



# Arizona's **WAY**

Teaching and Leading  
Talent Pipelines

**MAY 2022**



# INTRODUCTION

**T**eacher supply has been a hot topic in policy and politics for more than two decades. Historically, advocates have framed teacher supply challenges as being very specific to the education sector. The issues have ranged from the readiness of young teachers for real classrooms, to pay, to improving diversity in the educator ranks. However, readiness, competitive pay, and diversity needs are not unique to teaching and they are certainly not the only conditions impacting the labor market.

After all, educators are part of a larger labor pool and now, more than ever, job-specific challenges have given way to a broader sociological shift related to work.

Indeed, America is facing the most unique and diverse labor market in the history of the American workforce<sup>1</sup>. While cultural, generational, and technological advances were already pushing the labor pool towards where it is today, a switch was flipped the last two years that cannot simply be flipped back.

The gig economy; demands for part time work, remote work, and flexible schedules; career switchers; and a rejection of traditional norms regarding post-secondary preparation must be dealt with to fill employment gaps and retain workers

who take these jobs. K-12 education is not isolated from these conditions. In fact, they are taking direct hits in labor supply because of them.

These hurdles require broader solutions than previously suggested or embraced.

If K-12 education can respond to these preferences in the labor pool in a way that makes sense for schools, school leaders will have a fighting chance to compete for workers.

The good news in all of this is that Arizona may lead the country in terms of our readiness to respond to the narrow preparation model most schools use to staff schools as well as the growing demand from workers for flexibility and diversity in job assignments. We have tools that allow employers to recruit a larger pool of teacher candidates and to bring them into high quality training in schools as well as to rethink the school day in a way that is beneficial for learning and staffing.

However, we are not maximizing these opportunities. To do so, there are four actions that Arizona should pursue to assert our own solutions to the labor supply puzzle.

# ARIZONA SOLUTIONS TO TEACHER SHORTAGES

**Legislators should expand and amplify many of these already existing strategies to be easier to use; and to be available for more positions in education that have outdated and unnecessary barriers to hiring and licensure.**

**1.** These locally-initiated Grow Your Own strategies allow school leaders to recruit educated adults with the potential to be great teachers – many already working or volunteering on a school campus - and train them for that school’s specific educational model right on the local K-12 campus. In this way, future educators get real-life, hands-on training and apprentice their way to becoming a classroom teacher.

**School leaders must take advantage of these Grow Your Own opportunities in larger numbers.**

**2.** Schools still lean on a single and insufficient pipeline of students coming out of traditional education colleges and then voice frustration that there are not enough teachers to hire. Casting a wide net for talented and educated adults to become teachers is important when competing for talent in one of the tightest labor markets in history. Schools must help diversify the opportunity to become a teacher or shortages will remain.

**Local and multi-state training programs and colleges should help schools launch Grow Your Own programs that are authentically local and not just copy-cats of burdensome existing programs.**

**3.** Where possible, any bureaucracy that has attached itself to these new laws should be eliminated or left to the local school systems to add at their discretion. The State and their regulatory arm at the State Board should not over manage these GYO opportunities into the type of programs that are not attracting enough teachers now. They should simply ensure that there are positive outcomes for students and staffing.

**As school leaders strategize how Arizona’s new seat time modernization can be leveraged for more effective and customized teaching-and-learning models, they have a great opportunity to rethink staffing and to diversify job offerings for existing and new employees.**

**4.** Arizona has the country’s most flexible seat time statute in the country. This allows school leaders to meet the unique needs of today’s students while also meeting the expectations of a new generation of workers. School leaders should seize the moment.

