the meantime prior to the end of 2017.

### **Civic Engagement**

Jessica Williamson will continue to cooperate with the League of Women voters to increase voter registration and turnout to elect education committed political representatives in the 2018 election cycle.

Nikki Bagley will establish a bipartisan stakeholder coalition to endorse and advance the campaigns of education committed political representatives in the 2018 election cycle.

Sebra Choe will establish a regional youth council focusing on civic engagement and will have convened the first regional meeting by the end of 2017.

## **INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS**

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions at the Forum. Below are individual actions that were shared

### ***I WILL...***

- Follow the Town Hall discussions from their website and continue to develop an understanding of political action in regard to the implementation of an excise tax.
- Work toward an initiative to place an excise tax on the ballot to go toward a classroom fund by November 2018.
- Share information gained this weekend with my school and parent population.
- Offer my services to Verde Valley Education Consortium.
- Work with Matt Kelley and advocate on an initiative with the energy excise effort to increase public education funding long term in Arizona.
- Join the energy excise effort to increase public education funding long term in Arizona.
- Support the efforts of the “We Value Teachers Foundation,” which works to support teachers financially with food gift cards and begin tutoring at our local library.
- Share knowledge on building connected learning communities using digital learning platforms. Mentoring, coaching, and co-curricular learning.
- Work with parents and citizens to address needs of teachers and schools and help them see and commit to how they can use their talents to help the students and teachers.
- Help collaborate with schools, community and businesses.
- Organize and educate an action committee and develop a questionnaire to vet and endorse legislative candidates for 2018.
- Use my influence and connections with young adults (18-24) to promote voter registration and participation in primary and general elections (initiative, issue and candidate study sessions).



- Talk to some friends about the proposed excise tax and the benefits to our public school system and communities.
- Educate myself further on the implications of continuing or modifying corporate tax credits.
- Facilitate starting Regional Youth Council, hosting the first meeting this semester and identify goals/ vision for second semester.
- Partner with League of Women Voters and Nikki Bagley's Education Action group.
- Register to vote for 2018, get education on the issues and candidates and vote for education.
- Continue to advocate for school choice especially private schools.
- Facilitate forming of Camp Verde Youth Commission.
- Personally talk with every school board member, the superintendent, and every principal in my district (Sedona-Oak Creek Unified School District) about meaningfully participating in regional cooperation and collaboration.
- Work with the collaboration team in bringing groups together to better serve the Verde Valley in regards to education.
- Act as a community ally to schools, teachers, students and all parties involved to collaborate in improving preK-12 education in the Verde Valley through the Camp Verde Community Library.
- Change my personal dialogue to reflect my positive support of the quality educational opportunities that exist in the Verde Valley and remind others of the positive contributions of parents, teachers and volunteers in Verde Valley.
- Increase awareness of private school funding by working with DOP to involve participation at future Town Halls.
- Participate in the formulation of our initiative petition and the circulation of said petition to get the excise tax for the classroom site fund on the ballot.

# “Strengthening PreK-12 Education in the Verde Valley Region” Forum Sponsors



# “Funding preK-12 Education”

Community Town Hall Report  
Show Low, AZ – June 9, 2017



# White Mountains Community Town Hall

## “Funding preK-12 Education”

June 9, 2017

Participants used the Arizona Town Hall process to create the following consensus report of their discussions and recommendations for action on how best to fund preK-12 education.

### **PRINCIPAL GOALS FOR ARIZONA’S PREK-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM**

On a broad scale, Arizona’s education system should be giving Arizona students the tools they need to think critically, ask questions, understand how to learn, engage productively with others, understand their bodies, use technology appropriately, advocate for themselves and for others, and exhibit compassion.

To realize these goals, the education system itself must be comprehensive and equal. A comprehensive system begins with integrating early childhood education as a fundamental component as Arizona’s education system because early childhood education is the foundation of all subsequent learning. To maintain that foundation, students must also have continuous access to interventions and tutoring to fill any gaps that develop as their education progresses past the early childhood years. Providing parents with additional resources and training would also supplement these goals.

As students reach higher grade levels, they should also receive aptitude testing and be presented with options, including vocational education, continued academic education, and remedial education. One size does not fit all. This type of model has been successful in European countries.

For these goals to succeed, Arizona’s education system needs fundamental structural reform. Early childhood education, technology training, educational training, parent education, and the arts all require adequate funding to succeed. Additional funding will be necessary to attract highly qualified teachers who are adequately training in child development. Funding and other resources must be distributed in an equal matter that would provide students in all districts and all schools with access to the same high quality educational opportunities.

