

2023 Legislative Policy Priorities

Our Goals

In 2023, Save Our Schools Arizona is focusing on these 5 priority issues:

- Keep public funds in public schools
- Establish accountability for all public funds spent on education
- Adequately and equitably fund Arizona's K-12 public schools to at least the national median
- Improve student outcomes and educator working environments
- Protect Arizona's constitutional direct democracy system

Who we are

Save Our Schools Arizona is a nonpartisan, community-based organization fighting for strong public schools for a strong Arizona.

Why we fight

Arizona consistently ranks at the bottom nationwide for public school funding, teacher pay, and teacher retention. Despite recent investments, our state has failed to keep pace with the nation, leaving our children behind. Arizona's population is growing, along with the number of students in today's public schools; yet, even with the new education funding from 2022, Arizona remains in the bottom 5 for both per-pupil spending and total investment.¹

Diverting public funds away from public schools toward private schools through ESAs and STOs only exacerbates the crisis – especially with universal ESA vouchers directing state tax dollars overwhelmingly to families who never sent their children to public schools in the first place.² This negatively affects Arizona students and families, leaving the next generation unprepared for success and risking our state's future.

Arizona must prioritize investment in its public schools in order to build the workforce of tomorrow and ensure economic prosperity for its citizens. An overwhelming 92% of Arizona families choose public schools. Our state must invest its resources in those students in order to succeed.

1. <https://edlawcenter.org/research/making-the-grade-2022.html>

2. <https://www.sosaznetwork.org/2022/arizona-voucher-program-grows-by-400-stripping-300-million-from-az-public-schools/>

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Keep public funds in public schools

- Prevent a \$1.4 billion cut to public district school budgets by passing a two-year override of the K-12 Aggregate Expenditure Limit by March 1, 2023
- Support a long-term solution to this recurring crisis via a legislative referral to Arizona voters
- Protect current voter-approved education funding streams (Prop 301, Prop 123)

Establish accountability for all public funds spent on education

- Oppose any further expansion of Arizona's many voucher programs, whether through geographic reach, materials allowability, per-student allocation, eligibility, or any other method
- Roll back the 2022 universal expansion of ESA vouchers, prioritizing the program for the special needs students for whom it was originally designed
- Institute a budgetary line item for the ESA voucher program with specifically appropriated funding that does not impact public education funding
- Limit the ways institutions and individuals can spend public education dollars to the standards already set in place for public schools
- Establish transparency and accountability measures for all institutions and individuals that accept public funds, including the recovery of improperly spent or unspent public funds from private and for-profit organizations
- Require all institutions that receive public funds to publicly report disaggregated test scores for all students

Adequately and equitably fund Arizona's K-12 public schools to at least the national median

- This includes capital funding; low-income, rural and remote schools; educator and staff pay; student transportation; full-day kindergarten; CTED, extracurriculars, specials, and arts; and technology and internet access
- Reduce existing tax carve-outs; halt any additional tax deductions or credits

Improve student outcomes and educator working environments

- This includes anti-discrimination policies; social-emotional wellness measures; an accurate and honest teaching of history, civics, literature and art; and recognition and respect for teaching as a profession
- Redirect monies from "results-based funding" and increase last year's modest opportunity weight to help give low-income students the resources they need to succeed

Protect Arizona's constitutional direct democracy system

- Defend direct democracy rights such as citizen initiatives and referenda
- Protect the legal authority of local, nonpartisan elected school boards, including their authority to approve curriculum