

Governor's Education Budget adds funding but not enough to move the needle for Arizona public schools, focuses on expanding ESA vouchers

The governor's office says it's adding **\$608 million in "new" dollars**, but \$145 million is merely adjusting for inflation, which is required by law, and another \$175 million fulfills the last part of 2018's "20x2020" teacher pay raise, **so only a portion of the proposed budget is TRULY "new" funding:**

- **\$38 million** for schools to hire the additional school counselors and resource officers that were requested but unfunded last year
- **\$108 million** for building repairs and maintenance, but don't forget: [the state is being sued for neglecting this fund every year for several years, and this payout doesn't even account for 65% of what schools had back in 1998](#)
- **\$136 million** for Charter and District Additional Assistance, which puts us at 1998 levels, and in the case of the District allocation, is not adjusted for inflation
- **\$44 million** for something truly new: "Project Rocket" acknowledges for the first time that community poverty affects learning and widens the achievement gap between affluent students and those in low-income households. Based upon an application and oversight process, it would provide \$150 per student in additional funding to a portion of schools with the highest percentage of Free and Reduced Lunch (low income) families

The governor's State of the State address last week put a spotlight on two families using the Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA voucher) program, whom he presented as his guests at the Capitol. This is a loud and clear signal that expanding ESA vouchers for use at [out-of-state private](#), religious schools *AND* using state dollars to promote the program are top priorities.

In other words, the public education budget does have some new dollars, but none of that is enough to move the needle in terms of Arizona's national rankings for teacher pay (49th in the nation), per

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student investment (46th in the nation), teacher turnover (1st in the nation), or overcrowded classrooms (2nd in the nation). Meanwhile, supporting and growing the ESA voucher program looks to be a top priority for leadership.

Final assessment: We are going to have our work cut out for us protecting public education and Arizona taxpayers. It's going to take all of us writing, calling, showing up and talking to fellow voters about our classroom crisis to make a difference for our state.

Local to the Phoenix area?

Sign up to attend a [House Education](#) or [Senate Education](#) committee hearing at the Capitol.

Protecting schools from another part of the state?

Join a [webinar](#) about how to advocate!

Sample Bill



HB 2187 ✔

Appropriation: K-12 Rollover Pays Off \$630 Million of Rollover Debt to Public Schools
Rep. Michelle Udall

Would pay down \$60 million of the nearly \$1 billion "rollover" debt the state owes to schools.
For a decade the state has rolled over its final K-12 education payment to the next fiscal year, an accounting gimmick that delays an expense on paper so it doesn't count toward the current year's budget. The rollover is twice as much money as Arizona has in its rainy day fund, meaning the state could still have this debt on the books when the next recession begins if nothing is done.
The treasurer's office says Arizona must pay off the rollover before a recession or daily operations of all state government will be at risk. Paying back the skipped payments won't increase what schools can spend, but it will make their cash management easier. The Speaker of the House has also mentioned this as a priority.

LEGEND

Bill Number (Links to Bill Page)

SOSAZ Bill Position
Indicated by colored markers:

- ✔ **Support**
- ▬ **Neutral**
- ✘ **Oppose**

Bill Title and Primary Sponsor
Official Title in Grey
Descriptive Title in Black

Bill Description

Please use **Request to Speak (RTS)** and plan to attend Tuesday's Senate Education hearing, where two bills we support are on the agenda. Due to the Martin Luther King Day holiday, the House Education Committee is not meeting this week.

Bill descriptions on next page

Help Support Our Work:

Donate to Save Our Schools Arizona



Bills we're watching: Senate Education Committee

SB 1048



Support

Schools; Employees; Employment; Discipline

Tracks school personnel, keeps disciplined staff from being rehired

Sen. Kate Brophy McGee

Would develop a system under which the Arizona Department of Education could investigate uncertified educators, both district and charter, and ban them from being rehired at other publicly-funded schools for at least 5 years. Fewer than 0.08% of Arizona teachers each year currently fall into this category, but there [now exists no mechanism](#) to track non-certificated school personnel and keep them from being rehired. About 40% of teachers in charter schools are not certified. A good first step toward keeping students safer. Scheduled for Senate Education Committee, Tuesday.

SB 1060



Support

Special Education; Group B Weights

Allows districts to apply for grants for ultra high cost students

Sen. Sylvia Allen

Would allow school districts to request extra funding from the Dept. of Ed.'s Extraordinary Special Education Needs Fund for students whose education costs more than 3 times the statewide per-pupil funding average. The bill also contains modest increases for a few special education weights: Speech Language Impairment, Other Health Impairment, and Self-Contained Severe Intellectual Disability. It's far from enough, but a good start toward better funding for students with special needs, the vast majority of whom choose public schools. Scheduled for Senate Education Committee, Tuesday.

Calls to Action!

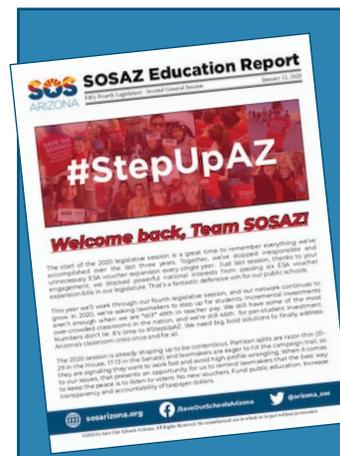
RTS Checklist



Support SB1048



Support SB1060



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Legislative
Report.



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