

Consolidated Arizona Education Reform Plan

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A. Introduction

One fact that nearly all in Arizona can agree upon is that young people being educated in this State's school system are entering adult life inadequately prepared to thrive in a first world economy. The consequences of this deficiency are catastrophic for their personal futures. It is also catastrophic for the whole of Arizona's future as they will become the fabric of our society, either as contributors or as dependants. Even if we choose to ignore the moral obligation to ensure that every child has an opportunity to become all that he/she can and chooses to be, we will reach the same conclusion from a selfish position. We will either enable their achievement now or pay for them later in the form of social services or incarceration. Sending a young person into the competitive world with a strong back, a weak mind and little competitive ethic is a severe form of child abuse.

The lack of our students' achievement is not the fault or responsibility of the children. They are below the ages of personal accountability and are passing through the education system at ages where they do not fully comprehend the consequences of their failure to perform. That is why it is the responsibility of all adult citizens to ensure that each student in the State has an opportunity to experience the American dream to the fullest extent of his/her potential. We do not owe the children an outcome but we do owe them that opportunity.

There is a prevailing attitude among many in Arizona that it everyone's personal responsibility to take care of themselves. In most cases, that is true for adults but not for children. For children, they are their parents' responsibilities. A fact that is conveniently ignored by many parents is that a child's education is the responsibility of the parents not the State. Schools and teachers are merely partners with the parents in the delivery of education and for that delivery to be successful, the parents must be deeply engaged.

Not to be even remotely confused with collectivism, it is also the responsibility of society as a whole to ensure that all children are given an opportunity to maximize their achievement in the adult world. In short, ensuring a child's future ability to contribute is the best investment in everyone's' financial future. It is also a moral obligation.

Government in this country was designed to be as small as possible while delivering the functions that the citizens deem necessary. From the State, we expect

quality education, quality roads and excellent safety/emergency services. Beyond that, the role of government is thin. Likewise, taxes are conceived to be as low as possible while delivering the required functions. Delivering high-quality education at a low cost is a matter of strategy as well as managerial and operational efficiency. Bureaucracy and political correctness contradict those efficiencies. Unfortunately, special interests also have history of absorbing otherwise-productive financial resources.

Paradigm Reform

The status of our education is so far below acceptable that a plethora of small improvements will produce insignificant improvement. We can throw an endless list of feel-good trivia at it to no avail. Rather, a paradigm reform is essential to truly produce substantial results. To date, any conversation about education improvement that can be found in the public forum, media or union literature focuses on one singular topic, more money. While a strong argument can be made that some aspects need more financial resources, it is my opinion that we could double the funding and still have no improvement. Rather, as any honest educator will attest, true education improvement requires a holistic approach including many aspects beyond funding. Among those aspects are family involvement, teacher empowerment, mentoring, discipline and community volunteering.

To succeed in meaningful reform, we will require a willingness and fortitude to abandon the special interests that will fight hard to preserve their piece of the pie and their spheres of influence. Many sacred cows will need to be slain. All involved in the status quo will need to get aboard the reform plan or get out of the way. There are a few notions that we are certain to encounter.

- Nobody will get everything that they want.
- Everyone will get things that they oppose.
- Everyone will need to get over it.

Goal of the Reform Plan

The goal of the Arizona Education Reform Plan is singular, results. Not process, not social engineering, not providing welfare to special interests, just RESULTS. What are results? When every single child in Arizona, rich or poor, male or female, all ethnicities, all origins, etc has a well-supported opportunity and abundant encouragement to intellectually achieve all he/she is capable of achieving in adult society. That is how we will measure results.

B. Cost Efficiency

A key to dedicating maximum funding to classroom education is that financial resources be used efficiently, especially those used outside the classroom. The Arizona Auditor General has published a detailed report regarding school spending that is very much an eye-opener. This enlightening study should be required reading for those interested in exploring the topic. I will generously quote from this report.

