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A Service of the Arizona School Boards Association

Part 1:

What are Arizona's Empowerment Scholarship accounts?



Originally published on
January 4, 2017
By Don Harris/AZEdNews

The expansion of Arizona's voucher-like Empowerment Scholarship Account program is expected to be one of the most high profile and contentious education issues of the 2017 legislative session.

ESA backers consider the program a parental school choice option, like charter schools or district open enrollment. Public school advocates see ESAs as a means to remove students from public district and charter schools while siphoning much needed dollars for education from the state general fund.

An Empowerment Scholarship Account functions like a personal checking account or debit card. A family's annual deposit from the state is equal to 90 percent of the state funding that the child would have been funded for if he or she attended a charter school. Parents spend the money at their discretion on items, allowable in the law, that include tuition and fees at a private school or an eligible post-secondary institution, an online learning program, educational therapies or services, tutoring, curriculum, testing fees, and bank fees charged for the management of an ESA. ESAs must be renewed by families annually. The parents or guardians of students who receive ESAs must waive the child's right to attend public school for the one-year period funded by the ESA.

Read full article at www.azednews to learn about the national movement in regards to ESA programs.

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AZEDNEWS. We inform. You decide.

We continue to cover the crucial topics in education policy and practice that shape and mold the future for all students in Arizona. Stay up to date with the new series on Empowerment Scholarship Accounts and infographics, as well as other upcoming issues we continue to cover. Remember, our original news reporting shifts the momentum away from conversations based on misperceptions and toward those that contribute to informed public discussion and greater understand of Arizona K-12 education. We inform. You decide.

Thank you for your continued support!

Best regards,
Tracey Benson

DIRECTOR,
ARIZONA EDUCATION NEWS SERVICE
ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
ARIZONA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

AZEDNews original articles featured in this issue were reported and written by ASBA education reporter Lisa Irish (lirish@azsba.org), contributing writer Don Harris, and ASBA education intern David Marino.



Part 2:

Academic accountability: How do ESA's measure up?

Originally published February 1, 2017
By Don Harris/AZEdNews

As legislators seek to dramatically expand Arizona's program to provide state funds for private schools and other personal education needs, public school advocates are pushing back on a host of policy issues related to the state's Empowerment Scholarship Account program, including its lack of state-level academic accountability.

They question how well ESA students are doing and why the state isn't keeping track of their progress as it does for students who attend public district and charter schools. Under the ESA program, parents whose child is accepted into the program receive 90 percent of the state funding that child would have been funded for at a charter school. The money can be spent on a variety of things, including tuition and fees at a private school, an online learning program, educational therapies, or services and tutoring.

Initially designed for children with special needs, lawmakers expanded the program to include children of an active duty military parent or guardian; children placed in foster care who have been adopted; children who attend a public school with a state grade of D or F; siblings of students who are participating or have participated in ESAs; children who reside on Native American lands; and children of military personnel killed in the line of duty.

The Arizona Department of Education, which administers the program, has no authority to request or require the academic progress of ESA students from private or home-schooled children. What's more, ADE has no records of how many students drop out of the program and return to public schools or how many have graduated from high school.

Read full article at www.azednews to learn about how ESAs compare to public schools in tracking student academic achievement and how new bills are affecting ESAs sponsored by the Arizona Senate.

Academic Accountability

How do ESAs compare?

Empowerment Scholarship Accounts provide taxpayer money from the state's general fund to parents who opt to take their child out of a public school - a district or charter school - and send them to a private school or use other education services.

Arizona public schools are mandated by law to meet certain academic accountability requirements to track students' learning, but Arizona's ESA recipients are not.

