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ARIZONA MEDIA INSTITUTE

Arizona Education: What the Data Tell Us

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**Arizona Media Association + Local News Foundation:
Arizona Community Collaborative Education Symposium**

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Our Mission

Bringing Arizonans together to create a stronger and brighter future for our state.

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We **listen to Arizonans** to learn what matters most, **share trusted data** about how Arizona is doing in those priority areas, **bring critical issues to public attention**, and **work with communities and leaders** to solve public problems.

Introducing the Arizona Media Institute

NEW RESOURCE TO SUPPORT ARIZONA'S MEDIA



A new initiative from Center for the Future of Arizona, built with input from media professionals



Created to meet the challenges of a fast-changing media landscape and support impactful, trusted reporting



Will offer regularly updated data, subject matter expert directories, and practical programming focused on Arizona's key issues at no cost



Launching this fall: an online hub, regular data briefs, and ongoing statewide programming to serve as support professionals across Arizona

The Arizona We Want

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Arizonans Agree on 7 Shared Public Values

1. Education
2. Health & Well-Being
3. Jobs and Economic Opportunity
4. Environment & Sustainable Future
5. Civic Engagement & Leadership
6. Immigration Reform
7. Fair, Just & Equitable Systems



Source: 2020 Gallup Arizona Survey



A CLOSER LOOK: **Education**

Shared Public Value:

A highly educated and skilled
population is good for Arizona

What's Ahead

- What Arizonans want from education
- What the current landscape looks like
- How this data can support your reporting
- Resources to go deeper



EDUCATION:

Where Arizonans Across Party Lines Consistently Agree

Strong public consensus:

- ✓ Every child deserves a high-quality education
- ✓ Close achievement gaps among student groups
- ✓ Increase enrollment and completion in post-secondary education
- ✓ Increase funding for public schools
- ✓ Focus on practical solutions that drive student success

EXAMPLES:

Actions Arizonans Consistently Support



Increase teacher pay and invest in schools



Expand access to quality Pre-K for families that want it



Improve reading instruction and early literacy



Expand dual enrollment and career training opportunities



Remove financial barriers to college and higher education

Source: CFA Public Opinion Research



EXAMPLES:

Topics That Generate Attention But Are Not Shared Priorities

- Banning books and critical race theory
- Restroom access for transgender students
- Placing caps on the ESA/voucher program

Source: CFA Public Opinion Research

Why Public Priorities Matter for Education



Education drives quality of life and
Arizona's future prosperity



Where we agree, progress is possible



Disconnects between public priorities and
outcomes fuels distrust

Arizona's Education Landscape

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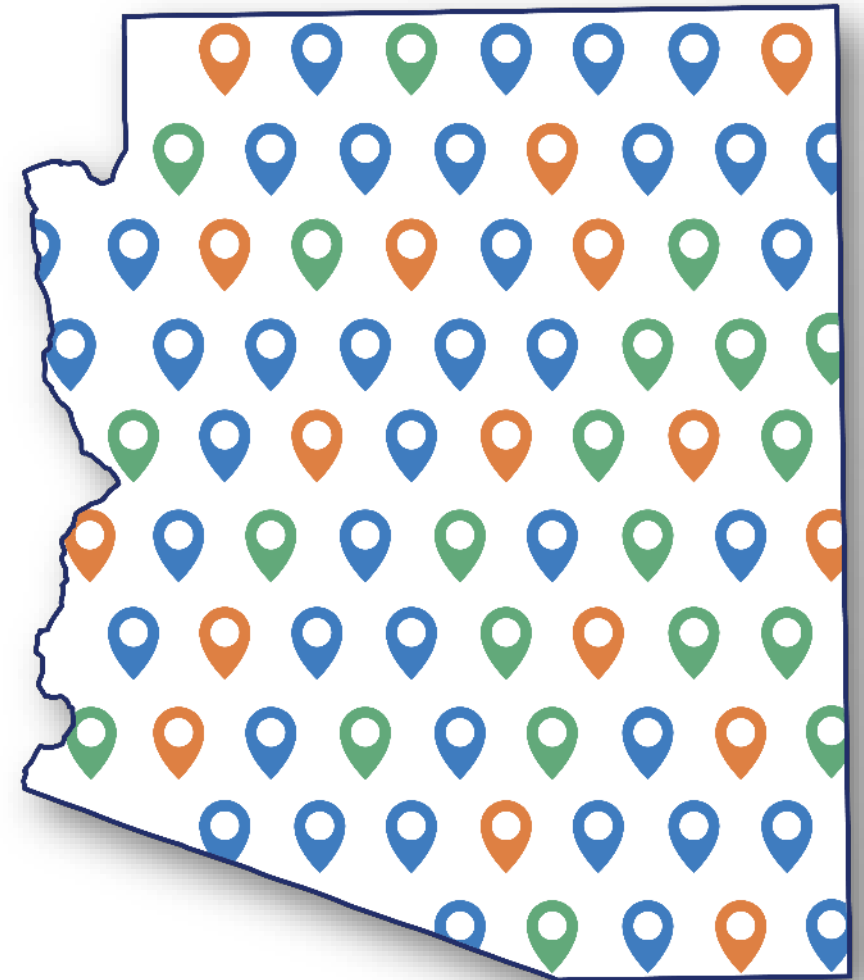


