

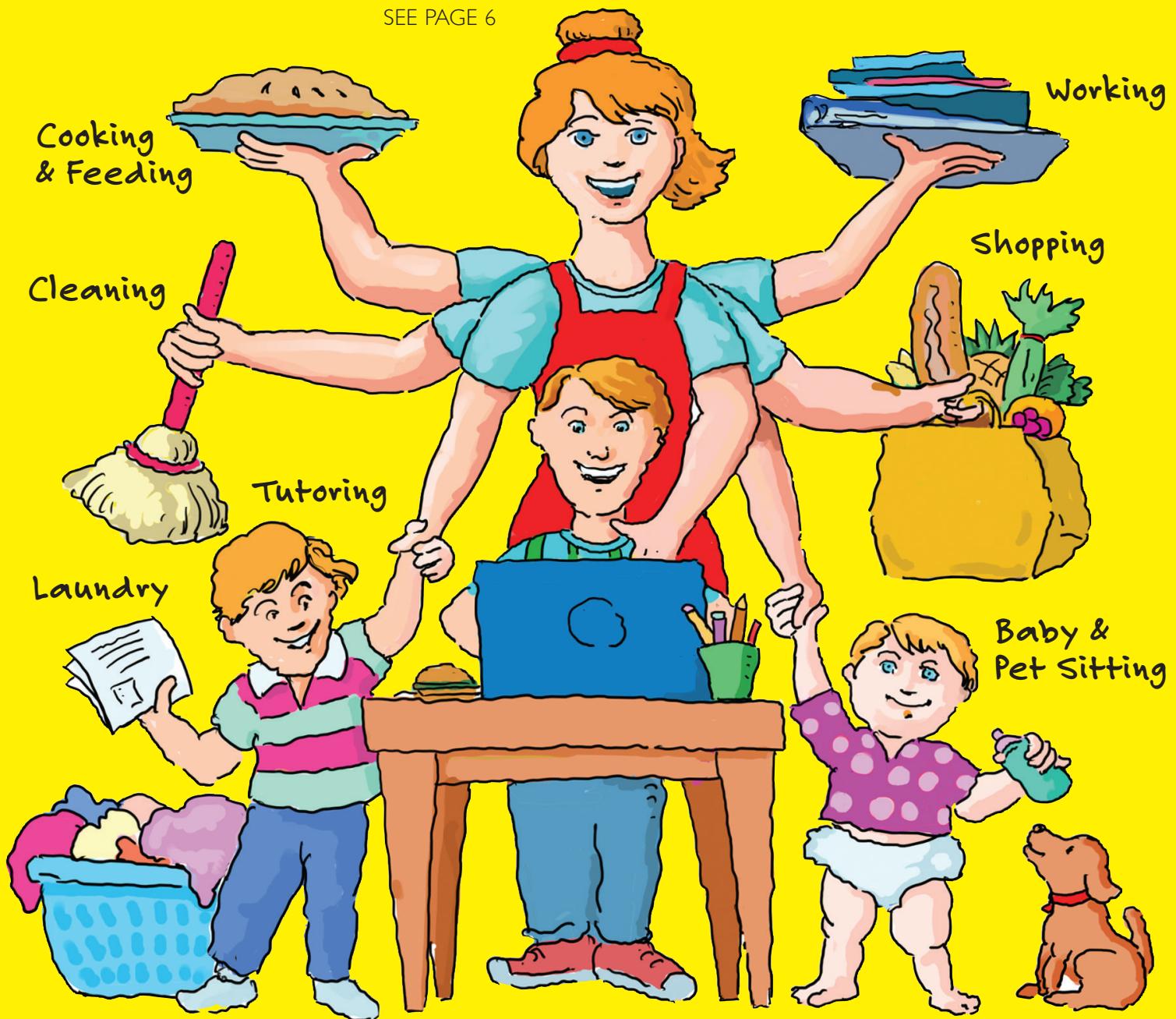
AmeriSchools Perspectives

VOLUME TWO NUMBER TWO
WINTER QUARTER 2021 ISSUE
AMERISCHOOLS ACADEMY

Parenting Through a Pandemic

We proudly salute our amazing parents who survived & thrived under unprecedented conditions

SEE PAGE 6





Dr. Reginald Barr
former president of The Arizona State Board of Education and Associate Superintendent of the State Department of Education, is the founder of Charter Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to developing charter schools throughout the State of Arizona, including AmeriSchools Academy, and co-founder of University High School, Tucson Unified School District.



Gov. Doug Ducey
is the 23rd governor of Arizona, first elected in 2014. Promoting educational excellence in Arizona is one of his top priorities. Governor Ducey is a member of the Education Commission of the States and past board member of the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools.



There is ancient wisdom which reminds us that "we make our choices and our choices then make us." As parents, entrusted with consequential responsibility, we can appreciate resources and organizations that can help us choose wisely for our children. With this in mind, AmeriSchools is proud to, once again, participate in the celebration of National School Choice Week.

Educational Choice: National, State & Local

AmeriSchools Academy, as a premier, pioneer charter school in Arizona, owes its existence to a dedication to the empowering idea of school choice. **National School Choice Week, January 24-30, 2021**, will be celebrated on a national, as well as state and local, level. **Governor Doug Ducey**, in a recent gubernatorial proclamation, has designated **Arizona School Choice Week** to coincide with the national event.

Arizona, one of the first states to establish charter schools, is still a leader in the charter school movement. As such, our state has been an enthusiastic promoter of this annual celebration from its inception in 2011. Since then, Arizona's lead has encouraged other states to join, so that in 2021 all 50 states and the District of Columbia are planning some form of commemoration of National School Choice Week. And as is common to education, this will be implemented on the local level, school by school.

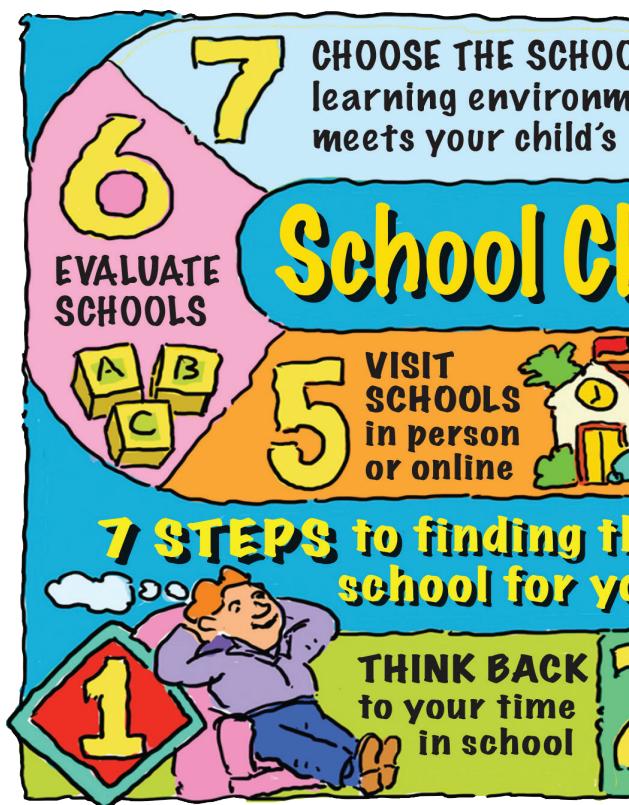
The Idea of School Choice

Milton Friedman, Nobel Prize-winning economist, is often credited with advocating for the idea of school choice beginning in the 1950's. Charter schools, the natural embodiment of

this idea, were first established in the 1990's, including AmeriSchools in 1996. National School Choice Week, begun in 2011, is led by **Andrew Campanella**, founding and current president of the National School Choice Week organization, the non-profit of the same name which sponsors the annual event.

In 2020, the ideas underlying the week-long event were transcribed and made available by Campanella, as a highly beneficial tool for parents, in the form of his latest book: *The School Choice Roadmap*.

