

“Funding preK-12 Education”

Community Town Hall Report

Payson, AZ – October 11, 2017



FUNDING PREK-12 EDUCATION

Rim Country Community Town Hall Report
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Participants of the October 11, 2017 Rim Country 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

The goal of our preK-12 education system should be to develop students into citizens with strong character and work ethic, who are prepared to contribute to society both as individuals and as part of the larger group. Each student should receive all attention they need to achieve their maximum potential and prepare them to succeed in an ever-changing world, to be successful lifelong learners who take personal responsibility for their lives. Education should address the whole child, producing well-rounded learners who excel and are prepared to think critically, use technology, and compete successfully in the world. There should be equal opportunity for all students and equal standards for all providers. Providing and funding preK and all-day kindergarten are critically important to the success of this system in meeting these objectives.

IMPACT OF PUBLIC FUNDS

Our education funding system is fundamentally flawed. In simple terms, the pie is too small and the pieces of pie are not distributed equitably. In this Frankenstein of a system, money does not flow to the areas of greatest need, such as teacher pay increases, with occasional surpluses in areas of lower need that have dedicated funding. The way teachers are paid is archaic. Spending restrictions make it difficult for schools to fund basic needs. Despite increasing student populations, the Arizona Legislature has diverted over \$1 billion from education budgets. This leads to a host of problems, including cutting of classes, lost opportunities for students, inability to provide needed remediation, loss of qualified teachers, and a significant loss of skills development for graduating students.

In rural and tribal areas, the transportation funding is inadequate and not appropriately adjusted for the distances and requirements involved. Poorer districts cannot afford to provide extracurricular services and elective classes. White flight is occurring as families with the ability to do so leave the district school system to attend charter schools. Schools in poorer districts do not have adequate resources or the ability to provide services that are comparable to the wealthier districts, and lack access to tax credit money on the same scale as wealthier schools.

Public, charter and private schools should be held to the same standards, have the same opportunities and be accountable for the same set of rules, including assessments, enrollment criteria, standards, certification, how funding is spent, and the services that are provided to students.

Elected officials who do not support adequate funding for education should be publicly shamed and voted out of office.

IMPROVING FUNDING FOR ARIZONA'S PREK-12 SCHOOLS

Arizona should approach the issue of funding for education by first determining what it really costs to educate a child, consider what other states are doing, and then determine how to provide the funding that is truly needed. We should not under any circumstances shift the tax burden for education to lower socioeconomic groups.

Arizona should think outside the box and look at all options for funding. More impact funding is needed, for example to educate English learners. We should stop siphoning money from public schools and providing it to private schools. We must increase teacher salaries and provide reimbursement for teacher expenses, such as costs of obtaining fingerprints. We should eliminate unnecessary funding restrictions and allow schools more freedom in spending according to their needs.

Funding for schools should be equal across all types of schools and all regions.

Arizona's tax base is smaller than it once was because of the amount of non-taxable federal and state owned land. In addition, mines and utilities were able to secure significant reductions in their taxes; those reductions are no longer justified and should be reexamined. We should consider increasing the sales tax and dedicating it to education. Income taxes on the wealthy could be increased. Payments in lieu of taxes should be reinstated, which will be particularly significant in rural counties with relatively small areas of private lands. State trust lands should be leased and freed up for economic development, as the proceeds from such activities are dedicated to education. To process the applications for such uses, more staff is needed.

If these and other measures to fund education are to be successful, citizens must educate themselves about these issues, and about the position of elected officials in regard to education funding, and select legislators who will adequately fund education

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 Rim Country Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Continue to be active in preK education learning to advocate for the needs of children.
- Try to educate the public about how funding solutions presented to us affect public education.
- Talk with students preparing to become teachers about the facts relating to education and education funding.
- As a member of the board of directors of Aspire Arizona, I will continue to support the dual credit program to help students earn college credit at a lower cost.
- Work with the local chamber to help students get experience outside the classroom.
- Continue to be an active community member who is concerned about seniors, students and the whole community.
- Meet with state and federal elected and educate them on public school needs. Talk about a one-cent tax on camping and fishing outdoor events with all money to go to public schools.
- Make my votes count and educate myself on how Arizona is spending our money.
- Continue to take proactive political advocacy on behalf of public education especially by calling our state representatives and senators to fulfill their constitutional responsibility for funding public education.

- Advocate for increased attention to be given to the goals of Arizona education in regards to life-skill development. Further advocate for equal funding between public and charter schools and same standards of accountability and transparency.
- Keep pressure on congress to give more money for education and teachers' salaries.
- Seek additional funding opportunities through state, local and grant resources to meet the educational needs of students.
- Continue to educate the public about the reality of funding for public education and the bias that we see between public and charter schools.
- Continue to be a positive and active community member that cares about our youth, seniors, families and whole community. Participate in opportunities such as the Arizona Town Halls to have my voice heard.
- Spread the word.
- Better understand how Arizona funds education and how the funds are spent.
- Continue to advocate with legislature for adequate funding for preK-12 public education.
- Talk to my students in my "Intro to Education" classes and prepare them for this topic. Share about the facts that were shared at this program.
- Continue to: support programs at Payson Unified School District (PUSD) to promote graduating students being productive citizens; support dual-credit programs allowing high school students to take college classes free or low cost; support new mentoring programs; and create partnership between Chamber and PUSD.
- Organize voters and write letters.
- Vote for education supportive legislators, talk more extensively to others about the needs of public schools, and support public schools through tax credit.
- Continue to promote education funding in my realm of influence.
- Research grant opportunities to help our district.
- Continue to try to "flip" the state senate so that the toxic education legislation can stop before it gets to the governor. I will also support organizations that litigate against inequity in school funding.
- Continue to research and become more educated regarding state legislative candidates.
- Continue to serve on school board and encourage the wealthy to consider education in their estate plan.
- Continue to reach out to our state elected officials to advocate for public education adequate funding, equity for public vs private institutions and allow local control over funds.
- Continue to visit every part of Arizona—listening to the different challenges of all schools so I can help develop solution to these challenges.
- Talk to staff, community and family members about Town Halls and funding for Arizona schools.
- Research "successful school districts" across the United States to see how they perceive funding and from whom.
- Continue to educate myself on our public-school funding. I will also be active in learning about politicians' beliefs on education so that I can make the best decision for my community.

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