Arizona School District Spending

Fiscal Year 2016
Special Study, March 2017
Report 17-204
Arizona Auditor General
https://www.azauditor.gov/sites/default/files/17-204_Report_with_Pages.pdf

In fiscal year 2016, Arizona school districts spent 53.5 percent of their available operating dollars on instruction—the lowest percentage in the 16 years we have been monitoring district spending. (Arizona Auditor General) The national average is 60.8 percent.

Operational Efficiency

The above trend is primarily a result of larger class sizes, lower teacher pay and an increase in student services, particular in high-poverty districts. However, there are wide differences among school districts in the percentage of funds that go to non-instructional operations. For example, when comparing only very large unified and union high school districts in cities and suburbs (apples to apples), the classroom dollar percentages ranged from 61.0 to 48.8. Similar discrepancies exist in all other groupings of like districts.

Although a district's efficiency can be affected by its size, type, and location, wide ranges of costs among districts grouped by these factors indicate that some districts have achieved lower costs than other districts of similar size, type, and location. Our performance audits have identified a variety of efficient and inefficient district practices. (Arizona Auditor General)

Districts that operate efficiently have more dollars available to spend in the classroom. Our performance audits of individual districts have found that efficient districts—those that perform better than their peers on performance measures of operational efficiency tend to have higher classroom dollar percentages. (Arizona Auditor General)

Examples (Arizona Auditor General):

- *A very large, urban, unified district spent \$522 per pupil for administration; another spent \$914 per pupil.*
- *A medium-sized, rural, unified district spent \$2.66 per square foot for plant operations; another spent \$8.98 per square foot.*
- *A medium-sized, rural, unified district spent \$2.56 per meal; another spent \$5.39 per meal.*
- *Two medium-large-sized, urban elementary districts drove a similar number of miles per rider; one district spent \$4.07 per mile, and the other spent \$8.14 per mile.*

The following data illustrate two important points.

- Larger school districts experience greater cost efficiency. This may result from greater economy of scale or more-intense cost-saving efforts.
- There is wide disparity between efficiencies of districts within groups of districts having similar characteristics.

Costs (\$) per Pupil (high school & unified high school)					
	Very large	Large	Med-large	Medium	Small
Instruction	4121	3809	3774	4576	5245
Administration	673	733	846	1145	1647
Plant operations	859	901	923	1342	1511
Food service	329	345	314	450	496
<i>Data from Arizona Auditor General</i>					

Administrative Costs (\$) per Pupil (high school & unified high school)		
School size	Average	Range
Very large (20,000+)	673	522 – 932
Large (8,000-20,000)	733	611 – 866
Med-large (2,000-8,000)	846	616 – 1240
Medium (600-2000)	1145	666 – 2922
Small (200-600)	1647	1040 – 3041
<i>Data from Arizona Auditor General</i>		

The Auditor General has identified several critical points of operational spending that vary greatly between efficient and inefficient districts. One is tempted to conclude that some district administrators try much harder than others to practice fiscal responsibility.

The Arizona School Facilities Board is tasked with managing the building, refurbishing, safety aspects and mission suitability of school facilities in the State. The Board is self-described as a “capital management agency”. In that regard, there is substantial room for improvement.

“However, other increases (costs) to non-classroom areas may have been more within districts’ control. For example, between fiscal years 2004 and 2016, Arizona school districts added 22 million square feet of building space, a 19 percent increase, despite a student enrollment increase of only 7 percent during this same period. This increased the state-wide average square footage per student from 138 to 154 square feet per student.

Office of the Auditor General performance audits have identified school districts that built additional schools when they already had low-capacity usage rates at their existing schools and districts that rebuilt existing schools with much larger facilities when no substantial student growth was expected.” (Arizona Auditor General)

The Arizona School Facilities Board Five-Year Strategic Plan (<http://www.azsfb.gov/sfb/Annual%20Reports/FY18FY22%20Five%20Year%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf>) implies that it advises and recommends facility composition to the local

school boards. It appears that the School Facilities Board needs to have a more-authoritative power over the facilities-related decisions by individual districts in order to protect State assets. The Board needs to protect the resources of the State from inefficient and/or misguided local resource management that does not result in value-added spending. School facilities exist for the sole mission of enabling excellent learning in a cost-efficient manner. They do not exist for the creation of administrative kingdoms or for the pleasure of administrators or special interests.

