



Highlights of 2017  
Arizona Town Hall  
Sessions

**FUNDING PREK-12  
EDUCATION**



Participant Johnny Key during Panel discussions at the 110th statewide Town Hall.

*The state's failure to adequately fund Arizona schools and teachers severely limits our ability to achieve the goals we have identified for the preK-12 education system, resulting in a system that does not meet the needs of the state.*

- from the 110th Arizona Town Hall Report of Recommendations

**F**or over 50 years, Arizona Town Hall has created solutions to complex problems by educating, engaging, connecting and empowering Arizonans.

In 2017, Arizona Town Hall initiated a new method for accomplishing its mission—a series of Community Town Halls held around the state prior to the statewide Town Hall.

Community Town Halls and Future Leaders Town Halls (events held for high school and college students) allow a greater number of Arizonans to experience positive civic engagement. These programs also incubate solutions for statewide issues and develop a grassroots network of informed citizens ready to work together to maximize Arizona's potential.

To ensure informed discussion, Town Hall participants review background information developed by the Arizona Town Hall Research Committee.

Participants at the statewide Town Hall consider the information in the Background Report as well as recommendations from the Community and Future Leaders Town Halls.

This publication is a summary of key points from the Background Report, the Community and Future Leaders Town Halls and the Report of Recommendations developed at the statewide Town Hall held November 12-15, 2017.

Complete Town Hall reports are published and made available to Arizona Town Hall members, elected officials (including the Arizona Legislature), public libraries, and the general public. Download digital copies for free online at [www.aztownhall.org](http://www.aztownhall.org) or call (602) 252-9600 to request a printed copy.

## FUNDING PREK-12 EDUCATION QUICK LINKS

Arizona State Board of Education

[azsbe.az.gov](http://azsbe.az.gov)

Arizona Department of Education

[www.azed.gov](http://www.azed.gov)

Arizona Education Association

[www.arizonaaea.org](http://www.arizonaaea.org)

Arizona Governor's Office of Education

[education.azgovernor.gov](http://education.azgovernor.gov)

Arizona Charter Schools Association

[www.azcharters.org](http://www.azcharters.org)

National Center for Education Statistics

[nces.ed.gov](http://nces.ed.gov)

First Things First

[www.firstthingsfirst.org](http://www.firstthingsfirst.org)

Expect More Arizona

[www.expectmorearizona.org](http://www.expectmorearizona.org)

Children's Action Alliance

[www.azchildren.org](http://www.azchildren.org)

103rd Arizona Town Hall on Early Education

[www.aztownhall.org/Early\\_Education](http://www.aztownhall.org/Early_Education)

# KEY POINTS FROM THE BACKGROUND REPORT

Read or download the complete background report at [www.aztownhall.org](http://www.aztownhall.org).

## KEY GOALS & METRICS FOR EDUCATION IN ARIZONA

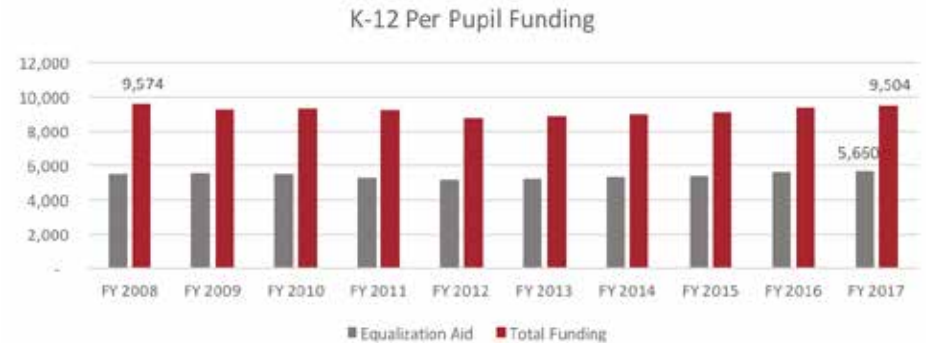
The widely adopted “Arizona Education Progress Meter” has eight primary metrics. Selected metrics and Arizona’s current status are as follows:

