

# Quick Guide to AZ Education Funding

updated 4/25/18, 11 AM

This handy guide is intended to help Arizonans:

- 1) Understand the crisis we are facing
- 2) Connect the dots about what caused this crisis
- 3) Navigate misinformation about AZ K-12 spending

## Part 1: Arizona's Classroom Crisis in under 3 Minutes

Please share this video widely to help others understand the troubles we face:



Link: [http://bit.ly/classroom\\_crisis](http://bit.ly/classroom_crisis)

## Support for Public Education

Poll after poll consistently shows that Arizona voters support public education:

- Arizona voters across all parties and professions consistently name education as the state's top priority ([Arizona Daily Star](#))
- 77% of AZ taxpayers want to pay more for public schools (Moore Poll, 2016)
- 97% of us name public education as central to Arizona's success ([Morrison Institute for Public Policy](#))

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# The Problem with Teacher Pay

Arizona ranks **50th** in the US in median elementary school teacher pay when adjusted for cost of living.

Secondary school teacher pay ranks **49th** in the nation. ([Expect More AZ Teacher Pay](#))

It would take an **11.6% raise** to lift elementary teacher pay to **48th in the nation**.

It would take **\$1 billion** a year to raise AZ teachers' pay to the national median.

## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

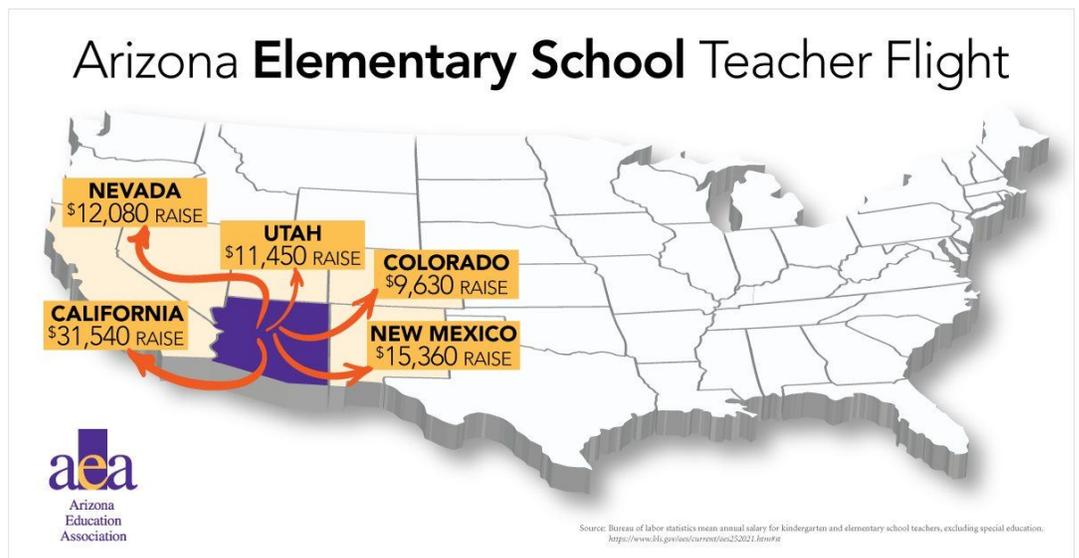


Median pay for Arizona's elementary school teachers has **dropped by 11%** since 2001. High school teacher pay has dropped by 10%. ([Morrison Report](#))

	RANK	SALARY
★ United States		\$55,800
● New Mexico	19	\$59,047
● Utah	28	\$54,814
● Colorado	45	\$47,413
● Arizona	50	\$42,474

## State Comparisons

Arizona educators can **earn a significant wage increase for the same job** simply by moving to a neighboring state that prioritizes education.



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## Empty Classrooms

Over [2,000 teacher positions throughout Arizona stand vacant](#), with more qualified teachers leaving the ranks every year. This means over 60,000 students do not have a permanent, certified teacher, and classrooms are very crowded. Another 3,400 classrooms have been filled by people who aren't trained or certified to teach.

According to a [2017 report by the Morrison Institute](#), more teachers are leaving the profession annually than Bachelor of Education degrees are granted by the three state universities. Among AZ teachers hired in 2013, **42% left the profession within 3 years**. Over one-third of AZ teachers have been in the classroom for 4 years or less.

### Teacher retention

Each year, Arizona is losing more teachers than its three state universities produce.



Sources: Arizona Department of Education and Arizona Board of Regents

Infographic by Lisa Irish/AZEdNews

## Overcrowded Classrooms

Arizona has 1.1 million K-12 students, but just 48,358 full-time teachers. [Only two states](#) have a worse teacher-to-student ratio.

While small class sizes are linked to positive life outcomes, children in overcrowded classrooms receive less individualized attention. It becomes harder for teachers to manage larger classrooms, properly supervise larger reading groups, or encourage a larger number of students to complete projects efficiently. All of this [slows down](#) the group's collective achievement.

This shortage extends across all types of educators. Because of budget cuts and low pay, Arizona has roughly one-quarter the [recommended number](#) of school counselors. This makes it difficult to identify red flags and assist youth.