ARIZONA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM:

The Big Picture

An interconnected journey: PreK, K-12, Post-secondary

- **Pre-K/Quality Early Learning:** Education for children ages 3-4 that builds early skills for school success (public and private programs)
- **K-12:** Kindergarten through 12th grade: Arizona's public, charter, private, and home schools
- **Post-secondary:** Education after high school, including university, community college, trade, and workforce training programs





What Makes Arizona's Education Unique and Complex

- Robust school choice
- English-only instruction policies
- Innovation & alternative models (e.g., multiple ways to become a teacher, micro schools, etc.)
- Decentralized governance and decision-making

Pre-K / Early Learning Enrollment

~171,000 3-4-year-olds
in Arizona (2023 Census)

~54,000 (32%) enrolled
in quality early learning programs

Quality Early Learning Programs: Head Start, Quality First 3–5 Star, Preschool Development Grant programs, nationally accredited sites

Enrollment does not include other Pre-K programs not yet accredited as Quality Early Learning



Sources: 2023 US Census; Read On Arizona



K-12 Schools

~2,460 schools

- 61% public district
- 22% public charter
- 17% private
- <1% Career Technical Education District (CTED)

~1.3M students enrolled

- 69% public district
- 21% public charter
- 5% private
- 5% homeschool

~67,000 teachers

- 74% public district
- 17% public charter
- 9% private

Sources: Arizona Department of Education, US Department of Education. Johns Hopkins School of Education.



K-12 Schools Demographic Context

- Arizona's K-12 system serves a racially and culturally diverse student population
- Students of color have made up the majority of students for nearly two decades
- Nearly half of all public school students qualify as economically disadvantaged
- Equity gaps persist in outcomes, access, and opportunity

Source: Arizona Department of Education

Post-Secondary / Higher Education Enrollment



~630,000 students enrolled



38% Public universities

47% Community colleges

15% Private universities, colleges, career colleges, and vocational schools



Among students enrolled full-time in Arizona post-secondary institutions,
60% are state residents and **40%** are nonresidents

There's Much More to Explore

- Today's overview just scratches the surface
- Education structures are complex and vary locally
- Our team is here to help you dig deeper