Beyond funding, these goals must be supported by regulatory reform. Regulatory reform should give districts and schools more local control over standards with less political intervention. Local control would provide more flexibility to implement consistent educational standards from year to year. Regulatory reform should also provide increased access to grant funding, and should provide increased accountability for voucher and home schooling programs.

These structural reform goals would allow for the student outcomes described above: students who become confident, productive citizens, have a sense of purpose, and are prepared for a global economy.

### **IMPACT OF CURRENT AMOUNT AND METHODS OF FUNDING PREK-12 EDUCATION ON PRIORITY GOALS**

You get what you pay for. The methods of funding and amount of funds available to Arizona’s preK-12 schools *eliminate* the ability to achieve the goals discussed in question one.

The methods of funding schools in Arizona are fundamentally unequal with charter and private schools benefiting in many direct and incidental ways that public schools do not share. For example, unequal tax credit policies provide more funding to private schools, private and charter schools have more fundraising options, such as selling real estate, from which public schools cannot benefit, and public schools bear the burden of higher expenses that private and charter schools do not bear, such as paying for school lunch programs and transportation needs. This unequal funding structure makes it impossible to reach the goals of creating equal, quality, and comprehensive opportunities to all students in the state.

The overall amount of funding available for all Arizona’s schools, meanwhile, is inadequate. Facilities are in need of repairs. To the extent money comes available, the roof over students’ heads must be addressed first, which leaves little to no money to expand facilities and reduce class sizes, to improve technology, to



attract and retain qualified teachers and staff, to invest in new equipment, or to keep or expand arts, music, and elective programs (including vocational programs), as a few examples.

Secondary effects of the lack of funds include economic impacts. Businesses do not want to remain in or relocate to an area where there is not a qualified work force. Lower levels of education and graduation rates also lead to increased use of welfare systems and a rise in the prison population. This also impacts the morale of education professionals, including teachers, staff, and local communities at large.

Finally, Arizona's current school funding system is punitive. It is designed to punish underperforming schools based on proficiency rather than growth. This inevitably and directly punishes the students themselves by making it harder to learn, depriving students of opportunities, and forcing schools to shift costs (such as those for extracurricular activities). As a result, students are less likely to become proficient, which leads to additional punitive funding reductions. This is an endless cycle that makes it impossible to reach the above-stated policy goals.

## **HOW TO IMPROVE THE AMOUNT OR METHODS OF FUNDING PRE-K-12 EDUCATION**

### **Business Actions**

- Encourage local businesses to sponsor classrooms

### **Legislative Actions**

#### ***Budget / Funding Related***

- Create a state education budget that works effectively and productively
- For all increases in schools, there must be an increase in funding so that the overall funding does not drop
- The legislature and/or voters need to increase sources of revenue
- The legislature and/or the voters need to protect sources of revenue (e.g., lottery money marked for education was diverted)

#### ***Tax Related***

- Eliminate tax credits for private schools or change the way the tax credits operate to promote equality between private, charter, and traditional public schools
- Legalize marijuana and put the money to education (modeled after Colorado)
- Impose a sugar tax to fund schools (modeled after Philadelphia)
- Close all sales tax exemptions and not bring them back until renegotiated (as suggested by a Tucson lawmaker)
- Tourism tax to fund education
- Legislators and/or voters should review and reevaluate tax cuts and sales taxes exemptions
- Halt automatic 20% tax credits for private school tuitions

#### ***Accountability Related***

- All educational entities receiving public funds should be equally accountable and subject to the same requirements and regulations (through legislation)
- The legislature and/or voters need to impose strong conflict of interest provisions for public officials
- Localize control over funding
- Communication/Media Actions
- Educate the public and state lawmakers on the needs and benefits of a successful public school system



## Local Civic Action/Personal Commitments

### *Fund Raising*

- Hold a state-wide car wash (tongue-in-cheek ... but perhaps a bit of satire is necessary to help boost public support and get the ball rolling)

### *State and Local Election Related*

- Elect legislators who support and prioritize education
- Hold public officials accountable through elections
- Pay attention to school board actions and attend school board meetings – be more involved and supportive
- Encourage parents, schools, and school boards to form community alliances that can work with and influence the legislature
- Create rural coalitions to support rural public school issues
- Make individual voices heard through elections and contacting lawmakers directly
- Individuals can study issues (such as candidates' positions on school funding) before voting
- Be willing to pay higher taxes
- Be involved—run for office

### *Legislation Related*

- Lobby existing legislators to support and prioritize education
- Pay attention, personally, to legislation as it moves through
- Renew the penny sales tax
- Stop the legislature from gutting citizen initiatives—many of the above suggestions are far more likely to pass through initiative than through the legislature.
- Establish a non-partisan pro-education campaign to bring to light issues about public education and to advocate for public education
- Have this campaign profile all office holders regarding their positions on public education and acceptance of donations / relationships to lobbyists and publicize these profiles
- Advocate for Proposition 301

## Public/Private Partnership Actions

- Create public/private partnerships and community partnerships as possible to help with shortfalls

## Public Schools Action

- Make changes to public schools that attract more students back from private and charter schools
- Model and validate the funding system to ensure that it works and provides equal funding
- Solicit community feedback

## INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS

At the conclusion of the Community Town Hall, participants committed to personal actions they would take as a result of the discussions. Each participant completed a card beginning with the statement “I will...” Participants retained the cards with their individual commitments. Some of those that were shared are listed below.

