

“Funding preK-12 Education”

**Community Town Hall Report
Prescott, AZ – October 26, 2017**



FUNDING PREK-12 EDUCATION

AASBO Community Town Hall Report

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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 25th 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.