Education Policies and Policy Making in Arizona:

Report on a Survey of Education Policy Actors

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Abstract

This study provides an objective look at the education policies adopted by the State of Arizona since 2000, describes participants in the policy-making process, and identifies policy options for the future. The framework of the study uses a typology of educational policies with seven categories: school building and facilities, curriculum material, school organization and governance, school program definition, student testing and assessment, school personnel training and certification, and school finance. The policy-making process reflects the influence 17 groups of policy makers grouped into five categories: insiders, near circle, far circle, sometime players, and often forgotten players.

Data for this study were collected in the fall of 2010 using a structured interview schedule. A purposive sample of 22 policy actors was identified by the actors' roles in policy groups and 14 individuals agreed to participate. Respondents represented the breadth of the political spectrum and 28% had experience in the executive branch of the state government, 14% in the legislative branch; 36% in education interest groups; and 21% in non-education interest groups. Legislators were perceived to be most influential and teacher and administrator associations the least. Policy options reflect the need for funding streams to support renewal of facilities, the implementation of the Common Core curriculum, and new accountability measures. Tensions between state, federal, and local control are apparent. To varying degrees, respondents support a more transparent state funding system, equity in the treatment of school districts and charter schools, and the possibility of some form of performance-based funding to encourage excellence.

Executive Summary

This study provides an objective look at the education policies adopted by the State of Arizona over the past decade, identifies policy options being considered for the future, and describes participants in the policy-making process. The framework of the study draws from that of Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt[1] who investigated educational policy-making in six states, including Arizona. Their typology of educational policies with seven categories: school building and facilities, curriculum material, school organization and governance, school program definition, student testing and assessment, school personnel training and certification, and school finance. They also examined the policy-making process and, especially, who was most influential in the process. They identified 17 groups of policy actors and, based upon survey data, grouped them into five categories: insiders, near circle, far circle, sometime players, and often forgotten players.

Data for this study were collected in the fall of 2010 using a structured interview schedule A purposive sample of 22 policy actors was identified by the actors' roles in

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[1] Marshall, C., Mitchell, D., & Wirt, F. (1989). *Culture and Education Policy in the American States*. New York: The Falmer Press.

policy groups. Fourteen individuals agreed to participate. Respondents represented the breadth of the political spectrum: 21% were strongly liberal, 14% moderately liberal; 21% moderate; 29% moderately conservative; and 7% strongly conservative. Also, 42% were registered Democrats, 29% registered Republicans, and 29% were independent or other. Twenty-eight percent had experience in the executive branch of the state government, 14% in the legislative branch; 36% in education interest groups; and 21% in non-education interest groups.

Parts I to VII report the perceptions of respondents on the education policies Arizona has followed during the past decade and their expectations and preference for policies in the coming decade. The next section reports the interviewees' assessment of the influence of different groups of policy actors. These assessments are compared and contrasted with those reported by Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt for data collected in 1986. The concluding section sets out promising policy options for the future.

Part I: School Building and Facilities. Over the past decade, respondents concurred that the initiation of Students FIRST (Fair and Immediate Resources for Students Today) reconfigured the funding of school facilities for K-12 education in Arizona. The program was a response to the state court's finding in *Roosevelt v. Bishop* that the state's previous manner of funding school buildings was unconstitutional. Almost all funding for Students FIRST came from the general fund of the state and there was no earmarked source of revenue.
Looking forward, respondents favored continued and improved *long range planning*, *new and improved instructional capacities (including online learning)*, and technical architectural review (especially LEEDs certification). The major question, noted by all, is the source of funds. None felt the current policy of using the state's general fund as the only source is practicable.

Part II: Curriculum Materials. In most regards, the matter of course curriculum is left to individual Arizona school districts and charter schools. Exceptions arise when policy decisions require a state response – either in the negative as to a curriculum or material that should not be taught or as a prescription as to what an initiative requires in curricular terms.

Respondents foresaw significant curricular change occurring the in the future as the drive toward nation-wide standards moves forward. Forty-one states, including Arizona, have signed on the Common Core State Standards Initiative. In addition, 26 states (including Arizona) are part of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for Colleges and Careers (PARCC) aimed at the development of nation-wide assessments. All these are state-lead initiatives. Respondents often emphasized these are not "federal" or "national" initiatives.

The majority of respondents support the coming of the *Common Core and PARCC*, but they recognize a gap between the "what" and the "how." In some areas, such as English language learning, the state is mandating detailed curriculum, including "how." But the vision of most is that while the state can assist by providing materials and guides,

ultimately the vital act of teaching and the creation of a culture of learning require local insights and genius.

Part III: School Organization and Governance. Much in the area of school organization and governance has to do with decisions rights; that is, who has the right to make binding decisions that affect others. In decentralized arrangements, agencies closest to the community make many decisions.

Looking ahead, respondents perceived *expanding parent/citizen influence* as very likely, which some viewed favorably and others skeptically. Less likely, but strongly preferred by some, would be *altering local district roles and responsibilities* by the formation of fewer, larger school districts, either by improved incentives or state-mandated action. Several also foresaw continued *strengthening of state agencies at the expense of local districts.*

Part IV: School Program Definition. Along with curriculum materials, the definition of a state's school program forms the framework for the delivery of education. The program determines the parameters of schooling – what subjects are required, how many days and hours must be devoted to schooling, what standards are set to earn certificates and diplomas, and how the needs students who have difficulty mastering the required program are to be addressed.

Respondents foresaw no pressure to mandate specific subjects on the horizon but a continued trend toward *increased standards*. As well, a number felt a renewed focus on *time requirements* was likely, along with an increased effort to *develop programs for special groups*, largely as a matter of accommodating those negatively affected by higher standards. Several broad trends or innovations were identified that could bring about significant changes in how Arizona defines school programs.

Higher standards for all does not, in the respondents' views, mean the same standards for all students. Standards need to be meaningful, and by that they mean standards need to be linked to expectations for the next stage of study (community college or four-year college) or work. Recent initiatives create new checkpoints at the third grade with "Move on when reading," and the 10th (or later) grades with *Move On When Ready* and the Grand Canyon Diploma. As well, technology education is importing Common Core standards and linking them, to the extent possible, with technology-related courses. One concern is a narrowing of educational opportunities that is occurring as a consequence of funding constraints and the academic focus of the Common Core. A second concern is that the new checkpoints will serve to segregate students into streams that will never merge. Thus, future polices will be needed to attend to the undesired side-effects of a strong focus on higher standards and the Common Core.

Part V: Student Testing and Assessment. The main trend over the past two decades has been away from norm-based testing – comparing an individual or group against the overall performance of test takers – to standards-based testing meant to assess the individual or group against some pre-set performance level defined by specific criteria.

Arizona's primary initiative in student assessment has been the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS), although it has also used nationally-normed instruments such TerraNova, and special purpose tests such as the Arizona English Language Assessment (AZELLA).

Looking ahead, responds foresaw a change in emphasis to the *use of tests to evaluate program or teacher performance*, although several felt there will *be greater emphasis on having local districts develop tests for tracking students* and *measuring non-academic student outcomes* to account for matters like the civic engagement of students

It is evident that the Common Core State Standards Initiative – which is coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) – and the federal Race to the Top competition guide the respondents' consideration of the future of assessment and its use in Arizona.

Part VI: School Personnel Training and Certification. The quality of education is inextricably linked with the quality of the teachers who instruct youth; hence, states have long set standards and authorized preparation programs for teachers and other public school officials. No Child Left Behind, with its requirement that teachers be "highly qualified," required states and districts to review and, when necessary, upgrade the qualifications of certificated staff. Yet, although the goal of having all students taught by "highly qualified" teachers is not yet attained, the prevailing opinion is that holding paper qualifications is not enough, but that evidence of success is also warranted.

Arizona's recent legislation removing tenure and the use of seniority and layoffs, and mandating the use of student progress as a major part of teacher and principal evaluations are as much actions for the future as they are of the past, since their implementation is yet to have full force. Still, in looking ahead, almost half of the responds *foresaw pre-service training and certification improvement*. About a third emphasized *accountability systems* and *changes in teacher job definition*. Just one mentioned *professional development programs*.

There is a clear tension in the perceptions of the respondent between oversight of the teaching profession and opening schools to all who wish to teach. An underlying theme voiced by some respondents is the loss of a professional identity for teachers and educators. Professions are governed by strong norms of ethical practice and specialized skill sets used by practitioners. Opening the door to all and narrowing the educator's role to prescribed actions are inconsistent with this model of a profession. However, there is a consensus that improved practice is possible with the assistance of mentors, coaches, and professional development.

Part VII: School Finance. In 1980 Arizona adopted a new school finance model that replaced the practice of having most educational costs paid for by local taxpayers. The new approach, which set a local "qualifying tax rate" and per pupil expenditure level referred to as a "revenue control limit," equalized expenditures across to the state by

assuring state grants to cover the difference between local revenue and the guaranteed expenditure level, while allowing for supplementary local levies for a variety of operating and capital expenditures.

A third of respondents continued to see *equity* as the primary issue, several others either felt the *level of funding* or *the targeting of funds* is likely or preferred in the future. Two rejected all five options offered and focused *on taxation in support of education.* Comments offered by respondents on the financing of education suggest that Arizona's intricate system of funding, which is intimately tied to its system of taxation, may not be the best of all possible models, but it also is not the worst. Yet, the questions of whether the revenue sources have grown too narrow and whether the system of funding does what it might to improve student outcomes are evident.

Several remarks question the negative effects of competition in recruiting staff and students, suggesting that the current arrangement may encourage instability which undermines improved performance. That is, the per-pupil funding system, complemented by local overrides, can be counter-productive by being *too* responsive to the movement of children. Now with a no growth, economic or demographic, it seems to promote a practice of beggar-thy-neighbor.

Perhaps the notion of a minimum state-wide salary schedule for entry level teachers would aid some districts, perhaps funding classrooms or schools rather than students would add stability, perhaps broadening the sales tax to included services would stabilize revenue, and perhaps some sort of incentive system for achieving academic goals at a school or district level would improve effectiveness.

Influence of Policy Groups. Who has the most influence on education policy in Arizona? According to the study's respondents, the *insiders* – those with most influence – include individual members of the state legislature who are tied with the influence of referenda and initiatives. Very close behind is the governor of the state. The perceived influence of referenda and initiatives is notable in that these allocate policy decisions to the voters.

The *near circle* of policy actors, as perceived by respondents, is much larger, with six groups cited. At the top of this list are mandates from the federal government, which are the direct product of legislation, such as No Child Left Behind and the Equal Education Opportunity Act. Second are the courts, state and federal, reflecting cases such as *Roosevelt v. Bishop,* which led to the Arizona School Facilities Board and state funding of new and upgraded schools, and *Flores v. Arizona*, concerned with the English language proficiency of English language learners. Third is the state legislature as a whole. The fourth is non-educator interest groups, which includes organizations such as the Arizona Business and Education Coalition (ABEC) and Arizona Tax Research Association (ATRA). The next two are the state superintendent of public instruction and legislative staff. The single member of the *far circle* is the state board of education.