Plan for Increasing Cost Efficiency

1. Require Intense Managerial Efforts

The Auditor General will devise a system of scoring the operational efficiencies of each school district which will be adjusted for independent variables. Each year, the Auditor General will publish the scores. Those District executives that demonstrate operational inefficiency will be given one year to correct the inefficiencies or will be dismissed by their local school boards, or as a last resort, by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

2. Percent Instructional Spending

Each school district will spend a minimum of 61 percent (the national average) of their operational budget on instruction.

3. School District Numbers and Size

The number of school districts in Arizona will be reduced from its current 226 to 175. This will not only enhance operational efficiency but also increase program availability to students. Such consolidation will be planned by the Arizona Department of Education with the sole objectives of increasing cost efficiency and educational opportunity.

4. Administrative Costs

The administrative costs shall not exceed \$1000 per pupil in any district.

5. Arizona School Facilities Board

The Board will continue to provide planning and guidance to local school boards in matters related to facilities. However, the Board will be given final approval authority and veto authority over facility-related spending. The Board will thus be held accountable for efficient delegation of the State's resources.

6. Lobbying

The Arizona Department of Education, School Facilities Board, local school boards and other education-related agencies will be prohibited from hiring lobbyists or utilizing lobbying services provided to them. They will also be prohibited from entertaining lobbying efforts presented to them.

C. Classroom Autonomy and Discipline

Teachers that I speak with almost unanimously tell me that the greatest impediment to successful teaching is the inability to enforce discipline in the classroom. This may be due to the presence of disruptive students and rules that prevent the discipline or removal of such students.

Administrative Bureaucracy

At present, the ratio of administrative to classroom spending is too high and is addressed in this plan. When an administrative presence becomes larger than necessary to address genuine problems and tasks, it usually manufactures problems or adverse situations for which to devise solutions. In doing so, it creates and enforces bureaucratic procedures which in-effect removes autonomy from the teachers. No administrator or bureaucrat has a better finger on the pulse of appropriate action than the teacher in the classroom. The role of an administrator is to serve and enable the mission of the teachers, not to be served by teachers. The Arizona Department of Education will create a set of uniform policies and procedures to supersede those of individual school districts. The goal is to reduce overbearing constraints on teachers, dysfunctional policy and increase teacher autonomy.

The Paralysis of Fairness

The ill-conceived application of “fairness” to all aspects of the public school system has resulted in one grand outcome, the deprivation of opportunity for all students. Instead, the Department of Education will revise policy and procedures for all school districts that will reorient to a system of competition and personal responsibility. Below is one example to illustrate the revised policies.

A hypothetical school has enough students to fill three eight-grade classrooms. Currently, students may be randomly assigned a particular teacher or the student pool may even be assigned to ensure that each of the three classrooms has an equal mix of serious students and students with discipline problems. In each case, the scholastic experience of each student will be reduced to the lowest denominator. We will not continue to allow disruptive students to impede the learning experience of other students. Under a new policy, the students would be segregated among the rooms according to learning potential. One room may have the more-advanced students. The teacher could then adapt the teaching style to maximize the results for those students. A second class may have the mediocre students. That teacher would also adapt the delivery of education to maximize those students’ experience. A third class may consist of disruptive students. The teacher of that group will design the curriculum to maximize the results for that group. In each of the three cases, the students will experience a teaching environment that maximizes their potentials while also preventing any student from being deprived by disruptive behavior or diluted curriculum devised for less-competitive students.

