



Superintendent of Public Instruction

**Please record a video to answer the following questions:**

1. Why are you running for Superintendent of Public Instruction and what are your qualifications?
2. Name an Arizona leader, either current or past, whose approach to public policy you align with. From a policy perspective, please explain why you chose this leader.
3. What is most important to Arizona's economic future and what steps would you take to meet those needs.

Videos attached to email.

**Please answer the following questions in writing:**

1. If elected, what are your top three priorities and how will you implement those?

The three most critical needs of our K-12 system are the following:

1) Teacher retention and recruitment crisis

- Established Educator Recruitment & Retention team in the Arizona Department of Education (ADE)
- Creating a new online statewide job board for school personnel
- Revamping the certification portal to expedite processes and help districts fill position openings faster
- Launched AZ Teacher Residency Program
- Elevate teacher voices through advisory councils and school visit tours

2) Mental health of our students and teachers

- Invest in mental health professionals in schools
- Provide trainings to school staff in mental health topics like suicide prevention, mental health first aid, and expanding the PAX Good Behavior Game

3) Addressing the digital divide, particularly our rural communities.

- Expanding internet access in rural communities through the Final Mile Project, which extends high-speed internet from school buildings to students' homes
- Partnering with Cox Communications to expand the Connect2Compete program, which offers affordable internet to low-income families
- Establishing the Office of Digital Teaching in Learning to support districts & educators
- Working with cities/towns and businesses to distribute laptops and hotspots

2. What is your plan with the Legislature and Governor to secure K12 funding and ensure it is a priority in the state budget?

Although my role as SPI does not have formal legislative power, I plan to meet with lawmakers individually to educate them on the importance of increasing K-12 funding. I also plan to advocate for more funding publicly. For example, by writing op-eds, letters to the editor, using my social media accounts, and using my annual State of Education speech to demand more K-12 funding.

3. Aside from teacher pay, why do you believe teachers are leaving our state and/or walking away from their contracts? What are your plans to ensure Arizona has the educators we need to support our school system?

The education field is facing many of the same challenges as other business sectors. After years of stagnant funding for districts, it's not only an issue of teacher salary, but also diminished healthcare benefits and difficulty in securing housing. Many districts have cited that they have lost potential teacher candidates when affordable housing is unavailable. When districts struggle to find a certified teacher, they resort to recruiting emergency-certified substitute teachers who have not graduated from a university preparation program. Often, teachers with less preparation and experience are the first to resign. Through partnerships with districts, ADE's Educator Recruitment & Retention team has helped to establish classroom-based preparation programs to support "grow your own" models. This model recruits from within the local community (e.g. parents or teacher aides) and trains them on-site, while receiving a salary.