Sometime players have four members: all education interest groups combined, the state school boards association and the state school business officials' organization, and the

charter schools association. *Often forgotten players* include six members: producers of educational materials, lay groups, education research organizations, state teacher organization, and state administrators' association. That is, the two groups representing the bulk of the educators who manage and provide instruction to the students of the state are perceived as the least influential.

There has been a considerable shift in the groups influencing educational policy-making in Arizona between the mid-1980s and the present. While individual members of the state legislature are still at the center of the action, the other groups that bring pressure to bear on them have shifted away from educational groups and toward other government institutional actors, especially the courts and the federal government, as well as toward voters in the form of referenda and initiatives.

Education Policies and Policy Making in Arizona

Problems and Options. This section identifies one key problem from each of the seven areas of education policy along with one or more. The options are meant to be complementary, with one or more being adopted to address the problems.

Problem 1. Arizona's schools and facilities are not being well maintained and upgraded.

> ***Option 1.1.*** *Issue short term (three to five year) state bonds to finance the purchase of equipment for schools, including computers, software, communication devices and the like.*

> ***Option 1.2.*** *Issue long term (20 to 30 year) state bonds to equalize the cost to local education agencies for building renewal and construction.*

> ***Option 1.3.*** *Levy a state-wide property tax to provide a revenue stream for funding bonds described in Options 1.1 and 1.2.*

Problem 2. Curriculum materials suitable for teaching the Common Core to all students are not currently available.

> ***Option 2.1.*** *Create state-level tasks forces to develop detailed syllabi for all Common Core courses.*

Problem 3. Members of district and charter school boards and chief education officers are not assessed as to their effectiveness according to state-wide standards.

> ***Option 3.1***. *Create a state-level task force to develop instruments and procedures for assessing and rating school board effectiveness in term of their value-added contribution to student learning.*

> ***Option 3.2.*** *Create a state-level task force to develop instruments and procedures for assessing and rating school the effectiveness of chief education officers in local education agencies (including charter schools).*

Problem 4. The definitions of school programs do not ensure appropriate pathways for all students from school to work, career, or college.

> ***Option 4.1.*** *Create a state-level task force to review the structure of education in other states and nations to develop flexible paths leading to employment and certification programs to complement paths leading to college.*

Problem 5. Introduction of new systems of testing to reflect the Common Core and *Move On When Ready* will shift the focus from existing state standards to other criteria.

> *Option 5.1*. *As part of its contribution to Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for Colleges and Careers (PARCC), the state should ensure assessment instruments reflect the multiple paths and goals developed in response to Option 4.1.*

Problem 6. The introduction of new instruments for the evaluation of teachers and principals may have unintended effects.

> *Option 6.1*. *The state should fund an independent research study to monitor the implementation and effects of the planned instruments for evaluation of principals, teachers and chief education officers (and school boards pursuant to Options 3.1).*

Problem 7. Revenue and allocation systems for K-12 education are complex and poorly understood by the public.

> *Option 7.1*. *Reformulate the current weighted-student finance formula in terms of program funding using plain language.*

> *Option 7.2*. *Fund education on a classroom and school basis, rather than per pupil basis.*

> *Option 7.3*. *On state reported school report cards, list all funds spent in a school, including all sources; e.g., state, local, federal, grants, and tax credits.*

> *Option 7.4*. *Outsource the management school funds to the private sector using a competitive bidding process so that one system is used statewide.*

Many other problems and options can be derived from the responses of those interviewed in to this study. Consideration of the options recommended above, along with those suggested by others, will aid policy makers in coming to decisions that best serve the students, teachers, and parents of Arizona.

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Table of Contents

Education Policies and Policy Making in Arizona

The purposes of this study are to provide an objective look at the education policies adopted by the State of Arizona over the past decade, to identify policy options being considered for the future, and to describe participants in the policy-making process. Underlying the study is the assumption that the study will prove useful by providing a dispassionate view of the current situation, a view that will facilitate discussions and lead to the selection of good policies.

The framework of the study draws from that of Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt[2] who in the mid-1980s investigated educational policy-making in six states, including Arizona. They developed a typology of educational policies with seven categories: school building and facilities, curriculum material, school organization and governance, school program definition, student testing and assessment, school personnel training and certification, and school finance. For each of these, they identified from three to eight policy options, each of which reflected a cluster of related specific policies. For this study, the same policy categories and options are used, although specific policy examples have been updated to reflect, among other things, the emergence of charter schools and the Internet. See Appendix A for the typology.

Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt also examined the policy-making process and, especially, who was most influential in the process. They identified 17 groups of policy actors and, based upon survey data, grouped them into five categories: insiders, near circle, far circle, sometime players, and often forgotten players. They found, for example, that individual members of the legislature had the highest ranking, a finding they noted was "consistent with decades-old finding about the power of specialists in the legislatures. Specializing in a policy area, they guide the votes of other legislators" (p. 17).

Policies and policy actors fall into first and last of the three streams in policy making identified by Kingdon:[3] the stream of policies, the stream of problems, and the stream of politics. Kingdon held that these three streams flowed independently of one another, suggesting that at all times there were multitudes of polices in search of problems, a variety of problems without solutions, and political actors who connected policies and problems when "policy windows" opened in the political process.

Method

Data for this study were collected in the fall of 2010 using a structured interview schedule that was based on the instruments used by Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt. A

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[2] Marshall, C., Mitchell, D., & Wirt, F. (1989). *Culture and Education Policy in the American States*. New York: The Falmer Press.

[3] Kingdon, J. W. (1984). *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policie*s. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

purposive sample of twenty-two policy actors was identified by the actors' roles in policy groups. Each person selected was contacted by phone to request an interview; requests were followed up with e-mails that included formal letters inviting participation. Fourteen individuals agreed to participate. Interviews lasted from a half-hour to one-and-one-half hours; all but one were conducted in person; the other was conducted by phone. Notes were taken during the interviews; no recording devices were used. Participants were promised their identities would be held in confidence. As a result, no attributions are made as to the viewpoints expressed here.

Demographics

Respondents represented the breadth of the political spectrum: 21% were strongly liberal, 14% moderately liberal; 21% moderate; 29% moderately conservative; and 7% strongly conservative. Also, 42% were registered Democrats, 29% registered Republicans, and 29% were independent or other. Twenty-eight percent had experience in the executive branch of the state government, 14% in the legislative branch; 36% in education interest groups; and 21% in non-education interest groups. See Appendix B for more detail.

By way of comparison, Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt conducted 30 interviews in Arizona; 33% of those interviewed were with the executive branch, 33% with the legislative branch; and 33% with interest groups. Hence, the present study had lower percentages associated with the legislative branch and higher percentages with interest groups. Also, Marshall, Mitchel, and Wirt reported slightly more Democrats than Republicans, as was evident here. Hence, although the findings reported here do reflect the breadth of political and organizational perspectives, there are likely to be somewhat more responses from the liberal end of the political spectrum.

Organization of Report

Parts I to VII report the perceptions of respondents on the education policies Arizona has followed during the past decade and their expectations and preference for policies in the coming decade. Each of these sections deals with one of the seven policy areas noted above. Part VIII reports the interviewees' assessment of the influence of different groups of policy actors. These assessments are compared and contrasted with those reported by Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt for data collected in 1986. The concluding section reflects on the changes occurring in education policy Arizona and the changes that have occurred in the influence of different groups of policy actors since the earlier study.

Part I: School Building and Facilities

Over the past decade, respondents concurred that the initiation of Students FIRST (Fair and Immediate Resources for Students Today) reconfigured the funding of school facilities for K-12 education in Arizona. The program was a response to the state court's finding in *Roosevelt v. Bishop* that the state's previous manner of funding school buildings was unconstitutional. The court found that the state's schools buildings, which had been financed out of highly variable secondary assessments, did not meet minimal adequacy standards in all districts.

Students FIRST became law in 1998 and the School Facilities Board, created to implement it, approved its Building Adequacy Guidelines in November 1999. Thereafter it sought to meet the obligations of the law to engage in deficiency corrections (i.e., bringing facilities up to the adequacy standards), building renewal (e.g., new heating, ventilation, and plumbing), and new facilities. Almost all funding came from the general fund of the state and there was no earmarked source of revenue.

Survey participants were asked to select from four policy strategies or options to describe the primary approach to the funding of school buildings and facilities over the past decade. The choices are summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1. *School building and facilities policy options*.
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A. **Technical architectural review** of local school district building plans to insure they are cost efficient, meet safety standards, etc.

B. **Long range planning** for school construction: demographic studies, allocation of state construction funds, etc.

C**. Remediation of existing building problems**: mold, asbestos, earthquake safety, energy conservation, access for handicapped students, etc.

D. **Providing new instructional capacities:** science and computer laboratories, libraries, media centers, smart boards, wireless Internet connectivity, etc.
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In their choices, respondents split evenly in characterizing Students FIRST as long range planning (B) and remediation of existing building problem (C), although a few emphasized that deficiency corrections included the provision of new instructional capacities (D) in many schools. According to some, Students FIRST has not been without its problems. Figure 2 lists the key points raised. More than one person may have cited a particular issue, but redundant items were omitted. All statements are based on notes taken during the interviews, and thus paraphrase responses rather than provide verbatim quotations.

Figure 2. *Reflections on past policies for buildings and facilities.*

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1.) At times, the process was not well governed and, with no limit on the funds, there was misspending and overspending. Opportunities were lost.

2) Needs were not fully funded during the latter part of the decade due to revenue shortfalls.

3) Some districts cannot bond to meet their needs (or desires) since they are limited to an amount no more than 10% of their assessed valuation.

4) Districts that do not meet the state demographic standards for needing new facilities cannot bond, even if they have bonding capacity.

5) The higher costs for "green" buildings that meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards are not funded.

6) Capital for charters schools is in disarray. Charters can bond for facilities based on a revenue stream from the state, but they have to pay higher interest rates since they do not have access to the property tax if they get into financial trouble.

7) Owners of for-profit charter schools acquire the property and all equipment if a school closes, whereas if a public school closes the building and equipment are still in public hands.

8) With the total dependence on the state's general fund, currently no funds are being allocated for renewal or new construction (correction of deficiencies having been completed).

9) Building renewal was never adequately funded and now building maintenance is falling farther behind, increasing long term liabilities.

10) Build American Bonds (BABs), part of the American Recovery and American Investment Act of 2009, provided an opportunity for some districts to offer these taxable but federally subsidized bonds. However, their use was hurt by the Davis-Bacon Act that requires prevailing wage rates be used. The latter are beginning to decline. [After completion of the interviews, the U.S. Congress chose not to renew the BABs program.]

