

“Funding preK-12 Education”

Community Town Hall Report

Phoenix, AZ – October 28, 2017



FUNDING PREK-12 EDUCATION

Asian Pacific Community Town Hall Report
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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.

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