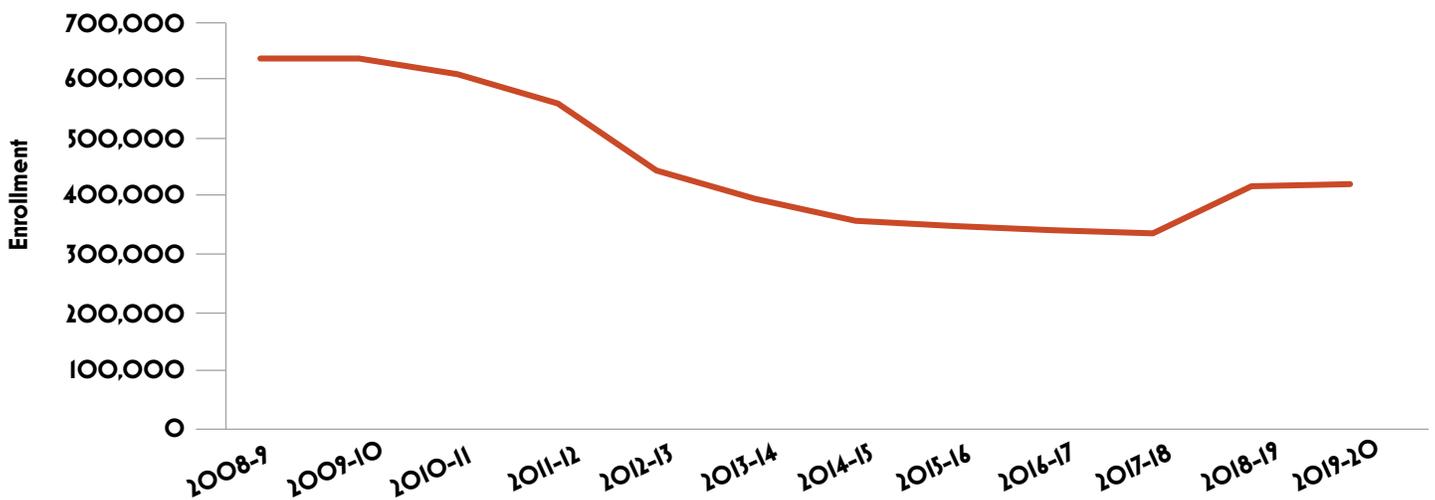
Together, these actions will not only help school leaders with job-specific challenges in the education space – including the readiness of new teachers – but also help them strategize access to a larger and changing workforce.



# DISCUSSION ON RECOMMENDATIONS TO GROW AND RETAIN PUBLIC EDUCATION TALENT

The pipeline to teaching is primarily dependent upon young adults who decide to enroll in a college of education, participate in sometimes too brief of an internship with little hands-on preparation, and then, hopefully, decide to apply to a school that needs them. Between 2008 and 2020, traditional teacher preparation programs have seen a decline of 34% in annual enrollment.

**Figure 1: Traditional Teacher Preparation Program Enrollment**



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Higher Education Act Title II State Report Card System

In the meantime, schools with vacancies wait.

Though this long-standing approach to training teachers has not met the needs of most schools for some time, they are falling even further behind in the modern era.

Nationally, experts are calling this time “the most unusual job market in living memory.”<sup>2</sup> America is experiencing record setting labor fluctuations across dozens of industries with half or more of working adults looking to switch careers; or work a part time job or jobs rather than a single full-time career.

This means the Education sector is just one of many competing for the same pool of workers who are looking for increasing flexibility and fewer barriers to entry and advancement<sup>3,4</sup>.

In the late 1990’s, Arizona and other states began to set up legal frameworks for hiring career changers who already have a degree and want to become public-school teachers. However, most of those “alternative” pathways to teaching

are simply re-packaged versions of the traditional route which requires career-changers to return to school for expensive second degrees.

College-degreed adults with the interest and skill set to become teachers should not have to return to college in order to make that shift. **While it is good to have this option available, it is not beneficial for potential teachers who do not want another expensive degree nor is it helpful for schools that need teachers now and cannot just wait for new college graduates to show up on their doorstep.**

Further, our most innovative leaders are staffing schools in new ways and willing to give younger workers the flexibility they need while also reshaping outdated school-day models to be more fluid in terms of time and place. This update to teaching and learning requires teacher preparation that looks very different than what most colleges are providing.

While Grow Your Own training modules are increasingly

common in the private sector, workforce updates in public education have been slow going due to old legal frameworks authorizing narrow preparation models or political resistance to those who prefer the old way.

With the need to diversify the education workplace and adapt to the expectations of a new generation of workers, such strategies are critical tools for schools to fill long and short-term staffing needs on school campuses now.

Not surprisingly, Arizona has modeled some of the most promising GYO strategies. Our desert state has the opportunity to fully leverage local training of teachers and school leaders to fill vacancies with qualified and motivated adults.