11) Even when SFB funds were used for new technology, a lack of professional development among those in schools led to poor utilization of the technology.

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Looking forward, respondents favored continued and improved long range planning (B), new and improved instructional capacities (including online learning) (D), and technical architectural review (especially LEEDs certification) (A). The major question, noted by all, is the source of funds. None felt the current policy of using the state's general fund as the only source is practicable. The general fund is currently well below its peak value and

the state is reducing funding in many critical areas. Figure 3 reports suggestions as to how the state should deal with school buildings and facilities in the future.

Figure 3. *Reflections for future policies for buildings and facilities.*

1) Use state-equalized bond issues. That is, a district would be able to bond as if it had the state's average equalized assessment per pupil, even though it did not, with the state providing the shortfall. Then, state money would go further, be spent where it is needed, and local resources could be leveraged.

2) Address the needs of charter schools for better facilities.

3) Have the SFB devise rules for going beyond "minimum adequacy," with funds being made available if, for example, a community center or public library were included in the facility.

4) Students FIRST is a great model – if it's fully funded. It needs a dedicated funding such as a state property tax.

5) Adopt a state-wide tax rate on equalized assessed value to fund state bonds (Class A bonds) rather than depending heavily on bonds unwritten by local districts (Class B bonds).

6) There is a genuine need for new schools in some areas that is not being met, a situation that could lead to double-session schedules.

7) All new schools should meet LEED standards – i.e., they should be "green" buildings.

8) Long range planning is needed to ensure balanced development across the state.

9) "Soft capital" also needs to be addressed for renewal of equipment, software, and the like.

10) Basic maintenance is not occurring due to fiscal constraints; the long term costs can be exceedingly high if roofs fail, air conditioning shuts down, etc.

11) Students FIRST does not fund aesthetic improvements, but schools need curbside appeal that attract parents and reassure them of their children's safety.

12) Traditional bricks and mortar will be supplanted, in part, with online instruction. Continuing in the old mold would be a mistake.

13) The poorest physical plants are found in charter schools; the best in affluent communities. The gap belies the goal of Students FIRST, which did not address the needs of charter schools.

14) Renewal of current facilities must be the first goal; there is little growth that demands new facilities.

15) Educational facilities need to be shared – schools, colleges, university, community – so that they do not sit idle much of the time.

Conclusion

The respondents clearly see the present fiscal crisis begetting a new vision of educational facilities that incorporates conservation (LEEDs and renewal), technology (online instruction), and community (sharing of facilities). They also see a need for innovative funding that is accessible to all, including charter schools, be it a state-wide property tax, state bonds, and/or leveraging of local assessment.

Part II: Curriculum Materials

In most regards, the matter of course curriculum is left to individual Arizona school districts and charter schools. Exceptions arise when policy decisions require a state response – either in the negative as to a curriculum or material that should not be taught or as a prescription as to what an initiative requires in curricular terms. An example of the first is the ban in 2010 imposed by HB 2281 on teaching materials that would "promote resentment toward a race or class of people" or that "advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals." An example of the second is HB2064 (2006) that required the development and adoption of "research based models of structured English immersion programs" that included a "minimum of four hours per day of English language instruction." But these examples are exceptions rather than the rule, as was evident by the respondents' reflections on past and future curriculum initiatives by the state in response to the policy choices offered in Figure 4.

Figure 4. *Curriculum materials policy options.*

A. ***Mandating local use of materials*** selected or developed by state agencies: textbook review and approval procedures, tight control over curriculum materials budgets, etc.

B. ***Specification of the scope and sequence*** of materials to be used in local districts and charter schools, identification of topics to be covered in various courses and grades

C. ***Development of specialized instructional materials*** for particular purposes: new technologies, computer literacy, materials for gifted or handicapped children, English-language learners, bilingual students, etc.

Most respondents believed that over the past decade the state relied on the specification of the scope and sequence of materials to be taught (B), though almost as many identified mandating the local use of materials selected by the state (A). Several others emphasized the development of specialize instructional materials (C). Often, the same examples were given, though placed in different categories, suggesting that the respondents did not perceive an overall orientation of state policy toward curricular matters.

A key point made by many was that state standards and testing serve as the the *de facto* curricular policy for Arizona. While these are not curriculum materials *per se*, they do specify the general scope and sequence of learning that is expected to take place. Specific comments are reported in Figure 5.

Figure 5. *Reflections on past policies regarding curriculum materials.*

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1) Standards and tests are prescriptive.

2) It is ironic that charter schools are given more freedom than conventional public schools, but legislated mandates in areas such as ELL provide for very narrow boundaries for both. It seems that legislators are conflicted about mandating their personal preferences as opposed to promoting freedom. Title 15 [of Arizona Revised Statutes] includes many mandates.

3) Option A in reverse. That is, ruling books or other matters out, rather than requiring them to be in. For example, LeapFrog [educational toys to develop reading skills] was not allowed.

4) There are lists of reading materials for districts under improvement under No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

5) Standards are quite detailed as to what is to be taught at each grade in each area.

6) There may still be a list of books approved by the state; if so, it is probably out of date.

7) The specification of scope and sequence was challenged by a charter school, which taught some material in a different order; the matter was settled out of court. In practice, if a school scores adequately on the Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS), then it can do as it feels is best for its students.

8) The state has focused on the "what" and not the "how" of the curriculum. Curriculum serves as the "why" for standards and assessment, and the assessment schedule determines the "when." In some areas, such as ELL, the state has moved in to the "how" in order to ensure the program is faithfully implemented.

9) There is an issue as to what is taught versus what is learned; assessment is needed for the latter.

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Respondents foresaw significant curricular change occurring the in the future as the drive toward nation-wide standards moves forward. Forty-one states, including Arizona, have signed on the Common Core State Standards Initiative. In addition, 26 states (including Arizona) are part of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for Colleges and Careers (PARCC) aimed at the development of nation-wide assessments. All these are state-lead initiatives. Respondents often emphasized these are not "federal" or "national" initiatives, though PARCC received support from the federal Race to the Top funds.

Decisions affecting the Common Core and PARCC are made by individual states, not the federal government. Figure 6 provides comments that add shading to this central trend.

Figure 6. *Reflections on policies regarding curriculum materials.*

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1) Local districts need to develop programs to meet local needs. Nothing in the law says this *should* be done but creative thinking "outside the box" needs to occur and receive state board encouragement.

2) All currently required topics cannot be taught in 180 days. WestEd [a non-profit educational think-tank and service agency] is helpful at "unpacking standards" to reveal more specific material and skills that need to be taught and learned.

3) It would be helpful to merge the standards for English with those for English language learning.

4) The state does not need to be directly involved in curriculum, *per se*.

5) Programs that are used are often not validated.

6) A concerted effort is needed for curriculum in specialized areas or for specialized groups, including the use of technology and underachieving learners.

7) The Common Core standards are more detailed than current state standards. Implementing PARCC assessments will reveal what kids will need to know by the 4th grade. But, do the sequences of learning activities exist for getting them there?

8) Building a rigorous bridge to university is a major goal of the state, but for many students it is secondary to a job and car. Many students will "push back" against the idea of another math course in their senior year. Parents are satisfied with their children's school, but it may not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). There is a disjunction between the collective goals and individual preferences.

9) Having the learning sequences to achieve Common Core standards specified down to the level of lesson plans and worksheets would be helpful to many – especially new – teachers. Pacing of teaching for 180 days is difficult. Even experienced teachers will be challenged to teach to Common Core standards and have students succeed with PARCC assessments.

10) The days of graduating and going to work are over. And, while some students embrace Advance Placement or International Baccalaureate courses, others do not. We need to ensure there is rigor in career and vocationally oriented courses; we need to have math and physics in the auto shop curriculum, not just how to change the oil in a car.

11) How does one maintain state testing and local control? There are few opportunities for local initiatives.

12) Dual enrollment of students in high school and college courses is a move in the wrong direction. Community college (and university) instructors believe the courses taught in high schools are not equivalent to those taught in college. Students are just paying for a credit.

13) While Arizona's adoption of the Common Core continues an emphasis on raising expectations, how the learning is to be accomplished is left to the local level. While scope and sequence are helpful, creation and innovation occur at the local level.

14) Adoption of the Common Core needs to be individualized so that those who learn more rapidly can advance more rapidly. We need to move beyond the concept of grade levels. A greater range of technology can transform education – if schools can keep up!

Conclusion

Beyond the state vs. federal tension over educational standards and assessment is the local vs. state tension. Clearly, the respondents support – or are resigned to – the coming of the Common Core and PARCC, but they recognize a gap between the "what" and the "how." In some areas, such as English language learning, the state is mandating detailed curriculum, including "how." But the vision of most is that while the state can assist by providing materials and guides, ultimately the vital act of teaching and the creation of a culture of learning require local insights and genius.

Part III: School Organization and Governance

Much in the area of school organization and governance has to do with decisions rights; that is, who has the right to make binding decisions that affect others. In decentralized arrangements, agencies closest to the community make many decisions. Within a federal system, some matters are decided by the federal government, others by the state, by local educational agencies, or by the people – in the case of schools, this means parents and students. One example of the issue of decision rights is the matter of "open enrollment;" that is, does a school district assign a student to a particular school, or can parents choose within – or outside – the district the public school they prefer? Respondents were provided eight policy options to describe state action in this area over the past decade.

Figure 7. *School organization and governance policy options.*

A. ***Redistributing authority among state level agencies***: creating new commissions, giving new powers to the chief state school officer, expanding oversight by the legislature, etc.

B. ***Strengthening state agencies at the expense of local districts***: moving curricular, personnel, fiscal, or other policies into the hands of state-level decision-makers

C. ***Strengthening site-level governance:*** advisory committees, school site councils, or other mechanisms for participation at this level

D. ***Strengthening teacher influence***: appointment of teachers to policy committees, giving them meet-and-confer or collective bargaining rights, etc.

E. ***Clarifying student rights and responsibilities***: defining due process requirements, mandating discipline programs, modifying suspension or expulsion regulations, etc.

F. ***Strengthening administrative control***: more discretionary authority over program personnel, mandating evaluation and employee discipline programs, etc.

G. ***Expanding parent/citizen influence***: more parental rights in student assignment or transfer, requiring citizen involvement in decisions, tuition tax credits or educational vouchers, more charter schools.

H. ***Altering local district roles and responsibilities***: reorganization or consolidation of districts, granting new powers to local boards, changing election or appointment procedures for board members.
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School organization and governance address "who does what" at different levels of the state educational system. Of the eight choices concerning policies in recent years, about equal numbers chose strengthening state agencies at the expense of local districts (B) and expanding parent/citizen influence (G). Also noted were redistributing authority among state level agencies (A), and altering local district roles and responsibilities (H). Those specifying the latter noted an extended effort to encourage elementary and high school districts to unify, an effort that came to naught. Comments also were made on the paradox of a state committed to choice in education – as evidenced by the large number of charter schools – that also strove for greater control over the evaluation of teachers and principals, school district fiscal accountability, and the like.

