

“Funding preK-12 Education”

Community Town Hall Report

Arizona Hispanic Chamber – September 22, 2017



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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.

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