- **Attainment:** Currently 42% of Arizonans ages 25-64 years of age have completed a 2- or 4-year degree or received a postsecondary certificate  
**Goal:** 60% by 2030.
- **Post High School Enrollment:** Currently 53% of Arizona high school graduates are enrolled in postsecondary education the semester after graduating from high school.  
**Goal:** 70% by 2030.
- **Opportunity Youth:** Currently 15% of 16-24 year olds in Arizona are not going to school or working.  
**Goal:** Reduce to 7% by 2030.
- **High School Graduation:** Currently 78% of Arizona high school students graduate in 4 years.  
**Goal:** 90% by 2030.
- **8th Grade Math:** Currently 36% of Arizona 8th grade students are prepared to be successful in high school math (includes 8th grade students passing the 8th grade AzMERIT math assessment, Algebra I EOC test, Geometry EOC test, or Algebra II EOC test).  
**Goal:** 69% by 2030.
- **3rd Grade Reading:** Currently 41% of Arizona 3rd grade students score Proficient or Highly Proficient on the AzMERIT 3rd grade English language arts assessment.  
**Goal:** 72% by 2030.
- **Quality Early Learning:** 21% of Arizona 3 and 4 year-old children are in quality early learning settings.  
**Goal:** 45% by 2030.
- **Teacher Pay:** Currently, Arizona ranks 50th in the nation for median elementary teacher pay.  
**Goal:** To reach the national median by 2022.

## HOW MUCH DOES THE K-12 SYSTEM RECEIVE?

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, Arizona provided approximately \$5,660 per student. Per pupil funding reductions between FY 2009 and FY 2012 were due to adjustments made during the recession. When all sources of funding are considered, including federal and local funds, the average per pupil amount jumps to \$9,504.

Arizona spends less than \$35 per \$1,000 of personal income on education and is one of only four states in the U.S. with this distinction. Arizona, Idaho, Utah and Oklahoma have the lowest overall state commitment to education spending.



Source: Joint Legislative Budget Committee, K-12 Funding Since 2008 (Non-Capital Funding Only) 7/25/16

## TEACHERS

School districts around the state are unable to hire and retain certified teachers. The teacher shortage has been exacerbated by the inability to provide cost of living raises and competitive salaries.

It is projected that 26,122 (or 24%) of Arizona teachers will be eligible to retire by June 30, 2018.

Student to teacher ratios: To bring the state to the national average of 16 to 1 would require an additional 21,000 teachers. To return the state to the pre-recession 20 to 1 levels would require 7,460 new teachers.

Special thanks to



and John Arnold in particular for serving as Editor of the Background Report.



# COMMUNITY TOWN HALLS

In the months before the statewide Town Hall, Arizonans discuss the topic at Community Town Halls. Communities can be organized geographically or by interest. These sessions generally range in size from 25 to 250 people and vary in length from 90 minutes to over a day. Participants develop ideas for statewide solutions, work on local action plans and commit to be a part of solutions through individual actions. Their recommendations help inform discussions at the statewide Town Hall while their actions create continued momentum from “the grassroots to the grasstops.” Following are some of the key points developed from these sessions.

## GOALS OF ARIZONA'S PREK-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM

- Maximize the potential of all students.
- Create critical thinkers and lifelong learners.
- Have students ready for the workforce—which may or may not include college.
- Provide important life skills.
- Create active civic citizens of the community and the world.

## IMPACT OF FUNDING LEVELS AND METHODS

- Creates severe teacher shortages that are getting worse—especially in Arizona's rural areas.
- The complexity of the funding system causes problems. Few people understand the system which can lead to inefficiencies.
- Funding differences between charters, traditional public schools and private schools create too many problems, especially when there is not enough overall funding.
- There is simply not enough funding. We need to increase funding to Arizona's public schools.
- Education is critical to creating a qualified workforce. Funding shortages to Arizona public schools impact our ability to maximize economic development.

## SOLUTIONS

### Identify & Secure Additional Sources of Revenue

1. Consider an increase in sales taxes. Renew and expand Proposition 301.
2. Consider new or expanded excise taxes, including a possible tax on energy.
3. Get rid of tax credits and loopholes that decrease the overall amounts in the General Fund.
4. Simplify and equalize funding across the state for all public schools.
5. Provide more local control so that schools can apply funds to where it is needed most.