Respondents noted there had been a number of decisions supporting parents' decision rights, particularly the introduction of charter schools during the 1990s, their expansion during the past decade, open enrollment within and among districts, the adoption of tax credits that allowed families to designate part of their state income taxes to particular schools or scholarship funds, and a "Parents' Bill of Rights." In contrast to this emphasis on freedom of choice was the creation of an English language learner task force that gave more authority to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, legislation permitting state takeover of failing districts, and a plan for the state to assign letter grades to individual schools. A common effect of both types of initiatives is the weakening of the authority of the local school district. [Note: No figure is provided summarizing comments.]

Looking ahead, respondents perceived expanding parent/citizen influence (G) as very likely, which some viewed favorably and others skeptically. Less likely, but strongly preferred by some, would be altering local district roles and responsibilities by the formation of fewer, larger school districts (H), either by improved incentives or state-mandated action. Several did puzzle at another paradox – the view that a conventional school district with 500 or 1000 students is considered too small while a charter school with 50 students is viewed as acceptable. In any case, several also foresaw continued strengthening of state agencies at the expense of local districts (C), citing the Common Core curriculum as a driving force. Yet, they recognized only a strong learning culture at the school could yield the improvement sought. Specific comments that expand the respondents' notions about the future are recounted in Figure 8.

Figure 8. *Reflections on future policies for school organization and governance.*

1) Increase incentives for school district amalgamation. The legislature could follow some other states and mandate mergers. The state has the authority if it chooses to use it.

2) School districts need to be restructured like corporations. At present, the only qualification to be on a school board is be a resident for six months and be 18 or older. There should be experts on the board and professionals who work with the superintendent as Chief Executive Officer. At present, many school boards serve only as political spring boards for members. School boards have not been touched by educational reform.

3) Student rights equal student responsibilities. That is, students must become active participants in their own education, not be told what to do. The administrative pyramid needs to be inverted; "servant leadership" is part of the solution.

4) Consolidation of school districts may be rational in a business sense, but it is not going to occur because it is not popular.

5) County superintendents are now more watchful of spending in small districts and laws have been adopted to spot warning signals before it is too late. We depend on competent superintendents and school business officials because many boards do not provide the oversight needed.

6) Joint Technological Education Districts require review as it is questionable whether the services they provide cannot be provided by districts and community colleges.

7) Charter schools need to be as accountable as school districts, including health and safety.

8) The trend toward greater choice is reinforced by President Obama's agenda in education; the philosophy has been adopted by Democrats and Republicans. There is no longer a strong teacher influence and administrators are being held accountable, becoming line administrators who serve as "hatchet men" to clear out "dead wood."

9) *Move On When Ready* and the Grand Canyon High School Diploma require performance-based assessment and will require significant preparation of teachers to succeed.

10) We do not need 230 school districts and 350 charter schools serving as local education agencies. We should move to regional centers that provide overall governance (much as the community college boards or the board of regents do) that serve both conventional public schools and charter schools administratively. The result: choice equitably provided with high uniform standards.

11) Charter schools are controlled administratively, not by their boards or communities. There is no accountability and owners, or those selected by owners,

run the schools. Politicians say a public school of 400 is too small and not efficient, yet most charter schools have less than 100 students. Different interests are being served – but what interests?

12) Strengthen the state department of education with more support for controlling conditions for success. The principal and teachers are key but they need materials and a culture that builds engagement, values education, and focuses on the family. Schools such as these do not have teachers absent 20 or 30 days a year.

13) Site-based governance, though evident in law, has not been operational.

14) The teachers' union is the largest in the state; the public tends to be hostile to labor and, hence, the union bears the brunt of the anger. The public figures the status quo is not working and unions are seen to support the status quo. Unions fight back against criticism or actions that threaten them – and get punished with retaliatory legislation. Yet, parents respect their children's teachers – they just do not like the union at the state level. There is a disconnect!

15) Parent and citizen influence is good if less state control can be coupled with the right finance policy to ensure equivalent access to resources. Then the market will promote better schools.

16) There is a disconnect between elementary and secondary education; as a result, there is not a smooth pathway. It will take elected officials who do not expect to be re-elected to address the issue.

17) A move to appoint some trustees to school boards using a system similar to that used for judges would enhance school board effectiveness. Adding a training requirement could assist.

18) Strengthen administrative control by providing more leeway for principals to build teams; then hold the principals responsible.

19) Expand parental choice and move toward site-level governance at the principal level. Higher levels of management should re-establish principals as instructional leaders. At present, principals are in compliance mode.

20) Loosen mandates as a trade-off for funding cuts; large organizations change slowly and traditional districts will be challenged. We need to facilitate adaptation to ensure children find the access to programs they need.

Conclusion

The list of options in Figure 8 is reminiscent of an alchemist's list of ingredients to transmute base metals into gold. Yet, systematic methods applied consistently have yielded many successes in other fields, and judicious decisions from among the options suggested may assist in attaining the goal. If it is agreed that the school and especially the pairing of the student and teacher are at the heart of education, then ensuring any and

all decisions on school organization and governance support these parties will likely produce good results.

Part IV: School Program Definition

Along with curriculum materials, the definition of a state's school program forms the framework for the delivery of education. The program determines the parameters of schooling – what subjects are required, how many days and hours must be devoted to schooling, what standards are set to earn certificates and diplomas, and how the needs students who have difficulty mastering the required program are to be addressed.

Changes in programs often create dilemmas; if a new subject or topic is required, what other subject or topic is to be sacrificed if no hours or minutes are added to the school day? If standards are raised in order to improve the quality of graduates, what of those who already are failing to master the existing program? The goals of new programs typically involve two issues: fixing a perceived weakness or increasing the performance of students across the board. Adding subjects and topics address the first issue; more required courses, higher performance standards, or more time devoted to schooling, address the second.

Figure 9. *School program definition policy options.*
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A. **Changing time requirements**: modifying the school day, school year, or specifying the number of minutes or hours for particular subjects, etc.

B. **Mandating specific subjects**: physical education, alcohol/drug abuse, creationism, driver education, American economic or political system, etc.

C. **Setting higher program standards**: new graduation requirements, promotion/grade retention policies, etc.

D. **Developing programs for special groups:** remedial courses, special education, English-language learner or bilingual, alternative schools, etc.
_____

In reviewing actions over the past decade, respondents split about evenly on the two main approaches taken in Arizona: mandating specific subjects (B) and setting higher program standards (C). Only one or two respondents emphasized changing time requirements (A) or developing programs for special groups (D). Figure 10 reports reflections that emphasized both big picture changes as well as the details of specific policies.

Figure 10. *Reflections on past policies for school program definitions.*

1) Over the decade, the program became less holistic, declining in breadth and integration of subject matter.

2) Standards increased – at least rhetorically.

3) The state has audited the used of time in the classroom, including whether or not time spent reciting the Pledge of Allegiance – which is required by law – is instructional time. At one point, the state demanded the return of funds for time spent for this purpose; although the state relented, it still forced the repayment of millions since "home rooms" were declared to be non-instructional time.

4) The length of the school day has changed and has some inexplicable differences – about 240 minutes per day in kindergarten to the third grade, 300 minutes for the 4th to 6th grade; 360 minutes for the 7th and 8th grades, and back to 240 minutes per day for high school students. [Section 15.901 of ARS sets the number of hours of instruction per year for a 180 day school year.]

5) There is a 5% incentive to increase the number of school days to 200 days per year, but it would cost 10% more to cover the costs. Earlier, the school year was increased from 175 days per year to 180 days per year over 5 years.

6) There have been incentive grants for introducing Character Counts, a curriculum focused on engendering good behavior.

7) The requirement of passing the AIMS test for high school graduation reflected concern about standards.

8) The state increased the number of credits for high school graduation from 16 to 22; some school districts now require 24.

9) More specific requirements for graduation, such as Algebra 2.

10) Mandating specific subjects, especially for English language learners.

11) The broad policy is to set higher standards, especially for high school graduation. Increased math and science requirements are coming into effect.

12) "Move on when reading" is a new requirement that would hold back students who are not reading at the required level by the third grade. However, assessment of young students is a problem, particularly for those with special needs and ELL students. Problems can be expected with this requirement.

13) There is an increased emphasis on graduates being "college or career ready" in order to meet global completion. Careers change quickly; business wants students who will show up and who are ready for training. Schools cannot afford technical training facilities, so the emphasis on "careers" is something about which I am skeptical.

14) Physical education, sex education, and English language learning programs

have been mandated in one form or another; however, in other case programs have been barred.

15) Attention to special groups, particularly concerning ELL, has consumed too much time and effort.

16) The state approved the use of a four-day school week, though few districts adopted it.

Respondents foresaw no pressure to mandate specific subjects on the horizon (B) but did perceive a continued trend toward increased standards (C). As well, a number felt a renewed focus on time requirements was likely, along with an increased effort to develop programs for special groups (D), largely as a matter of accommodating those negatively affected by higher standards. Several broad trends or innovations were identified that could bring about significant changes in how Arizona defines school programs.

Figure 11. *Reflections on future policies for school program definitions.*

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1) There is a need to set higher standards that are *meaningful*. Current standards have been supplanted operationally by AIMS, which drive the system as a measure of achievement. There is a narrowing view of what is "public education." Is it just five Common Core areas or reading, writing, math, science, and social studies? No art? No music? No sports?

2) More time is needed, each day and each year. Other counties have longer school years. How can we compete without more effort?

3) We should add 20 days of school per year for those who need to catch up and operate an extended school year for special education students.

4) Problems with the ELL program still have not been solved.

5) We should move to a 2 + 2 + 2 educational system – 2 years for 7th and 8th grades, 2 for 9th and 10th, and 2 for 11th and 12th. *With Move On When Ready*, students can move on to post-secondary education after the 10th grade if they are prepared. American Council of Education (ACE) tests are widely available; for example, the GED (General Education Develop) high school equivalency exam. This option is better than dual enrollment with community colleges, although attention needs to be paid to the socio-emotional readiness of youth to proceed. Readiness is not solely a cognitive matter.

6) We need more strategies to meet the needs of special groups; these may take the form of services and opportunities rather than programs *per se*.

7) There are real problems in rural and small schools which cannot offer program breadth and depth. Online instruction in hard-to-staff subjects may be one solution.

8) Secondary students should be required to take at least one course online, though we need reliable sites offering sound courses.

9) Retaining 3rd grade students who do not pass a reading test while eliminating full day kindergarten is counterproductive. To reduce opportunities while raising expectations is not logical. At very least, more tutoring services will be needed.

