



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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Superintendent Douglas: Arizona Kids Can't Afford to Wait for Funding

(Phoenix, Ariz., Sept. 11, 2015) – Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction Diane Douglas today revealed the first of many policy initiatives in her comprehensive AZ Kids Can't Afford to Wait! Plan to fix Arizona's education woes and turn our system into the best in the country. The dozens of other policy initiatives will be revealed at a press conference at 4:30 p.m. on Oct. 1 at the Arizona Science Center.

"As I traveled the state during the campaign, and then for several months on my We Are Listening Tour, the number one concern I heard was the lack of funding and support for teachers," stated Superintendent Douglas. "After seeing revenues so far above forecasts just a few months into this fiscal year, I believe that Arizonans can no longer afford to wait to provide higher quality education to our children. As a result, I'm calling for the immediate appropriation, for this fiscal year, of \$400 million to go specifically to teachers in classrooms."

The money would be allocated to classroom teachers and would use Proposition 301's definition to identify eligible recipients. The \$400 million in general fund monies could be spent on teacher salaries, hiring more teachers to reduce classroom sizes, or a combination of the two based on local needs.

"Given how long our schools have waited for additional resources, we appreciate the Superintendent's call for an immediate funding increase this fiscal year," said Dr. Deb Duvall, Executive Director of Arizona School Administrators. "The proposal's call for sustainable new funding for years to come is also very promising, as constant changes to funding levels place a great deal of strain on teachers and administrators."

"We don't need court cases and lawsuits to fund our school system, we need commitment and leadership," said Douglas. "I applaud the efforts of the Governor and the Legislature to increase overall funding and to focus on classroom spending. However, the eight year olds who were trying to read when the "temporary" cut to the 2 percent increase was made in 2009 will all graduate or drop out before having their funding restored under all the current plans being considered.

"We have an entire generation of children for whom over \$1 billion dollars of education was not provided. We can never go back and provide that education to them. How many more children must suffer the same fate before the leaders of our state truly prioritize education?"

More

1-1-1 Kids Can't Afford to Wait

“We have more than \$9 billion dollars in the general fund and revenues are increasing,” continued Douglas. “If not now, then when? What other priorities are more important than young children learning to read and thrive? Recent figures have shown that as many as 90 percent of our juniors in high school are not career and college ready. We either make the choice now to reverse course or Arizona will forever claim its place among the worst funded and poorest performing education systems in the nation.

“Funding is not everything, but when it has been reduced for so long, it becomes the most prominent obstacle to improvement. Only parents and teachers actually connect with and teach students. Well-proven programs will have no effect unless our teachers and parents have the support they need.”

The proposal calls for \$400 million from the general fund to be appropriated by the Legislature and the Governor in a special session. It does not count any current funding against that number, nor does it envision any changes to First Things First funding. If the Governor's state land trust plan is approved by the Legislature and the people in some form, any land trust education revenues in excess of 2.5 percent would count toward the figure, so long as the State Treasurer verifies the expenditure would not deplete the corpus of the land trust.

The Superintendent will also be working with Arizona's Congressional delegation over the next several years to return federal lands to our state, so that the state land trust corpus can grow through land use leases and the sale of new lands. However, the core of the proposal is that under any circumstances, the entire \$400 million must be made available **every** year with no drop off in the future. Schools cannot hire teachers and make plans if they cannot count on having the money available.

“Making our children wait two years, then funding them for a few years, then not funding them after that makes no sense at all,” added Douglas. “Do all Arizona children deserve a great education, or only those who are in school during key development periods in times of lawsuits or high revenue growth? I believe we need a system that is not subject to the whims of such ups and downs, but is based on what is best for all of our children.”

“Some will say we can't afford to fund our schools. My firm belief and that of the vast majority I have spoken to and the thousands of comments I've received is that we can't afford NOT to fund our schools. Our kids can't afford to wait, our state can't afford to wait, and we all have to act now.”

More

2-2-2 Kids Can't Afford to Wait

Funding Proposal

FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22 and beyond
\$400m General Fund	\$400m General Fund	\$400m General Fund and/or State Land Trust Funds over 2.5%	\$400m General Fund and/or State Land Trust Funds over 2.5%	\$400m General Fund and/or State Land Trust Funds over 2.5%	\$400m General Fund and/or State Land Trust Funds over 2.5%	\$400m General Fund and/or State Land Trust Funds over 2.5%

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