

## Re-Examining the Picture of Arizona K-12 Public Education: The Skewed PR Campaign -VS- the Complete Picture

*"What if I told you there is a state which has added nearly \$1.5 billion to the general fund in support of education in the past three years?"*

### What else should you know:

- The Governor's FY2019 budget proposal still leaves AZ public schools short by nearly \$1 billion (\$952 million) compared to the level of funding in 2008 (We were also ranked in the bottom 20% of states for public education funding in 2008.).<sup>1</sup>
- Over the three year period (FY 2014-2016), more than \$420 million of taxable revenue was diverted from the general fund to subsidize private education.<sup>2</sup>
- The \$1.5 billion added in the past three years was achieved partially from accelerating the withdrawal from the education trust fund established in the state's early history and designated as a trust fund for long-term support of public education.<sup>3</sup> Proposition 123, passed by the voters in May 2016, is a temporary measure to divert about \$300 million each year to education from state land trust revenues.
- Due to loopholes and special-interest tax cuts, "it is not surprising that 74 percent of AZ corporations are able to reduce their income tax liability to \$50 or less."<sup>4</sup>
- AZ tax credits are growing far faster than the state budget or economy.<sup>5</sup>
- "...the Arizona Legislature since fiscal year 1992 has made numerous changes to the tax code that have eliminated certain taxes, reduced the tax rates of other taxes, and introduced numerous tax exemptions and credits. The estimated effect of these changes is a reduction in revenue to the state government's general fund of \$4.41 billion in FY2017. Thus, substantial amounts of additional revenue could be realized simply by rolling back a portion of the tax cuts that have been put into effect over the last 25 years."<sup>6</sup>
- "Apart from 2003, the Arizona legislature and governors have reduced tax rates and/or increased exemptions and credits in every year since 1990. In total, the tax changes cost the state over \$4 billion each year. Some of the largest tax cuts were implemented in the last six years when state lawmakers cut over \$1.5 billion in annual state general fund revenues."<sup>7</sup>

*"What if I told you Arizona leads the nation in gains in 4th and 8th grade math and reading proficiency?"*

### What else should you know:

- Arizona schools have increased reading, math and science instruction time by frequently cutting instruction time for other subject areas and recess time. "Across the nation, the testing obsession has nudged aside visual arts, music, physical education, social studies, and science, not to mention world languages, financial literacy, and that old standby, penmanship. In a 2011 national survey, two-thirds of teachers said many academic subjects had been crowded out by an increased focus on math and language arts. About half said art and music were being marginalized, while 40 percent said the same for foreign languages; 36 percent for social studies; and 27 percent for science. The results were particularly striking at the elementary level, where 81 percent of teachers reported that extra time devoted to math or language arts meant less time for other subjects. Over 60 percent of middle school teachers and 54 percent of high school teachers reported the same in their schools."<sup>8</sup>
- Arizona's schoolchildren have consistently scored below the national average on the best measure of statewide student performance, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test. Arizona is the only state that showed statistically significant increases in grade 4 and



grade 8 scores in the three content areas of math, reading and science between 2009 and 2015. With the exception of 8th grade math, the scores are still below the national average, but they have been increasing despite the state's low funding for education. Arizona's teachers have been doing an admirable job while being in a tough situation.<sup>9</sup>

- Arizona has a high rate of childhood poverty. Nearly 24 percent (23.6) youth under the age of 18 were living in poverty in 2016.<sup>10</sup> "In 2014, nearly 1 in 8 children lived in extreme poverty at less than half the poverty level. Children of color in Arizona are disproportionately poor. More than 1 in 3 Black children, more than 1 in 3 Hispanic children, and nearly 1 in 2 American Indian/Native Alaskan children were poor in 2014, compared to more than 1 in 8 White children. Nearly 31,000 Arizona public school students were homeless in the 2012-2013 school year."<sup>11</sup>
- Special needs students account for 12 percent of Arizona's school children. The Arizona Legislature has not adjusted for these students for a decade.<sup>12</sup>