10) Non-negotiable mandates are likely to limit the choices available to children. Teaching models will be narrowed; as a consequence the interests of many children will not be met.

11) Local districts are political entities whose power is being pre-empted by state and federal mandates.

12) We will see variable time requirements; some students may do fine with 175 days a year, but others may need more. However, if we segregate kids based on their needs, we'll create a battleground. Supplementary summer schools with low 1:5 teacher student ratios may be needed to address both learning and cultural issues, such as expectations, self-monitoring, and self-esteem.

13) Our profession's tendency toward confessionals, always criticizing what we are doing and one another, and complaining we don't have this and don't have that, is sabotaging public education.

14) "Move on when reading" needs a lot of work, especially as it applies to English language learners.

15) Greater focus on higher standards has begun with higher graduation requirements and *Move On When Ready*, which a few districts are adopting.

16) The focus should be on higher standards with widespread recognition of minimum standards. There should not be so much wrangling over tests.

17) The notion of everybody going to college is a flawed concept; there must be paths for non-academically oriented students. We've created a situation where high schools are forced to graduate students. The Joint Technological Education Districts (JTEDs) are available and meaningful to some students. Right now, many students graduate from high school and then enter remedial course in community colleges before they qualify to take college-level courses.

18) We need higher program standards and higher expectations. The Governor's P-20 Coordinating Council report, *Arizona's Education Reform Plan*, provides a vision derived from the state's Race to the Top application.

19) Funding is tied to time requirements such as hours of instruction per year, but not to outcomes – what a child has learned or accomplished. Technological education specialists are working with the Arizona Department of Education to focus on outcome standards. Business members of committees are concerned about the rigor of, say, math content and standards in technology courses. Cross-walks are being developed to indicate where specific content and concepts are to be learned in technology courses.

20) The future is higher program standards with the Common Core defining the program.	Required time and program definition are a subset of higher standards. Embedding higher Common Core standards in technology courses is a challenge. At present, staff competence for accomplishing this is low. Perhaps we will use iPhones to go around local providers to reach students.
21) There is a need for a technology option for high school graduation that leads to an Associate of Arts degree in community college or to career entry.	

Conclusion

Higher standards for all does not, in the respondents' views, mean the same standards for all students. Standards need to be meaningful, and by that they mean standards need to be linked to expectations for the next stage of study (community college or four-year college) or work. Recent initiatives create new checkpoints at the third grade with "Move on when reading," and the 10th (or later) grade with *Move On When Ready* and the Grand Canyon Diploma. As well, technology education is importing Common Core standards and linking them, to the extent possible, with technology-related courses. One concern, though, is a narrowing of educational opportunities that is occurring as a consequence of funding constraints and the academic focus of the Common Core. A second concern is that the new checkpoints will serve to segregate students into streams that will never merge. Thus, future polices will be needed to attend to the undesired side-effects of a strong focus on higher standards and the Common Core.

Part V: Student Testing and Assessment

The measurement of student learning is a subtle and complex field. An individual's knowledge and problem-solving ability cannot be directly observed. The main trend over the past two decades has been away from norm-based testing – comparing an individual or group against the overall performance of test takers – to standards-based testing meant to assess the individual or group against some pre-set performance level defined by specific criteria.

While the federal No Child Left Behind law requires all states receiving federal funds to have a testing program that meets several criteria, it does not mandate a single test or set of standards. The primary national data on students' academic accomplishments have been the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) which is based on a sample of students, college-admission related tests such as the SAT and ACT, and various international testing initiatives such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study 2007 (TIMSS 2007) and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

Arizona's primary initiative in student assessment has been the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS), although it has also used nationally-normed instruments

such as the Stanford Achievement Test Series (SAT 9 or SAT 10) and TerraNova, and special purpose tests such as the Arizona English Language Assessment (AZELLA). Interviewees were asked to consider five policy options for testing and assessment (Figure 12).

Figure 12. *Student testing and assessment policy options.*

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A. ***Specifying the format and content of tests:*** adopting new tests, shifting from norm-referenced to criterion-referenced or standards-based tests, adding new subjects, new grades, or new student groups, etc.

B. ***Testing for special program placement:*** certification of handicapped or gifted students, placement of ELL students, requiring tests for graduation or promotion, etc.

C. **Using tests to evaluate program or teacher performance:** Linking salaries or program funding to test scores, etc.

D. ***Measuring non-academic student outcomes:*** assessment of physical skills, attitudes, interests, or other personal or social characteristics.

E. ***Requiring local districts to develop their own tests***: local promotion or proficiency testing for students, requiring local tests for program evaluation, etc.

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The study's respondents were of one mind as to Arizona's primary policy in this area over the past decade, with almost all describing it as one of specifying the format and contents of tests (A). One respondent focused on testing for special program placement for ELL students (B) and one on requiring local districts to develop their own tests (E). The last respondent reflected on the considerable effort many district have made to develop or acquire "benchmark" tests that would facilitate the tracking of students' progress during the year before the students undertook state-mandated tests. A few other specific comments expanded on the overall trend during the past decade (Figure 13).

Figure 13. *Reflections on past policies for student testing and assessment.*

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1) The state moved to centralize control over content with state testing tied to standards.

2) AIMS and TerraNova were adopted, but cut scores have been lowered so more students pass. We will not make the national goal of 100% pass rate by 2013.

3) The recently adopted "Move on when reading" policy to retain students in the 3rd grade who do not pass the state test will cause districts to incur higher costs due to those repeating. The Joint Legislative Budget Committee (JLBC) of the state legislature did not make a cost estimate for implementing the legislation.

4) The *Flores* case was the triggering event for the assessment of ELL students.

5) AIMS is a hybrid of norm-based and standards based testing.

Looking ahead, responds foresaw a change in emphasis to the use of tests to evaluate program or teacher performance (C), although several felt there will be greater emphasis on having local districts develop tests for tracking students (E) and measuring non-academic student outcomes (D) to account for matters like the civic engagement of students. Specific comments explored these notions further in Figure 14.

Figure 14. *Reflections on future policies for student testing and assessment*.

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1) A number of ideas in the state's second Race to the Top bid were promising.

2) We should have less testing; if you count how many days we are losing to testing out of the 180 day school year, it would be substantial.

3) As a state, we don't do badly given the amount of money we spend.

4) Republican legislators are torn between giving orders and local control. The state did not take over one school district with poor performance; in another case the State Board of Education stopped the Superintendent of Public Instruction from acting.

5) More work is needed regarding the tying of teacher evaluation to student outcomes, especially in areas where the AIMS test is not used.

6) We need to measure student and school success with a number of measures: grade point average, ranking, courses taken (especially Advanced Placement), civic engagement, and so

forth. A formula could be developed to produce an outcome index.

7) We need higher teacher performance in order to implement *Move On When Ready*. Professional development will be needed for this purpose.

8) College and career ready performance measures are needed, especially in fields like music, art, and science. Only math performance measures are ready. In some areas, student portfolio assessments are needed.

9) The Common Core will assist in guiding assessment of learning that can be tied to teacher performance – assuming the new Congress goes along with it.

10) Using tests to evaluate teachers is possible but the problem is the "all or nothing" view some hold. It is like deciding a doctor is not a good doctor because a patient has high blood pressure. It is a question of assessments "informing" teachers' pay as opposed to "driving" teachers' pay.

11) Tying teachers' pay to test scores is a problem due to great errors, especially with small groups. There is a state task force looking at the issue of assessing teachers and principals. It will recognize timely data is needed. Evaluation would need to be finished within an academic year, not the next fall.

12) There were four prongs with Race to the Top; one is measuring highly effective teaching with a student growth model.

13) One can use a mix of individual and school measures; the latter provides an incentive for collaboration.

16) Sixty percent of all teachers do not have students who are tested in a subject. How does one address that issue?

17) Many schools have instructional coaches. Will the coaches seek schools where student growth is occurring, rather than schools where the challenge is greatest?

18) There is a problem with student absenteeism, but we speak of "parents' rights." Some parents need a heavy-handed discussion with consequences for them if their children do not attend school. We need a statewide attendance policy since absenteeism is linked to performance at the individual and school levels.

19) Tests are more useful for program evaluation than the assessment of teacher performance. AIMS is not useful for identifying teacher weaknesses, but it is useful for benchmarking students against state standards.

20) The U.S. Department of Education is a big supporter of the Common Core and provides funding through Race to the Top for Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). Unless the House of Representatives zeros out fund for it, it will continue.

21) Pay for performance should be based on formal judgment, not necessarily tests. The salary grid is not beneficial. Teachers should be encouraged to develop to the maximum of their ability and be rewarded for it. Administrators need to be freed up to do assessment and need to be less cautious. Many administrators like the salary schedule since it means they do not need to make decisions. They need to be closer to the classroom.

22) We need end-of-course tests with common outcomes that are developed locally.

23) What measures are there for workforce readiness – team work and other outcomes advocated by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills?

24) Using tests that reflect the Common Core in form and content can be used in different ways to help assess principals and teachers. The tests will help to professionalize the educational system by seeing how those in the system do. Assessment must be used appropriately to influence behavior but not as punishment.

Conclusion

It is evident that the Common Core State Standards Initiative – which is coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) – and the federal Race to the Top competition guide the respondents' consideration of the future of assessment and its use in Arizona. As well, recent legislation mandates its use in the appraisal of teachers' and principals' performance on the job. Most common concerns are the need to leave room for judgment in use of assessment results, for both professional educators and students; the need to assess outcomes not measure by AIMS or evident in the Common Core; the development of appropriate assessments in technology and for non-college bound youth; and the need for greater efficiency in measurement so that excessive instructional time is not pre-empted for testing.

Part VI: School Personnel Training and Certification

The quality of education is inextricably linked with the quality of the teachers who instruct youth; hence, states have long set standards and authorized preparation programs for teachers and other public school officials. No Child Left Behind, with its requirement that teachers be "highly qualified," required states and districts to review and, when necessary, upgrade the qualifications of certificated staff. Yet, although the goal of having all students taught by "highly qualified" teachers is not yet attained, it is probably fair to say the prevailing opinion is that holding paper qualifications is not enough and that evidence of success is also warranted. Figure 15 outlines policy options put to interviewees.

Figure 15. *School personnel training and certification options.*
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A. ***Pre-service training and certification improvement***: credentialing reform, basic skills testing, increasing minimum salaries, etc.

B. **Professional development programs:** in-service training requirements, teacher centers, principal academies, summer institutes, etc.

C. ***Accountability systems***: linking compensation or job security with performance assessments, merit pay, special compensation for outstanding work, new evaluation or employee discipline requirements, etc.

