

## **CONSENSUS STATEMENTS**

### **From Community Outreach Programs following the 92nd Arizona Town Hall**

*In programs held around the state to follow up on the spring Town Hall on recruitment and retention of quality teachers, audience members were asked to participate in a Town Hall-style discussion. The question posed was: **What recommendation(s) should receive priority and how can we make the recommendation(s) a reality?** [from the recommendations that were generated at the 92nd Town Hall] Consensus statements prepared from the discussions at the Outreach Programs are set forth below.*

#### **KINGMAN (August 6, 2008)**

Unfortunately, politics has prevailed over common sense when it comes to education reform. We should be more conscious of electing people who promote education and who are willing to cross party lines to implement fact-based policy suggestions recommended by the P-20 council and the Arizona Town Hall. Parental involvement—in the form of time served—would also make a difference.

With respect to recruitment of quality teachers, we should explore pilot programs that encourage local high school students to go into the teaching profession so that communities can grow their own teachers.

Public schools, and teachers specifically, have significant challenges with disruptive students. Quality teachers who are willing to take a lower salary than what they might make in other professions are leaving the profession because they do not feel they receive the respect they deserve from students and parents. When you pay teachers what they deserve, and give them the respect they deserve, quality teachers will flock to the profession. Teachers also regularly pay for classroom supplies out of their own pockets. All of these challenges make it increasingly difficult for teachers.

We need to take action to reverse these trends.

#### **YUMA (August 19, 2008)**

Teaching should be considered a distinguished profession. Efforts, such as Rotary's Teacher of the Year program, should be supported and expanded. As part of our efforts, we also need to make sure that we have methods to remove teachers who are not performing up to standards.

Streamlining the certification process is essential. We should also streamline methods for professionals in other fields to become teachers. This should be an immediate priority.

Pay is an important issue to address as is the cost of continuing professional education. Furthermore, teachers should not have to buy their own supplies.

Finally, teachers need to have more support from parents.

#### **PHOENIX (NAU DISTANCE LEARNING FACILITY) (August 20, 2008)**

It is important to streamline the certification process for people who are leaving other professions to become classroom teachers. While it is recommended that professionals from other fields need to be prepared to teach, the current certification process is perceived as too complicated and time consuming. There are now some good streamlined programs that exist at community colleges. However, marketing for these programs could be better and there have been additional bureaucratic road blocks as well as resistance from university schools of education that have impaired the effectiveness of these programs.

A good mentoring program would benefit the retention and effectiveness of new teachers. Some current mentoring programs are compromised when the mentors are part-time or transitioning.

Funding is a key issue. However, to get the necessary funding, we need to build the case for it by linking increased funding to the reforms described in those Town Hall recommendations that seek to redefine teaching as the profession that it is.

### **PHOENIX (UNIVERSITY CLUB) (August 26, 2008)**

To make these recommendations a reality, we should draw on efforts already underway with different groups and build on them. Our efforts should be on all of the recommendations as part of a systematic change. While we should take an overall systematic approach, we may need to start with a particular recommendation or two so that the efforts do not at first appear overwhelming in scope.

Changing rules to allow teachers to have more professional discretion in the classroom and promoting teaching as a distinguished profession may be the place to start. Because, until we change the mindset of Arizona's citizens, overall reform will be difficult.

### **MESA (August 27, 2008)**

We need to address all of the recommendations in a systematic fashion. However, treating teaching more as a profession is one place to start. This should include consideration of year-round employment for teachers.

Restructuring the funding of Arizona's educational system also needs to be a priority. While appropriate pay is necessary to recruit and retain quality teachers, greater recognition of superstar teachers is equally important.

One way to assist with recruitment problems in rural Arizona would be to take our teacher training programs to those areas—as opposed to having potential teachers come to urban areas, like Phoenix, where they often stay once their education is completed.

In sum, while there are specific actions that we can take now, all of the recommendations are essential and interrelated.

### **SIERRA VISTA (September 4, 2008)**

Teachers have a great impact on our citizens. We should use marketing and other efforts to better express our gratitude to them. One way we can do this is to tell our personal stories of how teachers have impacted our lives.

With respect to recruiting teachers, we should make it easier for professionals in other areas to become classroom teachers. We can do this better by streamlining our certification process and making it more affordable. However, we need to be cautious that such efforts do not detract from the professionalism of teachers and the skills that are necessary to be effective in the classroom.

We may also want to explore additional methods of bringing in professionals—not as classroom teachers but as supplemental instructors in particular areas. While recruitment is important, we need to also have efforts to retain our current teachers.

Our system does not have the financial incentives for teachers to remain in the classroom. We need to change this system so that classroom teachers do not leave for the more lucrative fields of administration or private business.

While it is critical to make efforts to retain current teachers, our efforts should not detract us from removing teachers who are not effective. To help implement this effort, Cochise County will work with the Tucson Value Teacher effort. Trudy Berry will be the primary liaison; Chuck Hoyack will join her efforts.

### **TUCSON (September 4, 2008)**

We need to find the funds to pay teachers the professional salary they deserve. Proposition 105, if voted in, will be a major impediment to such efforts. If we really care about increasing teacher salaries and the impact

quality teachers have on economic development, we need to consider the impact of Proposition 105 and take action to defeat it.

To attract teachers in areas of high need, we should consider differential pay that will vary based on the teacher's credentials and our particular needs.

We should also consider programs similar to the adjunct program used in colleges and universities.

Furthermore, we need to increase our efforts to improve early childhood education. We also should reevaluate our pre-service programs to insure that they meet current needs.

Finally, it is important for our community to come together to implement these recommendations. This starts with community awareness. If we all participate in efforts currently underway, Tucson can become a model for the nation.

### **FLAGSTAFF (September 8, 2008)**

The traditional teaching system was created for a different era. We need systematic reform that includes reform of financing for education and elevation of the professional status of teachers. We also need to break down divisions between early education, elementary education and higher education.

These goals can be realized with better utilization of private/public partnerships, and community conversations that include business and education leaders.

To implement positive changes in Flagstaff, Flagstaff should consider creating a local version of the statewide P-20 council. This effort could bring together leaders to address all of these interrelated recommendations; build a greater public understanding; and most importantly, create the public will necessary for systematic reform.

### **EL MIRAGE (September 11, 2008)**

Current funding for recruiting and retaining teachers is inadequate. We need to explore broad-based financing schemes to make these recommendations happen. However, we need to have an informed perspective that includes knowledge of the funding that has occurred in education. We also need to solve problems the state currently has with funding. Funding for any program is an extreme challenge in this current economic environment.

As part of addressing these issues, we need to look not just at funding, but at the overall system—including private and charter schools. Competitors can help drive improvements as can informed discussions on how to accomplish our goals better with changes in structure and organization. As part of this systematic reform, we should seriously consider performance-based pay for teachers. We should also consider how to change the environment for teachers so that they can create individualized and creative classrooms where a teacher's professional passion for teaching is better supported.