

FUNDING PREK-12 EDUCATION

Future Leaders Town Hall Report

November 2, 2017

Participants of the City of Phoenix Future Leaders Town Hall make the following findings and recommendations. This report reflects the consensus achieved through group discussions by participants.

ARIZONA'S PREK-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM GOALS

The principal goals of our education system should be to prepare students for their future careers, college, and for life. Schools should provide a safe place for students to learn and grow. Students should be prepared for the real world, should know how society functions, and should be encouraged and equipped to become good citizens who will volunteer to help others, vote, and participate in society. They should be taught about life after school, including how to manage a budget and pay taxes, good credit, and the importance of college and training. We should recognize and reward students for more than their GPAs; instead we should value the whole person and goals other than just academic achievement.

Students should learn critical thinking skills, and should be encouraged to become lifelong learners with a passion for education. We should seek to increase the number of students who graduate from high school and go on to college or vocational training programs. Students should be told at a young age that college, including out of state schools, is an option for them, and they should be assisted to prepare for college. There should be more scholarships and financial assistance to help students attend college. We should also recognize that not all students will go on to college, and prepare students for careers that do not require a college degree.

To accomplish these goals, we will need well qualified, trained and motivated teachers who will be excellent role models for students. Teachers work hard and should be paid what they deserve. Students will do better when teachers engage them at a younger age, and help them to adapt to their environments. Teachers should be involved with their students and help motivate them to succeed. Students would benefit from more programs, such as internships, volunteer activities and clubs, and from a curriculum that interests the students and is relevant to students' future careers. They would also benefit from more help with test preparation, graduation requirements more suited to their interests and careers, and classes involving the arts and basic skills.

IMPACT OF PUBLIC FUNDS

The availability of funding directly affects the services schools can provide and the way these services are provided. Without money schools cannot fund technology that is needed to provide educational opportunities for students, extras such as field trips, adequate pay for teachers and administrators. They cannot provide the materials students need to learn, such as current textbooks. They cannot build and maintain facilities, hire teachers, and fund student programs and activities. More money means more resources, more and better teachers, more counselors, and better classes that meet student needs. Money should be spent on students and the activities that motivate them, such as electives and performing arts. More money would allow us to reduce class sizes and have more student-teacher interaction.

Charter schools receive public funding, but often do not use that funding to provide the same types of services as district schools. They may spend money to provide a fancy building, but they are not diverse, they don't serve special needs students, and they don't provide services such as school psychologists.

Schools need to fund both core classes and electives, and extracurricular activities, such as clubs and sports. They need to pay teachers fairly. There should be funding for financial aid to pay for materials and classes. We need funding for teacher training, and for school supplies and fees, particularly for students who cannot afford to buy them. We need funding for financial aid, to help more students get to college. We need funding to help students with high stakes test preparation. Teachers and counselors should be prepared and funded to help students, including undocumented students, to find schools and scholarships and to pursue higher educational opportunities.

We should also pay attention to the way in which funds are distributed. They should be spread evenly and fairly across different schools. Allocating funding based on test scores is very stressful to students and ultimately unfair. Funding should be provided by the state, not local communities, because many local communities do not have the resources to provide additional school funding.

IMPROVING FUNDING FOR ARIZONA'S PREK-12 SCHOOLS

Students, parents and business leaders can support our schools in a number of ways. Once students graduate and become successful they can give back to the schools by donating money and volunteer time. They can contact their legislators, write letters and make phone calls, expressing support for school funding. They should be more vocal and active in the community to bring the issue to public attention. They should vote, particularly in local elections, and should support education by voting for candidates who will fund it.

Students and parents should become more involved. Register to vote. Know your rights. Learn how to stand up for your rights.

Schools could petition for funding for programs and activities they want. Student, parents and others need to become more involved in spreading the word, and to become more knowledgeable about school funding issues. Schools could hold a resource fair to inform students about these issues.

Schools can generate more funding through donations, such as through the tax credit program. Taxes, particularly on the wealthy, could be increased. Students and schools could be involved in fundraising.

WHAT WE WOULD TELL ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS

Please care about us. Pay attention. We're worth it. We are your future.

Talk to us. Listen to us. Remind us that we are important.

Stop avoiding the discussion about school funding and other education topics.

We need better communication about what is going on in Arizona's schools. There should be meetings and discussions about how to fund and improve the schools.

Different schools have different strengths and weaknesses, and different programs. Struggling schools should be targeted to receive more resources. More public schools should have magnet programs, distributed regionally so that students don't have to travel so far to attend them.