### Identify and Partner in the Implementation of Communication Strategies

1. Education is an investment, not an expense.
2. Explain why an investment in education matters to everyone. Investing in education allows us to have the workforce needed for the 21st century economy. It also saves money in the long run. We can invest now in education or pay later with increases to our prison population.
3. Educate voters on how to vote for elected officials who truly support education.
4. Take action. Communicate information to others. Vote.



Participants Jennifer Cox and Manny Leon participate in discussions at the Tucson Community Town Hall.

### Community Town Halls:

- Arizona Association of School Business Officials
- Asian Pacific Community In Action
- Douglas
- East Valley
- Flagstaff
- Phoenix (Arizona Hispanic Chamber of Commerce)
- Phoenix (Chicanos Por La Causa)
- Quad City - Prescott
- Rim Country - Payson
- Scottsdale (Global Chamber)
- Sierra Vista
- Tucson
- Verde Valley
- White Mountains - Show Low
- Yuma



Student participants discuss the challenges facing Arizona's education funding policies in Payson and the Verde Valley.

### Future Leaders Town Halls:

- Arizona State University
- Arizona Western College - San Luis Learning Center
- Arizona Western College - Somerton Center
- Arizona Western College - Yuma Campus
- City of Phoenix
- Cochise College - Sierra Vista Campus
- Coconino Community College - Lone Tree Campus
- College Success Arizona
- Mesa Community College
- Payson High School
- Pima Community College - Community Campus
- South Mountain Community College
- University of Arizona
- Yavapai College - Clarkdale Campus
- Yavapai College - Prescott Campus

# FUTURE LEADERS TOWN HALLS

Arizona Town Hall, in partnership with community colleges, universities and other organizations, held Future Leaders Town Halls that included high school and college students throughout the state. Their recommendations helped to inform the discussions at the statewide Town Hall. The following are some of the key points developed from the gatherings.

## GOALS OF ARIZONA'S PREK-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM

- Prepare students for careers and their futures as individuals in the community.
- Aspire to send more students on for post-secondary education.
- Build critical life skills and teach common knowledge.
- Encourage students to become lifelong learners with a passion for education.
- Foster good values and develop community engagement.
- Incorporate a flexible and relevant curriculum to empower students to explore diverse opportunities.

## IMPACT OF FUNDING LEVELS AND METHODS

- Constrains ability to recruit and retain high quality teachers.
- Limits resources available for implementation of technology.
- Restricts budgets for purchasing supplies and maintaining facilities.
- Reduces dollars available for extracurricular activities.
- Increases class size and reduces individualized instruction when funding is low.
- Directly influences the variety, availability and quality of educational opportunities.

## WAYS TO IMPROVE FUNDING

- Reallocate funds in the state budget from other areas such as prisons.
- Generate more funding through donations such as the tax credit program.

- Ensure more transparency and accountability in how funds are spent.
- Support bond issues and budget overrides.
- Renew Proposition 301.
- Involve more businesses in supporting specific programs or adopting schools.

## MESSAGES FOR ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS

- Raise teacher pay and invest in their development.
- Increase overall funding to improve Arizona's educational ranking nationally.
- Become directly involved with schools in your area and embrace education as a top priority.
- Focus on preparing students for career and life success and reduce emphasis on test scores.
- Consider long-term effects of education funding on our state's future.
- Fund all aspects of education including extracurricular activities and life skills programs.

## INDIVIDUAL COMMITMENTS TO ACTION

### Participants committed to:

- Use my voice and my vote to influence education funding.
- Engage political leaders in understanding the importance of making education funding a priority.
- Expand other students' knowledge on school funding including holding a resource fair.
- Continue to push for higher salaries for teachers.
- Talk to my parents about education funding and the Town Hall experience.
- Post about these issues on social media.



Keynote speaker Michael Griffith, School Finance Strategist, Education Commission of the States presents an analysis of Arizona compared to other states.

*Arizona is facing a crisis when it comes to current and anticipated teacher shortages.*

- from the 110th Arizona Town Hall Report of Recommendations

# REPORT OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The 110th statewide Town Hall convened on November 12-15, 2017, to develop recommendations for funding Arizona's preK-12 education. Below is a summary of the recommendations for action. Read or download the complete report at: [www.aztownhall.org](http://www.aztownhall.org).