Academic Accountability Requirements	Arizona Public Schools	Empowerment Scholarship Accounts
Give students standardized tests	✓	✗
Report test results to state	✓	✗
Report data by subgroups to determine achievement gaps	✓	✗
Report high school graduation and college attendance rates	✓	✗
Comply with federal student privacy laws	✓	✗
Survey parents on satisfaction and effectiveness	✓	✗

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Long-term funding fix could be hottest K-12 conversation in 2017

Rep. Doug Coleman (R-16) speaks in a panel discussion concerning education policy in the upcoming Arizona Legislative session, as Rep. Heather Carter (R-15) and moderator Jim Small look on. Photo by David Marino

Originally published December 8, 2016

Increasing teacher salaries and repairing aging classrooms and school buildings for safety and to meet 21st century needs will be among the biggest needs discussed by legislators and education advocates at the Arizona Capitol when the new session begins in January, but raising revenue to fund those priorities is likely to take center stage.

Though the state is sitting on a rainy day fund of \$460 million and small revenue surpluses are projected for the next three years, a state budget official and panel of four Republican and Democratic legislators who spoke to a crowd of nearly 300 public school leaders last month agreed that it won't be enough to meet the ongoing requirements of district and charter schools, nor fully address the growing list of needs that have been stacking up since 2008.

Steady increases in overall student enrollment in Arizona public schools, inflation funding, and an increasing average per-pupil cost, due to an increasing number of special education students, also will need to figure into the funding discussion as well, said Steve Schimpp, deputy director of the Joint Legislative Budget Committee.

This legally required funding is projected by the Arizona Department of Education to be an additional \$67 million in 2018, \$134 million in 2019 and \$167 million in 2020.

Read full article at www.azednews to learn more about the long-term solutions to improve and stabilize public school funding.

Arizona's achievement gains can't overcome F in funding

Originally published on January 18, 2017



Arizona students' achievement gains over time ranked the state seventh in the nation, but that could not overcome the state's spending for education, ranked at 50th in the nation, according to Education's Week's 2017 Quality Counts report *Under construction: Building on ESSA's K-12 foundation*.

Arizona's state highlights report showed that Arizona received a D+, or 68.6 out of a total 100 points, ranking it 44th in the nation among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The national average was a C. The report includes an interactive map to compare states nationwide.

This year's results for Arizona are similar to previous report cards from 2016 and in 2015. Arizona's B grades in school finance equity and K-12 achievement equity, it earned a D in overall school finance and an F in school finance spending.

The chance for success index looks at education's role in positive outcomes over an individual's lifetime and takes into consideration 13 indicators from cradle to career that are grouped into three categories: early foundations, school years, and adult outcomes. Early foundations includes items that help children get off to a good start, while school years looks at things that range from preschool enrollment to post-secondary enrollment and adult outcomes examines post-secondary attainment and workforce indicators.

Read full article at www.azednews to learn more about what school finance and the K-12 achievement index measures.

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Equity means providing schools resources based on students' needs

Originally published January 18, 2017

While many focus on horizontal equity – each school receiving the same amount of resources – what they should focus on is vertical equity – each school receiving resources based on their students' needs, said Dr. Larry Picus, a professor of education finance and policy at the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education at a recent legislative workshop in Phoenix.

That means providing lower-performing students who have greater needs with more resources than higher-performing students with lesser needs. "Vertical equity means we actually address the individual needs of children," said Picus, former president of the Association for Education Finance & Policy and member of the EdSource Board of Directors. "The obvious thing is special education. We spend more money per child for children who have disabilities." Picus spoke to a group of Arizona school board members, superintendents, and school business officials in November.

One way these needs are met is through grants including federal Title I money that goes to schools

with large numbers of low-income students to help provide services that meet those children's needs. Another example, is transportation funding for rural and urban school districts which often have very different needs.

Transportation costs per pupil for urban school districts are often fairly low, because in densely populated areas where schools are nearby many children can walk to school, but those costs in rural areas are often much higher because schools are more spread out over sparsely populated areas making it more difficult for children to walk to school, Picus said.

"If you roll that into an equity model and say that everybody gets \$10,000 a child, and an urban district spends \$500 a child for transportation, and a rural district spends \$1,500 per child for transportation, you've created a \$1,000 inequity," Picus said.

Read full article at www.azednews to learn more about retaining teachers and the method Arizona uses to count students.