**Access dashboard with detailed data,
sources, and subgroup breakdowns**



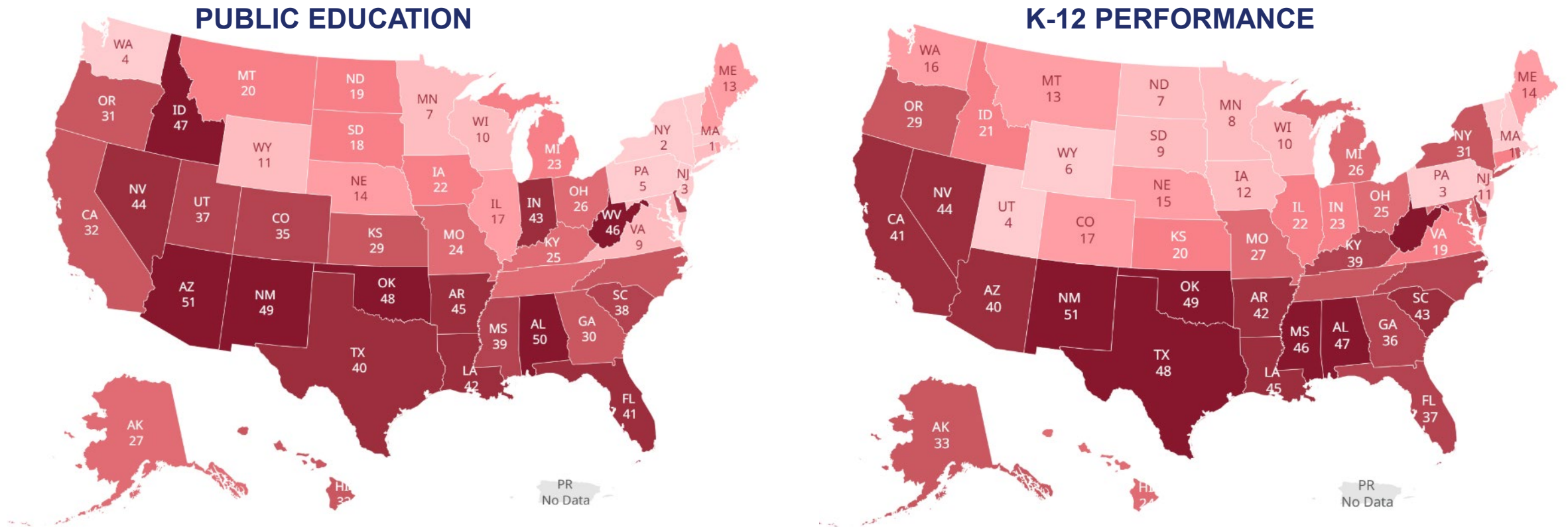
Arizona's Education Outcomes

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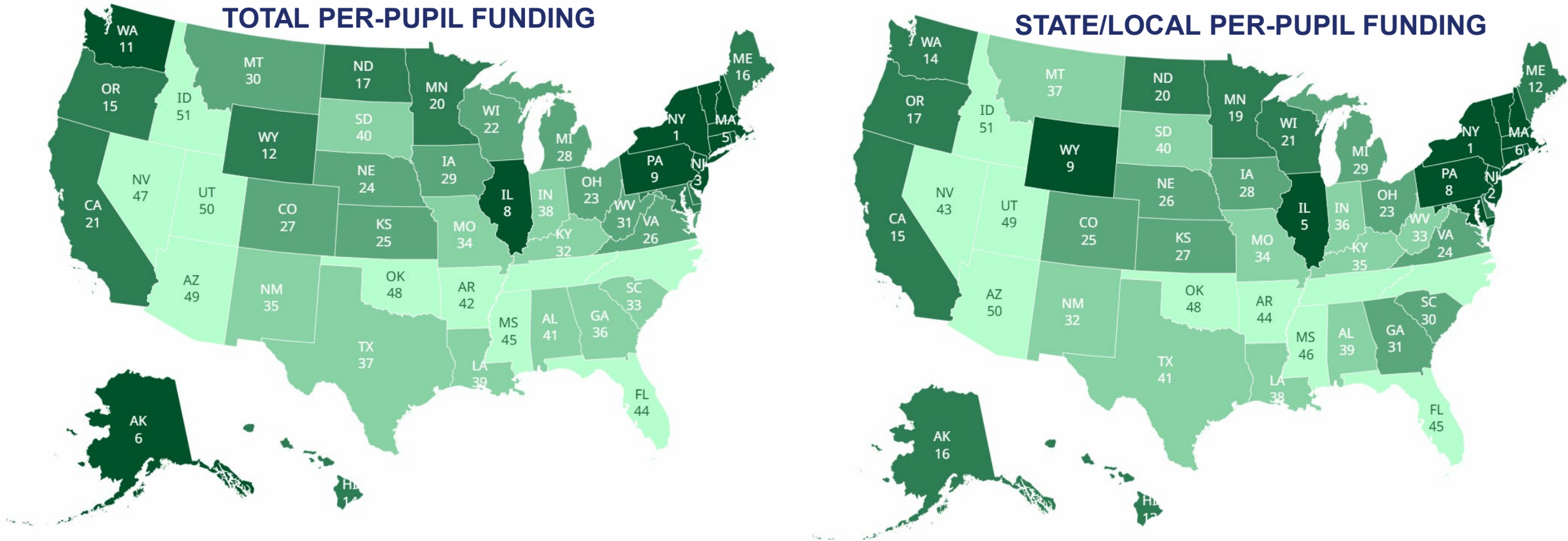
National Rankings: Quality of Education

Arizona is consistently ranked at or near the bottom nationally.