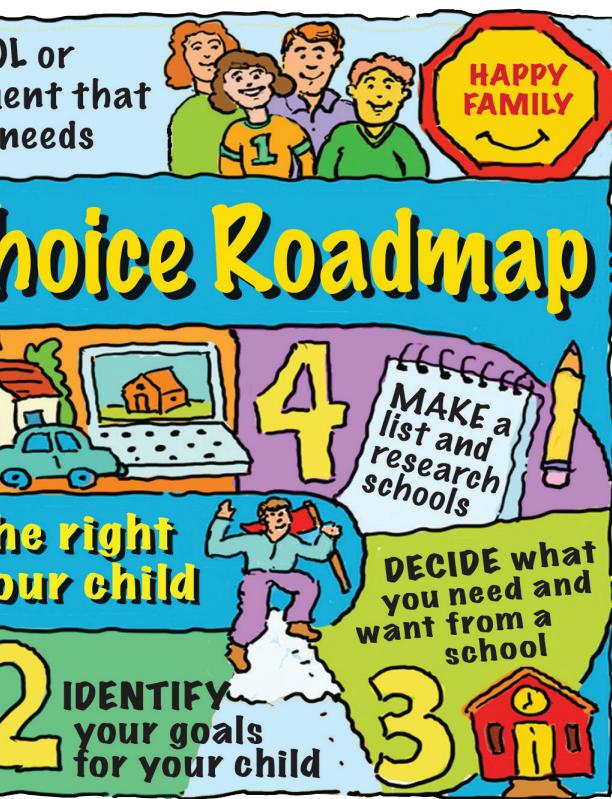
Within this book Campanella presents the results of his experience in educational delivery, policy, and advocacy. But this experience encompasses more than just academic research. He actually spent a great deal of his professional time *listening to parents and students*.



Chief Executive Officer's Notebook

A large part of this listening process was paying attention to the experiences of parents who had been fortunate enough to move their children's enrollment from a school that did not work for their child to one that did. Over several years he began to document the commonalities in the experiences of parents who discovered schools and educational programs that worked well for their children.

These were schools where the parents were not only comfortable with the academics of the school, but both the student and parent felt a sense of belonging within the greater school-family community. The process by which these families successfully upgraded their children's education, by exercising their *choice*, is laid out in the book as a seven-step process (see graphic accompanying this message).



AmeriSchools is proud to extend the promotion of National School Choice Week from the national and state levels to the local communities that we serve. Consistent with the message in *The School Choice Roadmap* and National School Choice Week, AmeriSchools' educational philosophy incorporates a major emphasis upon listening to and partnering with our parents, which is the theme of the current issue of *AmeriSchools Perspectives*.

AmeriSchools: A Destination of Choice

AmeriSchools continues to take advantage of the freedom to innovate enabled by school choice, as we provide the best possible educational experience for our students and their families. Current and future members of AmeriSchools' "extended educational family" literally "have a choice" when it comes to the education of their children. AmeriSchools continues to be appreciative of the choice our parents make by entrusting their children's education to us, and judging from their feedback, that feeling of appreciation is mutual.*

A limited number of new families will have an opportunity to exercise their school choice during AmeriSchools' upcoming enrollment period, beginning Feb. 1, 2021. (See pp. 22-23 of this issue)

*Our parents' feedback is presented in the cover story on page 6.

Reginald Barr

Dr. Reginald Barr, Chief Executive Officer,
AmeriSchools Academy



Milton Friedman

(1912-2006) was an American economist and Nobel Prize winner who proposed a system of educational vouchers that would require public, charter, and other schools to compete in a market-like setting. Friedman believed a system of vouchers would bring choice and the virtues of the free market to the K-12 educational system.



Andrew Campanella

president of National School Choice Week, has dedicated his career to helping families discover their K-12 school choice options. His book, "*The School Choice Roadmap*," offers a seven-step process that will help you harness the power of your own intuition—and your own expertise about your child's uniqueness—to help you find a school that reflects your family's goals, values, and priorities, so that you can give your children every opportunity to succeed in school and in life.



Ohio Governor signs bill expanding school choice to low-income students

Legislation to expand Ohio's school choice eligibility signed into law on Nov. 27, 2020

Recent articles from *The Wall Street Journal* and other national newspapers reported that Ohio's Senate Bill 89 will expand the state's **EdChoice Program**, which allows students to apply for vouchers for private schools if they are in low-performing schools or low-income districts. Supporters say this bill provides more opportunities for students and parents, but opponents say it diverts potential public resources away from public schools and toward private schools.

Under the bill, parents can apply for the vouchers if their students are enrolled in schools ranked in the bottom 30% according to the performance index rankings. It also expands eligibility for all students who are in districts that have 20% or more low-income students.

The legislation also increases the income-based voucher program so students are eligible if they are at 250% of the poverty level. Previous law only provided eligibility to students at 200% of the poverty level.

Performance-based EdChoice will now focus on the lowest-achieving 20% of schools. Both chambers of the Ohio legislature passed an agreed-upon version of the legislation after adopting compromise language through a conference committee.



The Year of School Choice

2020 revealed a public awakening on education

The 2020 Republican Convention focused on issues in a way that the Democratic party did not. Perhaps most striking was the impassioned—and repeated—demand for school choice. No convention had ever featured speaker after speaker who promoted choice in human and moral terms.

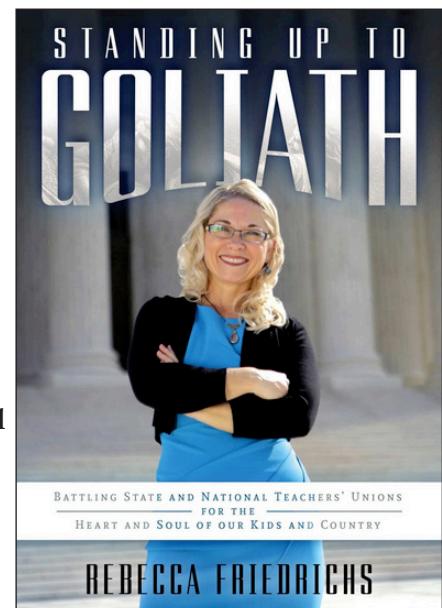
Like the virtual convention format, this owes something to COVID-19. As parents, teachers, principals and students have adapted to the pandemic, too many traditional public schools have been far less nimble in serving students than have charters, private and religious schools. Many parents are realizing this won't change as long as funding is tied to buildings and bureaucracies rather than students.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says reopening schools is itself a matter of public health because the harm to keeping children out of the classroom is "well-known and significant." The CDC adds that keeping schools closed "disproportionately harms low-income and minority children and those living with disabilities" because their parents lack the resources to switch to a private school, hire a tutor, or even sign up for after-school programs.

Rebecca Friedrich, a long-time California public school teacher, and author of *Standing Up to Goliath*, spoke of her battle with unions that force teachers to pay dues to finance causes they don't agree with. Like other speakers, she zeroed in on the human costs, noting that the teachers unions spend "hundreds of millions annually to defeat charter schools and school choice, trapping so many precious, low-income children in dangerous, corrupt and low-performing schools."

Nothing matters more to social justice than educational opportunity, and too many public schools fail to provide it.

"School choice is the real civil-rights issue of our time, and the GOP deserves credit for making it a marquee part of its 2020 agenda."



AmeriSchools Perspectives

Introducing Our 20/20 Vision for 2020

EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS CAN MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE

See inside for details on our visionary dream of a college education for every AmeriSchools child in grades 3 through 8

In February 2020, we announced our Vision for 2020 of opening and initially funding Education Savings Accounts for all students in 3rd to 8th grades. The pandemic and school closings forced us to put our plans on hold, and to address more pressing matters. We hope to accomplish that vision in 2021.

The Goldwater Institute Fights for Parents with Special Needs Children

ESAs have been a boon to children's education—that is, until government has gotten in the way. Just ask Kayla Svedin. Arizona's ESA program made it possible for her special needs daughter to attend a school where she got the individualized attention she deserves. Yet across the country, ESA programs face strident opposition from anti-school choice activists. The Goldwater Institute is standing strong on behalf of families and in defense of school choice.

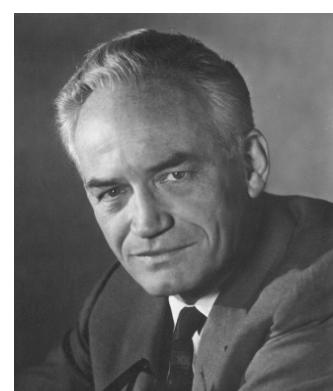
In 2019, they stopped the Arizona Department of Education from undermining a family's school choice options. Goldwater attorneys represented the Walton family, whose special needs son benefitted from ESAs and who were wrongfully asked to "repay" thousands of dollars that they spent on a language-skills computer program for their son. Thanks to their work, the Department dropped its demands. In January 2020, The Goldwater Institute filed a lawsuit on behalf of several other Arizona ESA families who are also embroiled in struggles with the state.

