

“Funding preK-12 Education”

Community Town Hall Report

Prescott, AZ – October 17, 2017



FUNDING PREK-12 EDUCATION

Quad City Community Town Hall Report October 17, 2017

Participants of the October 2017 Quad City 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

Goals of Arizona's preK-12 Education System include:

Outcome goals:

- Career preparation, college preparation, and development of technical skills.
- Personal and character development, including encouraging students to recognize and develop their own personal passions.
- Development of life skills including general skills like critical thinking, collaboration, listening, problem solving, and also more specific, practical skills such as budgeting.
- Development of an informed electorate and inclusive community.

Systemic goals:

- Equity in students' access to opportunities.
- Proper school funding.
- An emphasis on preK education.
- Stronger business and family relationships.
- Improved student engagement.

IMPACT OF PUBLIC FUNDS

The current funding system creates “have and have-nots,” “winners and losers”—aka, the public school hunger games. Lack of funding for preK creates inequity right off the bat. There is also a lack of equity between charter, private, and public schools.

Overall, there is simply not enough money. Single use funding streams and limitations on how money can be spent disconnect funds from the greatest needs. Temporary funding sources affect and limit long-term planning. School financing is too confusing. Capital cuts affect buses and facilities; there is insufficient funding for necessary tools such as textbooks and supplies, and teachers are not adequately prepared or compensated. There is also a lack of local control, which inhibits local planning.

In the end, this equates to a lack of enthusiasm in teachers and lack of opportunities for students, rural students in particular.

IMPROVING FUNDING FOR ARIZONA'S PREK-12 SCHOOLS

We need to engage in a grassroots effort that has a plan, a vision, and a champion which will educate the public—including students, teachers, business interests, and other members of the community. We need to get all of those interests engaged and invested in change, and encourage

students in particular to take on leadership roles. We need to change the narrative: rephrase proposals from, for example, “we need money” to we “need to invest in our children and our future.” Change “we will survive” to “we need to thrive.”

We need to mobilize the movement through the referendum and initiative processes and hold elected officials accountable for their actions and inactions related to education.

We need to train teachers and parents how to make their voices heard at the state and local levels and to advocate and lobby on behalf of students. Trust can be built through transparency, demonstrating how this money is an investment in education, and by working directly with the stakeholders who will be most impacted by any proposed new or increased taxes.

The legislature should be held accountable. They could create a statewide salary schedule for a livable wage for teachers to reduce competition between districts. The legislature also should eliminate funding restrictions and restore local control; make realistic assessments of the funding needed for various programs (such as special education); and, close tax loopholes.

If all else fails: we’ll hold a bake sale.

SETTING PRIORITIES AND TAKING ACTION

Participants determined the most important priorities and goals for ensuring the best education future for the Quad City community. The top priorities that will have the most beneficial impact on the future of Yavapai County are:

- **First:** Increase revenue by:
 - Informing, educating, and uniting everyone in the community (from students to legislators) through a grassroots effort. Specifically, educate community members as to the specific benefits of funding education and change the culture to emphasize the value of good teachers and the importance of public education as a whole.
 - Developing short and long-term plans for putting reliable and dedicated revenue streams in place to benefit public education.
 - Holding elected officials accountable.
- **Second:** Use additional revenue to recruit and retain qualified teachers who are not overburdened. Also create and maintain a long-term and reliable funding stream for facilities, textbooks and other resources without strings attached.

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 Quad City Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Continue to teach the disinvestment history and empower staff and parents and community members to engage and hold accountable our legislators to create a rural Arizona voice.
- Continue to commit to educating our community (and beyond) to change the narrative about public education and to fight for legislation that supports our students and our economy.
- Continue to stress to our legislators the importance of raising teacher pay and funding capital projects. I will also work towards educating the public on the needs of the school system.

