

Candidate Response

Friday, September 18, 2026

Name: **Teresa Ruiz**

Office Running For: **Superintendent of Public Instruction**

70% of Arizonans believe that their elected leaders should “do a lot more” to ensure Arizona has educated and skilled workers - especially because the state has a goal of ensuring 60% of adults having a post-high school education, which includes job training, degrees, or workforce certification (the Achieve60AZ Goal). When you hear “do a lot more” what does that mean to you and what you will do in office?

“Do a lot more” means taking an active role in developing, implementing, and maintaining successful programs that support workforce readiness and academic success — and I’m proud to be the only candidate in this race with a comprehensive plan.

As Superintendent of Public Instruction, I’ll implement programs and partnerships with community colleges, universities, employers, apprenticeship programs, and nonprofit organizations to strengthen pathways from high school into careers, the trades, or higher education. I plan to center students over political agendas, supporting programming that have data-proven results: early literacy, math intervention, universal pre-K, and robust CTE programs.

I’ll take a proactive approach to governance, creating advisory councils of teachers, parents, students, tribal nations, business leaders, charter leaders, district superintendents, and CTE and trades to inform decision-making. Bringing community members and stakeholders together will fortify Arizona’s education system, helping ensure all students have access to high quality education that prepares them for the future.

Finally, I’ll advocate to increase funding for public education at the State Legislature. Our schools have been consistently underfunded for decades — and I’ll advocate to ensure our schools have the resources they need to support student success and implement robust programs for workforce and academic readiness.

Arizona's Education Progress Meter shows that our state is well behind our goals on many critical education markers. A few examples are below. Rate how much of a problem you think this is for the state?

1 Not a Problem – 10 Very Significant Problem

- 10 / 10** Currently, 31% of three- and four-year-olds have access to quality early childhood education learning compared to the statewide goal of at least 45%.
- 10 / 10** Currently, 36% of Arizona 3rd graders read at grade-level and meet state standards for English language proficiency compared to the statewide goal of 72%.
- 10 / 10** Currently, math test scores show 27% of Arizona 8th graders meet state standards, indicating they are prepared for high school compared to the statewide goal of 69%.
- 10 / 10** Currently, 78% of Arizona high school students graduate within four years, compared with the statewide goal of 90%.

In your view, what is the path to improving these numbers?

Improving these numbers starts with shifting the focus back to what matters most: our students. To increase proficiency and graduation rates, it will take a coordinated effort to shift energy away from political agendas and towards public education. That's why, as Superintendent of Public Instruction, I plan to FOCUS on student success: Foundational skills first, outstanding teachers and classroom support, consistent accountability and transparent results, urgent intervention for struggling students, studentcentered success pathways.

I'll prioritize foundational skills, investing in early literacy and math programs. As the only educator in this race, I'll work to recruit and retain outstanding teachers through restoring a culture of respect and partnering with community colleges and universities to create teacher pipeline programs. I'll create a transparency portal so Arizonans can easily access and understand academic outcomes and where their taxpayer dollars are going. I'll support early intervention programs to support struggling students. And, I'll partner with community and industry leaders to expand access to pathways for success.

For the past 35 years, I have been committed to uplifting teachers, partnering with families, and serving our students. As Superintendent, I'll bring that same commitment and dedication as I fight to improve student achievement.

Should there have been a clean referral, defined as a re-proposal of Proposition 123 as it was passed by voters ten years ago, to the ballot this year?

Absolutely, there should have been a clean Proposition 123 renewal. Our schools have been consistently underfunded for decades; Prop 123 provides an alternative funding mechanism to help fill some of the gaps. While politicians prioritized political agendas and failed to renew Prop 123, I will advocate for a clean renewal.

What do you believe should happen with Proposition 123 in the future?

Proposition 123 is a temporary solution to a permanent problem. I firmly believe in the clean renewal of Prop 123 to ensure our schools receive additional funding from the State Land Trust. However, I also believe that the renewal of Proposition 123 needs to be supplemented with meaningful reform to school funding. As Arizona continues to rank last in the nation in per-pupil funding, our state lawmakers need to reassess funding public education to ensure our schools receive the funding they need to succeed.

As Superintendent of Public Instruction, I will advocate for a clean renewal of Prop 123. I will also fight for meaningful changes and improvements to public education funding, ensuring that Arizona no longer ranks last in per-pupil funding.

The following policy solutions received at least 80% or more levels of support from Arizona voters when they were asked. Please indicate your alignment.

- 5 - Strong Support
- 4 - Lean Support
- 3 - Undecided
- 2 - Lean Against
- 1 - Strong Against

- 5 / 5** Expanding access to advanced placement and dual enrollment courses that allow high school students to earn college credits
- 5 / 5** Funding Adult Technical Education to provide more workers, students, or adults looking to change careers with the financial resources needed to access job training and career education programs
- 5 / 5** Increasing the number of counselors available to help high school students plan for college or a career program
- 5 / 5** Providing adult parents who are fulltime students with low-cost childcare
- 5 / 5** Comprehensive literacy and reading programs to ensure students are reading by 3rd grade
- 5 / 5** Academic achievement and workforce development programs that provide students with access to careerfocused learning pathways to goodpaying jobs