*"What if I told you Arizona has created a Teacher's Academy to help prepare teachers for the state?"*

#### What else should you know:

- "The Arizona Teachers Academy, is to provide \$1 million of funding in scholarships for free tuition for 200 teachers at one of the state's three public universities for each year they teach in Arizona. According to Gov. Doug Ducey's office, the three state universities, Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University and the University of Arizona, are paying for the program through existing scholarship funds and Pell grants."<sup>13</sup>
- "Median pay for Arizona's elementary school teachers has dropped by 11 percent since 2001. For high school teachers, the decline has been 10 percent. When adjusted for statewide cost-of-living, elementary school teacher pay is the lowest in the nation. High school teacher pay ranks 49th of the 50 states."<sup>14</sup>
- "Increasing Workload – Demands for accountability, coupled with budget cuts that have increased class sizes while curtailing support personnel, have markedly increased the workload for Arizona's teachers. Teachers say they expect to work hard, but dislike being asked to work harder for less pay."<sup>15</sup>
- Teachers in AZ public schools are fleeing the profession or state with a diminishing pipeline into the profession. "Twenty-two percent of the teachers hired between 2013 and 2015 were not teaching in Arizona after one year. Over one-third of Arizona teachers have been in the classroom for four years or less. Forty-two percent of Arizona teachers hired in 2013 were no longer teaching in an Arizona public school by 2016. Fifty-two percent of Arizona charter school teachers hired in 2013 left within three years."<sup>16</sup>
- "More than one-quarter of the 8,344 openings for teaching jobs in Arizona for the 2016-17 school year were vacant as of Nov. 28, 2016. These vacancies were often filled by long-term substitutes or by having existing teachers teach extra classes. Another 27 percent of the openings were filled by those who did not meet the standard teacher requirements. This includes teachers whose certification is pending, and those with interim or emergency certificates."<sup>17</sup>
- "These problems combine to create a continuing shortage of teachers, leaving schools to scramble to find and keep teachers while denying students the benefits of having a well-trained, consistent presence in the classroom. If unaddressed, the problem could spill out of the classroom and into the economy as Arizona as a whole suffers the long-term consequences of a poorly educated workforce."<sup>18</sup>



## References:

- <sup>1</sup> Children's Action Alliance. January 2018. <http://azchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2018-01-10-Ducey-education-funding-bar-chart-comparison-explanation.pdf>
- <sup>2</sup> Arizona Department of Revenue, Office of Economic Research & Analysis, June 2017: <https://www.azdor.gov/Portals/0/Reports/FY2016%20Private%20School%20Tuition%20Org%20Credit%20Report.pdf>, page 2.
- <sup>3</sup> Children's Action Alliance Policy Brief. August 2015. <http://azchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/State-Land-Trust-8-151.pdf>
- <sup>4</sup> The Fair Share Campaign. Arizona Center for Economic Progress. January 2018. [https://www.azeconcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/ACEP\\_FactSheet\\_FairShareCampaign\\_LongVersion\\_P5-Digital.pdf](https://www.azeconcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/ACEP_FactSheet_FairShareCampaign_LongVersion_P5-Digital.pdf)
- <sup>5</sup> Children's Action Alliance, Policy Brief. January 2018. <http://azchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Policy-Brief-Tax-Collections-Not-Growing-Fast-Enough-to-Re-Invest-in-Public-Education.pdf> page 3.
- <sup>6</sup> W P Carey School of Business. Options for Raising State Government Revenue in Arizona. January 2018. <https://wpcarey.asu.edu/sites/default/files/revoptions01-18.pdf>
- <sup>7</sup> Children's Action Alliance, <http://azchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Policy-Brief-Tax-Collections-Not-Growing-Fast-Enough-to-Re-Invest-in-Public-Education.pdf> page 3.
- <sup>8</sup> The Testing Obsession and the Disappearing Curriculum. NEA Today. Sept. 2, 2014. <http://neatoday.org/2014/09/02/the-testing-obsession-and-the-disappearing-curriculum-2/>
- <sup>9</sup> Hunting, et al. Morrison Institute. May 2017. [Finding and Keeping Educators in Arizona's Classroom](https://morrisoninstitute.asu.edu/sites/default/files/content/products/AZ%20TEACHERS%20REPORT%202017_0.pdf), page . [https://morrisoninstitute.asu.edu/sites/default/files/content/products/AZ%20TEACHERS%20REPORT%202017\\_0.pdf](https://morrisoninstitute.asu.edu/sites/default/files/content/products/AZ%20TEACHERS%20REPORT%202017_0.pdf)
- <sup>10</sup> Kids Count Data Center. <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/6484-children-under-18-years-living-below-the-poverty-level?loc=4&loc=2#detailed/2/any/false/870,573,869,36,868/any/13488,13439>
- <sup>11</sup> Children in the States: Arizona. Children's Defense Fund. <http://www.childrensdefense.org/library/data/state-data-repository/cits/2015/2015-arizona-children-in-the-states.pdf>
- <sup>12</sup> Arizona Capital Times. October 5, 2017.
- <sup>13</sup> "Frustration, low pay, stress drive teachers from Arizona". Arizona Daily Sun. Sept. 30, 2017
- <sup>4</sup> Hunting, et al. Morrison Institute. May 2017. [Finding and Keeping Educators in Arizona's Classroom](https://morrisoninstitute.asu.edu/sites/default/files/content/products/AZ%20TEACHERS%20REPORT%202017_0.pdf), page 5. [https://morrisoninstitute.asu.edu/sites/default/files/content/products/AZ%20TEACHERS%20REPORT%202017\\_0.pdf](https://morrisoninstitute.asu.edu/sites/default/files/content/products/AZ%20TEACHERS%20REPORT%202017_0.pdf)
- <sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, page 6; <sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, page 5; <sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, page 8; <sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, page 20.