What is The Goldwater Institute?

The Goldwater Institute is a conservative public policy think tank located in Phoenix, Arizona, whose stated mission is "to defend and strengthen the freedom guaranteed to all Americans in the constitutions of the United States and all fifty states." The organization was established in 1988 with the support of former Senator Barry Goldwater. The Goldwater Institute is a proponent of increased educational choice through charter schools and school vouchers.

About Barry Goldwater

An American politician, businessman, and author who was a five-term Senator from Arizona and the Republican Party nominee for president of the United States in 1964. Despite his loss of the 1964 presidential election, Goldwater is the politician most often credited with having sparked the resurgence of the American conservative political movement in the 1960s.



THE GOLDWATER INSTITUTE IS WORKING TO HELP CHILDREN GET THE EDUCATION THEY DESERVE

The coronavirus upended daily life for all Americans, but the effects have been especially challenging for children, as schools across the country closed their doors. The Goldwater Institute, headquartered in Phoenix, knows that greater educational freedom can provide the options kids and families need to get through this crisis, and give them the education that best fits their needs after this outbreak.

Empowering Parents With School Choice

Education Savings Accounts—or ESAs—are one option that's helping thousands of families have choice in education. An idea pioneered at the Goldwater Institute, ESAs take a portion of what a state would spend covering the cost of a student's education in a K-12 public school and instead deposit that money into a personalized account—money that can be used to pay for tuition, tutoring, or teaching tools.

Six states currently offer ESAs to selected students, and the Goldwater Institute is leading the charge to expand ESAs across the country. In 2019, Tennessee followed Goldwater's lead when it expanded ESAs for low-income students in struggling Memphis and Nashville-area schools.

Earlier this year, they helped to pass a law in Arizona that gives families of the Navajo Nation the unequivocal right to continue their children's education at the school of their choice through the state's ESA program. And in Utah, the state adopted an ESA-style scholarship for children with special needs, just like successful programs in Arizona, Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

Parenting Through a Pandemic

We proudly salute our amazing parents who demonstrate not just surviving but thriving under unprecedented conditions



“AmeriSchools is like a big family, and you can really feel the love they have for our kids.”

— Lorena Millan, Yuma

“Every Home is a University, and the Parents are the Teachers.” – MAHATMA GANDHI



The Priorities and Promises of AmeriSchools Parents

As parents, we love, guide, discipline, and hope for the best for our children. This is not a part-time position, at least not for the first two decades. Even after our children “grow up,” they will always be *our children*, and we will always be *their parents*. Through good times and bad, it is who we are.

The just concluded year of 2020, the year of COVID-19, will be remembered differently by everyone according to its effect upon them. But it is a safe bet to assume that no one will classify it as a typical year. The crisis of the coronavirus is two-fold: (1) the direct effect of the virus upon thousands (afflicted and family members of afflicted alike), (2) the indirect effect of the virus through governmental response, and its ensuing effect upon the public. This second aspect of the crisis has been especially felt in the area of our children’s education.

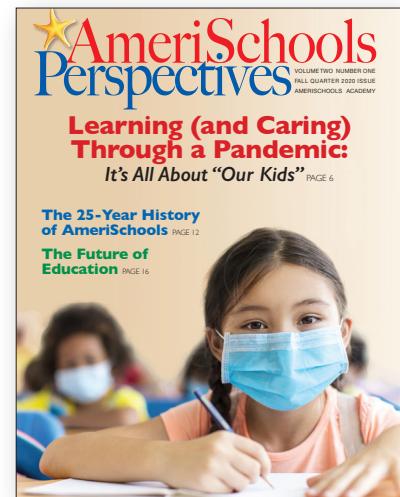
To complement our last issue’s report on the AmeriSchools response to the pandemic’s effect on education, we now present the results of a survey of our amazing parents. We gratefully acknowledge the generous contributions of our parents and their willingness to share a “slice of their lives” from this past year. This revealing and informative feedback is presented through a dual lens: (1) the *priorities* we have for our children’s education, which in turn are based upon, (2) the *promises* we make to our children (and ourselves).

Parental Priorities

Put First Things First

Numerous educational priorities were mentioned by AmeriSchools parents: safety for their children, maintaining the learning process, effective communication with the teachers and school, building social skills, maintaining support for special needs, keeping grades up, and the ability to receive support from the school when problems develop.

Data was collected through parental narrative responses—*we heard*



Pair your reading of this issue’s cover story with a re-reading (or initial reading) of our last issue’s cover story* relating how the AmeriSchools team—teachers and staff—kept the main thing the main thing throughout last year’s pandemic: focusing on “our kids.”

**AmeriSchools Perspectives*, Fall Quarter, Vol. 2, No. 1, “Learning (and Caring) Through a Pandemic: It’s All About ‘Our Kids’” Available for viewing or downloading on our website: www.AmeriSchools.org



**"With AmeriSchools,
you're getting the
'private school feeling'
without the private
school costs!"**

— Monica San Ramon, Yuma

My oldest daughter started at AmeriSchools in the 6th grade, and went from being a D student to an A student practically overnight. Before that, she couldn't even read. And then she went on to win the Principal's Award in high school. She was also the first in our family to go to college. My son started in kindergarten, and is now in 5th grade, and just loving it!

their stories as they told them. This resulted in primarily qualitative data; we have no colorful charts containing numeric comparisons to display. In one sense, responses seemed to vary—each family represents a unique combination of children with educational needs and the parental championing of those needs.

Parents representing one family in our survey were concerned with balancing their efforts between the diverse needs of multiple children during the pandemic-required virtual learning experience. Remote support from the school for their special-needs student was a primary priority for other parents. Preserving discipline and a regular daily routine for their children became a major focus for yet another family.

Without careful consideration, one could think that the pandemic crisis has generated the seeming chaos and confusion of these varied and divergent parental priorities. But upon more careful examination, for many, *the only thing that has really changed is the means of instruction*, from face-to-face to virtual or hybrid. The end goals that those means serve have not waivered.

Individual parents will always interpret their children's educational needs a bit differently, whether in the midst of a crisis or not. But if you look beneath these seemingly broad and varied parental priorities a common thread does begin to emerge. We should explore the underlying reason that parents have the priorities in the first place: the promises they have made.

Parental Promises

Not Just Made with Words, but Kept with Action

As parents, we are *promise makers* to our children:

- "I'll always be here for you."
- "I'll protect you."
- "My job is to take care of you."
- "Don't be afraid; I'm here."
- "I'm your mother/father; I may not always like what you do, but I'll always love you."

Sometimes these promises are just spoken, but sometimes they are demonstrated, with action. The AmeriSchools parents sur-



veyed are not only promise makers, but *promise keepers*. This process, keeping promises, begins with setting priorities (goals) and then following these up with action.

So, what actions have our promise keeping parents taken; actions necessitated by the expanded parental role required by the pandemic response? Here are just a few answers to that question:

- Daily planning and organizing of children's academic and non-academic schedule
- Monitoring online student's scheduling and activity
- Being a supplemental teacher/tutor for their children during home online instruction and while children are engaged in homework sessions
- Ensuring a sense of safety and security for their children in the face of uncertainty, negative news, and fearfulness
- Balancing their role as breadwinner for their family with the extra duties required to maintain their children's educational and emotional wellbeing
- Helping their children successfully utilize technology required by newly implemented modes of instruction

The actions listed above reflect the heightened sense of responsibility these parents have, related to assisting their children in a home learning environment and communicating/advocating for their children at a higher level due to the shift to online and hybrid instruction. Also, we should remember that these actions are

in addition to normal parental duties (providing parental love and guidance, food, shelter, ensuring health and safety).

While sharing their long list of action items necessitated by the past year of pandemic response, the parents surveyed were unanimous in their praise of AmeriSchools' performance throughout the entire pandemic period: how they communicated with parents, how they adapted to the online educational environment, and how they continued to demonstrate that the AmeriSchools educational experience took the form of an "extended educational family."



"We've had to deal with more difficult situations than school being online, so we're used to overcoming challenges."

