

Governor Ducey, Superintendent Hoffman Announce "AZCares: Flexibility And Funding For Schools And Families" Plan

Includes \$270 Million To Help Protect Schools During COVID-19

PHOENIX — Following listening sessions with superintendents and school leaders, Governor Ducey and Superintendent Hoffman today announced a \$270 million plan to help Arizona public schools safely open at the start of the school year, while allowing for remote learning, addressing the achievement gap and bridging the digital divide.

The funding plan, which will enable schools to operationalize the different recommendations made in the Arizona Department of Education's Roadmap to Reopening guidance, includes \$270 million to give schools the tools needed to reopen safely at the start of the school year, including:

- **\$200 million** to increase funding for remote learning and to protect schools against budget shortfalls due to declining enrollment;
- **\$40 million** to expand broadband in rural communities to bridge the digital divide;
- **\$20 million** to bring in extra support for high-need schools;
- **\$6 million** for the Arizona Teachers Academy to assist with the teacher shortage;
- **\$1 million** in microgrants to support innovative programs to continue educating Arizona students;
- **\$1 million** for vehicles for the Arizona School For The Deaf And Blind;
- **\$700,000** for leadership development through Beat The Odds Leadership Academy; and
- **\$500,000** for tutoring from Teach For America to provide tutoring to kids most in need, in schools most impacted across the state.

In addition to the \$270 million in one-time funding coming from the Governor's Office, the Arizona Department of Education is providing more than \$25 million from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. In total, \$850 million in one-time new funding is going to education in Arizona as a result of the CARES Act passed in March.

See more details about the plan [HERE](#)

(https://azgovernor.gov/sites/default/files/flexibility_and_funding_for_schools.pdf) [1].

The Governor today also issued an Executive Order streamlining the purchasing process for schools to obtain PPE and other COVID-19 related costs. The order also provides flexibility to schools to offer virtual learning opportunities for families that don't return to the classroom.

"This plan provides schools with the flexibility to ensure Arizona students continue to receive a quality education — whether through distance learning or in the classroom, and provides parents with options that work best for their families," said Governor Ducey. "It was informed and developed in close consultation with superintendents, school leaders, and the education community. My thanks to Superintendent Hoffman, ADHS Director Dr. Christ, education leaders and everyone working to support Arizona students."

"Our schools need as much stability and certainty as possible during these most uncertain of times," said Superintendent Kathy Hoffman. "This plan will help schools provide adaptable and flexible learning environments for students, families, and teachers and help operationalize the guidance provided in our Roadmap to Reopening schools. While many unknowns remain, our school communities are resilient, and I know they will rise to meet this moment for public education."

Policy Initiatives

The AZCares: Flexibility And Funding For Schools And Families Plan:

- Provides predictability to schools and helps them plan for the coming school year.
 - We know that some families aren't ready to send their children back to school, and the plan provides schools with funding guarantees to minimize impacts that might occur due to COVID-19 or other related factors.
 - To ensure distance learning remains a priority, the plan boosts funding for online learners up to the same level as in-person peers.
- Streamlines the purchasing process for schools to obtain PPE and other COVID-19 related costs, and provides flexibility to schools to offer virtual learning opportunities for families that don't return to the classroom.
- Continues efforts to close the achievement gap by ensuring that children facing a digital divide have access to distance learning, with a significant investment in broadband infrastructure and connectivity to put our state on the path to ensuring no Arizona student is without internet access at home.
- Addresses the teacher shortage with an investment in the Arizona Teachers Academy. This investment will assist schools by providing more highly qualified teachers at the front of Arizona classrooms as we respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and into the future.

Enrollment Stabilization Grant Program

The plan includes a grant program to keep school budgets stable for charters and districts partnering with the state to strengthen student achievement and transparency. The grant program guarantees funding that is the greater amount of 98% of a school's 2019-2020 enrollment or their 40th-day student account as enhanced by funding online learners at the same level as in-person peers.

Eligibility for the grant is contingent on the following accountability measures:

- Student attendance data;
- Financial compliance with state and federal transparency requirements;
- Student achievement monitoring data submitted to the state; and
- In-person education is provided the same number of days per week as last year.

Executive Order

The Governor's Executive Order ensures that all families have the opportunity to choose the mode of learning that best fits their needs. It allows districts and charters without an approved Arizona Online Instruction certification to continue offering distance learning to students whose parents choose that option, with no impact to their funding. To be eligible for this option, districts must submit a plan to the State Department of Education and charters must submit a plan to the State Board For Charter Schools.

Additionally, the Executive Order exempts districts and charters from existing procurement rules for the purposes

of obtaining PPE and any other COVID-19 related purchases. Districts and charters must submit documentation to their respective governing board describing the details of the purchase.

View the Executive Order HERE (https://azgovernor.gov/sites/default/files/eo_2020-41.pdf) [2].


See more details about the plan HERE

(https://azgovernor.gov/sites/default/files/flexibility_and_funding_for_schools.pdf) [1].

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Related Documents:

 [eo_2020-41.pdf](https://azgovernor.gov/sites/default/files/eo_2020-41.pdf) (https://azgovernor.gov/sites/default/files/eo_2020-41.pdf) [2]

 [flexibility_and_funding_for_schools.pdf](https://azgovernor.gov/sites/default/files/flexibility_and_funding_for_schools.pdf)

(https://azgovernor.gov/sites/default/files/flexibility_and_funding_for_schools.pdf) [1]

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Links

[1] https://azgovernor.gov/sites/default/files/flexibility_and_funding_for_schools.pdf

[2] https://azgovernor.gov/sites/default/files/eo_2020-41.pdf