Suspension and Expulsion

A child has a right to receive an education. However, the child does not have a right to prevent other children from receiving an education. Children with chronic discipline problems will be removed from the mainstream student body. Larger school districts will create a separate program for educating those disruptive students which will be segregated from the mainstream students. For those students that refuse to conform to

the expectations of the education system, they will be suspended and ultimately expelled. Parents, if you find your child to be in this situation, you do not have a teacher problem, you have a parenting problem.

Student Code of Conduct and Dress Code

A student's educational experience will be a reflection of the school environment. If a school campus conduct allows for students dressed like gangsters, wearing clothing with undesirable messaging, allows electronic devices in the classroom and tolerates drug presence, that school is going to produce largely dysfunctional adults that have little potential to care for themselves or contribute to a first-world economy. The Arizona Department of Education will create a uniform student code of conduct and dress code to be applied to all Arizona campuses. School administrators will be given not only authority but a mandate to enforce positive conduct.

D. Education Pathway

If a mortgage broker sells you a mortgage for a house far more expensive than you can afford, you will surely lose the house, lose your down-payment, be economically compromised and cynical about the world. That broker is (or should be) guilty of malpractice and, as a grown adult, you should have known better.

If a school faculty encourages a child to enroll in a university when the child has little potential for succeeding, encourages a field that sounds fun but is a professional dead end and encourages the assumption of monstrous debt, the faculty is guilty of malpractice. Unlike you and your mortgage decision, a child does not have the worldly skills to discern good from bad career directions. That presents a special obligation of parents and school faculty. What is purveyed as "every kid deserves a university chance" may actually be a condemnation to;

- Dropping out with no degree but with debt that can not be escaped.
- Pursuing a career that has no potential to ever pay back the debt and accumulate wealth.
- Living in their parents' basement or on a roommate's couch when they should be raising a family in their own home.

The Arizona school systems will cease prescribing university attendance for all children regardless of their potential for survival and success. The schools will also encourage professions where the student may maximize his/her potential for a quality lifestyle.

The Arizona Department of Education will annually develop an analysis of a wide spectrum of potential professions for graduating students. This will include such factors as wage trajectory, placement success, opportunity for growth, 5 and 10-year retention, etc with special attention to opportunities within the Arizona job marketplace. The school systems will exercise realistic direction to each student and his/her parents that will give that student the best opportunity for career success. This guidance will be based on the strengths and limitations of each student as an individual rather than on collective one-size-fits-all approach.

The philosophy of this guidance will resemble that practiced in Europe where every child is analyzed through their school years. The route through the school years

will be shaped by the student's characteristics, interests and potential. Some may be directed through a program in preparation for subsequent enrollment in a technical institute. Some may participate in a university-preparation program. Some may be prepared for a career in trades. It is the obligation of the faculty to guide each student as an individual to a career that they will find fulfilling and fruitful throughout adult life.

E. General Topics

Vouchers

The State's Empowerment Scholarship Accounts program will be limited to students with disabilities, as the program was originally conceived. A maximum of 10,000 will be awarded per year. No other voucher programs will be enacted.

Tax Credits

The State's tax credit program will be eliminated. No other program that allows taxpayers to use credits to direct education funds will be permitted.

Kindergarten

Each district will offer all-day kindergarten to all eligible students.

Charter Schools

Charter schools provide an avenue for school choice when a parent feels that their child's current school is not fostering a satisfactory learning environment. In that sense, they provide healthy competition to the public schools. As in other endeavors, competition inspires improvement for all competitors in the arena. Thus, the existence and expansion of charter school opportunities will be encouraged. That said, charter schools will only receive State support if they are equally accessible to students without regard to ethnicity or a family's financial capability. Charter schools may place requirements on students and their families that are designed to improve academic results such as compulsory parent involvement.

Testing

In order to evaluate the efficacy of systems of any kind, analytical measurement is necessary. That includes all matters related to education such as student progress and status as well as the efficacy of teachers, schools and programs. If our results are excellent, we will have reason to be proud. If our results are poor, we will be alerted that change is necessary. The need for positive change will not go away by ignoring the need. Hence, appropriate testing programs will be in effect.