In 2017, S.B.1042 was approved by the Legislature and a new era of Grow Your Own strategies provided thousands of new and qualified teachers for Arizona's schools<sup>5</sup>. The package of reform allowed for:

1. Embedded training at a K-12 school site, versus just coursework, for adults already with a college degree, and for that training to be provided by the local school. These teachers-in-training can earn a state license to teach once they show they can get results with their students. This is a higher bar than traditional routes.
2. Confirmed content experts to begin teaching immediately in schools that want to hire them. These experts receive training from their local employer and have two years to complete other state requirements.
3. True reciprocity for qualified out-of-state teachers to enter Arizona classrooms immediately rather than having to take additional coursework before teaching students.

These cohorts of educators receive needed training from their employers, local colleges, or both at the discretion of the school system that employs them.

**These GYO programs are not required to be used by public schools. They are simply options for those who use them to improve the readiness of incoming staff, fill vacant positions or both.** These laws make it possible for them to recruit from a pool of workers with college degrees who want to teach but did not get their first degree in education.

These 2017 reforms not only increased the number of certificated educators available to teach in Arizona, but they also provided targeted strategies that allow school leaders to be more engaged in managing their staffing needs locally versus waiting for education colleges to send them enough new teachers.

The two promising programs from these laws are the *Classroom*

*Based Preparation Model* and the *Subject Matter Experts in the Classroom* option.

While these options hold firm on safety requirements such as background checks and fingerprint clearance cards, they allow schools to create less cumbersome, more effective training programs on the mechanics of teaching and to earn a state certificate as a result.

Otherwise, most school districts are 100% reliant on universities to fill their talent vacancies. This also allows effective charter school teachers who have received high quality training to earn their teaching certificate if they so choose.



The Classroom Based Preparation model allows degree-holding adults to be trained right in the K-12 classroom rather than having to go back for a postsecondary institute for expensive degree earning programs. This preparation strategy not only takes advantage of educated teaching talent already on campus who are likely from the neighboring community and have acquired classroom tools, it is much faster and affordable than the traditional route.

**The most striking feature of Arizona's Classroom Based model is that the certificate cannot be granted to the individual on this track until they show results with students.**

This is above and beyond the traditional preparation track. Success in the classroom is not required for the large majority of teachers who come thru the traditional preparation pathway via colleges of education. Nor is extended hands-on experience in an actual classroom. **The Classroom Based model addresses both of these flaws in the existing pipeline and allows leaders to customize training based on the unique needs and instructional models of their schools.**

While going back to college is not required under this law, individual districts can require it as part of their local model.

## Figure 2: Classroom-Based Prep Programs Approved in Arizona

Approved in 2018

### Vail Unified School District

Elementary and Secondary

Approved in 2020 & 2021

### Washington Elementary School District

Elementary & Elementary Special Education

Approved in 2021

### Lake Havasu Unified School District

Elementary and Secondary

Approved in 2022

### Deer Valley Unified School District

Mild to Moderate Disabilities Special Education

### Yuma Union High School District

Secondary Education

### Mesa Unified School District

Elementary and Early Childhood and Mild to Moderate Disabilities Special Education

### Paradise Valley Unified School District

Mild to Moderate Disabilities Special Education

having just left or still working in their field. Experts are now also defined as those with previous work experience in a relevant field or those holding a degree in a certain field – such as biology or world history – rather than just someone with a teaching degree who wants to teach biology. With the various ways of determining subject matter expertise, the State Board of Education is charged with identifying the degrees and work experience that are relevant to subject area taught in schools.

This statute expands the pool of subject matter experts available to work in local district schools and expands which degrees can qualify individuals to earn a teaching certificate. Importantly, subject matter experts do not have to wait for that piece of paper to begin using their expertise to help students learn. The Experts track allows schools to directly recruit experts in the arts, sciences, mathematics, engineering, history, and other areas and allow them to teach those subjects in their high schools while these experts accumulate the other requirements necessary for a teaching certificate.

This tool has been embraced by over 3,000 individuals seeking this pathway to get this credential and local schools are hiring these individuals with more than 2,400 new educators entering the teaching profession through the Experts' track since 2017<sup>6</sup>.

## Figure 3: Subject Matter Expert Teaching Certificates Issued in Arizona (2017-2021)

Subject	Work Experience	Teaching Experience	College Degree	Total
Biology	2	8	308	318
Math	5	9	395	409
Chemistry	3	2	96	101
Physics	1	1	60	62
Computer Science	6	0	43	49

**It is only logical that if we tie schools' hands and do not let them hire those who can become great teachers and train them to do so, we are asking them to fully staff up from an artificially limited supply of talent.**

Clearly, Arizona policymakers have set the foundation to start to allow Arizona's schools to manage their own talent pipeline. But there are still unnecessary constraints.