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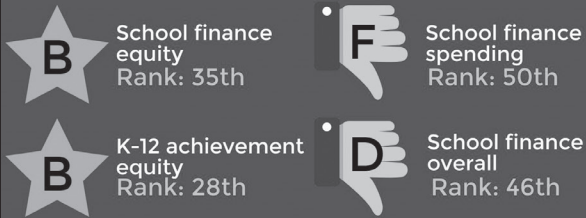
Arizona's Report Card

AZ grade AZ rank National average National average rank



Source: Education Week's 2017 Quality Counts report

Arizona snapshot



Arizona's grades

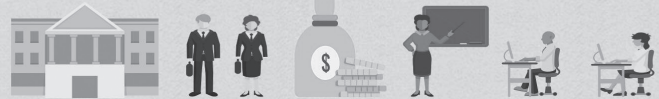
Rank	Chance for success	US average
44	C+ Early foundations	B-
42	C- School years	C
38	C- Adult outcomes	C+
C Overall		
School finance		
50	F Spending indicators	D
35	B Equity measures	B
D- Overall		
K-12 Achievement		
37	D- Status	D
7	C- Change	D+
28	B Equity	B
C- Overall		

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Arizona's achievement gains can't overcome F in funding

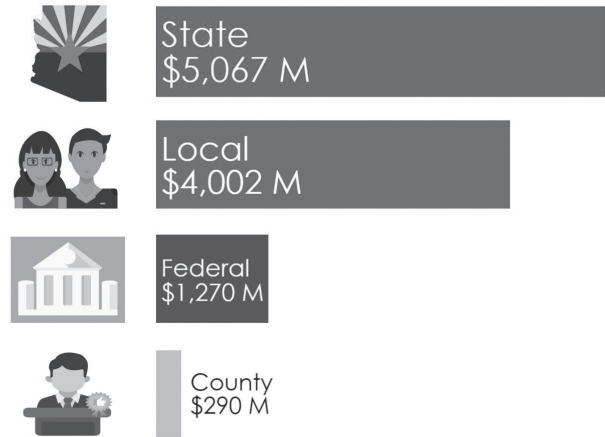
Originally published January 18, 2017

How much money goes toward Arizona K-12 education this year?



AZ public schools will receive an estimated \$10.6 billion from federal, state, county and local sources for this school year.

Estimated public school revenue this year



Source: Joint Legislative Budget Committee presentation on Nov. 18, 2016.

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Schools with high Latino enrollment receive least state, local funds

Originally published November 9, 2016

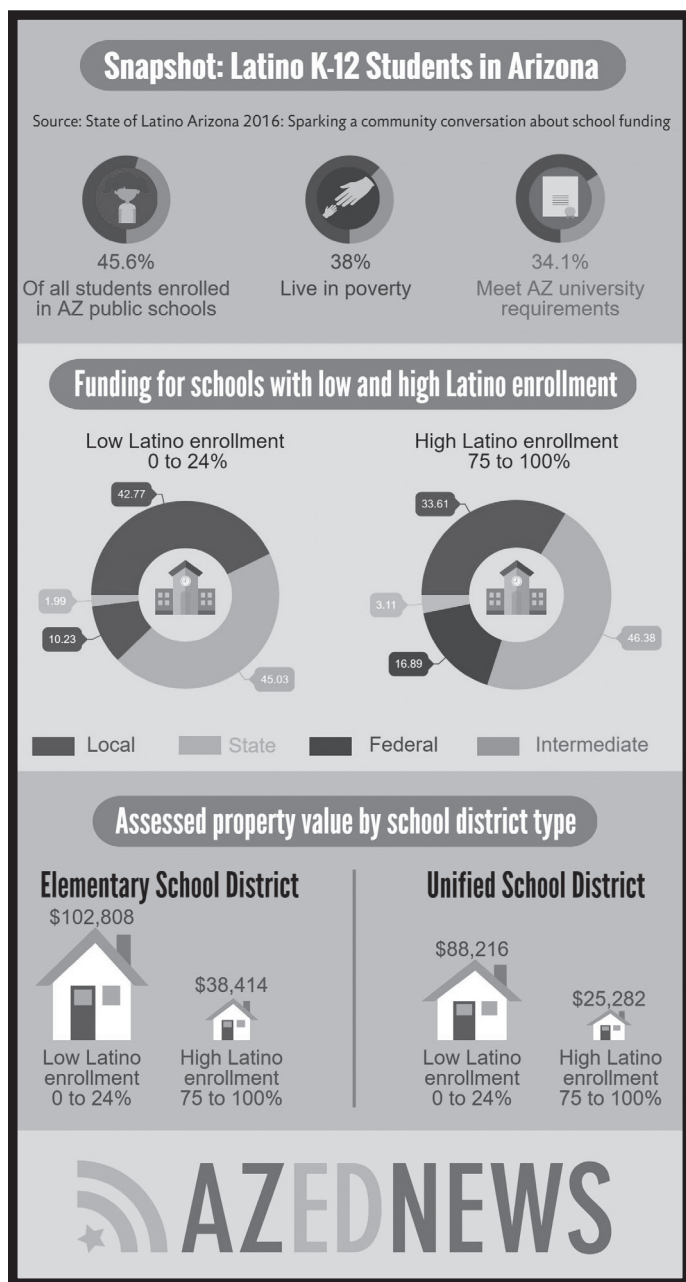
Long-term funding fix could be hottest K-12 conversation in 2017