D*. **Changing teacher job definition***: mentor teacher programs, development of career ladders, differentiated staffing plans, etc.
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In reviewing the states actions in the area of school personnel over that past decade, respondents emphasized a variety of policy choices. Almost half of the respondents selected accountability systems (C) as the pre-eminent approach; almost as many selected

pre-service training and certification improvement (A). Several, though, selected changing definitions of the job of teaching (D). Individual comments help to explicate this variety of opinions (Figure 16)

Figure 16. *Reflections on past policies for school personnel training and certification.*
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1) Proposition 301 (2000) that approved a six-tenths of a cent increase in the state sales tax for 20 years led to performance pay; districts were given automatic increases in funding.

2) Some districts implemented Career Ladders requiring teachers to set goals and take courses to improve. Career Ladders did not go statewide. They were challenged in a lawsuit as inequitable.

3) Recently laws were passed that ended tenure for teachers and banned the use of seniority in deciding who to lay off when reductions in force (RIF) occur.

4) Career Ladders were an excellent idea but they morphed into systems for rewarding extra work rather than improved academic outcomes.

5) The school boards' association is conscientious in training school board members.

6) Certification of teachers is basically a joke with all of the types of alternative certification programs. Teaching has lost a sense of dignity and honor as a profession. Experience and mentoring is needed to become effective. Schools are not businesses and business is not a model we should be following.

7) SB1040 (2010) calls for quantitative data measures of student progress to account for between 33% to 50% of

teacher and principal evaluations starting in 2012-2013 school year.

8) The ELL law prescribes teaching down to the 15 minute level; if a person does what is required and a student fails, cannot one say the failure is in the program and not the person?

9) With Arizona Educator Proficiency Assessment (AEPA) and the NCLB requirements for highly qualified status, all one must do is to check all the boxes.

10) Increased opportunities to become a teacher, such as Teach for America, open the door for many talented persons, though more classroom practice is needed before full responsibilities are undertaken. Still, taking classes on how to teach while one is teaching makes sense.

11) Accountability has been and will continue to be in order to make sure teachers are effective and students are learning. The success of Career Ladders depended upon the district; they worked well in some but in others became a combination of money equally distributed and given for extra work. Its loss will be hard on some districts.

12) Past efforts at pay for performance such as Proposition 301 and Career Ladders have not succeeded. Hence the search for centrally guided models of pay that are based on performance.

| 13) Not much accountability has been done; teacher evaluations are "drive- | bys" and in-service training is provided two or three times a year. Neither is sufficient. |

Recent legislation removing tenure and the use of seniority in layoffs, and mandating the use of student progress as a major part of teacher and principal evaluations are as much actions for the future as they are of the past, since their implementation is yet to have full force. Still, in looking ahead, almost half of the respondents foresaw pre-service training and certification improvement (A). About a third emphasized accountability systems (C) and changes in teacher job definition (D). Just one mentioned professional development programs (B). Specific comments expand on these choices in Figure 17.

Figure 17. *Reflections on future policies for school personnel training and certification.*

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1) A longer, paid internships more like that used in medicine are needed. A full five-year program is needed, but one that would emphasize delivery as much as content.

2) Policy centers advocating various reforms are driven more by ideology than sound research on teaching practice. They do not trust educators.

3) Improved Career Ladders can work if they tie teacher advancement to growing teacher skills and performance. Student progress should count, but not only as measured by tests; support is needed to do it right.

4) Restore dignity to the profession with complete teacher certification programs. A chief financial officer cannot run a school district without educational knowledge about evaluation, curriculum, and the like.

5) Alternative forms of certification can be effective, such as the Boston Teacher Residency in which trainees are paid a

stipend, are in the classroom four days a week, and take classes Fridays.

6) The state and districts need to cooperate with the Arizona Education Association and have respect for members and non-members. What happens to children is not just test scores; teacher, principal, and superintendent morale has been damaged. Fiscal pressures have cost schools instructional specialists, assessment coordinators, and others. Principals are concerned that their own assessments will be used punitively. They may have given the best teacher the tough kids, hurting that teacher's result. It is critical each child show a year's growth. If one does not "feed and care" for principals, teachers, and superintendents, they cannot perform well, and students will not perform well. A bit of anxiety is good, but excessive stress is bad for everybody.

7) It becomes a question of money. Administrators can be artful in selecting who to cut.

8) There is a changing definition of what it is to be a teacher; it is more uniform and perhaps less professional. In a few years, teachers may not be considered white-collar professionals under the U.S. Fair Labor Standards Act. What impact would that have on the school system?

9) Governments are moving away from credentialing educators, as evident in the requirement for alterative certification in Race to the Top. Arizona changed its law this past year to allow for a CEO rather than a superintendent to head a school district. High schools may benefit from a greater supply of math teachers as engineers seek second careers; special education classes may benefit as well from a greater supply.

10) In recent years, the caliber of those entering teaching has not been as good as it was in the 1960s and 1970s. As more career opportunities opened for women – in law, medicine, and business – the most talented did not become teachers. If alternative certification like Teach for America works, why not adopt it if the result is getting the top 20% of college graduates into teaching?

11) The Soviet style grid for paying teachers does not promote accountability.

12) Developing human capital is not just pre-service; sound in-service, including mentoring and coaching on how to improve student performance, is needed as well.

13) Professional development programs for implementing the Common Core will be critical. It must be done well by the state, which has statutory authority over education. It is not a role for the federal government.

14) Accountability needs to be paired with rewards for outstanding teachers and high expectations for those who exhibit low performance.

15) Five recent films (e.g., *Waiting for Superman* and *The Cartel*) have been on the same subject: bad teachers. Is there a conspiracy? By whom? All films were aimed undercutting the power of teachers' unions to mobilize.

16) The Arizona Education Association is too close to the Democratic Party; it loses influence by trying to elect Democrats rather than lobbying specific issues relevant to its members. As a result, teachers do not have the voice they need in state-level decisions that affect them.

16) Professional development for principals as trained evaluators is needed to implement any new evaluation instrument.

Conclusion

There is a clear tension in the perceptions of the respondents between oversight of the teaching profession and opening schools to all who wish to teach. The first approach implies systematic programs for certification. The second assumes that by selecting the best of those available and providing systematic on-the-job performance appraisals, one

can improve the quality of the overall teaching force. Beyond that, it seems that respondents support rewarding excellent performance demonstrated by principals or teachers, although there is a variance of opinion as to how student progress as measured by standard tests should be figured into the equation.

An underlying theme voiced by some respondents is the loss of a professional identity for teachers and educators. Professions are governed by strong norms of ethical practice and specialized skill sets used by practitioners. Opening the door to all and narrowing the educator's role to prescribed actions are inconsistent with this model of a profession. However, there is a consensus that improved practice is possible with the assistance of mentors, coaches, and professional development.

Part VII: School Finance

In 1980 Arizona adopted a new school finance model that replaced the practice of having most educational costs paid for by local taxpayers. The new approach, which set a local "qualifying tax rate" and per pupil expenditure level referred to as a "revenue control limit," equalized expenditures across to the state by assuring state grants to cover the difference between local revenue and the guaranteed expenditure level, while allowing for supplementary local levies for a variety of operating and capital expenditures. In 1999, expenditures for buildings and facilities were equalized under Students FIRST. Both programs remain and form the fundamental structure for financing Arizona's schools, although they have been "tweaked" over the years and state fiscal problems have reduced state funding in recent years.

Survey participants were offered five strategies or policy options to consider in describing the practices Arizona has followed over the past decade (Figure 18).

Figure 18. *School finance policy options.*
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A. **Equalizing** the amount of money spent to educate each child in the state (perhaps under court order)

B. **Limiting or increasing** the total amount of money spent on schooling

C. **Targeting** funds on children with special needs – non-English speakers, disadvantaged minorities, low achievers, handicapped, gifted, etc.

D. **Financing particular services** or functions – textbooks, staff training, program planning, minimum salaries, building maintenance, etc.

E. **Offsetting** burdensome costs incurred by school districts with specific problems – declining enrollment, extensive pupil transportation, high cost urban environments, building construction,
_____

Almost all respondents viewed Arizona's school finance system to be focused on equalizing expenditures (A), although one focused on limiting expenditures (B) and one financing special services (D), referring to recent actions concerning the funding of English language learner services. Their comments offer insight into recent practices and events (Figure 18).

Figure 19. *Reflections on past policies for school finance.*
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1) Equalized funding has often been supplemented with flat grants.

2) When Napolitano was governor, we gained full-day kindergarten funding from the state; this has since been cut.

3) Proposition 301 funds helped the system, but the budget crisis has reduced funding although the basic system of funding is still in place.

4) For the last four decades the funding has been based on the current formula, but there is no equalizing for expenditures above the Maintenance and Operations funding level. The formula needs adjustment. Legislation says that the Arizona Department of Education is to conduct a cost study every three years, but this has not been done.

5) The state government has been limiting funding the last few years. While the formula does offset burdens and targets funds to a degree, it does not equalize salaries to the extent that a state salary minimum schedule would do, as is practiced in North Carolina.

6) While the state has recently focused on limiting money and cost controls, some local communities do better than others if they have the wealth that generates more revenues from overrides and tax credits.

7) The federal Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and requirements for addressing the needs of English language learners have meant higher funding for qualifying students.
8) We need a more understandable funding system so people can interact in an informed manner. At present, many think administrators are hiding or wasting money.

9) Using census data rather than targeting funds would be an improvement.

10) The equalizing effort in the 1980s was based on what happened in California [Proposition 13 and the *Serrano* case] in that many saw the existing Arizona system as unequal. The late speaker of the Arizona House studied actual costs and revised the system of funding.

11) Funding levels are influenced by who is at the capitol and how much money there is. Less money means less spending. More money means more spending.

12) Nationwide the focus on educational funding has been adequacy rather than equity. The question is: How much money does it take to educate a child? The *Flores* case is an adequacy case: How much money does it take to educate children to speak English

adequately. Tim Hogan of the Arizona Center for Law in the Public Interest pursued an adequacy case against the state funding system, but the case was dismissed.

13) Minimum salaries are a local, not a state, issue.

Respondents exhibited still less agreement about funding in the future than they did about the past. While a third continued to see equity (A) as the primary issue, several others either felt that adjusting the level of funding (B) or targeting funds (C) is likely or preferred in the future. Two rejected all five options offered and focused on taxation in support of education. Respondents' comments capture a wide variety of insights (Figure 19).

Figure 19. *Reflections on future policies for school finance.*

1) Arizona's legislature has looked to Florida's funding approaches, but without the money that Florida allocated.

2) We need to invest more in education to improve the economy. Good education attracts good businesses.

3) We need to review the funding formula and the tax systems. While the concepts used are sound, how they are put into practice is not.

4) A large liability is being created by dropping property values. Lower local revenues from the qualifying tax rate implies larger state grants – but where will the state find the money?

5) Arizona Business and Education Coalition (ABEC) wants to revise the funding formula. But the real problem is that schools are funded for teaching reading and writing, but not for building maintenance, after school programs, utilities, community use, and the like.