Arizona should give local leaders as many options as possible to hire, train and deploy prepared individuals using local training strategies that get results for students.



### SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS TRACK

The Subject Matter Experts Track addressed limitations in prior options to allow college educated workers with an expertise in a certain field to come into the classroom to teach for grades 6-12. Earlier accommodations in state law were very narrow and designed primarily for college professors rather than experts



# RECOMMENDATIONS



## one



**Legislators should expand these strategies to be easier to use; and to be available for more positions in education that have outdated and unnecessary barriers to hiring and licensure.**

These locally-initiated Grow Your Own strategies allow school leaders to recruit educated adults with the potential to be great teachers – many already working or volunteering on a school campus - and train them for that school’s specific educational model right on the local K-12 campus. In this way, future educators get real-life, hands-on training and apprentice their way to becoming a classroom teacher.

- Expanding Subject Matter Experts across all grade levels, subjects, and professional certifications.
- Expanding locally-driven preparation programs to include non-teaching and professional certifications like counselors, assistant principals, and instructional coaches.

As the world of work quickly evolves and modern workers bring a different set of expectations to the workplace, GYO strategies are more important than ever to customize school employer and school employee needs.

**Arizona’s school leaders should take advantage of these options to ensure staff is ready for their teaching-and-learning model, improve retention, improve diversity, and create local staffing models that improve interest in teaching.**

During this time of immense change in the labor supply, most industries have the freedom to hire the best candidates and train them for the job they want them to do. Public education, much less so. But Arizona is in the best position of any state to leverage GYO tools and to use those tools to attract workers who want to come into education with fewer barriers or more flexible work options.

Allowing truly local training programs for adults with college degrees without requiring them to go back for another expensive degree, or to pay for coursework irrelevant to their teaching assignment, has many benefits for schools including meeting the specific staffing needs of schools versus schools changing their local models based on who they can find to hire who is already trained.

While Arizona colleges have made some adjustments to their teacher preparation programs in recent years, and have been nationally recognized for doing so, they still fall short of meeting the need. In fact, one state university in Arizona does not even offer undergraduate degrees for secondary education thus leaving an even smaller pool of local talent for staffing high schools.

Additionally, new teachers coming out of these programs tend to go to the school systems that have agreements with the universities. This tends to put small and rural systems at a disadvantage.

The GYO pathways not only provide an additional pool from which to recruit teachers, it provides a unique pathway for preparing teachers for specific models and students.

Both of these strategies not only provide a great match for schools and their staffing needs, they reduce the amount of time it takes to prepare new teachers to have success in the classroom.



## **School leaders must take advantage of these Grow Your Own opportunities in larger numbers.**

---

**two**



Many schools still lean on a single and insufficient pipeline of students coming out of Education colleges and then voice frustration that there are not enough teachers to hire. Casting a wide net for talented and educated adults to become teachers is important when competing for talent in one of the tightest labor markets in history. Schools must help diversify the opportunity to become a teacher or shortages will remain. This includes finding additional opportunities to seed these Grow Your Own programs through philanthropic or state funding to overcome resource gaps.

While thousands of new and qualified teachers are in classrooms thanks to these tools, too few school systems are taking advantage of this opportunity to fill staffing positions through their own locally driven preparation programs. One reason may be a lack of time, confidence or resources to build such programs.

Most institution-based workforce training is very general and standardized, this includes preparation for becoming a teacher. Schools should not attempt to re-locate a university coursework model to their school campus. Most GYO models are heavy on the development of hands-on skills relevant to their staff's day-to-day teaching assignments.

Schools can, if they so choose, add additional coursework on to this model. After all, the state authority is a baseline authority that schools can customize for their own purposes. While we think adding too much postsecondary coursework on to these programs can be counterproductive and dilute the advantages of local training, schools may develop programs they and their constituencies are comfortable offering that are over the baseline required in law if they so choose.



## **Local and multi-state training programs and colleges should help schools launch Grow Your Own programs that are authentically local and not just copy-cats of burdensome existing programs.**

---

**three**



Where possible, any bureaucracy that has attached itself to these new laws should be eliminated or left to the local school systems to add at their discretion. The State and their regulatory arm at the State Board should not over manage these GYO opportunities into the type of programs that are not attracting enough teachers now. They should simply ensure that there are positive outcomes for students and staffing.