## **Links to additional resources for reexamining the total AZ K-12 public education 2018 status.**

**What if we told you the truth about education funding in Arizona?** Save Our Schools. A 30 second YouTube video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oPqvFg-ks48>

**Next Steps on Teacher Pay and Student Support.** AZ Schools NOW (one page recommendation) <http://azchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2018-Next-Steps-FINAL.pdf>.

**"Crisis in Public Education: Teachers, Funding and Why We Should All Care."** Video of non-partisan forum presentations by Dan Hunting, Dana Wolfe Naimark, Dr. Jennifer Johnson, and Q&A. January 25, 2018. Online at: <https://www.facebook.com/LWVAZ/videos/1664796846920147/>

**"Finding and Keeping Educators for Arizona's Classrooms.** Dan Hunting and associates. Morrison Institute for Public Policy. May 2017. [https://morrisoninstitute.asu.edu/sites/default/files/content/products/AZ%20TEACHERS%20REPORT%202017\\_0.pdf](https://morrisoninstitute.asu.edu/sites/default/files/content/products/AZ%20TEACHERS%20REPORT%202017_0.pdf)

## **Children's Action Alliance Series of Policy Briefs about K-12 Funding Issues:**

★ AZ Tax Collections Not Growing Enough to Re-Invest in Public Education. <http://azchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Updated-1-18-Tax-Collections-Not-Growing-Enough-to-Reinvest-in-Public-Education.pdf>

★ Private School Tax Credits Divert Public Dollars for Private Benefits. <http://azchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Private-School-Tax-Credit-brief-12-151.pdf>

★ Arizona Schools Count on Proposition 301 Sales Tax. [http://azchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Prop-301\\_final-9-15.pdf](http://azchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Prop-301_final-9-15.pdf)

★ Empowerment Scholarship Account Voucher Expansion: Growing Public Subsidies for Private Schools. <http://azchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Return-on-Education-ESA-brief-6-17.pdf>

**"Following the Money: Twenty Years of Charter School Finances in Arizona"**. Curtis Cardine and David Wells. Grand Canyon Institute. Sept.. 17, 2017.

Compiled by Joye B. Kohl, EdD, and John W. Kohl, EdD  
LWV-NWMC Education Co-Chairs. Feb. 2018