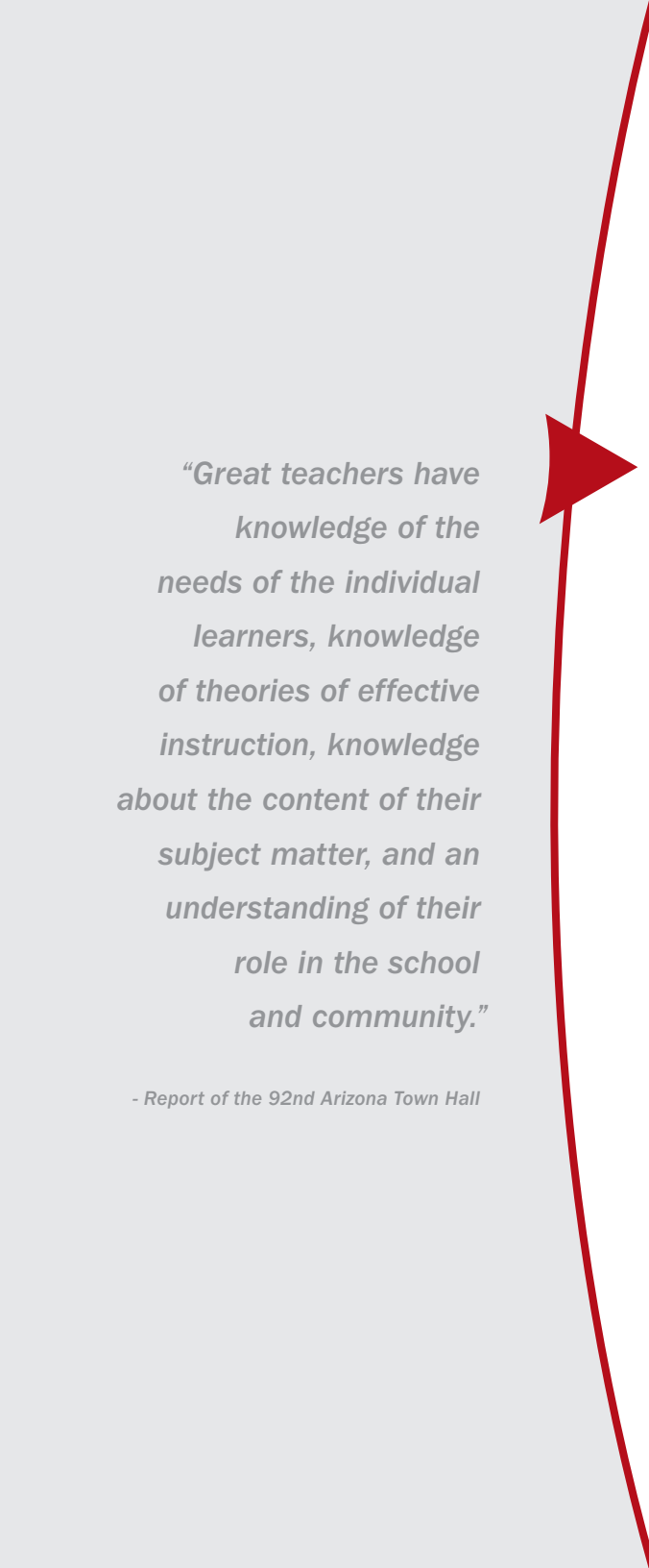


# Who will teach our children?

▶ Redesigning Arizona's Education System to Recruit and Retain More High-Quality Teachers

Highlights of the  
92nd Arizona  
Town Hall  
April 2008





*“Great teachers have knowledge of the needs of the individual learners, knowledge of theories of effective instruction, knowledge about the content of their subject matter, and an understanding of their role in the school and community.”*

- Report of the 92nd Arizona Town Hall

**A**s the “think tank” for Arizona’s business and community leaders, Arizona Town Hall has a proven record of developing recommendations that lead to effective reforms in a rapidly growing state. Participants in the 92nd Arizona Town Hall, held in Prescott on April 27-30, 2008, identified attributes of great teachers and discussed what Arizona must do to develop and maintain a teacher workforce that embodies those attributes. The conclusion: a consensus on nine priority actions to fundamentally redesign Arizona’s education system.