Life Skills Curriculum

All high school students will be required to complete education in life skills. This curriculum will include industrial arts, mechanical skills, family financial management, nutrition and personal health.

Curriculum Specific to Identity Groups

School districts will be prohibited from offering educational programs or classes that are specific to any identity group and / or not equally applicable to all students.

Physical Education

All students will participate in physical-activity programs. This will include play activities for young children and competitive sports for older students. The goal is to foster both competition and routine lifelong well-being habits.

Parental Engagement

Parents, not teachers, are responsible for the education of their children. Teachers' missions are to assist the parents in the education of their children. There will be a dramatic increase in efforts to engage parents to make them an integral part of the school experience. Each school will have a "Parental-engagement" officer(s) to assist the teachers in this person-to-person contact as well as with the application of communication technology. The Arizona Civic Force will be utilized generously in this effort. The Civic Force will also serve as a mentoring program for parents that are not equipped or capable of fulfilling their obligations to their children.

American Studies Curriculum

The common bond that citizens of this country share and should serve as a cohesive force for our society is that we are all Americans and equally so. It will be required that all students in Arizona study a curriculum in American history and the constitutional republic that celebrates the unique gift that is given to all of us.

Spirit of Competition and Individualism

All curricula will be presented in a manner that celebrates each student as an individual. As such, we are to be given equal opportunity but without guarantee of equal outcomes. Rather, a person's outcome results from individual effort in competition with their peers. Each individual has an opportunity to try, fail and try again. This positive spirit will be consciously promoted throughout a student's school experience.

F. Faculty Compensation

In order to provide students with superior educations, it is recognized that Arizona must employ professional, dedicated, high-performing and credentialed teachers. Though there are some wonderful teachers in Arizona today, we do not currently have a stable education workforce that can deliver superior education results throughout the State's entire school system. Some simple facts regarding the current school year illustrate that point (from the Arizona Republic).

- Schools are short 1968 teachers this year.
- 627 teachers have resigned (526 quit just a month into the school year).
- 83 teachers never showed up.
- 156 teachers abandoned their classrooms.
- 3403 teaching jobs were filled by persons with no training in education.

- 62 percent of the State’s nearly 8600 teacher vacancies were filled by people who haven’t or couldn’t qualify for a teaching certificate.
- Over 1000 emergency teaching certificates have been issued.

The law of supply and demand is in effect here. We have the demand, however, certain job parameters are not desirable enough to attract the supply of professional teachers that is needed. To meet our objective of superior education results, we must make Arizona teaching careers attractive enough that adequate numbers of the people we desire will want to compete for those jobs.

Among other elements of teacher job satisfaction is financial compensation. This plan proposes that the average teacher compensation in each district will equal the median teacher compensation nationwide. A system of achieving and maintaining this status is described below.

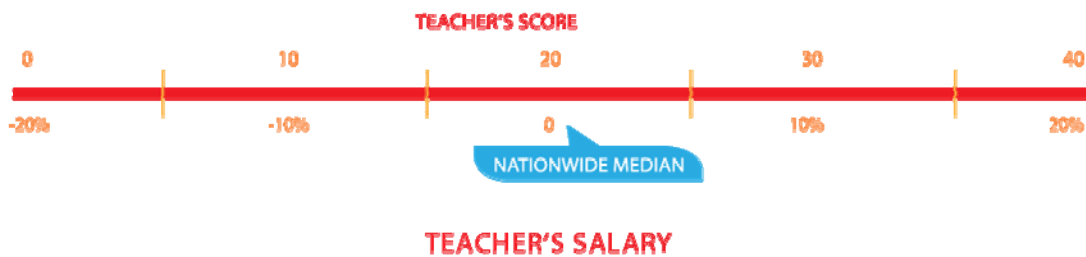
Nationwide Median Index

The benchmark for computing the average teacher salaries will be the median salaries for teachers nationwide. There are two widely accepted national surveys that report average teacher salaries in each individual state. They are the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the National Education Association and the data that they report is often not equal. Therefore, data from those two surveys will be averaged.