### *I WILL:*

#### Take Personal Actions with Local Impact

- Educate local community members about school needs and concerns
- Volunteer in local schools and donate to local schools

- Support local bonds and overrides
- Stay informed about school issues and pending legislation

**Take Personal Actions with Statewide Impact**

- Write to Arizona congress people regarding increasing the maximum tax credit for public schools, other methods of funding education, and conflict of interest laws
- Vote in state elections for politicians that support local schools
- Support renewal of Proposition 301



# Education

Investing in our future

OCTOBER 2017

FINAL REPORT

 **SWATH**  
South West Arizona Town Hall

# Southwest Arizona Town Hall FUNDING PREK-12 EDUCATION Town Hall Report October 5, 2017

Participants of the October 5, 2017 Southwest Arizona Town Hall in Yuma make the following findings and recommendations. This report reflects the consensus achieved through group discussions by Town Hall participants.

## **PRINCIPAL GOALS FOR ARIZONA'S PREK-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM**

The overriding goal of Arizona's education system is to develop a foundation of skills for students to advance to post-secondary education and careers. Schools must cultivate basic skills and abilities for success in academics and life, including the ability to effectively communicate and interact, and the ability to acquire and apply knowledge. By developing students' competencies in problem-solving, critical thinking, and social skills, the preK-12 education system positions students to succeed in a range of potential careers, including some careers that may not yet exist. Highly qualified and motivated educators are essential for realizing this goal, but to attract and retain such teachers, compensation must be more competitive with other states.

In addition to teaching academic skills and knowledge, schools should expose students to potential career pathways. Schools should equip students with enough knowledge about future options to determine a path beyond high school, with a focus on postsecondary education and training. Partnerships between education and business can introduce children to the diversity of career options. This should include options besides college, for those who may wish to pursue skilled and technical-based careers.

Stability is key to children's success in school, and since proficiency in core subjects translates into future success, schools must be places where every student has the structure and opportunities to excel. For students whose home life is characterized by uncertainty, stability at school is all the more important. Stability in teaching staff is an essential piece of this picture. With fair compensation, passionate teachers are more committed to their school and students, and more likely to remain in their positions for several years. This stability in staffing should be a priority for schools, and helps to provide structure to students. Ideally, some of this structure is also supplied by parents, and schools must engage parents as partners in their children's education. However, schools must also be attuned to the unique needs of children with difficult family situations and more challenging economic circumstances; for these children, school may be one of few places with assured structure and stability.

The preK-12 education system plays a vital role in the personal development of children: their self-motivation, interest in life-long learning, and engagement in the community as informed citizens. Teachers provide leadership and motivation to students, underpinning their academic as well as personal development. Attracting quality, long-term teachers is contingent on competitive salaries. Teachers need not only better pay, but also support to advance their education and obtain master's degrees, avoid burn-out, and participate in professional development. Professionally supported and involved teachers translate into student engagement, which in turn is taken home and builds stronger, more civic-minded communities.

## **THE AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS AND THE METHODS OF USE OF THE SAME IN ACHIEVING ARIZONA'S PREK-12 EDUCATIONAL GOALS**

The amount of funds provided to Arizona's preK-12 schools, along with the methods for the use of the same, greatly impact the ability to achieve principal goals of Arizona's educational system. Current funding levels are inadequate—and often inequitable, too. For example, wealthier districts, where the per student public funding is similar to lower income districts, have additional district and parent resources to fill gaps, while other districts do not have such local resources available. The end result is that zip codes still determine the quality of funding.

As such, at this time there is not enough money being funneled into the education system to support the students' and Arizona's educational goals. Some of this inadequacy is a sourcing issue, and available fund sources currently are being ignored or dismissed. For example, education relies heavily on property taxes, which is detrimental to Yuma County's ability to source funds, as there is a minimal amount of taxable property (approximately 8%). One alternative would be to instead focus on utilizing a sales tax, especially since Arizona is a tourism and vacation destination. Other alternatives include food taxes, local taxes earmarked for schools, or excise taxes on electricity and other commodities.