Originally published December 8, 2017

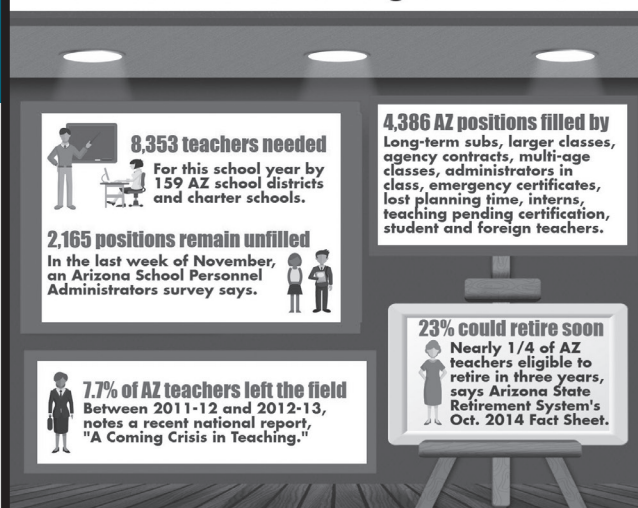
infographics?

Education advocates urge Governor, Legislators to make teachers' pay raises a priority

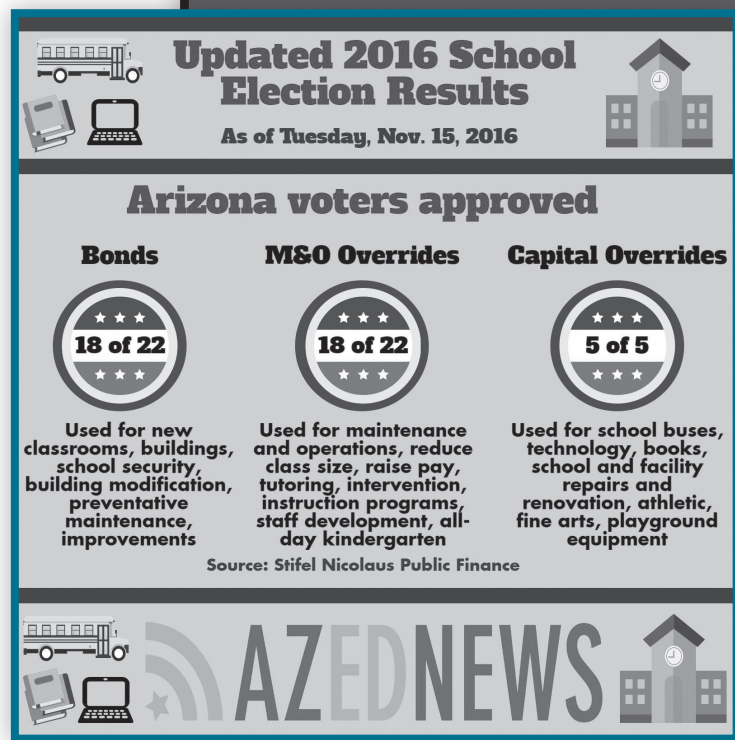
Originally published January 23, 2017



The Teacher Shortage in Arizona



How Arizona ranks nationally



Local school funding measures surpass recent trend

Originally published November 16, 2016

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Education advocates urge governor, legislators to make teachers' pay raises a priority

Two Arizona Teachers of the Year presented Gov. Doug Ducey with a letter Monday afternoon from public education advocates asking him and legislators to put all new ... (Publish January 23, 2017)

Gov. Ducey: More education funding, teacher raises and loan forgiveness plus video & budget

Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey proposed increased K-12 education funding each year he's governor, permanent salary increases for Arizona ... (Published January 9, 2017))

2017 Arizona Teacher of the Year says strong connection boost students' learning

Michelle Dougherty, who was named Arizona's Teacher of the Year last month by the Arizona Education Foundation, said without these caring teachers ... (Published December 13, 2016)

Initial statewide results: 75 percent of bonds, overrides pass

School boards in 46 of Arizona's 223 school districts asked voters to increase local funding for schools through passage of bond and override measures ... (Published November 9, 2016)

Alternate routes to the front of the class provide some relief

This school year, Arizona administrators having trouble recruiting certified teachers filled about 22 percent of their open classroom positions by ... (Published November 1, 2016)

Low supply, high demand for teachers causes stress on schools

Fewer college students enrolling in college teacher preparation programs and more teachers leaving for higher paying careers or retirement has led to ... (Published November 1, 2016))