Each year, the average salaries for teachers in each individual state will be calculated by adding the data from the two surveys and dividing by two. The states will be ranked from high to low. The median salary with 25 states reporting higher and 25 reporting lower will be deemed that Nationwide Median Index.

Salary Range for Arizona Teachers

The range of salaries for Arizona teachers will be the Nationwide Median Index (the Index) plus or minus 20 percent. That said, the average of all teacher salaries within each district will be equal to the Index. Each teacher will have a **score** (0 – 40) that may adjust each year. For example, the salary for first-year teachers will be the Index minus 20 percent (their “score” being 0). A seasoned teacher with a historically average performance will likely have a score of 20, meaning that that person’s salary would equal the Nationwide Median Index. A seasoned teacher that is historically and remains currently a superlative performer may have a score of 40 (the maximum) and consequently a salary equaling the Index plus 20 percent.



Longevity Increases

In each of the first five years of a teacher's employment in the State, the teacher will be awarded 2 points, corresponding to a salary increase equal to 2 percent of the index. Thus, at a minimum, a teacher's salary would equal the Index minus 10 percent in five years. Beyond the first five years, there will be no longevity increases.

Performance Increases

Beyond the first five years of a teacher's Arizona career, all salary increases will be based on performance (starting teachers will be eligible for performance increases as well as longevity increases beginning the first year). The Arizona Department of Education will develop a standard system for annually evaluating each teacher's performance. This system will be based primarily on quantitative performance data but will also include qualitative input based on each teacher's personal, inspirational and motivational skills. The evaluation system will be designed to ensure that qualitative input is devoid of nepotism and is a true reflection of a teacher's impact on students.

District Pool

Within each district, an equilibrium should be achieved whereby the average scores of all teachers would be 20. Given that each year some teachers with higher-end scores will retire and be replaced with new hires with scores of 0, at the conclusion of each year, the districts average score will be less than 20. That differential between the year-end average score and 20 represents scores available for annual increases for the remaining teachers. This sum of scores available within each district will be referred to the "district pool".

So, each year:

$$\text{District pool} = (20 \text{ minus average score}) \times \text{the number of remaining teachers}$$

The District pool would be in units of "scores available".

Teacher' Annual Salary Re-evaluation

Each year, each teacher will receive an annual performance **rating**, also on a numerical scale of 0 – 40. It is intended that the average rating of all teachers within a district will be 20.

Any change in a teacher's salary for the following year will be determined by their current score, their current performance rating and the size of the district pool. The system would be as follows;

$$\text{Adjustment factor (individual teacher)} = \text{Performance rating} - \text{Current score}$$

$$\text{Available scores per factor} = \text{District pool} / \text{total adjustment factors (district)}$$

$$\text{The teacher's new score} = \text{old score} + (\text{adjustment factor} \times \text{available scores per factor})$$

The teacher's salary for the following year would be calculated based on their new score relative to the Nationwide Median Index.

Inflation Adjustment

Inflation per se would not be part of the above computation. Rather, inflation would be reflected by an increase in the Nationwide Median Index which would, in turn, affect the teacher's salary.

Partial-Year Service

If a teacher's appointment is less than year-round, then the salary payments will be suspended during that absence and days of leave will accrue on a pro-rated basis.

Results of this System

This system of teacher salary adjustment would accomplish the following objectives;

- Beginning teachers that are superlative performers would be able to move up the pay scale quite quickly.
- Poor performers will always remain on the lower end of the pay scale.
- A historically superior teacher that remains a superior performer will remain in the upper end of the pay scale.
- A historically superior teacher whose performance tapers down will not see a pay decrease but will decrease relative to other teachers as inflation raises the Index.
- The average salary for teachers in the State will always equal the national median salary for teachers in all states.
- The average salary within each district will equal the Nationwide Median Index thus ensuring that teachers are financially rewarded the same in all districts.
- Teacher salaries will be competitive in that they will annually compete for a portion of the district pool.
- Aside from the entry-level teachers, salary increases will be solely a reflection of performance and will follow performance as it changes over time.
- Excellent performance will be well rewarded, poor performance will not.