Ultimately, even with improved access to the teaching profession thru modernized preparation models, schools need a plan to leverage the extraordinarily unique labor market of the moment and have an answer to the demands for a more flexible work environment.

More workers than ever are looking for part time work or a more flexible setting. Both of these will require employers to act fast to grab these mobile workers now and to rethink their scheduling paradigms to meet increasing worker demand for flexibility<sup>7</sup>.

**In other words, with more than a third of the current workforce reported to want a new way to work, schools must come up with a new way to deploy talent<sup>8</sup>.**

New staffing models have been hard for schools to initiate under the prior seat time regulatory environment. These archaic school schedule models left over from decades ago not only made it hard for schools to customize instruction, but it also made it nearly impossible to have the flexible staffing options workers are demanding.

For the willing, that has changed. Arizona passed a sweeping seat time flexibility bill in 2021 that allows multiple approaches to how schools, classrooms, and subject matter learning can be organized and delivered. For example, whole schools no longer need to schedule every single class for every single student in cookie cutter blocks for the whole day. And allowing blended subject matter learning means schools do not have to avoid project based learning or flexible learning teams to stay compliant. The rules have changed.

While the Arizona Department of Education has yet to finalize best practices and guidance for these broad freedoms to customize instruction and rethink the traditional school day, too many leaders are waiting for them to do so. It seems that the proverbial chicken or egg scenario is in play as the agency has made it clear that they are following the lead of schools to launch this new era of innovation. This is a refreshing and timely approach.

# four

**As school leaders strategize how Arizona's new seat time modernization can be leveraged for more effective and customized teaching-and-learning models, they have a great opportunity to rethink staffing and to diversify job offerings for existing and new employees.**

---

Arizona has the country's most flexible seat time statute in the country. This allows school leaders to meet the unique needs of today's students while also meeting the expectations of a new generation of workers.





## CONCLUSION

The importance of opening new pathways to the classroom cannot be overstated. In an era where workers hold very individualized visions for their work life, the one-size fits all staffing model that worked generations ago must be rethought. Without efforts recommended in this paper, schools will continue to fall behind in their competition for talent regardless of where states land on teacher pay.



# REFERENCES

- 1 The Most Unusual Job Market in Modern American History Explained: The Washington Post, December 2021  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/12/29/job-market-2021/>
- 2 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/12/29/job-market-2021/>
- 3 <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/09/03/gen-z-and-millennial-workers-are-leading-the-latest-quitting-spree-.html>
- 4 <https://www.wjhg.com/2021/06/16/new-study-shows-millennials-gen-zers-prefer-polywork/>  
<https://www.fool.com/research/20-percent-americans-changed-careers/>
- 5 Laws 2017, Chapter 245 <https://www.azleg.gov/legtext/53leg/1R/laws/0245.pdf>
- 6 Arizona Department of Education: Subject Matter Expert Certifications by Subject and School  
<https://www.fool.com/research/20-percent-americans-changed-careers/>  
Fortune.com April 6, 2022 CEOs Want Workers Back Full Time
- 7 Fortune.com: <https://fortune.com/2021/11/12/labor-shortage-us-labor-force-workers/>
- 8 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/carolinecastrillon/2021/05/16/why-millions-of-employees-plan-to-switch-jobs-post-covid/?sh=13db0ec111e7>  
[https://www.bizjournals.com/phoenix/news/2022/02/07/workforce-arizona-opportunity-risk.html?utm\\_source=st&utm\\_medium=en&utm\\_campaign=EX&utm\\_content=ph&ana=e\\_ph\\_EX&j=26606700&senddate=2022-02-07](https://www.bizjournals.com/phoenix/news/2022/02/07/workforce-arizona-opportunity-risk.html?utm_source=st&utm_medium=en&utm_campaign=EX&utm_content=ph&ana=e_ph_EX&j=26606700&senddate=2022-02-07)  
[https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/insights/us/articles/4055\\_FoW-GenZ-entry-level-work/4055\\_FoW-GenZ-entry-level-work.pdf](https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/insights/us/articles/4055_FoW-GenZ-entry-level-work/4055_FoW-GenZ-entry-level-work.pdf)

# ARIZONA'S WAY

TEACHING AND LEADING TALENT PIPELINES



[www.AforArizona.org](http://www.AforArizona.org)

@AforArizona