— Araceli Rocha, Tucson

I have two boys, one in kindergarten, and the other in 3rd grade. We've always focused on keeping grades up, and that hasn't changed because of the pandemic. I have to explain a little bit more and play the part of the teacher, but I get great support from AmeriSchools.

"What keeps me motivated and going is my kids and knowing that we have all the support that we need from AmeriSchools."

— Susan White, Tucson

After 30 years at Raytheon, I'm currently retired and raising my four great-grandchildren (two at AmeriSchools), after raising six grand children and two daughters, and let me tell you, it doesn't get any easier! The online learning is difficult, but the kids pick it up fast, and the entire staff at the school is amazingly helpful.





What AmeriSchools Parents Can Teach Us

Passion and Perseverance

These AmeriSchools parents have shown us that when you decide to be a promise keeper and not just a promise maker to your children, you are inspired by passion. But keeping your level of *passion* consistently high with *perseverance*—a recent challenge for many—is the key to successful promise keeping.

The *Huffington Post** wrapped up the year 2020 by recommending four resolutions to adopt for the legions of parents who want to revitalize their perseverance muscle: (1) deep breathing three times per day, (2) increasing the amount of high-quality time spent with our children, (3) increasing our daily sleeping / resting time, (4) increasing the amount of daily time you spend genuinely connecting with individuals (face-to-face or virtually).

Passion and perseverance, according to University of Pennsylvania professor of psychology, Angela Duckworth,** form the foundation of *grit*, that powerful quality of the truly successful—even more important than knowledge and intelligence. Duckworth believes that *gritty* parents raise *gritty* kids, not through what is said, but through the example of who they are.

“The slice of life” generously shared by many of our AmeriSchools parents tells an important story, not of *the year that was*, but of *the people who are*. Change happens, events occur, but we do a disservice to ourselves if we focus only on the uncontrollable versus the response, action, and progress manifested by the people—parents, teachers, staff, and students—engaged in the process of our children’s education. This partnership of people, to quote many of the AmeriSchools parents surveyed, is their *educational family*.

As the ongoing pandemic demonstrates, sadness, grief, loss, and struggle are not always unavoidable. However, these challenges to the human spirit can be springboards to a rededication and refocusing of our efforts to live truly good human lives, as individuals and parents. As the results of our AmeriSchools parent survey reveal, we can overcome hardship, especially for our children’s sake. We must take inspiration from the examples shared by our amazing parents who demonstrate not just surviving but thriving under unprecedented conditions. By following their lead, we can make 2021 a year of renewed dedication to the purpose for which our families operate, for the benefit of our most valuable and precious resource: our kids. ❤️

“I’m with my daughter when she’s online, and hear what the teacher is saying, and she just loves what they do. You can tell that they just love being teachers, and that they love you. It’s not a job to them, you can just feel the passion!”

— Heather Bolin, Yuma South

My daughter is eight years old and in 2nd grade at AmeriSchools. My hope is that in the long run they end up extending the grades past 6th grade because I would just love for her to continue going to AmeriSchools. To me, there is no other school that is as good. There is no better feeling knowing that your child is safe, and that they are going to take care of your child. It’s just an awesome experience! I just love them!

*Huffington Post, “2020 Was Relentless for Parents. In 2021, It’s Time to Put Ourselves First.” huffpost.com, Catherine Pearson, 12/30/2020 05:45am EST

**Duckworth, Angela. *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*. United States: Scribner, 2016.

AmeriSchools Parenting Success Formula

PASSION + PERSEVERANCE = GRIT

Promise Making

- Focus on Your Children's Success
- Set Priorities for Their Success

Promise Keeping

- Take Regular Action Toward Their Success

TAKE ACTION!

Sustained Success

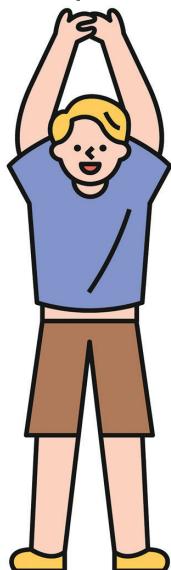
Enlist Assistance to Maintain Consistency

1. Huffington Post* Article Tips
2. Help from School

Four Steps (That You Can Control) for Maintaining Parenting Effectiveness*

1.

Deep Breathing:
3 minutes,
3 times per day



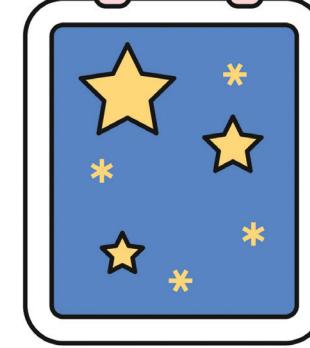
2.

Increased High-Quality Time
with Kids



3.

Increased Sleep Time



4.

Increased Connection with
Others
(Face-to-Face or Virtually)



Why I ❤️ To Parent

An interview with parent (and teacher) Moani Kanae

I was born and raised in Hawai'i. Learning was always a priority in our family growing up, along with sports. We moved to Arizona when I was in the 7th grade and I graduated High School here before attending the University of Arizona. I am currently pursuing my Masters in Reading, Language and Culture at the UofA. I am a mom to three beautiful kiddos. In my "free time" (as a single mom what is this?) you can find me reading, running, or riding my bike around our fair city.

General Questions

AmeriSchools Perspectives (AP):
How long have your children been students at AmeriSchools?

Moani: My children have been attending AmeriSchools since they were three, my oldest was in our first PreK class. So she has been with AmeriSchools for six years, my oldest son five years, and the three year old just started school in October.

AP: How many children do you have (have you had) within the AmeriSchools system?

Moani: I have three kids in the AmeriSchools system. But my niece attended AmeriSchools back in 2006-2008, and that is how I got involved with the school.

AP: What are the positives of your children's experience with AmeriSchools?

Moani: The positives of my children's experiences at AmeriSchools have been the family atmosphere and the small class sizes. Most of my kid's classmates have been with

them since kinder, a few were even in the PreK with them so they have grown up together. The teachers and staff have always been supportive of what the kids do and cheering them on.

AP: What areas could AmeriSchools improve upon related to the education of your children?

Moani: Honestly, I love what AmeriSchools does, but what I feel they could improve is the access to technology and technology classes that teach students about typing and basic computer skills in lower elementary.

Parental Philosophy and Priorities for Your Children

AP: Please describe the goals you have for your child related to their education and their future?

Moani: My goal for my children in regards to their education is that they feel successful in whatever they do. I want them to get great grades, but how they feel about their education is far more important to me. I want them to love learning and coming to school. For their future, I'd like them to attend university, but I know that's not for everyone. I want my children to know they are supported in whatever route they take in their future as long as they are contributors to society in a positive manner.