Faculty Holiday and Paid Leave Policies

Holiday and paid leave policies for teachers will conform to those for Arizona state employees as detailed in the Arizona State Personnel System Employee Handbook, Part 6 (http://www.hr.az.gov/PDF/Statewide_Employee_Handbook.pdf).

Discharge of Substandard Teachers

The sole mission of our schools is to educate our children to their full potential whereby they will experience successful lives in the local, State and global competitive marketplaces. High-performing teachers are instrumental in achieving that goal. Teachers that are not high-performing do not adequately contribute to the mission and hence deprive children of their maximum potential. Though they may be very nice people, there may be another profession to which they would be better suited. Regardless, teachers whose performance is substandard will be dismissed. To paraphrase

a quote by a local group, continuing to deprive students of education should not be a reward for having a long history of depriving students. Further, tenure will not serve as a mechanism to protect a poor-performing teacher.

The Arizona Department of Education will develop a statewide system of appraisal to identify poor-performing teachers. If a teacher is deemed to be poor-performing, he/she will be given a brief opportunity for remediation after which the teacher will be dismissed.

Staff Professional Image and Respect

Students are being prepared to function in a first-world economy and society to the highest level that they aspire and have the potentials to achieve. Not all elements of students' educations are academic in nature. These include learning norms that may be above those that they experience at home but are essential for entry into the business world. In other words, teachers and staff may be their only exposure to the socio-economic world that is above their non-school experiences. Even if students are otherwise exposed to these elements, their reinforcement is essential. That is, the students' frame of reference for performance as they enter the adult world is what they observe at school as well as at home. As such, teachers and staff must be superlative role models and project a professional image worthy of a students respect and aspiration.

If a student's role model is that of an adult dressed and presenting his/herself as a slob, then the student will be unprepared for success in their young adult world. Faculty and staff should present an image that respects their positions and their obligations as role models. That includes wearing neat business attire while at work. Men's school wardrobe includes a business button-down shirt, tie, dress slacks and dress shoes. Women should be attired in a commensurate wardrobe. Non-teaching/administrative staff should be attired in a neat issued uniform with long pants. As matters of self-respect and obligation to their students, teachers and staff are professionals and should present themselves in that manner.

G. Faculty Retirement Program

The relationship between currently-employed teachers and their employers relative to retirement and pensions are subject to existing contractual terms. Courts have ruled that those terms can not be changed unilaterally. Hence, existing teachers and future teachers will be subject to different retirement programs.

Future Teachers

Future teachers will not use a defined pension program. Rather, each teacher may establish a commercially available IRA-type retirement program of his/her choosing. As such, each teacher will manage their account as they see fit and it will be portable. The teacher's employer will contribute funds matching the teacher's contribution to a maximum of 12% (24% total) of the Nationwide Median Index.

Existing Teachers

The retirement program for existing teachers will be as currently contracted. Society has deemed that the appropriate age for retirement and enjoying the fruits of one's working years is 65 years of age. However, I rarely encounter a teacher that isn't retired by age 52. That means that those teachers are likely being paid during more years of retirement than while working. Also, students miss the benefits of a teacher's most-experienced years.

We wish to encourage teachers to stay in active teaching until 65 and at the same time reduce the need for new teachers to be hired. So, if an existing teacher will voluntarily commit to not receiving a pension payment until age 65, the teacher will be given an annual bonus of 10% of the Nationwide Median Index.

H. The Arizona Civic Force

Any experienced teacher will testify that the quality of a child's education is only 50% attributed to the experience in the classroom. The remaining 50% is a consequence of family motivation, family situations, poverty, etc. Children right under our noses experience terrible and limiting circumstances that few beyond educators recognize. A plethora of data from Arizona illustrates the dramatic impact of a child's living situation on educational outcomes. Some children have the good fortune of being born in two-parent families with adequate financial means and parents who engage lovingly and with determination in their child's education. Other children are unfortunate enough to experience the opposite. We would like to believe that all children have nurturing environments that inspire their children to educational excellence. But this is very far removed from reality. Those unfortunate children will receive assistance to fill the voids of incapable or delinquent parents.