National Rankings: K-12 Education Funding

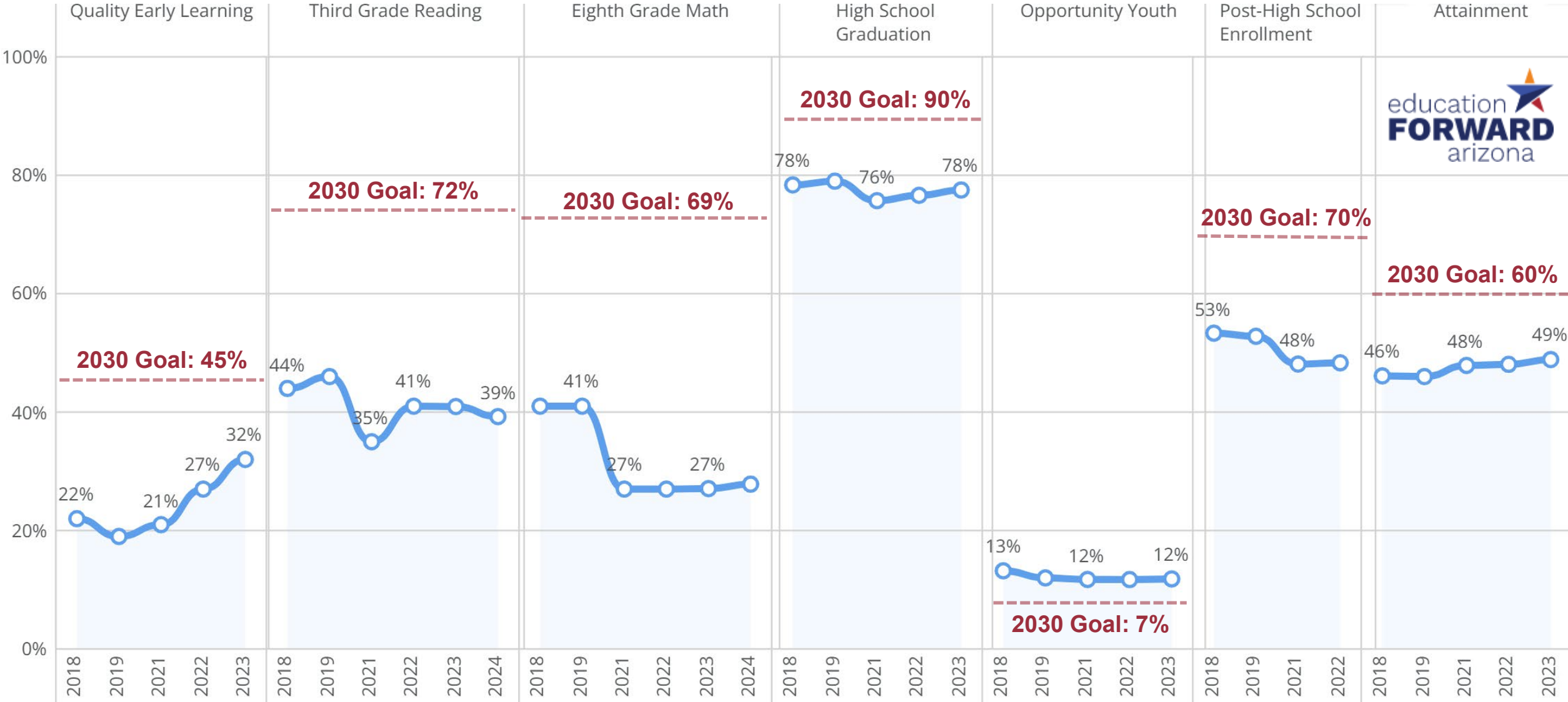
Arizona is consistently ranked at or near the bottom nationally.



Measuring Arizona's Education Outcomes



ARIZONA EDUCATION PROGRESS METER





3rd Grade Reading

Third Graders Passing State Reading Exam

Current Standing (2023): 39%



National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) Results for 4th Grade Reading

(Closest to State Level Reading measure)

At or above proficient 2024:

- 26% Arizona
- 31% National Average



8th Grade Math

Eighth Graders Passing State Math Exams

Current Standing (2024): 28%



National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) Results for 8th Grade Math

(Aligns with State Level Math measure)

At or above proficient 2024:

- 26% Arizona
- 28% National Average



Post-Secondary Enrollment and Completion

High Schoolers Enrolling in Post-Secondary Institutions Within One Year of Graduation

Current Standing (2022): 48%

2030 GOAL

70%

Working-age population with a credential or higher

Current Standing (2023): 49%

2030 GOAL

60%

Sources: Arizona Board of Regents; US Census Bureau



The Road Ahead

Strengthening Understanding, Supporting Progress

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Trusted Journalism Strengthens Democracy and Builds Stronger Communities

- Bring clarity to complex issues and build shared understanding
- Help communities see patterns and possibilities
- Hold systems accountable without prescribing solutions
- Keep the public conversation focused on what matters to Arizonans

Key Questions Help Make Sense of What Matters

- *What difference will this make for students, and which students?*
- *How does [this solution, policy, or decision] improve outcomes?*
- *Where's the evidence, short-term and long-term?*
- *How do students, parents, and teachers experience this?*

Stay Connected – We are here to support you!

- Please use CFA and the Arizona Media Institute as a resource

ArizonaMediaInstitute.org



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A wide-angle photograph of a desert landscape at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm orange and yellow glow across the sky and the distant mountains. In the foreground, several types of cacti are visible, including tall saguaros, cholla, and a large, spiky cholla. The terrain is rocky and covered with low-lying desert vegetation. The overall mood is peaceful and scenic.

Thank you.

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