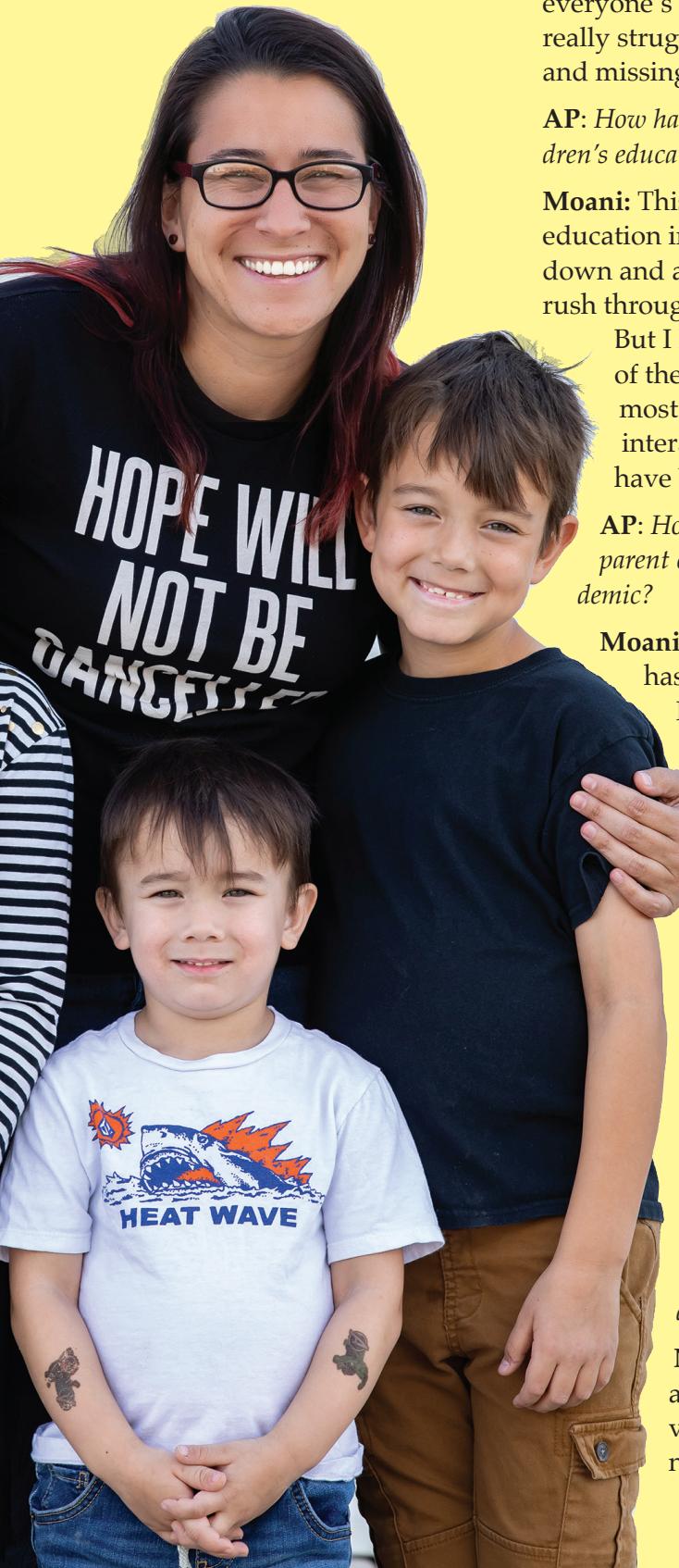
AP: How do you see your role in your children attaining these goals?

Moani: My role in helping my children attain these goals is to make sure they know how supported they are by me. We often have conversations about their future (prompted by them, not

me) and I remind them it is their choice, but whatever they choose, I will support them and help them attain their goals. For example, my daughter has wanted to be a doctor from the time she was three, so our conversations are about what type of schooling she will need and making sure she is studying hard in her math and science courses. Sometimes those conversations with my children go to "Do I need to go to college mommy?" to which I respond that they don't, but they do need to contribute to society, and that I will support them.

AP: What do you tell your children to motivate them to keep up with their school-work and other important responsibilities?





Moani: My kids have always been self-motivated in school and their responsibilities. I do tell them they don't have to be the best and they won't always get everything right, but they always need to try their best so they can be proud of themselves in the end.

Pandemic Challenges

AP: *What specific challenges has your family faced due to the pandemic?*

Moani: Our biggest challenge was juggling my teaching with helping to facilitate their education when we are at home, along with a three year old who wants to be in everyone's meeting. The older two really struggled with feeling lonely and missing their friends.

AP: *How has this affected your children's education?*

Moani: This has affected their education in that they have slowed down and aren't always trying to rush through everything they do.

But I know the social aspect of their education is the one most affected as a lot of their interactions with classmates have been online.

AP: *How has your role as a parent changed during the pandemic?*

Moani: My role as a parent hasn't changed much as

I have always been one of their teachers. It has made me appreciate the lower elementary teachers and their patience a whole lot more. I have really enjoyed seeing first hand the learning and ah-ha moments with my kids and their joy for their learning.

AP: *How have your children's attitudes and educational performance been affected by the pandemic?*

Moani: They have always been self-motivated, but in the beginning of online learning

it took a toll on them because they are very social kids and love being with their friends and school community. It was very sad to hear my kids, who have always loved school, cry about how they don't like school anymore because it isn't as fun as being in person. It has forced them to be more aware of their schedules as I am also teaching during this time. They have gotten on meetings on their own and really taken ownership of their learning day to day.

AP: *What specific strategies have you used to help your children during this period?*

Moani: Back in March it was not pretty, they were both in my room with lap desks, all three of us working in the same space. It made it difficult on all three of us. Since then, I have set up their own learning stations in their rooms and we go over their schedules each morning, and I am often popping in their rooms checking on their progress with assignments. I do put their mental health first. If they are not having a good mental health day because of how taxing this all is on them, I let their teachers know and they get to just play. It has really helped to keep them doing well in school.

AP: *What have you learned about your role as a parent and/or about your children after having experienced the past year?*

Moani: I have learned how resilient kids are. This global pandemic was thrown at them and in an instant their educational journeys changed so drastically, but they have risen to the occasion and pushed through. It hasn't always been rainbows and butterflies, but they have learned so much about themselves and what they are capable of. ❤️

A Principal-ed Leader

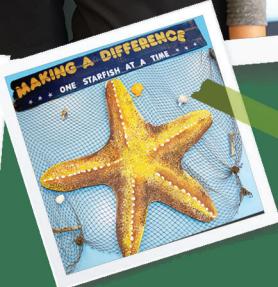
From Parent to Volunteer to Teacher to Principal



Linda, with her son, "Coach Joe"

Principal Linda McCormack's AmeriSchools Academy Timeline

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 2001-2006 | Long-Term Substitute
Began attending college part-time |
| 2006-2010 | Special Education Aide
Full-Time college student as a single parent with two sons; had a great support system with Mrs. Bermudez, Dr. Reginald Barr, Carol Towner, and mother and father |
| 2010-2011 | Student Teacher at AmeriSchools
Completed bachelor's degree in elementary education |
| 2011-2014 | Fourth-Level Teacher
Completed first master's degree |
| 2014-2016 | Fourth-Level Teacher and Special Education Instructor
Completed second master's degree in 2016; encouraged by parents and staff to apply for the newly-available principal position at Yuma North |
| 2016-2018 | Principal of Yuma North |
| 2018-Present | Principal of both Yuma North and South |



A Profile of Linda McCormack, AmeriSchools Academy Principal, Yuma North & South

As the saying goes, "leaders aren't born, they're made." But where does the "raw material," the future leader, come from? In the case of Linda McCormack, the Principal of AmeriSchools Yuma North and South campuses, she was "hiding in plain sight," as a parent of two AmeriSchools students.

Ms. McCormack's story is one example of what a parent can do—not just for their own children, but for a much larger group of children, and families—given the right circumstances, internal motivation, and effort. We will briefly examine her AmeriSchools career through the principles of (1) motivation (of self and others), (2) overcoming challenges, and (3) gratitude.

After a Short Time, She Was Hooked

In 2001 Ms. McCormack was a parent and volunteer at AmeriSchools when the Yuma North principal, Dea Bermudez, offered her a job as a long-term substitute teacher for a K-1 class. The experience of watching the students learn and grow, academically and emotionally, was so rewarding that, after a short time, she was hooked.

McCormack was able to remain with the same group of students for the next few years as they moved up through the grade levels. Described by Ms. McCormack as "a life-changing event," this experience enriched and rewarded her beyond her imagination. When you invest, not just effort, but a part of yourself into a noble cause, motivation is never lacking.

After more than a decade, she is still in contact with many of the students and parents from that first class.

Transferring Motivation to Students

The first principle of effective teaching, according to Principal McCormack, is to understand that everyone learns in a different manner and at a different pace. Instruction needs to be molded to reach all the students by keeping them engaged and learning.

Another key is to make the learning experience fun, as well as challenging. Ms. McCormack strongly believes that the most important principle is for students to know that the teacher genuinely cares about them and wants them to succeed.

Recent Pandemic Challenges

The biggest challenge during the pandemic, relates McCormack, has been ensuring that our students and families have everything they need to be safe, continue learning, and maintain emotional security. Meeting this challenge for AmeriSchools families included providing a broad array of equipment and support ranging from computers to toilet paper. Principal McCormack reports that the initial remote and now remote/in-class learning has been a challenge for the teachers, parents, and students, but AmeriSchools has managed to continue providing high levels of academic and instructional support.

Under her direction, Yuma staff have made the best out of a challenging situation. This included learning to use new technology and new ways to engage the students in a virtual learning environment.

