



Congratulations on your candidacy for the Arizona State Legislature. Stand for Children is a non-partisan, non-profit education advocacy organization. Our mission is to ensure all Arizona students graduate from high school prepared for, and with access to, college and career opportunities. We do this by educating and empowering community members, advocating for effective policies, ensuring strong policy implementation, and supporting courageous leaders at the ballot box.

In the 2018 election cycle, Stand for Children will consider endorsing candidates aligned with our mission and current policy priorities. In the questionnaire below please provide responses indicating your position on our key focus areas. Please limit your overall responses to 6 pages.

Thank you for your willingness to share your perspectives and preferences regarding public education.

CANDIDATE INFORMATION

Candidate's Name: J.D. Mesnard

Office Sought: State Senator

Legislative District (LD): 17

Party Affiliation: Republican

E-Mail Address(es): jd@jdmesnard.com

Phone: 480-447-8244

Alternate Campaign Contact:

Campaign Website: JDMesnard.com

Education (Please note highest degree achieved): Masters in Business Admin and Masters in Public Admin

Previous Elected Office(s) Held: State Representative - District 17 (including as Speaker of the House

Current Profession: Professor/Investor/Small Business Owner/Consultant

Please describe why you are qualified for the office sought:

I have a demonstrated record of accomplishment. I have authored and/or strongly supported some of the most significant educational and economic measures. I have experience working in the public, private and non-profit sectors. I have had the unique experience of serving in leadership for four years, including two as Speaker of the House.



QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What are your top three priorities for public education in Arizona?
 - A. More resources into the classroom and to teacher pay
 - B. More educational choices, opportunities, competition and flexibility
 - C. Greater focus on teacher performance, based on student improvement and outcomes

2. What state policy change(s) do you believe could allow more Arizona children attend a quality school, be taught by an effective teacher and be provided with opportunities to succeed?

Following the above three priorities.

3. What role should the state play in holding schools accountable for student academic growth and achievement?

The state should have a major role in holding public schools accountable for student achievement, defined both in terms of growth/improvement and overall outcomes.

Currently, Stand for Children Arizona is focused on several policy areas: Early Literacy and Grade-Level Reading, English Language Instruction and School Finance. The following questions address those priorities.

Early Literacy & Grade-Level Reading

Based on the Spring 2017 statewide assessment, 56% of Arizona students cannot read on grade-level by the end of third grade, meaning only 44% of students are reading on grade-level. Scores have improved overall, but with the statewide goal of 72% of 3rd graders reading on grade-level by 2030, we have a long way to go. When looking at the data by school and region, it shows the improvement is concentrated in a small percentage of schools while many Arizona schools struggle to increase students' reading ability (see attached data sheet). Reading proficiency at this point in a student's academic career is vitally important. Research shows failure to read proficiently by the end of 3rd grade is linked to ongoing academic struggles, failure to graduate high school on time, and it dramatically reduces and creates barriers to entry into a postsecondary institution or career opportunities.

4. Would you support providing targeted funding and evidence-based programs, such as reading coaches and summer school, to improve the reading proficiency of Arizona students?

Absolutely.

5. Would you support state funding for early learning opportunities such as full-day kindergarten or quality pre-school for 3 and 4-year olds?

I am strongly supportive of early childhood literacy programs. To the extent resources are available and they are allocated towards programs that have learning standards, I am open to full-day kindergarten.

English Language Learners (ELL)

Current state policies regarding ELL students were adopted in response to a lawsuit and limited by voter-protected requirements. They have been in place for 12 years. These policies use a one-size fits all approach, unlike any other education policy. During the 2018 legislative session, Stand moved H.B. 2435 through the process. The bill allowed for flexibility at the local level while preserving voter mandates and it provided for needed transparency and accountability. HB 2435 passed unanimously out of the House and Senate Education committees. Unfortunately, the bill failed to get a final vote in the last days of the session as time ran out.

6. Would you support legislation similar to HB 2435 to change current ELL instructional requirements in order to provide local flexibility, increased accountability and transparency and more efficient use of funds?

Yes, I voted for it in 3rd Read in the 2018 session.

7. Would you sign a pledge to support similar legislation, if elected?

I avoid pledges. But I am already on record supporting the bill.

8. If not, what policies would you support to improve ELL instruction?

N/A

School Finance

Arizona's current school finance system is over 30 years old. It was designed to support local school districts funded by their taxpayers with the state providing what could not be raised locally. Since that time, Arizona's public-school system has expanded to include a myriad of choices: open enrollment, charter schools and Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESAs); many students don't attend their local community school. The current system is outdated and continues to increase reliance on state funding. State policies which continue to limit the ability to raise revenue have resulted in the chronic underfunding of public schools. Short-term solutions and targeted investments fail to address the underlying problem. Stand for Children advocates for sufficient funding for all Arizona students, regardless of where they live or what type of school they attend.

9. What would you do or support to increase public school funding to at least the national average?

I continue to believe that economic expansion, coupled with greater prioritization of budget priorities is the best way to increase education funding.

10. How do you plan to grow state revenue, establish new revenue sources and provide additional resources for education?

Please see answer to previous question.

Below, please include any additional information you believe Stand for Children should know about your priorities: