Equity in education is essential to provide students deeper learning opportunities critical to developing skills necessary in our rapidly changing economy, Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond, professor of education at Stanford University, told a group of Arizona education leaders last week. “There is increasing demand for non-routine skills – communication, analysis and thinking – while the demand for manual labor or even routine cognitive skills has gone way down,” Darling-Hammond said. “The skills that are easiest to teach and test are also the ones easiest to digitize, automate and outsource.”

Darling-Hammond is founder and faculty director of the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education. She served as executive director for the National Commission on Teaching & America’s Future from 1994 to 2001, led President Barack Obama’s education policy transition team, and started out teaching high school English classes.

Q: Will Common Core standards move us to number one?
A: There are some good things in those standards in terms of critical thinking, problem solving, mathematical practices and roles of communication, but there are also things that need to be revised. We would hope that practitioners will get their hands on the standards and make them better. Just having the standards will not make us number one. We’ve got to fund the resources, materials and high-quality teaching that can teach the standards.

We must assess learning in ways that are really true to the standards. The jury is out as to whether the next generation of assessments will take the steps necessary to truly reflect those standards. If we want the standards to help us

Continued on page 4
What is The Best of AZEdNews?

It’s been almost a year since the Arizona School Boards Association launched the Arizona Education News Service (AZEdNews) to deliver fair, balanced and accurate news focused on legislative, legal and policy issues and action related to K-12 education. We want you to know the accomplishments that AZEdNews has achieved so far!

Best regards,

Tracey Benson
DIRECTOR, ARIZONA EDUCATION NEWS SERVICE, AND ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ARIZONA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

AZEdNews original articles featured in this issue were reported and written by ASBA education reporter Lisa Irish (lirish@azsba.org).
To increase students’ academic growth, educators are working more closely with children’s first teachers – their parents.

Wenden Elementary School teachers visit each student’s home before school starts to get to know their families, build up trust, better understand students’ lives, and determine if special student services are needed in this predominantly Hispanic, high-poverty La Paz County community, said Dr. Gloria Dean, school principal and district superintendent. Schools host events to help families feel comfortable on campus and also provide resources parents can use at home to support students’ learning.

“In the past our schools have held open houses, parent-teacher conferences, and invited our families to carnivals, curriculum nights and science fairs to name a few events,” said Jessie Arroyos, principal of Coolidge Unified’s Heartland Ranch Elementary in Pinal County. “This year, we are excited to have partnered with the Arizona Department of Education and WestEd to develop Academic Parent-Teacher Teams.”

Academic Parent-Teacher Teams were developed by Dr. Maria Paredes in 2008 for use in the Creighton Elementary School in Phoenix to engage parents in their child’s learning by partnering with teachers to examine individual student’s test data, set goals for academic growth, and learn methods to use at home to boost achievement.

Why is family engagement so important? “When families feel welcome and respected, they are more involved and supportive,” said Rhonda Chavez, director of federal and state programs at Balsz Elementary School District in Phoenix. “Meaningful family engagement provides parents and caregivers with the tools they need to support their children.”

Students are more successful when they see parents and teachers working together on a common goal, Dean said. “Research shows evidence-based family engagement practices positively enhance student success in school and after graduation; positively influence student grades, attendance, social skills, and strengthens a school’s climate and reputation within the community,” said Raquel Alvara, education program and family engagement specialist at the Arizona Department of Education.

To engage families it’s important to tailor activities to the community’s strengths and needs, said Dr. Anthony J. Perkins, superintendent of Peach Springs Unified School District in Mohave County.

“At Peach Springs, we have it built into our mission, vision and goals that at minimum once a grading period we will do a big family event,” Perkins said. “We’re trying to do different things to get our community involved.”

In late September, this small, rural school in a predominantly Native American community will host an astronomy night where an NAU professor will lead a discussion, students and their families can look at stars and planets through telescopes, and then visit over dinner, Perkins said.

Wenden Elementary hosts parent nights four times a year where families learn how to help students with math and reading, Dean said. “In the spring at the last one, we do a cultural night where staff, parents and community members set up little booths to share what they enjoy with others and celebrate our cultures,” Dean said, noting she helped students decorate cupcakes, one family taught kids how to make tortillas and another showed students how to do origami.

Read the full article at www.azednews.com to find out what other strategies schools are using and why the Arizona Department of Education developed its family engagement initiative.
propel the nation to number one, we need to think about them several ways.

One, we need to make strong investments in professional development for teachers, other educators and in curriculum materials they need to teach the positive aspects of the standards well. We need to close the opportunity gap in resources among schools and districts, because some places right now cannot teach the standards because they don’t have the base on which to do it.