A Gratifying Career

Principal McCormack believes the most gratifying aspect of her work with AmeriSchools to be the

impact the school has on families and students. Building the character, confidence, and compassion of young men and women, as well as providing them with a solid base of learning for the next levels of their education, provides immeasurable rewards to staff and student alike. As an example, many of the students and parents return to the school, years after leaving, just to visit or sometimes get help with academics or other challenging situations that they find themselves in. This strongly suggests that the ultimate principle may just be the valuable, ongoing relationships forged between McCormack and her team, and the students and families they have the privilege to serve. ❤️

Brief Biography:

Linda McCormack was born in New York and lived in Florida and Rhode Island before settling in Yuma, Arizona. Her two sons attended AmeriSchools, with her youngest, Coach Joe, still a member of the AmeriSchools family. She has a grandson and will soon have a granddaughter. Her family is also blessed with two dogs, Allie and Bruno. When she is not busy leading the Yuma campuses, she enjoys community plays, the Yuma Orchestra, reading, and jigsaw puzzles. A love of horses also fuels Ms. McCormack's volunteering at Saddles of Joy, a therapeutic riding program.

Favorite Quotes:

"Ask 'How will they learn best?' not 'Can they learn?'"

— JAIME ESCALANTE

"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn."

— BEN FRANKLIN



The Future of Education

*Will Augmented Reality and
Virtual Reality be the next leap forward?*

PART TWO OF A SERIES



It doesn't take a Ph.D. in education to understand that schooling may never again be quite what it was. There's no doubt that the future of education will be transformed—but how exactly?



In our last issue we discussed the great challenges and changes that the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic would likely bring about in education. It's probable that schooling will change significantly in the long-term.

We outlined the roles that Artificial Intelligence and Robotics could possibly play in the immediate future, and gave a few examples of what is currently being tested in classrooms and laboratories around the world. In this issue we explore two more areas that show potential for use in classrooms and other training centers: Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality.

The COVID-19 pandemic has upended school systems around the world. The pace has been frenetic as systems have had to implement remote learning overnight, plan whether and how to reopen schools amid changing epidemiological circumstances, and support students academically and emotionally. The scope of the challenge has thus far left little time for deeper reflection.

Yet crises often create an opportunity for broader change, and as education systems begin to make decisions about investments for the new school year, it's important to step back and consider the longer-term imperative to create a better system for every child beyond the pandemic.

While we mustn't lose sight of what we have learned through decades of research and education reform, the COVID-19 pandemic is driving educators to accelerate new models of learning and innovate beyond the classroom. Lockdowns forced students around the world to learn from home, resulting in a dramatic increase in the use of online tools, such as videoconferencing, learning-management platforms, and assessment tools.

Augmented Reality (AR) *Potential to advance student engagement*

AR is an interactive experience of a real-world environment where the objects that reside in the real world are enhanced by computer-generated perceptual information. The primary value of augmented reality is the manner in which components of the digital world blend into a person's perception of the real world, not as a simple display of data, but through the integration of immersive sensations, which are perceived as natural parts of an environment.

Victoria S. of RubyGarage, says, "Using augmented reality in the classroom can turn an ordinary class into an engaging experience. AR technology provides virtual examples and adds gaming elements to support textbook materials. As a result, classes become more interactive. AR helps students better remember the information they've just learned. Let's review a few examples of augmented reality in classroom education.

HISTORY AND SCIENCE. Google Expeditions provides AR tours that let teachers use augmented reality in education. With AR technology and mobile devices, users can bring 3D objects into the classroom, then walk around and explore them. These can be tornados, volcanos, or even DNA. Google Expeditions covers various subjects and offers more than 100 AR Expeditions through the circulatory system, history of technology, and the moon landing.

CHEMISTRY. Elements 4D uses AR to make chemistry more fun and engaging. First, users need to make paper cubes from special element blocks. Then, they just need to place the cubes in front of their device's camera to see representations of chemical elements, their names, and their



"Using augmented reality in the classroom can turn an ordinary class into an engaging experience."





VIRTUAL REALITY

“Community as Laboratory,” a unique AmeriSchools field trip program, can now be reinstated as a Virtual Reality experience!

The Grand Canyon, Catalina Island, and BioSphere 2, were favorite destinations for AmeriSchools students on “Community as Laboratory” field trips.



atomic weights. To explore elements, students can bring together two cubes to find out if elements react and to see the chemical reaction.

PALEONTOLOGY. Dinosaur 4D+ is an AR app and a set of flashcards. Users can scan flashcards to see 3D dinosaurs. With Dinosaur 4D+, students can see dinosaurs in action, rotate them, and zoom in and out. The app also gives some information about each dinosaur.”

“A famous Chinese proverb says: ‘Tell me and I forget. Show me and I remember. Involve me and I understand.’ Practice by doing is considered one of the most effective methods of learning, as it moves information from short-term to long-term memory. Augmented reality can help make classes more interactive and allow learners to focus more on practice instead of just theory. As AR adds virtual objects to the real world, it lets students train skills using physical devices. So instead of just reading books or listening to lectures, students and trainees can actually start practicing with the help of headsets and goggles. This increases engagement and improves the learning experience.”

Virtual Reality (VR)

Students can experience the world without leaving the room

Virtual Reality is defined as a computer-generated simulation in which a person can interact within an artificial three-dimensional environment using special electronic devices, such as special goggles with a screen or gloves fitted with sensors.

In the real world of education, VR can bring subject matter to life with virtual experiences, from traveling to distant lands, to taking a look inside a human brain to learn chemistry.

In an article by Nick Babich of Adobe, he shares that in the era of digital devices, we have an opportunity to enable better learning with technology, and that VR seems to be the natural next step for the evolution of education.

He points out that VR can increase fact retention. “Teaching methods are focused on providing facts; however, having access to and consuming a lot of information isn’t learning. Being informed isn’t the same as being educated.”

Nick adds that VR can help people who have difficulties comprehending information.

“Too much information received in a short period of time can easily overwhelm students. As a result, they become bored, disengaged, and usually not sure why they are learning about a topic in the first place.”

“Virtual reality can be used to enhance student learning and engagement. VR education can transform the way educational content is delivered; it works on the premise of creating a virtual world—real or imagined—and allows users not only to see it but also interact with it. Being immersed in what you’re learning motivates you to fully understand it. It’ll require less cognitive load to process the information,” says Nick.

“When students read about something, they often want to experience it. With VR, they aren’t limited to word descriptions or book illustrations; they can explore the topic and see how things are put together.

Thanks to the feeling of presence VR provides, students can learn about a subject by living it. It's easy to forget that VR experiences aren't real—a body actually believes it's in a new place. This feeling engages the mind in a way that is remarkable."

"Virtual reality in education is on the horizon, and without a doubt, it'll change the world as we know it. Twenty-first century classrooms will be technologically advanced places of learning, with VR technology significantly increasing students' engagement and learning. VR experiences will inspire a whole new generation of young and bright students, ready to innovate and change the world.

At the same time, the next big thing in education no longer relies on technology, but rather on a teacher's decision to push forward and adopt these technologies inside the classroom. The global goal should be to make knowledge available, accessible, and affordable for everyone on the planet."

Peter H. Diamandis and Steven Kotler's book, *The Future is Faster Than You Think*, provides compelling content regarding converging technologies such as VR.

The authors take us into the future, into a history class in 2030. This week's lesson: Ancient Egypt with the pharaohs, the queens, the tombs—the full Tut.

Sure, you'd love to see the pyramids in person. But the cost of airfare? Hotel rooms for the entire class? Taking two weeks off from school for the trip? None of these things are feasible. Yet, even if you could go, you couldn't go. Many of Egypt's tombs are closed for repairs, and definitely off-limits to a group of teenagers. Not to worry, VR solves these problems.

The classroom full of kids have HTC Vive VR headsets. Because High Fidelity is a social platform, meaning multiple people can share the same virtual space at the same time, the entire class was able to explore that tomb together. In total, for their fully immersive field trip to Egypt: zero travel time, zero travel expense.

This was a rich learning experience for the kids who took the trip. Research shows

that multi-sensory learning trumps other forms—even if we do that learning in VR. This means the technology allows us to create an infinite variety of immersive, high-quality teaching environments.

Now what?

Artificial Intelligence, Augmented Reality, Robotics and Virtual Reality are just some examples of technologies that could forever be part of the reimagining of what education will be like in the future, and represent just a glimpse of the possibilities.

Innovative technologies in education are growing, and the capabilities, they can ultimately provide to students are endless. As they continue to move forward, schooling could potentially benefit from the opportunities provided by these advancements. It's important to keep in mind, however, that no matter how the future of education evolves, new technologies won't replace outstanding educators. **As many will attest, a single teacher can change a student's path in life.** ❤️

"No matter how the future of education evolves, new technologies won't replace outstanding teachers."