We should tell Arizona's elected leaders to visit public schools to see for themselves the work that is done and the disparities in funding. They should experience what it is like to be a high school student; use the restrooms and locker rooms, deal with schedule changes, wait in line for lunch, and experience the overcrowded classrooms. Spend time with students; come to campus to talk and listen to students. Include students in discussions about education.

We should tell our leaders that they are not providing enough money to fund schools. Programs that benefit students, including extracurricular activities, are being cut or unavailable due to lack of funding.

We should spend less money on "dumb stuff" (e.g., the wall) and more money on public education. We need more universities and fewer private prisons.

Funding should be spread evenly across different schools. It should be based on the number of students attending the school, not the location of the school.

We need to see where the money is going, how it is spent. (It should be spent for students.)

We should elect public officials who are more concerned about 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 Future Leaders Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Focus on constructive solutions that really matter.
- Listen to my peers and what they have to say about what they think we should do to better our schools, and the community, and make the funding issue known.
- Make student issues known.
- Inform students on funding and how it affects our schools.
- Voice my concern when the opportunity rises. Magnify the voice of others.
- Listen to the voices of others and act accordingly to their needs.
- Use my voice and photography to spread answers about education and the lack of funding for it
- Talk about the problems with funds and how we should distribute it.
- Give back to my community and do whatever it takes to receive what we need to be successful. I will do this by registering people to vote, canvassing door to door, and making sure people vote. We will continue to fight for what we want!! Si se puede!
- Inform my surroundings about the lack of funding in schools.
- Register to vote and make my voice heard!
- Stand up for what I believe. Speak up on why it is important for schools to get more money and not silence my opinions nor beliefs.
- Talk to other about how important voting is and how much of a difference they could make.
- Continue to teach my students with 100% passion and energy.

- Believe in my students' own unique abilities as well, and guide them.
- After this I will go home and register to vote.
- Pass the word on voting, so more people help make an impact in our community.
- Probably register to vote since I will get older and I will be able to choose a great leader.
- Register to vote. I will accomplish my goals and succeed.
- Start getting more involved and learn about voting independent.
- Try my best to go to the meeting in January.
- Be more involved than I already am and help with volunteer work for my school.
- Become an advocate for my students and my community.
- Make it a goal of mine to get the word out of the impact of voting. Encourage people to vote and get involved with politics, or at least know what's going on.
- Be more involved throughout my community to help with the lack of commitment with helping education and schools.
- Keep doing what I do by speaking up and register to vote as soon as I can.
- Continue to go out in my community to register and get out the vote and inform them about the necessities they had put aside.
- Register to vote when I turn 18 so that I can have a say in education, but until then I will do what.
- Go to medical school to become an orthopedic surgeon and then become an activist for universal health care.
- Communicate with other people how funding to schools is going. And, I will ask everyone, how should we use the funding in school?
- Attend Stanford university and study either sports medicine or veterinary medicine. I will also play on the girls' soccer team.
- Be on time for school more so that I don't get kicked out of Student government (STUGO) because I want to be involved in school.
- Become the greatest businessman the world has seen.
- Make a change.
- Bring knowledge to the school and share my ideas.
- Expand other students' knowledge with what I learned today.
- Increase the concern I have for school funding, while bettering myself in my community and my school.
- Voice my opinion and try to be a leader for students and be the voice for those afraid to speak.
- Inform the upcoming generations about the importance of education.
- Vote as soon as I am available to.
- Tell others to vote.

- Spread the word! Inform others about what is going on in the educational world and overall.
- Gather my school and use my leadership and voice/communication skills to ask for public school funds to invest in our school needs and not only students but raising teacher salaries to increase motivation.
- Engage more at school and try my best to make a difference at my school.
- Help make Phoenix Union High School District (PUHSD) better as a whole by attending board meetings and discussing with others.
- Spread the word about preK-12 Funding. More students don't really understand or even know what's going on.
- When I can vote, I will vote.
- Spread the word about the issues that are currently affecting us (i.e. Funding affecting schools). We can even Hold a resource fair to explain the impact.
- Talk to my parents about things that are going on at school more.
- Commit to having better communication with parents and staff to make a more successful student.
- Educate myself. Empower other students and members of my community.
- Invest in/engage in education others on the poor quality or Arizona's public schools.
- Go to college and achieve my dream of becoming a great lawyer (criminal defense).
- Register to vote and go to a college that will help me achieve my career goals.
- Go to college.
- Communicate with staff members about my concerns on the school and what goes on around school.
- Educate myself and others on how to make an impact on their community.
- Not stress myself out with college.
- If I want to see a change, I will be the one to communicate bit until then I'm fine with my education and finance.
- Go off to college and use my learning skills and what I learn from college to teach others. I will also go out to my home, to the Hopi reservation and teach my young generation about art and my culture.
- Pursue an education after high school and ask for help on how to do so.