We need to transform the assessments. We need to have fewer tests of much higher-quality. We need to use them for information and improvement and not for punishment and sanctions. If we get those things, which is how other countries implement their national curricula, we would have a shot.

Q: Many times equity is talked about as synonymous with race and ethnicity. It’s much bigger than that. How do we change that conversation with policy makers?

A: We need to think about equity both in terms of who gets opportunities – including students who have different learning styles, learning differences, are in different geographic regions of the state along with other contexts – and also what people are getting access to.

Equity has to do with the nature of the curriculum – who’s getting access to what kind of knowledge and whether what you’re getting access to is what you need for the future. Equity doesn’t mean standardization. We need to think of equity as giving children what they need at that moment to be able to learn.

A wonderful man who teaches students with learning differences says other teachers will often say “I can’t do that for you, if I’m not doing it for her,” and he calls them on it.

Read the full interview at www.azednews.com to find out how U.S. student ranked compared to other nations in school poverty. Find out if Title I is effective and how technology is leveling the playing field in education.

Arizona legislators on the budget, education funding and standards

Originally published December 1, 2014

Arizona legislators who have served on House and Senate education committees said they will work together to solve the budget shortfall, support settling the school inflation funding lawsuit and expect more attempts this session to try to repeal Arizona’s College and Career Ready Standards.

During a mid-November panel moderated by Dennis Welch, political editor for 3TV and co-host of Politics Unplugged, the legislators said they were waiting to hear if they would continue to serve as education committee members.

The discussion was part of a legislative workshop hosted by three of Arizona’s leading public education groups – Arizona School Boards Association, Arizona Association of School Business Officials, and Arizona School Administrators.

Read the full article at www.azednews.com to find out what AZ legislators said would be the biggest issues this year at the Legislature.
Arizona’s national blue ribbon schools share secrets to their students’ success

Originally published October 7, 2014

Four Arizona schools honored as National Blue Ribbon exemplary high performing schools for their students’ test scores and graduation rate say strong community engagement is key to their success and that sharing what works with other educators is critically important. “This award is validation that the hard work and dedication of our teachers, our students and our parents is paying off,” said Lorenzo Cabrera, principal of Franklin Police and Fire High School in Phoenix Union High School District.

All the schools included the other factors that contribute to their schools’ positive learning environments and led to student achievement in their applications. “Our success is a direct result of what happens when great instruction is supported by a strong, healthy community,” said Katie Dabney, former principal of Mesquite Elementary, a district-sponsored charter in Vail School District in Pima County.

The Arizona schools are among 287 public and 50 private schools nationwide honored this year by the U.S. Department of Education for high learning standards or closing the achievement gap. “This is one of the most prestigious awards a school can attain, and I am so proud of our dedicated, talented teachers and smart, hard-working students,” said Victoria Wilber, principal of Reid Traditional School’s Valley Academy, a K-8 charter school in northwest Phoenix.

In the past 30 years, about 7,900 American schools have been honored as National Blue Ribbon Schools. Schools are nominated by the top education official in each state, Washington D.C., U.S. territories, Department of Defense Education Activity and the Bureau of Indian Education.

Read the full article at www.azednews.com to find out what these principals shared as the secret to their students’ success which include student achievement and family engagement components.
School district bonds and overrides were approved by Arizona voters in this most recent election at a higher rate than in the past five years, said Randie Stein, director of the public finance team at Stifel Nicolaus in Phoenix. Voters may recognize the state has cut education funds for the past several years, and they may also see public schools’ increased needs, Stein said. “This evidence of need and an improving economy may have come together and resulted in improved pass rate statistics in 2014,” Stein said.

Bonds and overrides are voter approved community support for schools generated by local property taxes. They are for a specific period of time and purpose. Maintenance and operations overrides are used to directly impact the classroom, typically by reducing class sizes, providing all-day kindergarten, which is no longer fully funded by the state, more teacher training and instructional materials. They often are continuations of existing overrides.

Capital outlay overrides often are used for technology, upgrading network infrastructure and buses. Bonds can be used for school construction and renovation, and many districts now use bond money for buildings repair, since the state has not provided money for building renewal since 2008.

Continued on page 10
Arizona students show growth in 2014 college board results

Originally published October 15, 2014

The number of Arizona high school students ready for college and career is above the national average, and more than twice as many Arizona students are earning college credit through Advanced Placement exams now than 10 years ago, according to The College Board’s 2014 Results.

The report combined information from the PSAT, SAT and AP exams for the first time. “We’re making strides, but we have to keep going,” said Rich Nickel, CEO of College Success Arizona, which works with community partners and colleges to increase access for students who would not be able to afford college or graduate without support.

PSAT

The percentage of Arizona minority students who took the PSAT in 2014 was higher than the national average, and Arizona sophomores who took the PSAT had the most balanced ratio of male to female participation nationwide.

The PSAT helps measure students’ college readiness and identify who needs additional instruction or more challenging work. Students who score well on the PSAT may qualify for National Merit Scholarships.

Advanced Placement

Arizona students taking Advanced Placement exams grew at a faster rate in every ethnic group than nationwide. The Advanced Placement program provides students more challenging work by letting them take college-level courses while still in high school.

SAT

The percentage of Arizona students who met the SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmark was higher than the national average, and more African-American and Hispanic students in Arizona met the benchmark than the national average.

College Graduation

Recently, the Arizona Board of Regents set a goal of having a 60 percent college graduation rate across the state, a nationally agreed-upon standard for achievement.

Read the full article at www.azednews.com to find out the how students in Arizona performed compared to the national benchmark.
Efforts over the past decade to improve Arizona’s afterschool programs have earned the state the sixth highest ranking in a national report released this month. A focus on reinforcing school-day lessons through fun and enriching learning opportunities and an increase in access to federally funded grants that support them are key contributors.

Isaac School District students in the Little Scholars after-school program build Lego robots and powered them through computer workstations. Students in Prescott Mile High Middle School’s after-school program rehearse lines and build a set for their upcoming performance of “Annie.”

After-school programs like these help kids see the relevance of what they learn in class, develop resiliency, and create the solid social and emotional foundation that academic success is built on, said Melanie McClintock, executive director of Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence.

Arizona’s after-school programs are ranked sixth in the nation, according to “America After 3 p.m.: Afterschool Programs in Demand” recently released by the Afterschool Alliance. “What sets Arizona apart is the amount of parent satisfaction in after-school programs and their understanding of the value of these programs for their kids,” McClintock said.

But access to after-school programs remains an issue statewide. Nearly twice as many Arizonans would enroll their children in an after-school program if they had access to one, according to the report. The Isaac and Prescott after-school programs are among more than 215 21st Century Community Learning Centers in Arizona that serve about 70,000 students, said Cindy Trejo, state director of the program for the Arizona Department of Education.

The centers, which provide youth programming after the school day is done, are funded through federal grants, and the Arizona program has received accolades from the U.S. Department of Education. “We have changed the culture of after-school in the past 11 years to go from ‘glorified babysitting’ to serious but fun academic intervention and enrichment,” Trejo said. “We’ve always maintained that we have a responsibility to offer both academic intervention and enrichment with a youth development focus.”

School administrators applying for the grant analyze assessment data and target students needing academic support, Trejo said. Participating
Arizona interscholastic association director talks about priorities
While many focus on high school football, the organization governing Arizona high school sports and activities since 1913 is considering a new STEM-based activity and finding ways to expand opportunities for all students. The Arizona Interscholastic Association provides a balance of academic and extracurricular activities that touch nearly 100,000 students at its 268 member public and private schools who participate in everything from volleyball to speech and debate. (Published Sept. 3, 2014)

Race, ethnicity, poverty factor into the re-segregation of Arizona’s schools
Arizona students from different racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to go to school together now than 25 years ago, according to new research by an Arizona State University professor. This increasing segregation is cause for concern, said Dr. Jeanne Powers, associate education professor at ASU’s Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College. (Published Sept. 15, 2014)

Educators, parents urge Arizona legislature to provide court-ordered funding
A year after the Arizona Supreme Court decided the Legislature did not fund schools’ inflation costs for several years as it is legally required to, educators and parents came together to urge the state to start paying the more than $300 million owed to public schools this school year. (Published Sept. 24, 2014)

Governor candidates disagree on standards, education funding
Arizona candidates for governor Doug Ducey and Fred DuVal had conflicting views on Common Core standards and the inflation funding court decision during a debate in Phoenix focused on K-12 education issues. (Published Oct. 2, 2014)

Mariachi hones Arizona students’ skills, problem solving
Second- through eighth-grade students in a small Arizona school district located just miles from the Mexican border are broadening their horizons and building skills like teamwork, responsibility and determination by learning to play and perform traditional mariachi music as part of the district’s expansive music curriculum. (Published Oct. 2, 2014)

Helios’ Vince Roig on partnerships to raise college readiness
To raise student achievement and increase the number of students going to college and completing their education, it helps to have partners in the public and private sector with a similar vision and innovative methods, said Vince Roig, founding chairman of Helios Education Foundation. (Published Oct. 14, 2014)
**Q:** What percentage of school district bonds and overrides were approved statewide in the elections earlier this week?

