



Arizona Department of Education
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction Diane M. Douglas

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**Superintendent Diane Douglas: All Arizona Students Deserve Access to an
Excellent Education**

*New Zip Code Project Will Help Support Disconnected Youth in Several
Communities*

(Phoenix, Ariz., May 12, 2016) – Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction Diane Douglas today announced the official launch of the Zip Code Project, a new program at the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) designed to help students in high-risk communities who have left the school system.

ADE's Zip Code Project is dedicated to assisting disconnected youth, meaning those who are neither employed nor attending school. ADE has started developing partnerships with community entities such as schools, non-profit organizations, local businesses and government agencies. These partnerships will help pinpoint the specific needs of each community and will provide assistance when seeking grant funding to address the identified needs.

"It is impossible for our education system to prepare students to be successful citizens if they are not attending school," Superintendent Douglas said. "All children, regardless of where they live, deserve a chance to pursue the American dream. Our mission with the Zip Code Project is to help these young adults get back on the path to a successful, happy and productive life."

Using both urban and rural geographic census data, four zip codes with unique factors that contribute to youth disconnection were selected as the first communities to participate in the Zip Code Project.

"This issue is critical due to the long-term consequences that snowball across the life course of disconnected youth, including physical and mental health, marital prospects and limited lifetime earning potential," said Sen. Carlyle Begay, R-Ganado. "The Zip Code Project is targeting four zip codes throughout Arizona, including 86503, which surrounds the Chinle area and has been selected to receive this additional support."

According to the Opportunity Index, Chinle and Apache County have an unemployment rate of 12.6% and about 34% of youth ages 16-24 in the area are considered disconnected.

"Our youth deserve a second chance at success," said Quincy Natay, Superintendent of Chinle Unified School District. "The Zip Code Project will create opportunities for our young people to realize their potential, and if we take advantage of this program it will help strengthen our community."

A featured program in her 2016 State of Education speech, the Zip Code Project is one of multiple proposals outlined in Superintendent Douglas' **AZ Kids Can't Wait!** education plan, which was released Oct. 1, 2015.

"By partnering with our state's outstanding communities and with parents, we will shine a light on youth disconnection in affected each zip code," said Superintendent Douglas. "The more people know and understand what youth disconnection is, the more successful we will be when combatting the issue. That approach with this project can help us end youth disconnection, one zip code at a time."

"I am pleased to pledge my support to the Zip Code Project and would like to thank Superintendent Douglas for raising awareness about this important issue," said Sen. Begay. "We have an obligation to ensure the health, education and prosperity of our future generations. The Zip Code Project will help us do that by supporting these communities in new ways."

Arizona has among the highest rates of youth disconnection in the country. Nationally, one in seven youth ages 16-24 meet the criteria; in Arizona, that number is one in five.

To learn more about the Zip Code Project, please visit www.azed.gov/zipcode. For additional information regarding the **AZ Kids Can't Wait!** plan, visit www.azed.gov/weheardyou.

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