Prior to the Town Hall session, more than 150 participants from throughout the state reviewed a comprehensive background report developed by the University of Arizona College of Education. Meeting in facilitated small groups for two days, the participants addressed a common set of discussion questions. Trained recorders captured points of consensus and the entire group gathered for a plenary session on the third day to adopt a report of findings and recommendations.

The final report and background research are published in a single volume and distributed to Arizona Town Hall members, the Arizona Legislature, other elected officials, public libraries, and the general public. Copies are available online at [aztownhall.org](http://aztownhall.org) or by calling 602-252-9600.

# A Snapshot of Education in Arizona

- ▶ About 60,000 teachers are employed in 237 school districts in Arizona. They teach more than 1 million students enrolled in public preschool through 12th grade. Arizona is a state with a growing student population and an aging teacher population.
- ▶ Arizona teachers have an average of slightly more than eight years of experience; about one-quarter have spent three years or less in the classroom.
- ▶ Approximately 97% of regular-district teachers and 88% of charter-school teachers meet the criterion of “highly qualified” as defined by federal No Child Left Behind legislation.
- ▶ The recruitment and retention of qualified math and science specialists for middle and secondary schools is an acute problem. The shortages are especially severe in rural and high-poverty urban districts.
- ▶ Teacher certification in Arizona is under the jurisdiction of the State Board of Education and implemented by the Arizona Department of Education. Arizona teacher-education programs are evaluated under regulations set in 2006, and programs must be aligned with state standards.
- ▶ In most districts, about 1% to 4% of teachers have “emergency certification.” Statewide, teachers not meeting the “highly qualified” criterion teach slightly more than 5% of core classes. These figures increase, sometimes dramatically, in fast-growing rural and exurban areas, and in schools with high concentrations of poverty. The number of emergency certificates also is high in some specialty areas such as special education, secondary math, and secondary science.
- ▶ Slightly more than 8% of Arizona teachers leave the classroom each year, many for personal reasons, retirement, or career changes. Those who leave because they are dissatisfied cite poor salaries, lack of administrative support, and workload.
- ▶ It is estimated that teacher attrition costs Arizona more than \$88.5 million annually. Programs for supporting and mentoring teachers early in their careers can dramatically reduce the typical loss of beginning teachers during their first six years of teaching. Every dollar invested in a quality induction and monitoring program returns \$1.66 in cost savings over five years.
- ▶ In 2007, the 15 approved teacher-education institutions in the state produced fewer than one-half of the teachers needed.
- ▶ Arizona school finance is known as one of the most complicated financial structures in the country.
- ▶ Compared to other states, Arizona appears at the bottom of most lists in terms of school funding and teacher salaries.
- ▶ Early childhood education and care teachers in Arizona earn salaries that place them at the federal poverty level for a family of four, making it hard to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers, despite growing awareness of the personal, educational, and economic benefits of providing high-quality early childhood education and care.

- From the University of Arizona's Background Report



*“Arizona must have the funding to attract and retain teachers. Money is required to assure that our best and brightest enter the teaching profession. Teachers should not be forced out of the classroom because of inadequate compensation.”*

*- Report of the 92nd Arizona Town Hall*

# Arizona’s Education System Must Be Fundamentally Redesigned

The 92nd Town Hall recommends a fundamental redesign of both Arizona’s PreK-12 education system and the post-secondary system that supports education preparation programs. Changes must be implemented to ensure that each child in Arizona receives the quality education necessary to be competitive in a global marketplace.

While the Town Hall recognizes that change will take time and significant resources, nine goals must be advanced on an urgent timeline.