**A:** The pass rate for maintenance and operation overrides was 67%, for capital overrides the pass rate was 50%, and for new money Class B bond elections the pass rate was 88%.

**Q:** How have bond/override approval rates in Arizona changed much over the past five, 10 and 15 years?

**A:** In all cases, maintenance and operations overrides, capital overrides and bonds, the pass rate in 2014 is higher than the pass rate in the 2009-2013 period, but lower than the pass rate in the 2004-2008 period.

*Read the full interview at [www.azednews.com](http://www.azednews.com) to find out what factors influence voters the most and why are mail-in ballots so important.*

---

### Afterschool programs – continued

Students receive math and reading support along with a wide array of youth development and enrichment opportunities, Trejo said. “A regularly participating student can add the equivalent of 27 school days of instructional support,” Trejo said. “Students who regularly attend afterschool are more likely to volunteer answers during the school day, turn in homework and increase their engagement in school.”

*Read the full article at [www.azednews.com](http://www.azednews.com) to find out what types of afterschool activities are funded by the ADE for elementary, middle and high school students as well as standards and assessments developed by the Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence in partnership with the Valley of the Sun United Way.*

---

**Students in the Little Scholars after-school program at Isaac School District in Phoenix build robots. Photo courtesy Isaac School District.**

---

**Galileo® K-12 Online**

The CLEAR choice

Galileo® K-12 Online is comprehensive, standards-based, and research supported. The system provides an array of assessment, instruction, educator effectiveness, and reporting tools aligned to Arizona’s College and Career Ready Standards and facilitates advancements in assessments, teaching strategies, and implementation of educator effectiveness initiatives.

*contact ATI to schedule a Galileo Overview*

1.877.442.5453  ati-online.com  GalileoInfo@ati-online.com  facebook.com/AssessmentTechnologyIncorporated  townhallblog.ati-online.com
Dr. Frances Mills-Yerger on youth resiliency and leadership

School leaders seeking ways to prevent bullying should take a look at what Workshops for Youth and Families, a Scottsdale nonprofit, has been doing to help youth for the past 35 years. Workshops for Youth and Families helps children and teens develop the social and leadership skills they need to navigate their way through difficult situations, said founder Dr. Frances Mills-Yerger. (Published Oct. 22, 2014)

New Phoenix, Tucson centers use proven strategies to help dropouts graduate

What do Phoenix, Boston, Los Angeles and soon Tucson have in common? They’re cities with large numbers of young people who aren’t in school or at work that are having success with re-engagement centers that connect youth with education and careers. ReEngage Phoenix, which helps youth find ways to earn their high school diploma or GED, launched this summer at the Burton Barr Central Library in Phoenix with the help of the City of Phoenix. (Published Oct. 23, 2014)

Why music – and teachers – matter: A Q&A with one of Arizona’s top teachers

As her students prepare for the Gila Valley String Showcase later this week, Margie Looney, orchestra teacher at Willcox Middle and High Schools, said music changes students’ lives for the better. (Published Oct. 28, 2014)

Test picked to measure Arizona’s new, higher standards

Arizona teachers got the answer they had been waiting for – the name of the statewide assessment that will measure the level to which Arizona students are mastering the state’s new reading, writing and math standards and also will be used, among other things, to measure the effectiveness of their own instruction. (Published Nov. 4, 2014)

Campaign helps 14,000 high school seniors complete college applications

Winslow High School seniors will receive a little extra help applying to college again this year during the Arizona College Application Campaign, said Principal Chris Gilmore. Students took part in the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education’s pilot program last year. It was created at the request of state universities and the Arizona Board of Regents. (Published Nov. 5, 2014)

Education, workforce development lead Arizona town hall priorities

Education and workforce development topped a list of Arizona Town Hall participants’ priorities to support a strong Arizona economy. (Published Nov. 10, 2014)

Read these stories at www.azednews.com
We’re waiting to hear from you!

Promote your district and school stories throughout Arizona.

What’s Your Story?

ASBA’s Arizona Education News Service wants to promote all the great things happening in school districts throughout Arizona. Submit your stories by going to www.azednews.com and clicking on “Stories by you” under the News tab.

Connect With Us...

Lisa Irish, Education Reporter

e: lirish@azsba.org
c: 602.254.1100 or 800.238.4701

Connect With Us...

623.229.7533