I have proposed at great length elsewhere my vision for the Arizona Civic Force (<https://chiphowardaz.com/arizona-civic-force/>). This would be essentially a directory service for people who would like to mentor children and assist in their educations (as well as a multitude of other community engagement). It would provide the structure for such civic minded persons to dedicate a wonderful service to the next generation but do so under the comfort of a State-sponsored umbrella. Such programs already exist in smaller isolated venues and are producing wonderful results not only for the children but also for the volunteers. I consider it to be a force multiplier in the education system that will fill critical voids that are beyond the capacities of the teachers.

I. Paying for the Plan

Almost all citizens in Arizona want the education of their young people to be improved, drastically improved! Most polls say that the citizens would be willing to pay more for better results. As evidence, in the last election, 18 out of 18 school district overrides were passed by the voters. Understand this clearly, voters are not asking to pay more for a continuation of the status quo. They are willing to pay for better results.

Consistent with human nature, many voters are willing to increase the funding for Arizona education so long as someone else pays for it. Why do big business-persons

propose a new 1.5 percent sales tax to pay for education? Because sales tax disproportionately affects the population on the lower end of the economy. Why do poor people want an increase in income tax? Because wealthy people pay disproportionately more income tax. Why do we want corporations to pay more tax? Because corporations are some nebulous entity dripping with gold. Never mind that if we kill that golden goose, we will also kill our employment base.

The Arizona Office of Strategic Planning and Budgeting will investigate this plan and consider its financial implications. They will then prepare an estimate of the cost of implementation. Funding by the citizens will then be adjusted accordingly.

The only rational way to increase funds for education is for everyone to pay for it as we are all in this together. Thus, each of the three following revenue sources will pay one-third of the increased cost.

1. Sales tax - Though it disproportionately impacts the lower end of the economic spectrum, everyone who spends money will contribute.
2. Income tax - Income tax is progressive and as such, disproportionately affects higher income earners.
3. Real estate tax - This affects everyone, even renters, either directly or indirectly. It is also progressive in that the more house or business property someone can afford, the higher the contribution. Real estate tax also provides a stability factor in that it does not fluctuate dramatically with the economy.

In order to avoid shocking the economic system and allowing transition time for the schools, this plan will be phased in over a two-year period. The funding transition will be linear.

J. Implementation of the Plan

A drastic change of this kind and the critical nature of quality education demand that the choice to accept or to not accept be a choice of the voters. What's more, it is critical that the plan not be the product of the political system. If it were, it would become a dysfunctional buffet for every conceivable special interest and lobbyist under the sun. The product would certainly cost more and would likely not produce results. Implementing this plan as a citizen's ballot initiative will provide members of the Legislature with accountability "cover" and thus lessen their motives for resistance. Also, as a ballot initiative, the Legislature will have less ability to modify the Plan in response to special interest pressures. Hence, the plan will be presented to the voters in the form of a ballot initiative with an all or nothing result. Every special interest, education proponent, taxation opponent, etc will have opportunity to make their case to the voters. Ultimately, the People will decide.

K. Conclusion

Many readers will find this plan to be unorthodox, inconsistent with current practices, naive and outside the box. That is absolutely correct. However, what we do know is that what we are doing now is not working. It is time for a fresh look and boldly

pursue a new course. With no apology, we must change our current failure as the costs of not doing so are way too high.

Sign here

<http://go.azsos.gov/fzw5>

Help Chip Howard get on the ballot for November's election so that he can enact this Consolidated Arizona Education Reform Plan. Sign Chip Howard's petition online now.

Contribute \$5

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Help Chip Howard qualify as an Arizona Clean Elections Candidate. Make a \$5 qualifying donation online now.