

Teachers will be crucial to the state's future, Town Hall is told

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Special for The Republic

Apr. 30, 2008 12:00 AM

Editor's note: This article was submitted by Tara Jackson, president of the Arizona Town Hall. Send your education news to lori.baker@arizonarepublic.com.

Gov. Janet Napolitano told more than 180 Arizonans this week that teacher-recruitment and -retention efforts must prepare educators to teach the critical-thinking, problem-solving, and team-learning skills that employers expect of high school graduates today.

A cross-section of statewide leaders met in Prescott for four days through today for the 92nd Arizona Town Hall, titled Who Will Teach Our Children?

"The public education system is the way we provide equal opportunities for Arizona youth," Napolitano said. "A strong public education system is essential to support a quality workforce and maintain a strong state economy."

Napolitano called for Town Hall participants to develop specific recommendations to improve teachers' working conditions; increase the pipeline of teachers, particularly in the areas of math, science, English language learners, and special education; ensure that colleges of education in the state use up-to-date, research-based methodologies; and support ongoing professional development and mentoring.

Arthur E. Levine, president of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, addressed the Town Hall on approaches to teacher education based on the latest research.

"In order to thrive, our children need higher-level skills and greater knowledge than ever before in history," Levine said. "Industrial societies relied on process. Information economies, in contrast, care about outcomes. What matters is how much children actually learn. The world has changed and requires a new breed of teachers."

After the conference, the Town Hall's recommendations will be available on its Web site on May 9. The recommendations also will be combined with the background report into a final report and formally published in July.