In short, Arizona schools need a dedicated public funding source that must be used for public education and cannot be swept for use in other budget measures. Other traditional methods are demonstrably not as effective. For example, bonds are a double-edged sword. When a district passes a bond, it can lead voters to believe that these bonds are now adequately funding school operations, which they often are not. Additionally, there are also issues with other funding sources which must be allocated to a specific purpose. With these "strings-attached" funds, there often are no resources allocated for the underlying infrastructure required to implement those purposes that receive the "strings-attached" funding resources. When the funds sit unspent, it makes school districts appear to have unused funds, but the district literally cannot spend the money because it does not have the resources to implement the programs to then spend the additional money on the students. This is often the case with federal funds provided for education.

For schools, the use of public money is just as important as the availability of public money. For example, in the abovementioned federal funds dilemma, if the state adequately funded the districts in order to support infrastructure, it could increase its investment, as the districts could now spend the available federal funding as intended. As it is now, shrinking state budgets are requiring districts to choose between competing essential needs, putting tires on the bus or fixing air conditioners. When bathrooms in school buildings need repair, sometimes the whole wing needs to be shut down. Employees are being asked to work double duty, with administrators going back to the classrooms to teach and doing the administrative jobs after hours. Doing more with less is the norm in Arizona schools, but it has reached new extremes—now districts are being asked to fulfill increasing demands with almost no funding.

Effective use of the public funding available is critical to achieving local and state educational goals. Currently, increased class size and the elimination of librarians, arts education, music programs, physical education, and other programs all are the adverse effects of inadequate funding. The "pot of public money" for education must be divided so many ways, including salaries, facilities maintenance, and special programs, that there simply is not any left for real, demonstrable needs of the school districts. Foremost among these needs is an increase in teacher salaries, as Arizona is losing quality teachers to other, more competitive salary environments.

The current political climate and system makes it difficult to address these issues. Top-down decision-making has reduced local influence and the resultant willingness of local population to tax themselves as a bottom-up countermeasure. Apart from low teachers' salaries and turnover, the State is also seeing unfunded educational mandates, reduced secondary undergraduate education programs in Arizona public universities, expiring and unstable revenue sources, teacher shortages, slow implementation of technology, a lack of funding to incentivize experienced teachers to remain in their careers, and an inability to fund extracurricular activities such as sports, arts, and student government. While funding has shrunk, it has also focused on improving metrics on required tests rather than, arguably, the true needs of students and districts.

A disconnect has emerged between politicians' focus on performance metrics and local understanding of where funds should be prioritized for the greatest impact on educational success. When schools must devote educational and administrative resources to measuring and capturing data for metrics, this comes at the cost of allocating resources on the basis of local community interests and true student and teacher needs. And, once "metrics" are achieved, revenue sources tied to such achievement are withdrawn from schools. Furthermore, the focus on performance measures creates special challenges for obtaining infrastructure funding, with its indirect link to outcomes data.

Instead, public monies should be used to hire more teachers—and not just stop there. Funding should focus on retaining teachers, which rests heavily on salary and benefits. Indeed, a standardized statewide salary structure should be considered. Funds should also expand teacher days without students in order to allow professional development such that teachers can better reach students and help them to become more



engaged and achieve their individual potential. Additionally, the State should fully fund JTED. Resources should also be utilized to increase job skills programs and certifications, which will provide practical job experience and assist students to make informed life choices.

In addition to public monies, schools should consider partnering with private businesses to employ teachers during the summer and keep them in the area, as well as to obtain additional resources for schools and assist with vocational programs. Engaging the business community to more effectively address and fund education issues is critical for local success in education. This was demonstrated when recent proposed JTED funding cuts were considered, and business leaders, speaking out against the cuts because they would adversely affect the ability to provide a trained technical workforce, stopped the proposal from advancing. Further, various educational organizations need to provide specific, real economic and tax data to communities to justify and explain education spending methods and legislative bills, such that funding is not seen as a “black hole” but rather a concrete, data-supported plan with a strong return on investment. And lastly, a continued push for parental involvement is necessary to achieve goals, as it takes understanding and involvement to change the system that affects all Arizona children.

## **THE FUNDING IMPACT OF SCHOOL CHOICE, IMPACT OF VOUCHERS, AND GEOGRAPHICAL DIFFERENCES**

In Arizona, education funding is fragmented by the variation in types of schools (public, charter, and private), vouchers and tax credits, and the right to school choice. Public dollars not only fund public schools, but also charter schools, even though charter schools can be for-profit. While private schools rely on private funding sources, Arizona’s voucher and tax credit systems position private schools to siphon tax dollars (both individual and corporate) from the public purse and into private schools.