## Students per teacher



Click image to enlarge: The student-teacher ratio in Arizona is nearly 23:1, well above the national average of 16:1. (Source: National Center for Education Statistics)

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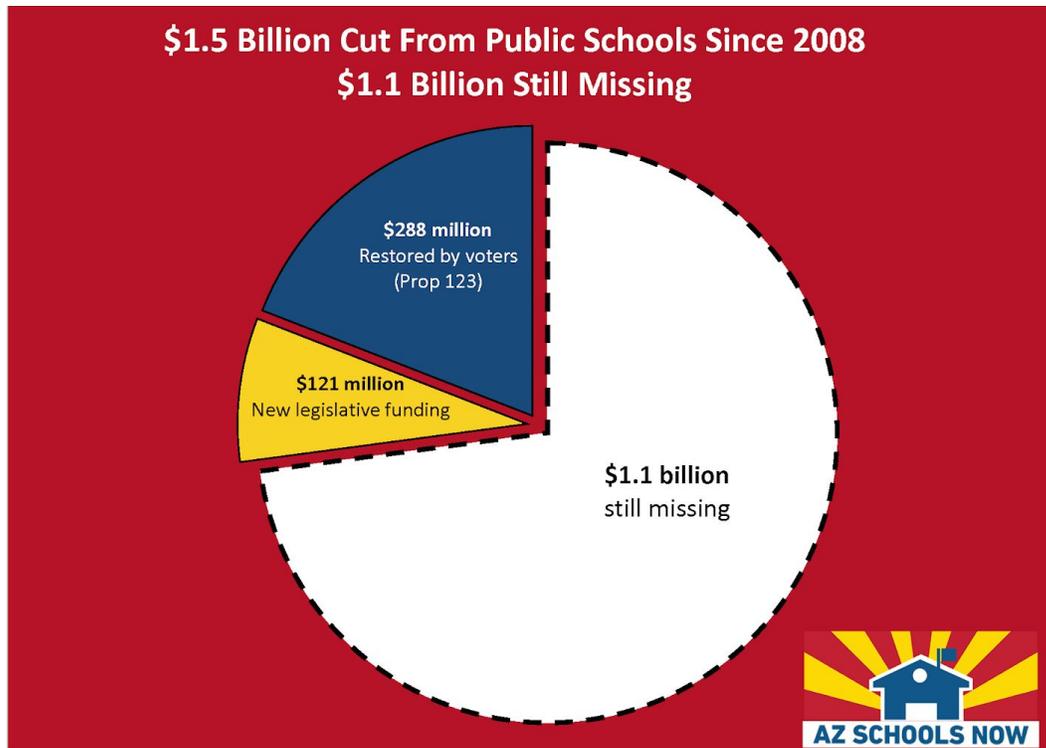


*Arizonans support public education,  
but our schools are in crisis.*

*How did we get here?*

## Part 2: How Did We Get Here?

### School Funding: The Cuts Keep Coming



- Arizona has **cut more from education funding than any other state** in the nation. Since 2009, Arizona has lost \$4.56 billion in funding — a decline of more than 36%. ([Arizona School Boards Association](#))
- Despite our state’s growing population and the larger number of students in today’s classrooms, our public schools get nearly 15% less funding now than they did 10 years ago. ([Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#))
- Full-day kindergarten (funding eliminated in 2011, a loss of \$1.2 billion) and capital funding (\$2 billion total cut since 2009) have suffered the largest cuts.

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# School Privatization: We're #1!

School privatization is part of a larger campaign to diminish the public institutions on which our nation was founded by fanning out their jobs and responsibilities to the private, for-profit sector.

Arizona ranks #1 for school choice and has been “ground zero” for school privatization for almost 30 years. Over decades, funding for public schools has dramatically declined while our state’s investment in for-profit education has increased exponentially.



- **1995:** Arizona passes the nation’s most expansive charter school law, as well as open enrollment
- **1997:** Arizona implements Student Tuition tax credit for private schools (STO vouchers)
- **2006:** Arizona implements school vouchers
- **2009:** School vouchers ruled unconstitutional on the grounds that public money cannot go directly to educational institutions with a religious affiliation
- **2011:** Arizona becomes the first state to implement Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESA vouchers). To circumvent constitutionality issues, funding is loaded onto debit cards and given directly to families.
- **2012:** ESA vouchers are expanded past their original purpose for students with special needs to include students in failing schools, foster care children, children on Native American reservations, and children of military personnel
- **2017:** ESA vouchers are expanded to include every child in the state (referred to voters as Prop 305 on November 2018 ballot by [Save Our Schools Arizona](#))

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# ESA Voucher Expansion

## What are ESAs?

ESAs, “Empowerment Scholarship Accounts,” are a type of private school voucher. They divert public tax dollars to private schools, as well as online and home schools.

ESA vouchers have lax oversight, little accountability, and few auditing requirements. The Arizona Education Department's tracking is [opaque, incomplete, and riddled with errors](#). This makes ESA vouchers vulnerable to misspending. A state audit found over \$102,000 in ESA voucher funds misspent over 6 months alone; the state recovered less than 15% of the funds.

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## Part 3: Get Involved!

Change comes from all of us working together. Here are just a few ways you can help:



1. Sign up to volunteer with Save Our Schools Arizona: [sosarizona.org/volunteer](https://sosarizona.org/volunteer)
2. Coordinate an AZED101 presentation at your home, school, community center, or church: [azed101now@gmail.com](mailto:azed101now@gmail.com)
3. Become an AZED101 presenter: [www.azed101.org](http://www.azed101.org)
4. Attend PTA/PTO meetings: check the web site of your local school, or ask school office staff
5. Support your local school: volunteer your time, support community events, or become a school liaison with [Arizona Educators United](#)
6. Attend school board meetings: meeting dates are publicly posted on district web sites
7. Find your local [Legislative District](#) and identify your state lawmakers
8. Contact your state [senators](#) and [representatives](#) and the [Governor](#)
9. Investigate candidates' campaign funding: [seethemoney.az.gov](https://seethemoney.az.gov) or [followthemoney.org](https://followthemoney.org)
10. Elect officials with clear understanding and clear support for public education
11. Share this document with friends, family, neighbors, coworkers — and anyone else you can think of!

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