## IMPROVING OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM

- Develop a dedicated revenue stream to increase teacher pay to levels commensurate with the national average.
- Restore full funding for school capital, including school facility construction, maintenance, investments in technology, and other capital needs.
- Fund full-day kindergarten and early childhood education programs.
- Eliminate "results-based" funding.
- Implement consistent, transparent accountability standards applicable to all institutions within our preK-12 education system that accept public funds.
- Ensure that all existing and new sources of funding are dedicated accordingly and cannot be diverted for other purposes.

## REINVESTING SUBSTANTIALLY IN ARIZONA'S PREK-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM

- Make a one-time investment to address existing deficiencies, including deferred maintenance.
- Restore the cut in Charter Additional Assistance.
- Update and fully fund the Building Renewal Fund.

- Use state bonding authority to address deferred maintenance and other significant capital deficiencies.
- Renew and expand Proposition 301 to provide for an incremental statewide sales tax of at least one percent.
- Repeal the limitations on Legislature-approved tax increases that were enacted pursuant to Proposition 108.

## LOBBYING THE LEGISLATURE

- Modernize the basic formula for state funding to level the playing field among different types of schools and consider the unique needs of our diverse student population.
- Implement a new uniform statewide property tax.
- Adjust the equalization formula to require all districts to levy the "qualifying tax rate."
- Streamline the bureaucracy in our preK-12 system, focusing on whether the rules applicable to district vs. charter schools make sense and contribute to adequate, equitable funding statewide.
- Revisit and repeal tax credit and private school tuition scholarship programs that utilize public funds for private endeavors, thereby increasing the burden on the public school system.





Participant Jonae Harrison proposes changes to the draft report of recommendations during the plenary session at the 110th Town Hall.

***There is a state of emergency with respect to Arizona's underfunding of our preK-12 education system, which requires urgent, decisive action.***

- from the 110th Arizona Town Hall Report of Recommendations

## IDENTIFYING ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF FUNDING

- Consider adding sales taxes on personal, professional or other services.
- Make all nicotine delivery devices subject to the existing tobacco tax.
- Evaluate expanding excise taxes.
- Close corporate tax loopholes.
- Explore public/private partnerships for infrastructure and construction needs.

## DEVELOPING A STRONGER COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION

- Increase awareness within the general public about the value and importance of adequately funding our preK-12 education system, and about what is working and what isn't.
- Use research, statistics and available data to quantify what "adequate" means so legislators and the public better understand our constitutional mandate to adequately fund education.
- Hold elected officials accountable for explaining their support of our preK-12 education system, as well as how they intend to provide adequate funding.
- Encourage young people to be involved and vocal about supporting our preK-12 education system, including voting by those who are eligible to do so.
- Launch and sustain a grassroots effort to support preK-12 education funding by increasing collaboration and coordination among local communities, educational advocacy groups, tribal organizations, chambers of commerce and other business groups.

- Work diligently with all involved to reduce duplicate paperwork and burdensome oversight. Use technology for efficiency.

## PROVIDING LEADERSHIP FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Ask the Governor and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to lead the effort to improve our preK-12 education system and engage and challenge our legislators.
- Involve the Governor, Superintendent of Public Instruction, education stakeholders, advocacy organizations, business groups, educational foundations and associations of elected officials in changing the tax structure to provide adequate education funding.
- Push forward the initiative to implement and fully fund full-day kindergarten through a combined effort of all levels of elected officials, the business community, other community organizations and the public.
- Develop a coordinated and sustained grassroots effort wherein all Arizonans take ownership of their preK-12 education system and become outspoken advocates for adequate funding.
- Act in an urgent and decisive manner as individual participants in the 110th Arizona Town Hall to encourage serious and intense discussion and action to address the state of emergency re: funding for our preK-12 education system.

### KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

**Kristin Blagg**, Researcher, Education Policy Program, Urban Institute

**Michael Griffith**, School Finance Strategist, Education Commission of the States



We welcome your involvement,  
questions and perspectives.

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Town Hall recommendations are a valuable resource for policymakers because they do not represent the agenda of a particular group or political perspective. Instead, Arizona Town Hall reports contain the informed consensus of Arizonans from different political parties, professions, and geographic areas of the state. A private, non-profit civic organization, Arizona Town Hall serves as a catalyst for conversations and recommendations that create significant changes in Arizona's public policy. Countless local, state, and national leaders cite Arizona Town Hall as an important factor in educating people about complex issues, and fostering the development of civic and community leaders.

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