6) Our funding system is not bad, though it needs to be monitored and improved. There is no need to throw it out and start over.

7) The state increased the qualifying tax rate by 20 cents this year. Truth in Taxation (TNT) legislation spurred this change. When TNT was passed, it was meant to reduce the tax rate automatically when assessed values increased.

8) In districts where secondary assessed values decline, tax rates will go up, but the taxation amount will remain the same.

9) The state's Constitution limits bonding to 30 percent of assessed valuation, but statute now lowers it to 10 percent in light of funding from the School Facilities Board (SFB). But now the SFB has no money. Increasing school district bonding level up to 30% would not hurt state or local bond ratings.

10) More revenue streams are needed for funding education. Perhaps a new lottery and a moratorium on tax credits, which now amount to $400 million per year, would help.

11) The state would benefit from a master salary schedule. Right now, rural and poor districts loose good teachers to better funded districts. Poaching goes on. However, a survey was conducted and 83 percent of responding districts opposed a standardized schedule.

12) Efficiency studies are needed.

13) Differentiated pay is needed for math, science, and special education teachers, and for teachers in remote areas.

14) All polls say people support education, but we must make sure funds go to the classroom.

15) Fund schools, not students. We need a new method of funding. We are too bound by tradition and are all thinking in the same box. Now, districts want students because it earns them the full amount guaranteed by the state per pupil, but their costs go up only marginally.

16) Parents make choices, but mobility of students is a problem. We need parents to keep students in a school for a minimum of one year. Choosing a school is more like purchasing a two-year cell phone contract than buying a product you can return the next day. The funding system lends itself to choice rather than commitment since students take funding with them. Hence, it works in favor of those with money; it makes economic but not educational sense.

17) The funding system needs to be understandable. The Goldwater Institute suggests Arizona is spending $9,000 per year for each student, but school district financial reports are not understandable to the public. At least $2,000 per year goes to new books, new schools, federal Title I, and so forth.

18) The elephant in the room is that charter school operators end up owning buildings that are paid for with taxpayer money. They will probably receive more capital funding in the future, making some people rich.

19) While we need a scheme to revise the funding model, the main issue is revenue stability. Half of the income of the state is based on a narrow sales tax applied only to goods and not services. The property tax is obscenely low. If Americans have "reset" their personal finances and are saving more, the sales tax revenue will not recover. It needs to be expanded to services, except for medical and educational. A broader-based tax means one could lower the rate.

20) The state is not giving the required inflationary increases; there is a court case on the issue.

21) The state does not recognize actual costs. School districts must deal with aging facilities out of operational costs of $200 million per year. When we equalize funding, it is on a per student basis not on the basis of providing equalized services.

22) Equity is falling as some districts have dramatically more revenue than others.

23) Too many rules burden districts; time could be freed up by stripping Title 15 of Arizona Revised Statutes. A problem is that one legislator with a beef makes a law that applies to all and does not accomplish anything but create red tape.

24) Proposition 301 made it look like schools would become more efficient in order to attract votes.

25) Equity is needed for both students and taxpayers; school choice will not work fairly if there are rich and poor districts and schools.

26) Tie funding to learning; the more learning, the more funding.

27) The term "adequacy" is despised in the state's political arena.

28) Put a system in place with the right for local communities to spend on their own kids. Placing limits on the right of parents to spend on "my kids" flies in the face of local control.

29) We must limit funding since the state does not have sufficient revenue.

30) Increase incentive pay by tying it to the graduation rate. We need to reallocate current funding so we can demonstrate it is being spent efficiently.

Conclusion

The thirty comments offered by respondents on the financing of education suggest that Arizona's intricate system of funding, which is intimately tied to its system of taxation, may not be the best of all possible models, but it also is not the worst. A framework that has survived 30 years while the state grew from 2.7 million to 6.6 million residents is remarkable. Yet, the questions of whether the revenue sources have grown too narrow and whether the system of funding does what it might to improve student outcomes are evident. Looking ahead, more of the same may not be good enough.

Several remarks question the negative effects of competition in recruiting staff and students, suggesting that the current arrangement may encourage instability which undermines improved performance. That is, the per-pupil funding system, complemented by local overrides, can be counter-productive by being *too* responsive to the movement of children. The property tax system has features that dampen the rapidity of change; these include the distinctions between primary and secondary assessment and the practice of lagging by a year or two the impact of assessment changes. Per pupil funding has no such system to dampen changes for charter schools and a one year delay for district schools. During the period of prosperity and growth, this responsiveness aided rapidly growing districts. Now with a no growth, economic or demographic, it seems to promote a practice of beggar-thy-neighbor.

No obvious single solution arises from the comments. Perhaps the notion of a minimum state-wide salary schedule for entry level teachers would aid some districts, perhaps funding classrooms or schools rather than students would add stability, perhaps broadening the sales tax to included services would stabilize revenue, and perhaps some sort of incentive system for achieving academic goals at a school or district level would improve effectiveness.

Reviews of costs and of needs, particularly those related to the condition of facilities and efficient use of resources, are always in order and can be used to demonstrate and justify special allocations to resolve difficulties. Also, revising of the terminology used in the financing of Arizona's schools by replacing the use of weighted students with program funding categories might improve communication with the public and participants.

All of these suggestions are more than "tweaks" to the current finance model. It does seem there is support for a somewhat more aggressive stance to redesign or refine Arizona's school finance model than has been evident the past decade. At the same time, no respondents suggested radical changes, such as full-statewide funding as in Hawaii or funding public schools using the same formula used for charter schools. And some do prefer to be conservative, in a case of "better the devil you know." Rather than risk an open agenda that could lead to unforeseen outcomes and consequences, they would tweak the model for another decade or two. And it is true, while the current model may not be the best of systems; it certainly is not the worst.

Part VIII: Influence of Policy Groups

Who has the most influence on education policy in Arizona? According to the study's respondents, the *insiders* – those with most influence – include individual members of the state legislature who are tied with the influence of referenda and initiatives (Table 1). Very close behind is the governor of the state. The group means for all three round to a mean score of 5.9 on a seven-point scale. The very small standard deviation for the influence of individual legislators (0.88) implies there was a strong consensus among respondents; there was more variability in responses about the other two insiders. The perceived influence of referenda and initiatives is notable in that these allocate policy decisions to the voters. Some such decisions are referred to them by the legislature, as occurred with Proposition 100 (2010) which proposed a temporary one cent increase in the state sales tax, a tax increase that had been advocated by state governor.

The *near circle* of policy actors, as perceived by respondents, is much larger, with six groups cited. At the top of this list are mandates from the federal government (M = 5.79), which are the direct product of legislation, such as No Child Left Behind and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act. Second are the courts (M = 5.43), state and federal, reflecting cases such as *Roosevelt v. Bishop,* which led to the Arizona School Facilities Board and state funding of new and upgraded schools, and *Flores v. Arizona*, concerned with the English language proficiency of English language learners. Third is the state legislature as a whole (M = 5.10). The fourth is non-educator interest groups (M = 4.79),

which includes organizations such as the Arizona Business and Education Coalition (ABEC) and Arizona Tax Research Association (ATRA). The next two are the state superintendent of public instruction (M = 4.79) and legislative staff (M = 4.71). The state superintendent is a popularly elected official in Arizona. The single member of the *far circle*, the state board of education (M = 4.29), is an appointed body.

Table 1. *Influence of policy groups in Arizona (2010)*

Rank	Policy group	Group mean*	Standard deviation	Cluster
1	Individual members of legislature	5.93	0.88	Insiders
--	Referenda/initiative	5.93	1.39	
3	Governor and executive staff	5.86	1.25	
4	Federal policy mandates	5.79	1.21	
5	Courts	5.43	1.35	Near
6	State legislature as a whole	5.10	1.54	
7	Non-educator groups	4.93	1.32	Circle
8	State superintendent	4.79	1.41	
9	Legislative staff	4.71	1.28	
10	State board of education	4.29	1.33	Far circle
11	Education interest groups combined	4.14	1.41	Sometime
12	School boards' association	4.00	1.56	players
--	School business officials association	4.00	1.55	
14	Charter schools association	3.79	1.61	
15	Producers of educational materials	3.50	1.40	
16	Lay groups	3.21	1.74	Often
--	Education researcher organizations	3.21	1.08	forgotten
18	Teacher organization	3.00	1.20	players
19	Administrators' association	2.86	1.55	

Note: * Based on data collected from an instrument with a scale of 1 – 7 with seven being the highest. (n = 14).

Sometime players have four members: all education interest groups combined (M = 4.14), the state school boards association and the state school business officials' organization

(M = 4.00), and the charter schools association (3.79). *Often forgotten players* include six members: producers of educational materials (M = 3.50), lay groups (M = 3.21), education research organizations (M = 3.21), state teacher organization (M = 3.00), and state administrators' association (M = 2.86). That is, the two groups representing the bulk of the educators who manage and provide instruction to the students of the state are perceived as the least influential.

Table 2. *Influence of policy groups in six states (1986)*

6-state Rank	Policy group	Group mean*	Standard deviation	Cluster
1	Individual members of legislature	5.85	0.98	Insiders
2	State legislature as a whole	5.73	1.03	
3	Chief state school officer	5.21	1.57	
4	Education interest groups combined	5.14	1.10	Near
5	Teacher organizations	5.10	1.54	
6	Governor and executive staff	4.88	1.63	Circle
7	Legislative staff	4.66	1.41	
8	State board of education	4.51	1.60	Far circle
9	School boards' association	4.18	1.36	Sometime
10	Administrators' association	4.00	1.32	players
-	School business officials association	--	--	
-	Charter schools association	--	--	
11	Courts	3.92	1.89	Often
12	Federal policy mandates	3.89	1.49	forgotten
13	Non-education groups	3.87	1.31	players
14	Lay groups	3.10	1.26	
15	Education researcher organizations	2.66	1.48	
16	Referenda/initiative	2.13	1.64	
17	Producers of educational materials	2.11	1.20	

Note: * Based on data collected from an instrument with a scale of 1 – 7 with seven being the highest. Adapted from Table 2.1 in Marshall, Mitchell, & Wirt (1989), p. 18.

Table 2 is an adaptation of the perceived influence of various policy groups in the six states studied by Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt. In addition to Arizona, the states included

West Virginia, California, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Illinois. The table reports the perceived influence of seventeen policy groups.