There is a common perception in Arizona that charter and private schools inevitably provide students with a better education than public schools. However, private schools are not held accountable for standards and outputs in the same ways as public and charter schools. For example, mandated state tests that students at public and charter schools must take are not requirements for private schools. This makes real comparison of outcomes between private, public, and charter schools unobtainable. An additional confounding factor in such a comparison would be the income level of families with the resources—whether those resources are financial or knowledge of system navigation—to send their children to private schools. The perception of higher quality in private schools nonetheless supports the trend of diverting funding from public schools, thereby weakening the funding base necessary for public school systems to succeed.

Charter schools have been a central component of the “school choice” concept, and charter schools enjoy unique advantages in funding. With limited enrollment, sometimes specific curriculum, and a smaller population of students with disabilities than public schools, charter school students are often less expensive, per student, to educate than the general student population. Charter schools, for instance, can push students with emotional or discipline challenges back into the public school system. Charter schools additionally benefit from public school tax credits, which can offset costs for extracurricular and enrichment activities. Furthermore, charter schools can exercise more flexibility in the use of their funding than public schools can. They also do not share some of the administrative costs that public schools bear, such as costs related to open meeting laws, student transportation, and employment of certified teachers.

Vouchers—or more precisely Empowerment Scholarship Accounts, for which students with special needs and circumstances are eligible—disproportionately benefit private schools and negatively impact the funding of public schools. For public schools, vouchers compound the uncertainty inherent in school choice: both force districts to assume the burden of unpredictable class sizes and student volume from year to year. Vouchers exacerbate the challenges of Arizona’s already-low investment in the public preK-12 education system. Proponents of vouchers, however, emphasize the possibilities they open for students with disabilities; vouchers may provide educational opportunities and true choice to those who cannot otherwise afford or access it.

In assessing the funding impact of school choice, geographical variation between urban, rural, and tribal areas must be taken into consideration. Indeed, geography significantly impacts the range of choices available in a given zip code. In urban areas, schools have access to a larger supply of teachers for recruitment, whereas rural schools do not enjoy this selection. Rural and tribal areas often struggle

with recruiting and retaining sufficient numbers of qualified teachers. A potential measure is offering salary differentials to help recruit more teachers to rural and tribal areas. Tribal students most often attend public schools, but often in rural areas where choice is limited.

While the option for parents to exercise school choice is valued in Arizona, the concept underpins inequities in the current funding system. This leads to an uneven playing field in which not all schools—or students—enjoy the same opportunities. School choice also leads to the diversion of funds from a family's local school district, which contributes to severing the traditional ties between a public school and the surrounding neighborhood. The impact of this can be cyclical: local parents are less likely to pass a bond or levy to raise funds for the local schools that their child may never attend. Furthermore, school choice is only an operational principle when there are multiple schools in the area for parents to choose among. In rural and tribal areas with only one school, school choice can be meaningless. For instance, this is the case in East Yuma County, in Dateland and Wellton. In these rural areas, additionally, schools struggle to attract qualified teachers. Even in more populated areas, school choice is still limited by the availability of transportation. These factors all contribute to the school choice concept applying more in urban areas than rural ones, and more to resourceful families that tend to have more choices beyond the selection of school.

In short, fragmentation characterizes the current education system in Arizona. With school choice, schools are competing for the same education dollars; this pits public schools not only against private and charter schools, but also against each other. School choice allows for some parents to move children who are underperforming between schools, which can lead to a vicious cycle of poor accountability and passing on blame. The school choice system is an element of the increasing privatization of the education system, which has accompanied market-like evaluations of schools as successes or failures based on student performance. In such calculations, however, public schools are disadvantaged in their accountability to state testing and performance measures, which do not apply to private schools. Despite the fragmentation of funding, public schools are mandated to accommodate students of all circumstances and abilities. Yet more resourceful families gravitate toward charter and private schools, depleting public schools of both per-student funding as well the social capital these parents bring. With steady or declining overall education funding in Arizona—and a portion of that funding going toward charters, tax credits, and vouchers—public schools are put in a position in which they must do more with fewer resources.

## **IMPROVING THE AMOUNT OR METHODS OF FUNDING FOR ARIZONA'S PREK-12 SCHOOLS**

There is much that can be done by various stakeholders to improve the amount and methods of funding Arizona's preK-12 schools. Mainly, however, stakeholders should focus on tax solutions or reforms, and education of the voting populace.