Digital Disruption: Social media threats and consequences for students

Aaron Schoenberger, founder and CEO of Soteria Intelligence, a social media threat company, says that while the number of social media threats were fairly low from the rise of social media in 2005/2006, there was a spike in ... (Published October 26, 2016)

Rural district seeks bond to bring P.E. and community events back to campus

Seligman Unified School District is seeking a \$2.95 million bond election to replace its old gymnasium, which was found to be structurally ... (Published October 18, 2016)

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Local funding outpaces state funding for Arizona schools

The amount of local funding as a percentage of total funding for schools in Arizona has been increasing steadily for the past 22 years and is higher than ... (Published October 18, 2016)

Schools seek community buy in for building, buses and books

The 150 elementary and middle school students who attend school in Seligman, Ariz., haven't had a gym to use for P.E., school plays or community gatherings in ... (Published October 18, 2016)

Leaders say full-day kindergarten is key to early literacy

On the heels of a new national report on the value of full-day kindergarten and the states that offer and fund it, Arizona leaders have renewed calls for ... (Published October 6, 2016)

Americans speak up on purpose of a public school education

Most Americans disagree on whether the purpose of a public school education is to prepare students for higher education, for work or ... (Published September 28, 2016)

How students' rights shape schools' responses to social media, cell phones

When an Arizona student was critical of school administration on social media, an administrator asked the district's legal counsel if they could punish the student and search the student's cell phone. ... (Published September 27, 2016)

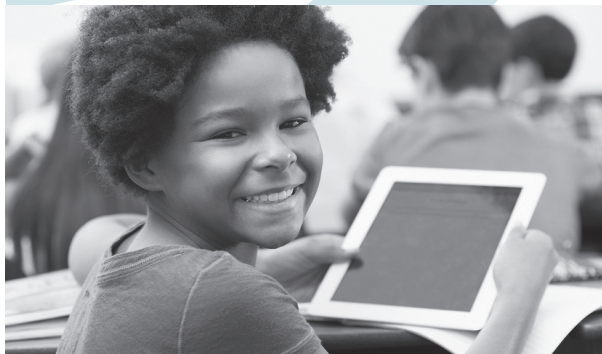
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