Two groups included in the present study are not included: charter schools association and the school business officials association. The former did not exist when their study was conducted, and the latter probably fell within the "administrators' association" group. A brief comparison with Table 1 yields a number of similarities and differences. Individual members of the legislature rank first on both tables. Also, the first two clusters – *insiders* and *near circle* – include some similar members: the governor, the legislature as a whole, and the chief state school officer (superintendent). In both cases, the state board of education is the sole member of the *far circle* and in both cases the school

Table 3. *Comparison of Arizona rankings with six-state rankings.*

Policy group	6-state rank*	AZ 1986**	AZ 2010
Individual members of legislature	1	1	1
State legislature as a whole	2	2	6
Chief state school officer	3	4	8
Education interest groups combined	4	9-	12-
Teacher organizations	5	12--	19--
Governor and executive staff	6	13--	3
Legislative staff	7	7	9
State board of education	8	3+	10
Others	9	10	12
School boards' association	10	6	13
Administrators' association	11	15	20--
School business officials association	--	--	13
Charter schools association	--	--	15
Courts	12	11	5++
Federal policy mandates	13	8+	4++
Non-education groups	14	5++	7++
Lay groups	15	14	17
Education researcher organizations	16	16	18
Referenda/initiative	17	18	1++
Producers of educational materials	18	17	16

*Notes: Six states include Arizona, West Virginia, California, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Illinois.
Wisconsin does not have a state board of education.
** ++ Ranked much higher than other states per 1986 data
    + Ranked higher than other states
    - Ranked lower than other states
    -- Ranked much lower than other states

boards association is a *sometime player*. Finally, lay groups, education research organizations, and producers of educational materials are *often forgotten players*. Quite different, though, are the ratings for referenda and initiatives, courts, and federal policy mandates, which became *insiders* or members of the *near circle*, and for teacher associations and administrators' association, which became *often forgotten players*.

Table 3 compares the 1986 six-state rankings of policy group influence with the 1986 and 2010 rankings for Arizona. Plus and minus signs are used to highlight differences from the six state ranking, with ++ meaning a much higher rank, + meaning a higher rank, - meaning a lower rank, and -- meaning a much lower rank.

In the earlier study, Arizona's teacher organization and the governor and the executive staff had much lower rankings than the six state averages, and all education interest groups had a lower ranking. Non-education interest groups, in contrast, had a much higher ranking in Arizona and the state board of education and federal policy mandates had higher rankings. By 2010, the influence of teachers' organizations had dropped further (down from rank of 12 to 19) as had the administrators' association (from 15 to 20). Part of the decline of the latter group may be been due to the splitting out of the more influential school business officials association, now ranked 13. The courts, federal policy mandates, and especially referenda and initiatives showed large gains in rankings, moving the last of these from an *often forgotten player* to the *near circle*. Non-education groups retained an above average ranking.

Taken together, the three tables demonstrate a considerable shift in the groups influencing educational policy-making in Arizona between the mid-1980s and the present. While individual members of the state legislature are still at the center of the action, the other groups that bring pressure to bear on them have shifted away from educational groups and toward other government institutional actors, especially the courts and the federal government, as well as toward voters in the form of referenda and initiatives.

Problems and Options

This section identifies one key problem from each of the seven areas of education policy along with one or more. The options are meant to be complementary, with one or more being adopted to address the problems. These examples are meant promote thoughtful discussion and, by identifying problems, it adds the second stream of Kingdon's model for policy making. Therefore, the challenge is for active members in the political stream to consider these and other policy options which address these problems and other problems on a timely basis.

> **Problem 1**. Arizona's schools and facilities are not being well maintained and upgraded.

Option 1.1. *Issue short term (three to five year) state bonds to finance the purchase of equipment for schools, including computers, software, communication devices and the like.*

Option 1.2. *Issue long term (20 to 30 year) state bonds to equalize the cost to local education agencies for building renewal and construction.*

Option 1.3. *Levy a state-wide property tax to provide a revenue stream for funding bonds described in Options 1.1 and 1.2.*

Problem 2. Curriculum materials suitable for teaching the Common Core to all students are not currently available.

Option 2.1. *Create state-level tasks forces to develop detailed syllabi for all Common Core courses.*

Problem 3. Members of district and charter school boards are not assessed as to their effectiveness according to state-wide standards.

Option 3.1. *Create a state-level task force to develop instruments and procedures for assessing and rating school board effectiveness in term of their value-added contribution to student learning for both charter schools and school districts.*

Problem 4. The definitions of school programs do not ensure appropriate pathways for all students from school to work, career, or college.

Option 4.1. *Create a state-level task force to review the structure of education in other states and nations to develop flexible paths leading to employment and certification programs to complement paths leading to college.*

Problem 5. Introduction of new systems of testing to reflect the Common Core and *Move On When Ready* will shift the focus from existing state standards to other criteria.

Option 5.1. *As part of its contribution to Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for Colleges and Careers (PARCC), the state should ensure assessment instruments reflect the multiple paths and goals developed in response to Option 4.1.*

Problem 6. The introduction of new instruments for the evaluation of teachers and principals may have unintended effects.

>   ***Option 6.1****. The state should fund an independent research study to monitor the implementation and effects of the planned instruments for evaluation of principals and teachers (and school boards and chief education officers pursuant to Options 3.1 and 3.2).*

Problem 7. Revenue and allocation systems for K-12 education are complex and poorly understood by the public.

>   ***Option 7.1****. Reformulate the current weighted-student finance formula in terms of program funding using plain language.*

>   ***Option 7.2****. Fund education on a classroom and school basis, rather than per pupil basis.*

>   ***Option 7.3****. On state reported school report cards, list all funds spent in a school, including all sources; e.g., state, local, federal, grants, and tax credits.*

>   ***Option 7.4****. Outsource the management school funds to the private sector using a competitive bidding process so that one system is used statewide.*

Many other problems and options can be derived from the responses of those interviewed in to this study. Consideration of the options recommended above, along with those suggested by others, will aid policy makers in coming to decisions that best serve the students, teachers, and parents of Arizona.

Those concerned about the ability of families and youth to have some control over their own destinies may believe all seven questions provided above speak more to the problems of government agencies than the problems of children and parents. Yet, local, state, and the federal governments are making decisions that determine the content, process, and environment of schooling. Parents and children benefit when their public servants do their jobs well. Clear and honest answers to the questions posed above, as well as to others readers may raise, will aid them in doing so.

Appendix A: Approaches to Educational Policy Areas

School Building and Facilities

A. ***Technical architectural review*** of local school district building plans to insure they are cost efficient, meet safety standards, etc.
B. ***Long range planning*** for school construction: demographic studies, allocation of state construction funds, etc.
C***. Remediation of existing building problems***: mold, asbestos, earthquake safety, energy conservation, access for handicapped students, etc.
D. ***Providing new instructional capacities:*** science and computer laboratories, libraries, media centers, smart boards, wireless Internet connectivity, etc.

Curriculum Materials

A. ***Mandating local use of materials*** selected or developed by state agencies: textbook review and approval procedures, tight control over curriculum materials budgets, etc.
B. ***Specification of the scope and sequence*** of materials to be used in local districts and charter schools, identification of topics to be covered in various courses and grades
C. ***Development of specialized instructional materials*** for particular purposes: new technologies, computer literacy, materials for gifted or handicapped children, English-language learners, bilingual students, etc.

School Organization and Governance

A. ***Redistributing authority among state level agencies***: creating new commissions, giving new powers to the chief state school officer, expanding oversight by the legislature, etc.
B. ***Strengthening state agencies at the expense of local districts***: moving curricular, personnel, fiscal, or other policies into the hands of state-level decision-makers
C. ***Strengthening site-level governance:*** advisory committees, school site councils, or other mechanisms for participation at this level
D. ***Strengthening teacher influence***: appointment of teachers to policy committees, giving them meet-and-confer or collective bargaining rights, etc.
E. ***Clarifying student rights and responsibilities***: defining due process requirements, mandating discipline programs, modifying suspension or expulsion regulations, etc.
F. ***Strengthening administrative control***: more discretionary authority over program personnel, mandating evaluation and employee discipline programs, etc.
G. ***Expanding parent/citizen influence***: more parental rights in student assignment or transfer, requiring citizen involvement in decisions, tuition tax credits or educational vouchers, more charter schools.
H. ***Altering local district roles and responsibilities***: reorganization or consolidation of districts, granting new powers to local boards, changing election or appointment procedures for board members.

School Program Definition

A. **Changing time requirements**: modifying the school day, school year, or specifying the number of minutes or hours for particular subjects, etc.
B. **Mandating specific subjects**: physical education, alcohol/drug abuse, creationism, driver education, American economic or political system, etc.
C. **Setting higher program standards**: new graduation requirements, promotion/grade retention policies, etc.
D. **Developing programs for special groups:** remedial courses, special education, English-language learner or bilingual, alternative schools, etc.

Student Testing and Assessment

A. *Specifying the format and content of tests:* adopting new tests, shifting from norm-referenced to criterion-referenced or standards-based tests, adding new subjects, new grades, or new student groups, etc.
B. *Testing for special program placement:* certification of handicapped or gifted students, placement of ELL students, requiring tests for graduation or promotion, etc.
C. **Using tests to evaluate program or teacher performance:** Linking salaries or program funding to test scores, etc.
D. *Measuring non-academic student outcomes:* assessment of physical skills, attitudes, interests, or other personal or social characteristics.
E. *Requiring local districts to develop their own tests*: local promotion or proficiency testing for students, requiring local tests for program evaluation, etc.

School Personnel Training and Certification

A. *Pre-service training and certification improvement*: credentialing reform, basic skills testing, increasing minimum salaries, etc.
B. **Professional development programs:** in-service training requirements, teacher centers, principal academies, summer institutes, etc.
C. *Accountability systems***:** linking compensation or job security with performance assessments, merit pay, special compensation for outstanding work, new evaluation or employee discipline requirements, etc.
D*. Changing teacher job definition***:** mentor teacher programs, development of career ladders, differentiated staffing plans, etc.

School Finance

A. *Equalizing* the amount of money spent to educate each child in the state (perhaps under court order)
B. *Limiting or increasing* the total amount of money spent on schooling
C. *Targeting* funds on children with special needs – non-English speakers, disadvantaged minorities, low achievers, handicapped, gifted, etc.
D. *Financing particular services* or functions – textbooks, staff training, program planning, minimum salaries, building maintenance, etc.
E. *Offsetting* burdensome costs incurred by school districts with specific problems – declining enrollment, extensive pupil transportation, high cost urban environments, building construction, etc.

Appendix B. Background characteristics of respondents (n = 14)

Characteristic	Typical Respondent
Time in current positions	5 to 7 years
Age	50 to 59
Sex	57% female; 43% male
Ethnicity	79% White; 21% Hispanic
Occupation	36 % educators
Highest degree earned	Doctorate (Ed.D/Ph.D)
Family annual income	Over $100,000
Political orientation	21% strongly liberal
	14 % moderately liberal
	21% moderate
	29% moderately conservative
	7% strongly conservative
Political party	43% Democratic;
	29 % Republican
	29% Independent/Other
Respondent role	28% Executive branch
	14% Legislative branch
	36% Education interest groups
	21% Non-education interest groups