

# **“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.

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



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