

“Funding preK-12 Education”

**Community Town Hall Report
Flagstaff, AZ – October 1, 2017**



FUNDING PREK-12 EDUCATION

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Participants of the October 2017 Flagstaff 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

Arizona's preK-12 Education system is designed to achieve many goals. It should be a nimble system which helps to build a vibrant community. We want to maximize the potential of students in our preK-12 system, as well as prepare them from ages zero to five, by creating quality education that is flexible and meets their unique needs, while ensuring that it serves the needs of ALL students. Our students should leave the preK-12 system with a sense of achievement, ready to respond with passion to an unpredictable life that will be full of changing technology and careers. It should be designed in a participatory way that engages students themselves and ensures they come to school ready to learn and develop skills of lifelong learning.

In particular, our schools should:

- Create critical thinkers who are self-sufficient, productive members of society.
- Prepare students for post-secondary education—whether it is college or trade schools, or other post-secondary pathways for success.
- Address the whole child and prepare students to be a whole person, providing important life skills—including having a cooperative mindset, being able to work in an environment of diversity, a strong work ethic and communication skills.
- Identify their strengths as an individual and engage students in the process.
- Create good citizens, who will be an educated electorate.
- Respond to the needs of industry and prepare students to be innovative contributors in the world of work.
- Create critical thinkers and people with open minds.
- Teach strong math skills.
- Help students find their passion, giving them options, such as Career & Technical Education (CTE) and other alternatives, to pursue their individual passions.

Our preK-12 system should offer incentives to teaching, including higher salaries, to keep and attract the best possible professionals in our schools. It should contribute to a goal of reaching a 60% post-secondary education attainment rate.

IMPACT OF PUBLIC FUNDS

In order to achieve the goals for preK-12 Schools outlined above, Arizona must identify and secure the resources required to be successful. Overall, the preK-12 funding formula is too complex and creates confusion which produces unnecessary challenges for schools. It does not address all rural and tribal schools, and leads to inequities across the state. It also is not meeting all of the State's needs for early childhood education, and a sustainable source of funding should be provided for that part of the system. Local schools should have more flexibility in how they spend funds—restrictions and unfunded mandates prevent them from meeting local needs. Funding should be based upon different criteria than just test scores, and should address issues such as how engaged students are and how much passion they leave the classroom with. It should address the unique needs of students, and when the formula provides funding for specific needs, those dollars should clearly address all of those needs, which doesn't always happen today.

We need funding that addresses the poor pay and high stress levels now affecting our teachers. It should include funding to pay adequately for supplies, appropriate class sizes, modern textbooks and other supports required to prepare students for the 21st century. When funding for teachers is inadequate, it discourages people from entering the profession and translates into stresses to students in their classrooms. We should also be providing adequate funding to repair and maintain facilities. We need to address the funding currently provided by Proposition 301, and ensure that funding solutions create a more equitable, sustainable and understandable basis of support for long-term needs that can be joyfully supported by the State's citizens. Ultimately, we would benefit most from a clear definition of how much it costs to accomplish the goals we described above, and then find a fair and sustainable system of funding that citizens can understand and support.

IMPROVING FUNDING FOR ARIZONA'S PREK-12 SCHOOLS

Many opportunities are available to address the methods and level of funding for Arizona's preK-12 schools. First and foremost, the community needs to be actively engaged in understanding the funding system, how it benefits individuals and communities, and translating its support for the goals into voting for lawmakers who agree. The community needs to consistently make their voices heard at the legislature. We should actively engage stakeholders in the community to make the case for the value and importance of investing in the preK-12 system, especially including the business community which relies upon the system for its workforce and which can be influential with lawmakers. We should consider ideas such as a marketing campaign to educate people on the system and tools like a financial map that helps people understand the system. In our campaign, we need to help people understand the return on our investments, and not just frame the discussion around costs.

We should also evaluate the tax credit system to determine whether it is consistent with our other preK-12 funding goals. Vouchers should be evaluated against these goals as well. An underlying principle that should be considered in these examinations is the impact on equity.

We should launch a voter initiative to address the expiration of the Proposition 301 tax and address the underlying tax base available to preK-12 schools, including the mix of sales and property taxes appropriate to meet our goals. The tax base needs to be established in a way that does not produce inequities. We should consider all elements of our economy, such as our reliance on tourism, as sources of revenue.

Our efforts to address the funding needs of our system need to be creative. We should look at best practices in other states, and consider ideas that address puzzles, such as why we might be giving schools more money who are already doing well instead of schools which need help. Another example of creative approaches would involve businesses and people in the community directly in the

classroom, through internships, apprenticeships and new sponsorships, which could be a new way of expanding resources. We need thinking out of the box: if what we have isn't working, we need to find creative ways to build a system that accomplishes our goals.