Using Virtual Reality, exploring the entire world outside our classrooms is now a reality.



The book, "The Future is Faster Than You Think," provides compelling content regarding converging technologies such as VR.

Don't miss PART THREE of this exciting series coming in the Spring 2021 Issue of AmeriSchools Perspectives

Financial Literacy for Kids



By Ken Osborn and Joshua Osborn. A father and son Investment Advisor duo based in Southern California. Ken has been in the industry for over thirty years, and his son has been his mentee for the last three years. Ken instilled the wisdom of sound financial management in his son from a young age, helping him to develop smart monetary practices in his young adult years. The two of them work side by side in the stock market, analyzing companies to help suggest the proper entities for investment with their clients.

If you are like most parents in America, the thought of helping your child grow financially is one of great importance. However, many adults are not sure when to start teaching their children about money. I would say the sooner the better! It is common knowledge that kids are better at learning and retaining information the younger they are. It is for this reason that teaching a child the importance of earning, saving, and spending is paramount in their developmental years. Lessons learned in as early as kindergarten can be fundamental skills that can be honed over a lifetime.

Another tried and true method of teaching a child the value of money is to offer them an allowance. A beneficial twist, to this method, is to make a 'chore checklist' that must be accomplished every week for them to redeem their allowance. This will help the child in the long run to recognize the basics of wages and how work equals pay. At the end of the week, if they have done their chores, reward your child with a trip to their favorite store, allowing them to do the shopping. If they spot a toy they cannot quite afford, use that moment to teach them the importance of saving, and as they grow, increase the amount you encourage them to save. Over the years, your child will quickly develop a keen sense for money management and develop a strong will in controlling their finances. Many adults today struggle with impulse buying. With beneficial money practices from a young age, your child will be better equipped to curb these impulses, setting them up for a more stable financial future.

There is no better time to start helping your child prepare to handle their finances and master the basics of money management. With just a little effort, a little patience, and a lot of love, you can ensure your child grows to recognize the importance of earning, saving, and spending. ★

Investment Advisory Services offered through Cornerstone Securities, LLC. Streetwise Investments and Cornerstone Securities, LLC are separate and unrelated companies.

1. Concept of 'Earning'



Give your children a weekly allowance as pocket money. A fixed amount of money on a regular basis will teach them to manage the limited amount carefully. Ask them to do chores in exchange, thereby teaching the value of earning.

2. Concept of 'Saving'

Make an occasional trip to the bank with your children and talk to them about what a bank does. Give them a savings jar or a piggy bank to practice saving. Offer them a small amount of money at the end of each month. This could be an introduction to the concept of investing and the return one earns from investing.



3. Concept of 'Spending'



Allow your children to spend a percentage of their allowance. Encourage them to contribute some money for the family treat; for example, ice cream or chocolates after dinner. They can even buy their own toys.

4. Concept of 'Sharing'

Inspire your children to save a portion of their pocket money and donate it to a charity. For example, they could use the money to buy a clothing item or food for a person in need. That way they will learn to be considerate and empathetic.



AmeriSchools Perspectivas en español

Estimados padres de AmeriSchools,

Hay sabiduría antigua que nos recuerda que “tomamos nuestras decisiones y nuestras decisiones luego nos hacen”. Como padres, a los que se les ha confiado la consiguiente responsabilidad, podemos apreciar los recursos y las organizaciones que pueden ayudarnos a elegir sabiamente para nuestros hijos. Con esto en mente, AmeriSchools se enorgullece de, una vez más, participar en la celebración de la Semana Nacional de elección escolar.

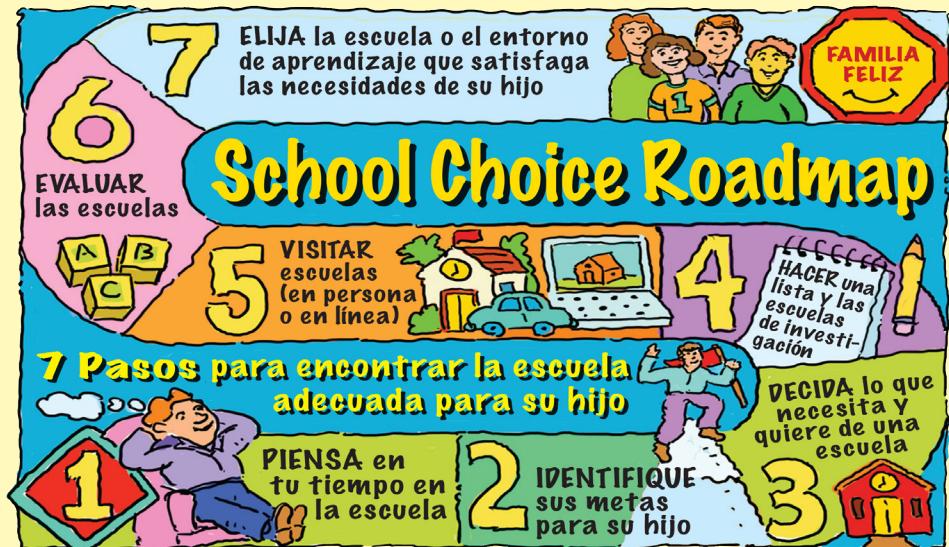
Opción Educativa: Nacional, Estado & Local

AmeriSchools Academy, como una escuela charter pionera en Arizona, debe su existencia a una dedicación a la idea empoderadora de la elección escolar. La Semana Nacional de Elección Escolar, del 24 al 30 de enero de 2021, se celebrará a nivel nacional, así como estatal y local. El gobernador Doug Ducey, en una reciente proclamación para gobernador, ha designado la Arizona School Choice Week para coincidir con el evento nacional.

Arizona, uno de los primeros estados en establecer escuelas chárter, sigue siendo un líder en el movimiento de escuelas chárter. Como tal, nuestro estado ha sido un entusiasta promotor de esta celebración anual desde su creación en 2011. Desde entonces, el líder de Arizona ha alentado a otros estados a unirse, de modo que en 2021 los 50 estados y el Distrito de Columbia están planeando algún tipo de conmemoración de la Semana Nacional de Elección Escolar. Y como es común a la educación, esto se implementará a nivel local, escuela por escuela.

La idea de la elección escolar

Milton Friedman, economista ganador del Premio Nobel, a menudo se le atribuye la defensa de la idea de la elección de la escuela a partir de la década de 1950. Las escuelas chárter, la encarnación natural de esta idea, se establecieron por primera vez en la década de 1990, incluyendo AmeriSchools en 1996. La Semana Nacional de Elección Escolar, iniciada en 2011, está dirigida por Andrew Campanella, fundador y actual Presidente de la



Organización Nacional de la Semana Elección Escolar, la organización sin fines de lucro del mismo nombre que patrocina el evento anual.

En 2020, Campanella transcribió y puso a disposición las ideas subyacentes al evento de una semana de duración, como una herramienta muy beneficiosa para los padres, en la forma de su último libro: *The School Choice Roadmap*.

Dentro de este libro Campanella presenta los resultados de su experiencia en la entrega educativa, la política y la promoción. Pero esta experiencia abarca algo más que la investigación académica. De hecho, pasó gran parte de su tiempo profesional escuchando a padres y estudiantes.

Una gran parte de este proceso de escucha fue prestar atención a las experiencias de los padres que habían tenido la suerte de trasladar la inscripción de sus hijos de una escuela que no trabajaba para su hijo a una que lo hizo. A lo largo de varios años comenzó a documentar los puntos en común en las experiencias de aquellos padres lo suficientemente afortunados como para descubrir escuelas y programas educativos que funcionaban para sus hijos.

Estas eran escuelas donde los padres no sólo se sentían cómodos con los académicos de la escuela, sino que tanto el estudiante como los padres sentían un sentido de pertenencia dentro de la comunidad mayor escuela-familia. El proceso mediante el cual estas familias mejoraron con éxito la

educación de sus hijos, mediante el ejercicio de su elección se establece en el libro como un proceso de siete pasos (véase el gráfico que acompaña a este mensaje).