## 1. Define Teaching as a Distinguished Profession

- ▶ Redefine and restructure the school year to encompass the entire scope of professional teaching responsibilities (e.g., planning; student instruction; assessment; curriculum development; mentoring and coaching; professional development, including graduate work; and collaboration with colleagues, parents, and the community). A professional total compensation structure should include a 12-month work year, be commensurate with these responsibilities, and comparable to other professions.
- ▶ The legislature should be responsible for adopting and funding a professional work year for teachers. Public schools should be responsible for addressing school calendars and contractual changes necessary for implementation. The state legislature and the public schools should create a transition period of no more than five years to allow for the transition of nine- to ten-month contracted teachers.

## 2. Promote Teaching as a Distinguished Profession

- ▶ Create a marketing and public relations effort that promotes teaching as a distinguished profession; recruits new teachers from within and outside the state; and changes the perceptions of parents, the community, and government officials regarding the schools’ needs and teachers’ responsibilities. The marketing plan should emphasize the value of professional teachers who are certified and highly qualified, as well as create a website that provides a one-stop portal for information (including certification) and allows teachers to apply for any state teaching job.
- ▶ The Governor’s P-20 council should be responsible for developing the campaign, in conjunction with the Arizona Department of Education, the Arizona School Boards Association, the Board of Regents, county educational service agencies, other education associations, school administrators, colleges and universities, and business partners.

### **3. Provide Teachers with Professional Pay Linked with Systemic Education Reform**

- ▶ Global competition requires that, within 24 months, Arizona establish a statewide compensation structure competitive with professional compensation for similar skills, education, and experience, and accompanied by a well-developed performance pay system that includes student achievement as a component. In setting performance standards, care should be taken to reward teachers who choose to work with the most challenging students.
- ▶ The State Board of Education should be responsible for achieving this systemic change. A consortium of supporters of education, such as the Arizona Education Association, Arizona Business and Education Coalition, First Things First Board, and others, should lead the effort to secure needed funding measures. By legislative action or initiative, Arizona must fund this new compensation structure with a new dedicated revenue source.

### **4. Restructure Arizona's System for Funding PreK-12 Public Education**

- ▶ The new system must be transparent, equitable, and fully fund the needs of public schools, including, but not limited to, salaries, transportation, utilities, English Language Learners, special education, and other specific specialized needs.

### **5. Implement a Consistent, Statewide Professional Development System with a Strong Mentoring Component**

- ▶ Implement a well-designed, consistent statewide professional development system based on local needs and evaluated for effectiveness against National Staff Development Council (NSDC) standards. All aspects of the system should be data-driven and emphasize that teaching is a profession, not just a job. It should include a statewide two-year induction program for new teachers and a well-funded, well-defined, and well-monitored mentoring program for all teachers and principals within the first three years of practice. The system should include early childhood development education and require technology training at all levels.
- ▶ The professional development systems should be designed by P-20 education stakeholders, delivered by approved providers, and monitored by the State Board of Education. The mentoring program should be implemented at school level.

### **6. Focus Teacher Recruitment and Retention Efforts in Areas of High Need**

- ▶ Invest in training, recruiting, and retaining a diverse group of teachers in areas of high need, including STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), special education, English Language Learners, music, middle-school teachers, and early childhood development. A comprehensive strategy is required. Current teachers should

be given opportunities and support to become qualified and certified in high-need areas.

- ▶ The Arizona Department of Education, public schools, colleges, and universities should be responsible for teacher recruitment and retention efforts in areas of high need.
- ▶ Challenges to the educational system are exacerbated in high poverty and remote areas. Schools in these areas face teacher shortages, which result in unqualified teachers being placed in the classroom. Teacher turnover is higher, and these schools suffer from funding shortages. The state should give incentives to teachers to work in remote districts and areas with high levels of poverty. Improvements to the technology infrastructure are needed, and technology should be used to provide more opportunities for teacher development and student learning.