In order to advance the goals and recommendations above, Arizona and each of its communities, such as Flagstaff, should create priorities for action which lead us to the day when our education system becomes a bragging point, not a sore spot. Our top priorities should be to:

- Launch a community education campaign that informs citizens about preK-12 funding needs, how to address them, and how citizens can become involved. This campaign should not be framed simply as a request for "more money," but instead make the case for what resources actually do and provide for in our schools.
- Raise teacher pay to a level that makes it an attractive and respected profession, and which addresses stress, class sizes, and keeps young teachers in the classroom.
- Involve more volunteers in the classroom to reduce pressures on teachers, and explore the possibility of introducing more paraprofessionals as well.
- Launch a voter initiative to replace Proposition 301 with new stable funding sources that raise the investment to a level necessary to achieve our goals.
- Evaluate the current testing regime and determine whether measures other than test scores can be incorporated to demonstrate quality and achievement to the taxpayers.
- Review where current funding is allocated to determine if priorities can be shifted to more effectively address our goals and ensure that we are educating the whole child.
- Research other states where funding is more robust and capture ideas which are relevant to Arizona.
- Identify what our community, including businesses, need from our system and involve them in designing the funding system to meet their needs and build a quality of life that all residents expect.

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 Flagstaff Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Work with my student council and my school administrators to help brainstorm solutions to our problems with funding there
- Work to learn more about increasing teacher salaries at the local level.
- Share the Arizona Education Progress Meter on social media.
- Speak louder about the funding issues.
- Continue to work for students in our community and make them more aware of LAUNCH.
- Research community educational models that are successful.
- Incorporate the answer to #1 in our ParentEd night.

- I will become more involved in our local community on education.
- Support my fellow students in their education and push them to find a passion that leads them to an improved and enjoyed life.
- Encourage and better the people around me to all our future generations a chance to make the world even better, through education and leadership.
- Work to get an override for FUSD on the ballot and passed.
- Attend school board meetings and continue to advocate for students.
- Educate the current and younger generation of people of the problems in the Arizona education systems face. As well as communicate the points that they are pieces in the change needed.
- Begin to educate my peers on the education system and how it works so our future generations are given an exciting and passionate learning environment.
- Ask others to consider increasing funding and support for our schools as an investment in the future of our students and the creation of thriving communities, state and democracy.
- Tirelessly hound my elected officials in support of education investment and its urgency.
- Tutor a student in math this week.
- Meet the legislators this year (in person).
- Host a parent education advocacy night.
- Participate with LAUNCH.
- Attend January 25, 2018 Legislative Day at the Capitol.
- Volunteer at CHS
- Attend FUSD PAC.
- Have a conversation about where our tax credit goes.
- Create an adult civics class for residents of Flagstaff to educate citizens so they can be involved in the most effective way.
- Vote with education in mind.
- Advocate for increased education funding specifically for teachers.
- Continue to be an early childhood advocate.
- Engage in school board meetings.
- Work to engage educators and community members in promoting education as an investment not a cost.
- Work for increased preK-12 access.
- Support and vote for candidates and initiatives that adopt a fair and sufficient funding formula.
- Advocate for increased teacher pay and support.
- Participate in LAUNCH Flagstaff.
- Inform others about what I've learned and how it affects everyone in the community.
- Advocate for education and increased funding.

- Continue to participate in LAUNCH and other community-level advocacy based efforts.
- Continue to advocate for the education pipeline.
- Attend the statewide Town Hall.
- Participate in LAUNCH.
- Work with LAUNCH to create increased public support of education.
- Organize a van pool for education day at the state legislature.
- Educate our parents/community about how amazing our school protocols are for students.
- Work to raise awareness among voters about the impact of public education.
- Study the funding formula for schools in Arizona.
- Contact my legislators.
- Work towards solutions.
- Continue to speak up for education, serve on boards and rally the troops.
- Work on getting out the vote through voter registration.
- Volunteer on campaigns of leaders I believe in.
- Celebrate what's right in education and ask people to enhance education.
- Continue to push for an assessment system that aligns with what students, teachers, business/industry sectors are asking for to be/measure success.
- Thank teachers daily for their service.
- Promote education to all of my community connections.
- Be a positive beam of light on education.
- Host Paper Tiger and American Teacher for teachers at my school.
- House party for pro-education candidates.
- Build LAUNCH's relationship with Flagstaff Education Association.

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