First and foremost, solidifying the public's knowledge of all sides of the issues is critical. Without understanding, support for additional resources—and certainly support for additional taxes—is difficult to achieve. Various stakeholders may hold the responsibility for educating the populace including educators, governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, and political action committees. This education should supplement their work of lobbying and advocacy to the government for funding. With education to better grasp the issues, the voting public can and will support pro-education candidates and initiatives. An educated voting populace can then elect public officials who truly reflect the community's interest in improving education. This movement starts early by motivating students to register to vote when they reach voting age, and teaching them the reasons why their votes are important. Stakeholders should encourage younger, politically active members of the community to focus on education to benefit their families. Since education has such broad stakeholders, grassroots movements must energize discussions on improving education. Education then allows stakeholders to maximize the spirit of collaboration to improve education with elected officials and the business community.

By understanding the history of funding public education, from local funding to state funding, and the societal reasons for those changes, voters can then understand the current challenges and options. Citizens must understand that public education is worth it. Spending money on education now can save spending money on criminal justice later on. Educational attainment is an economic resource that serves the public good.

Apart from education, obtaining funds through a variety of taxes seems the most tenable option. Cooperation and involvement of the legislature is the easiest answer. However, the issues with education funding seem to be created by the legislature, and a sense of urgency to fix the problems created needs to be fostered within the legislature. The legislature exacerbated the educational funding problems during the great recession. In the time of falling revenues, the legislature cut funding in education to balance the budget and the public had little say in the matter. Now is the legislature's opportunity to incorporate new tax solutions to fix the funding problem.

As discussed earlier in this report, there are a variety of potential funding sources that the legislature could explore, such as a sales tax, a food tax, excise taxes, and partnership with local businesses, by reference. Further, there currently is a disparity between the amount one can donate to a private school and the amount one can donate to a public school for tax credits. If the State is going to proceed with the tax credits model, the ability to donate needs to be equitable across all schools. Indeed, certain tax credits may need to be reduced or eliminated.

The State should continue to foster and fully fund JTED, as it provides access to resources for students in all local schools and in a variety of programs. More sources of funding, or greater portions of those sources (such as an increased amount from Proposition 301), need to be earmarked strictly for educational use, protecting them from being subsumed into the general fund. We need to set regulations to prevent shifting of funds from one purpose to another, such as from capital to facilities, within the education system.

Additionally, when tax breaks for businesses are passed, many times there is no plan to make up for this lost revenue. Unintended consequences of tax breaks/credits, such as the Scottsdale Art Gallery sales tax exemption to address online sales, create education funding issues. Other times, focus on the source of taxes affects areas outside of Maricopa County. For example, Yuma is disadvantaged due to relatively low assessed property value and fewer large businesses than metro areas like Phoenix, resulting in a higher (secondary) tax rate. Areas like Yuma need another outside dedicated funding source to compensate for this inequality. In other states, developer fees on new homes and requirements to provide land for schools provide revenue and also good, new schools; such an approach may work here, as well. In situations such as this, local taxes may alleviate local concerns and supplement State allocations.

But, again, when it comes to taxes, education is key. While many Arizonans moved from other states where education is a portion of their taxes, and may expect it here, others do not want to see a penny more in taxes. There is also a perception that a portion of population believes it does not need to pay for schools now that their kids are grown.

Because of the political sensitivity of raising taxes, total reliance on the legislature may not be the best way to go about funding schools. Arizona may want to consider an option for private funding of education that would allow the individual to be responsible for their children's education, although protections must be in place for those who are economically disadvantaged. Schools may also benefit from private sponsorship and support, as well as community resources beyond financial support. Businesses and public/private partnerships can provide outside funding sources, as in the case of Gowan Company's assistance to Crane School District in Yuma. Schools need to determine how to better utilize the resources they have access to, such as community resources and knowledge and existing infrastructure, in order to save money and expand opportunities. The "Community School" concept currently being implemented at O.C. Johnson Elementary School in Yuma is a case in point. Alternative income sources, such as in-house businesses at schools or the use of students to handle certain tasks may also defray costs.

## **FUNDING CHALLENGES FACING YUMA AREA SCHOOLS, AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS AND SOURCES OF LOCAL SUPPORT**

A number of funding challenges face Yuma-area schools; with competing priorities and limited funds, sacrifices can jeopardize the ability of schools to fulfill their many obligations. Funding challenges for Yuma schools include financing the soft capital expenses of classroom furniture and supplies, the costs of maintenance and operations for school facilities, and the costs of purchasing and maintaining vehicles for school transportation. Funding should also support the acquisition of new forms of classroom equipment and technologies to support various learning styles, and to support the many English Language Acquisition learners in Yuma County.

