



Igniting collective action to cultivate, honor & empower resilient, thriving communities.

The Coconino Coalition for Children & Youth has taken a pro position on Prop 208 for education funding. We are encouraging a yes vote on this ballot item.

A quality education system is crucial for healthy communities and the outcomes society desires. A well-resourced and supported education system helps prevent many costly societal needs including high incidences of criminal justice and law enforcement involvement. Education is a societal tool to prepare our children for healthy, engaged and positive community involvement through their life span. Further, it is a driver of economic growth. Businesses with higher-paying jobs locate in areas where they have access to an educated work force and where they are ensured of a quality education for their employees and their children. Increasing jobs through cheap labor, and low paying wages, is not as beneficial to the Arizona economy as high paying, invested employers.

While Prop 208 may be an imperfect approach, we cannot ignore the Arizona voter's repeated request, and lack of satisfaction, for adequate school funding. While CCC&Y does not support divided communities, we recognize that the voters can no longer wait for measures to adequately deal with our education needs. We have seen for decades Arizona's rank fall nationally across numerous measures. For example, Arizona is currently 48th for teacher pay (49th for elementary teachers). The counselor to student ratio in Arizona is 905 students per one counselor. The American School Counselor Association recommends a 250-1 ratio. While we acknowledge the first steps that have been taken in Arizona, and we realize this approach is not addressing the early learning or the post high school learning our community requires, this measure presents a next step in Arizona attempting to correct decades of failing systems. In the Fall of 2019, there were 1,443 open teaching positions in AZ according to the Morrison Institute.

Arizona will benefit from the community taking a stand to support our children and communities through education. Arizona will benefit from the decreasing costs of our over-burdened child welfare, criminal justice and behavioral health systems. We will benefit from not continuing to be at the bottom of multiple different measures of education; constantly losing qualified teachers to neighboring States and other professions. Finally, we will most certainly benefit, when we stop demanding that highly qualified professional teachers -responsible for our most important resource- accept that "they know what they signed up for" when they entered the profession. We, society, assign the value, and we say our children, our future is of the utmost value.