



## 2021 Public Policy Priorities

### **School Funding**

Arizona school districts need additional capital funding for building new schools, maintaining existing facilities, purchasing cleaning supplies and school buses, as well as additional funding to keep classrooms equipped with current technologies and instructional materials for students and teachers. ASA supports additional state funding to cover these expenses as well as the following:

- Establish a weight within the funding formula to provide additional funds to schools that serve low-income students, recognizing the unique needs of schools who serve large numbers of such students.
- Adequately fund the cost of special education by increasing the Group B weights in the funding formula. Services to students with special educational needs are mandated by both state and federal law and must be provided at a level to allow those students the same educational opportunities as nondisabled students. The cost of providing such services to students greatly exceeds the funds the statutory formula allocates.
- Appropriate money to the extraordinary special education needs fund so schools that incur extraordinary costs in meeting the educational needs of specific students can apply to the fund for help offsetting those costs.
- Increase funding to school districts for costs associated with classified staff wage increases due to mandated minimum wage increases.
- Provide funding for all day kindergarten.

### **COVID Response**

School districts play a critical role in communities. This function has never been clearer than during the pandemic, as schools have provided unprecedented leadership in making resources available to students, families, and communities. This unparalleled global event has exacerbated existing inequities within schools. In the start of the 2020-2021 school year, large numbers of students were disenrolled from school, leaving districts uncertain of their budgets, with many facing a financial cliff. ASA recognizes that it is best for students, parents, teachers, and the community to keep school buildings open and therefore endorses the following actions to achieve that goal:

- Support mitigation efforts in the community to allow school buildings to remain open, such as mask mandates.
- Hold school district budgets harmless for enrollment losses due to Covid-19. Some parents felt comfortable with the options provided by their district (virtual, hybrid, in-person), while other parents chose options outside the school district.



- Enact a moratorium on A-F letter grades for the 2020-2021 school year.
- Support flexibilities for hiring substitute teachers.
- Appropriate funds to reimburse district purchases intended to mitigate Covid-19 spread, i.e., masks, plastic shields, disinfectant, thermometers, cleaning equipment, extra desks, and chairs.
- Appropriate funds to address the learning loss students may experience because of Covid-19.
- Expand school districts' liability coverage to include Covid-19.

### **Teacher Recruitment and Retention**

- Support actions that provide funding for professional development and teacher recruitment and retention.
- Support actions that provide increased funding for teacher salaries.
- Oppose burdensome and unfunded mandates on teachers.

### **Accountability for Public Funds**

- Advocate for and support actions that create financial and academic transparency for all institutions that accept public funds.
- Support actions that require classroom spending reports for all academic institutions that accept public funds.
- Support actions that broaden the definition of classroom spending to encompass all school district expenses that contribute to classroom success.

### **Local Control and Governance**

District and school leaders should be given flexibility to determine how to best serve their students. Arizona's public education system is founded on the principle that local schools, governed by representatives of the local community, can determine how best to deliver an educational program that optimizes the potential for success of all students.

- Support actions that provide flexibility in managing district resources.
- Support actions that eliminate or suspend costly or redundant administrative statutory requirements.
- Oppose additional requirements to districts, schools, or teachers without additional resources (time, materials, and funding).
- Oppose mandated consolidation of school districts.