Funding shortfalls in Yuma County can in some respects be attributed to geography. A unique challenge is our location on the border with Mexico; Yuma County schools educate students who cross the border from Mexico each day, but education dollars for these students are not accompanied by the typical property tax investment of parents. The geography of Yuma also means isolation from policymakers whose priorities in education funding are often informed by the more densely-populated areas of the state. Within the sizable landmass of Yuma County, an additional challenge is the minimal amount of taxable property, and the large portion of agricultural land that is taxed at a lower rate.

Despite these current limitations to Yuma's property tax revenues for education, this is also an area of opportunity. With strategic community development, in-fill of areas with commercial properties can increase the tax base for school districts. Other new tax revenues, such as sales taxes and excise taxes on electricity and other commodities, as mentioned previously, could further supplement education funding.

Tax credits are mostly considered for their impact on private education, but are not limited to private schools. Tax credits could provide a more equitable revenue source; currently, there is a disparity between the amount one can donate to a private school and the amount one can donate to a public school for tax credits, by more than twofold. The community should create more awareness of the ability to donate to public schools via their tax returns, and advocate to policymakers so that tax credits can more significantly benefit the public educational system.

This lack of funding has material consequences for public schools. Teachers often pay for supplies out of pocket, or must independently seek outside funding for basic teaching resources. There are, however, creative efforts that also mobilize parents and the broader community to address funding challenges. At a grassroots level, fundraising opportunities for education include Box Tops for Education, which can help defray field trip costs, Target grants for field trips, and websites such as [zigaty.com](http://zigaty.com) and [DonorsChoose.org](http://DonorsChoose.org). Other local efforts in the Yuma area include drives for school supplies and Operation School Bell, which helps low-income families with school uniforms. Additionally, some foundations offer grants to support the purchase technology and consumable supplies, such as the Staples Foundation. To pursue such opportunities, some schools are investing more resources in grant writing, but it must be underscored that no one grant is a sustainable solution to funding shortfalls.

Creative opportunities also include collaborations, such as locating kindergartens in senior facilities to share facility costs and provide the mutual benefits of cross-generational social interaction. Schools also have resources that could be shared, such as buses that could serve the public as well as the educational system. Other potential funding opportunities include taxation targeted at tourists and the seasonal visitors who otherwise are not substantially investing in Yuma's education.

The value of education must be better recognized and valued outside of the education sector. Given the importance of an educated populace in all sectors, the education sector must be at the table in discussions regarding economic development, business, and healthcare. With such representation of the education sector, Yuma can differentiate itself in a positive way, highlighting the importance of education and our students' work ethic to attract new businesses to the area. Forging stronger ties between education and economic development is most effective with mutual support. Local industry can be recruited to invest in extracurricular activities at early stages of education, and to develop mentorship programs for local students. These investments not only enhance educational opportunities in the school setting, but also open the eyes of students to future career opportunities.

Human capital is an essential—if not the essential—asset in any organization, and in schools, the importance of teachers cannot be underestimated. Yet with poor compensation and recognition, public school teachers are not properly valued, leading to dissatisfaction and turnover. To build local support for education and educators, Yuma must continue to foster appreciation for teachers. Schools should reach out to local businesses to expand the opportunities for teachers to find short-term employment during the summer, which helps keep them in the area. Additionally, schools must identify internal pathways for professional development for teachers; this incentivizes teachers to remain in the profession, and in the community.



## **COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS LEADER SUPPORT TO YUMA AREA SCHOOLS**

There are many ways in which our community and business leaders can and do support Yuma area schools. For example, local business leaders can mentor students, volunteer for speaking engagements, provide resume and interview training and practice, offer career experience programs (with a stipend to the student), sponsor field trips or other programs, and invite students to conferences and other events. By coming into the schools, leaders can introduce students to various professions and encourage pathways to success. This includes teaching as a profession, as recruitment for this field can start early. Creative ways to encourage students to consider teaching as a profession include clubs, meetings, stories, and publicity. Involvement in the classroom has the added benefit of raising awareness of businesses that allow their employees to spend some of their time in the classroom. Collaboration between public schools for special events, such as science fairs, continues this mutually beneficial relationship.

Schools are the heart of the community, and this should be reflected in community partnerships. Right now, there is collaboration and partnership in certain industries that provide information to assist in developing education curriculums based on those industries' needs. It can get better. Many companies are starting to explore continuing education scenarios, such as shadowing opportunities for students, preceptor opportunities to satisfy program requirements, and internships for students to gain experience. These are available to traditional and non-traditional students alike. These students will facilitate learning opportunities for students to improving their communication and soft skills, and will help them cultivate interviewing skills. Many students need to know how to foster those skills to continue to the next level, and in this way companies could provide a substantial resource to schools with only a small increase in their participation.