- Continue to be politically and civically engaged to support education.
- Recruit my staff to become better advocates and more involved in being vocal at the legislative level.
- Continue to advocate for and support candidates for public office that support public education.
- Contribute to the “positive narrative” for education by educating the pre-service teachers I work with, which will lead to giving teachers a voice and tools to be a part of the systematic change.
- Create awareness for this issue by bringing it to my parents and pushing my school to make this problem known to the students.
- Vote in every election touching on school funding or school boards, and make the effort to talk with candidates out all levels about their views and plans for improving Arizona public school funding.
- Work through Prescott Indivisible’s education group to raise awareness of the needs of Arizona public education by speaking to various civic groups.
- Reach out to the American Business and Education Coalition (ABEC) to volunteer to help their efforts.
- Use my voice more to advocate for what is lacking and necessary in the classroom rather than parroting what is popular.
- Make a concerted effort to share the information discussed today with stakeholders in my district.
- Engage in more educated and passionate conversation with any contacts about the investment in education—support candidates working to change the education system in Arizona.
- Discuss education funding issues with parents, parent groups and community stakeholders so we can take our collective concerns to the legislators and beyond.
- Contact Arizona politicians, advocating the issues discussed today.
- Strive to increase public awareness on the issues surrounding my education as well as contacting state legislators to make sure these concerns one heard and something is done about them.
- Promote future town halls and the ideas discussed in this town hall.
- Be a part of and help facilitate the organization of a grassroots group to advocate for increasing revenue for public education.
- Communicate with the PUSD Education Foundation the goal of dedicated revenue streams and possibilities of attaining that and see if anyone would volunteer with American Business and Education Coalition (ABEC) or speak to other groups.
- Educate those around me, helping others see how the issue impacts them and participate in efforts to change the way education is funded.
- Continue doing what I am already doing: work on bond and overrides.
- Notify general public of legislation impacting education.
- Act as an education ambassador.
- Register as an independent.
- Organize within Prescott Indivisible to educate and refer activists about investing in public education.
- Educate my stakeholders and people in the organization to which I belong.
- Change from my language from we need more money to this is an investment in our education and future.
- Share information I have learned today with staff, family, and friends.

- Support a movement in Prescott.
- Become an Arizona Town Hall member and register as an Independent (I've been a democrat for 50 years).
- Start educating my school stakeholders on the movement of increasing school funding with changing the verbiage.
- Start championing the movement at my level.
- Work to get a diverse group of people on board with the cause by spreading the word and convincing people how they and their community specifically will benefit.
- Work to inform fellow students and adults alike.
- Continue to attend and engage and partner with Arizona Town Hall in full faith that working together, we will affect change.
- Advocate for more transparency in the actual financial situation in public preK-12 education.
- Continue to help with the positive understanding of the education process in the Prescott Unified School District (PUSD) schools in our community.
- Be part of and help facilitate the organization of a grassroots group to advocate for increasing revenue for public education.
- Change my language from "we need more money" to "this is an investment in our children and future." Share information I have learned today with staff, family and friends. Support a movement in Prescott.
- Plan to vote in the primaries as an Independent in the Republican side to vote for those politicians to support increased funding for schools and continue voting in regular sessions for those whose priority is education funding.
- Be willing to write and speak with groups about the issue of education and coordinate with local efforts. Partner with other agencies who support education.
- Talk with the government teacher at Prescott High School about how to motivate students to register to vote and vote at age 18.
- Contact my legislator—urge them to invest in education in significant ways. Ask media to emphasize and focus upon the crisis facing Arizona in education—create public awareness.
- Vote to renew and expand proposition 301. Register as an Independent so that I can have flexibility to vote for the most education-friendly candidates regardless of party affiliation.
- Write a column in the newspaper about Community Town Hall outcomes, take a crew to the statewide Town Hall and push the Arizona Town Hall topics in our advocacy community.
- Volunteer and financially support my local public school district.
- Use my voice to bring awareness to the subject of education.
- Use my voice to help bring awareness about this major issue to my fellow students and community.
- Educate and inform community members about funding preK-12 education.

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