### **7. Improve Pre-Service Programs**

- ▶ Assure that PreK-12 teachers are competent in subject areas, instructional strategies, and classroom management. To achieve the required depth of subject area competence, a rigorous teacher-training curriculum should be required. The improved programs should include substantial field experiences, establish core competencies for each grade range, train teachers in critical thinking and technology, and educate pre-service students about the realities of the teaching profession. The articulation and communication between community colleges and universities should be

*“Certification should be analyzed to ensure that it is yielding desired results in terms of demonstrated competence. Improvements to the certification process should be made, but the quality of teachers in the workforce must not be compromised.”*

*- Report of the 92nd Arizona Town Hall*

strengthened. Professional development school programs throughout the state should be expanded to include remote and underserved locations, and areas of high need.

- ▶ Our institutions of higher education are responsible for teaching our pre-service teachers what they need to know in order to be prepared to enter the workforce. The State Board of Education should require analysis of student data to assess the effectiveness of educator preparation programs as part of their preparation approval process.

#### **8. Streamline the Certification Process**

- ▶ Restructure the certification process in ways that enhance the pipeline, while maintaining high standards for those who teach our children. Certification is an important requirement in gaining and maintaining the respect the teaching profession deserves; however, bureaucratic barriers exist to placing qualified out-of-state teachers in classrooms. There is a need for better definition of the training and qualifications required by subject matter experts who want to work in classrooms. The State Board of Education should be responsible for revising rules and processes with input from appropriate constituencies.
- ▶ Teacher recruitment and retention can be aided by simplifying the certification process. Arizona needs to expand and improve reciprocity with other states. The Arizona Department of Education should develop programs to encourage

and enable teachers to be certified in multiple disciplines.

#### **9. Recognize Early Childhood Education Within the Teaching Profession**

- ▶ As part of this effort, we need to strengthen the articulation and communication between community colleges and universities for early childhood education. We also need to increase the understanding of the community, the legislature, and the educational system about the importance of high-quality early care and education (birth through age 8) as the foundation of school and life success. When more children start school with the skills to be successful learners, K-12 teachers and schools can be more effective. To begin this process, program licensing should be expanded to include quality factors, certification standards should be enhanced for early education teachers, and the legislature should include funding for quality early care and education as a component of the total education system.
- ▶ Teachers in early childhood programs are paid the least and need to be recognized as members of the teaching profession. There are inadequate and inconsistent preparation requirements for early childhood teachers. Although Arizona is raising the bar in terms of early childhood education, there are not going to be enough teachers to meet the state’s needs.

# How You Can Take Action

- ▶ **Thank a teacher.**
- ▶ **Arrange a program in your community. Arizona Town Hall can provide resources, speakers, and printed materials.**
- ▶ **Work with others to pursue recommendations from the 92nd Arizona Town Hall. To join existing efforts, contact the Arizona Town Hall office.**
- ▶ **Learn about education issues and be an informed participant in the public discussions. For more information on factors influencing the recruitment and retention of quality teachers, download the full report from the 92nd Arizona Town Hall at [aztownhall.org/summaries.asp](http://aztownhall.org/summaries.asp).**
- ▶ **Make your views on education known to the governor (<http://azgovernor.gov/Contact.asp>) and your state legislators (<http://www.azleg.state.az.us/alisStaticPages/HowToContactMember.asp>). Be clear about your message. Identify yourself as a voting constituent. Tell personal stories to make needs and solutions come alive. Urge specific action.**
- ▶ **Use resources such as Project Vote Smart (<http://www.vote-smart.org/index.htm>) to find contact information for all of your elected officials, including U.S. Senators and Representatives.**

Since 1962, Arizona Town Hall has served as a “think tank” of Arizona leaders. Town Hall recommendations are a valuable resource for policymakers because they do not represent the agenda of a particular group or political perspective. Instead, Arizona Town Hall reports contain the informed consensus of Arizonans from different political parties, professions, and geographic areas of the state. A private, nonprofit civic organization, Arizona Town Hall has served as a catalyst for conversations and recommendations that have influenced significant changes in Arizona’s public policy over the years. Countless local, state, and national leaders have cited Arizona Town Hall as an important factor in educating people about the multiple facets of complex issues and fostering the development of personal and professional leadership skills.

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