In particular, there is room for such partnerships to grow within Yuma's key sectors: agriculture and the military. Yuma County is fortunate in that it has a huge resource in the agriculture and fertilizer industry. They also have a significant political presence that can influence our legislature. Since the military also has a significant presence in this area, the voices of these sectors can be amplified by joining together in advocacy. By way of example, Future Farmers of America (FFA) receives a great deal of support from companies through scholarships, sponsor drives, job shadowing, and other experiences that help students learn about careers. Companies located across the border in Mexico could also provide support for education and learning experiences at their facilities.

Unfortunately, vocational education is dwindling with decreasing budgets. As such, students may not know about the available opportunities right now. Many students may not have ever been exposed to industry and may have only seen a real scientist on television. The fact that there may be a real scientist around the corner could provide inspiration for students to continue with education and seize available opportunities, such as continuing education. Students may not see the light at the end of the tunnel without a local leader showing them that their hard work pays off. Through involvement of local industry, the creation of field-based learning opportunities could translate into school credits and real-life experiences. Teachers need this help from local role models to assist in exposing students to future options and real success stories. These must demonstrate that success is not always about the money; it is also about opportunity.

Education is a life-long endeavor that needs continuous inspiration. Everyone understands that funding is lackluster, to say the least, but the proposed solutions focus on what to do with the education that local students *do* receive and what is available without the need for more money. To facilitate these solutions, community residents, and leaders in particular, should take the opportunity to tour public schools and observe teachers and students in action, such that they better understand the challenges and opportunities first-hand. Elected officials should be included in invitations to schools so that politicians are educated on what is really going on in public education, rather than drawing conclusions based on anecdotes.

In the end, schools and interested citizens should continue to advocate for the positions discussed herein, through positive messages on social media, continued communication with the legislature, and education to the voting public. Education and collaboration is crucial between all stakeholders, from parents to businesses to legislatures, in order to ensure workable solutions in funding sources, funding adequacy, and maximization of available resources.



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# Community Town Halls FAQs

## What is a Community Town Hall?

- A Community Town Hall is a gathering that includes discussion about the public policy topic being addressed by Arizona Town Hall that is informed and facilitated using Arizona Town Hall methods, that culminates in a written consensus statement that is published by Arizona Town Hall, and that contributes to the statewide Town Hall.
- Working in partnership with the Arizona Town Hall, each community designs the event to meet its particular needs.
- The length depends on the audience, and affects the quality of the discussion. Ideally the event lasts at least 3 hours, but it may be as short as 1-1/2 hours or as long as one or two days.
- Community Town Halls may be held as part of a previously scheduled event, such as a regular meeting, or a conference. May-October is the prime time for a Community Town Hall.

## Why sponsor a Community Town Hall?

- To provide communities and leaders with tools that will help them resolve difficult issues.
- To educate community members about, and engage them in tackling, important policy issues.
- To provide communities a voice that will inform policymakers and others about the community's perspectives and to share the community's creative ideas.
- To empower communities and community members, through powerful discussion and connections to resources, to become more effective action agents.
- To enable those who cannot attend a statewide Town Hall to share their ideas and recommendations.

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*“Our Community Town Hall was one of the best experiences our members have ever had. The expert facilitation of a discussion on global trade in Arizona with Global Chamber members allowed challenging issues to be openly and constructively addressed. The Arizona Town Hall facilitators were nothing short of amazing in how they captured input and documented consensus for the large group.”*

- Doug Bruhnke, CEO/Founder, Global Chamber

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## How can my organization sponsor a Community Town Hall?

- Start by contacting Arizona Town Hall; we can help you to design an event that will best meet your community's needs.
- Your community should determine a date, time, location, and facility. Many communities minimize costs by obtaining in-kind donations of facilities and refreshments.
- Arizona Town Hall charges approximately \$5,000 to support and facilitate a Community Town Hall. The fee varies depending on the community and the scope of the event; it does not include the cost of facilities or refreshments.
- Arizona Town Hall is actively seeking philanthropic funding to help support Community Town Halls. Funding also may be obtained from local governments and businesses or through registration fees and in-kind donations.

## Why does Arizona Town Hall charge a fee and what does it cover?

- Arizona Town Hall staff provides operational guidance and support, training materials, background information on the issue, discussion questions and either training or trained facilitators.
- Arizona Town Hall will assist in finalizing your consensus report and will publish and publicize it as part of its annual program addressing the topic. We also may seek to engage participants in your event in our media campaign.
- Arizona Town Hall can provide additional services and resources including participant registration and related bookkeeping, press releases, and contacts for in-kind services such as facilities.
- Arizona Town Hall is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with limited resources. Our staff and volunteers, many of whom are highly skilled professionals, have special expertise developed over years of training and practice. Fees cover a portion of the costs of providing the services described above.





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