AmeriSchools se enorgullece de extender la promoción de la Semana Nacional de Elección Escolar de los niveles nacional y estatal a las comunidades locales a las que servimos. De acuerdo con el mensaje de La hoja de ruta de la elección escolar y la Semana Nacional de Elección Escolar, la filosofía educativa de AmeriSchools incorpora un énfasis importante en escuchar y asociarse con nuestros padres, que es el tema del número actual de Perspectivas de AmeriSchools.

AmeriSchools: Un destino de elección

AmeriSchools continúa aprovechando la libertad de innovar habilitado por la elección escolar, ya que proporcionamos la mejor experiencia educativa posible para nuestros estudiantes y sus familias. Los miembros actuales y futuros de la “familia educativa extendida” de AmeriSchools literalmente “tienen una opción” cuando se trata de la educación de sus hijos. AmeriSchools sigue apreciando la elección que nuestros padres hacen encomendándonos la educación de sus hijos, y a juzgar por sus comentarios, ese sentimiento de aprecio es mutuo.

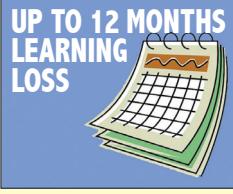
Dr. Reginald E. Barr,
CEO, AmeriSchools Academy

Has Your Child Fallen Behind During the Pandemic?

Studies show school shutdowns caused by the virus could hurt our kids for a lifetime

Studies now show that extended educational shutdowns, like those imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, are detrimental to students. The effects are not just temporary, but on a long-term basis. The quality of education provided by typical online programs falls far short of what is delivered in the classroom. Key study findings, including from the McKinsey Institute, demonstrate the detrimental effects of online versus classroom instruction.

The Impact of School Closures

Low-Income & Minority Students	Future Economic Loss
 <p>Regularly logging into online instruction: 60% of low-income students vs. 90% of high-income students*</p>	 <p>Average lifetime earnings loss for K-12 students = \$61,000 to \$82,000*</p>
 <p>Average learning loss=7 months Black students=10.3 months Hispanic students=9.2 months Low-income students=12 months*</p>	 <p>National annual earnings loss = \$110 billion (\$98.8 billion from loss of learning and \$11.2 billion from increased highschool dropouts)*</p>
 <p>Existing achievement gaps increased by 15% to 20%, resulting in increased dropout rates*</p>	 <p>Negative effects on USA: a less-skilled, less-productive generation; declining health, increased crime, and decreased political participation*</p>

* © 2020 McKinsey & Company

A Call to Action = A Call to AmeriSchools

These are the facts:

- In 2021, due to COVID-19, many students may need to use online learning for a period of time
- When online learning is required, only the best programs can minimize long term risks to students
- High quality online instruction does exist
- Parental action, on behalf of your child, is preferable to inaction

If online education is required for your child, wouldn't it make sense to contact AmeriSchools to see how our highly-rated online programs could benefit your child?

Don't take our word for it, see the cover story on page 6 and read what our parents (and students) have experienced

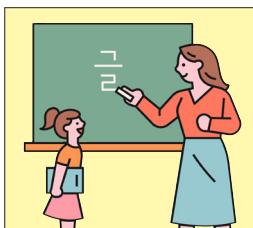
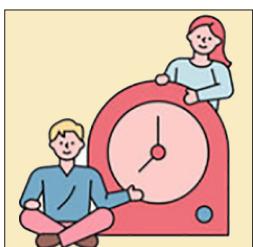
AmeriSchools: The Answer to the “Educational Pandemic”

First Things First

Learning Depends on Social and Emotional Factors



How AmeriSchools Does It



1. Our Philosophy

- Personal Relationships come first
- Addressing Individuals, not disseminating information

2. Meeting Student’s Social and Emotional Needs

- Nurturing of Student Character Development and Behavior
- Positive Social Development
- Anti-Bullying Policies
- The Best Education possible in a comfortable, consistent environment

3. CURRICULUM: Non-Graded, Integrated

Promotes creative abilities and a positive self-image

4. INSTRUCTION: Multi-Age, Skill-Based, Individualized

- *A Challenging Environment* where students promote their own advancement *in the time they need* to achieve academic requirements
- *Low Student-Teacher Ratio* and Minimal Staff Turnover enable more direct student instruction to accelerate student learning
- *Reduced Discipline Issues* with students who become frustrated when they are not grasping academic concepts

5. TECHNOLOGY: A Supplement, Not a Substitute, for Classroom Instruction

Integrated 21st century technology and Internet resources

AMERISCHOOLS IS READY TODAY WITH

- 1. high-quality online instruction, when required, and**
- 2. superior classroom instruction, when permitted.**

Call today to enroll your child:

YUMA NORTH (K-6)

1220 South 4th Ave., Yuma, AZ
(928) 919-7203

YUMA SOUTH (K-6)

2098 South 3rd Ave., Yuma, AZ
(928) 329-1100

COUNTRY CLUB (K-8)

1150 N. Country Club Rd., Tucson, AZ
(520) 620-1100

CAMELBACK (K-8)

1333 W. Camelback Rd., Phoenix, AZ
(602) 532-0100



AmeriSchools Academy

Executive Offices
1150 N. Country Club Road
Tucson, AZ 85716

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PASADENA, CA
PERMIT #740



AmeriSchools Perspectives

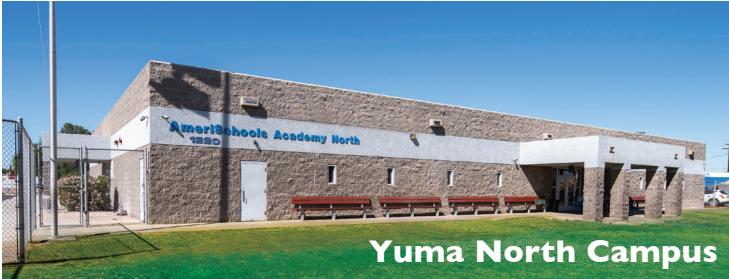
is a publication of The Charter Foundation, Inc., a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation, doing business as The AmeriSchools Academy, or AmeriSchools
© Copyright 2021
All rights reserved

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Message from our CEO / 2
- Charter School News / 4
- Parenting Through a Pandemic / 6
- Parents Success Formula / 11
- Why I Love to Parent / 12
- A Principal-ed Leader / 14
- Future of Education / 16
- Financial Literacy for Kids / 20
- AmeriSchools Español / 21
- Call to Action / 22
- Our Core Values / 23
- Contact Information / 24

CONTRIBUTORS

- Moani Kanae
- Ben Lizardi
- Linda McCormack
- Joshua Osborn
- David Stern
- Christopher Wolfe



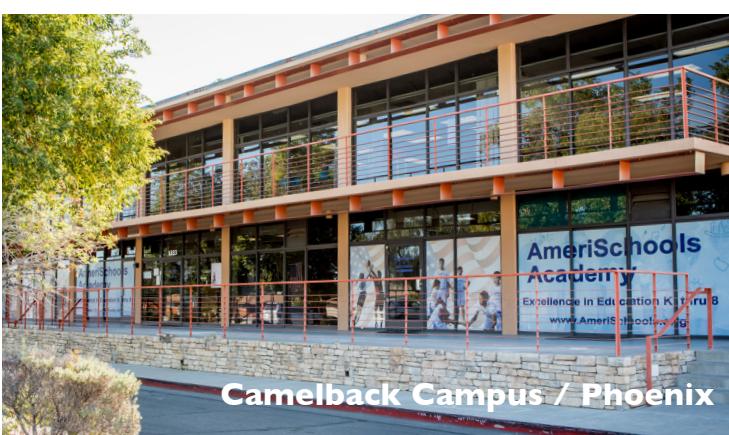
Yuma North Campus



Yuma South Campus



Country Club Campus / Tucson



Camelback Campus / Phoenix

AMERISCHOOLS ACADEMY

A system of charter schools for children K-8

To learn more visit:
www.AmeriSchools.org

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

1150 North Country Club
Tucson, AZ 85716
(520) 296-1100

OFFICERS & BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Dr. Reginald E. Barr
Chief Executive Officer

Sandra E. Barr
President

Deborah E. LeBlanc
Vice President

Carol A. Towner
Secretary

Courtney Braren
Superintendent for Instruction

Steve Radakovich
Assistant Superintendent for Support Services

SCHOOL LOCATIONS:

YUMA NORTH (K-6)
1220 South 4th Avenue
Yuma, AZ 85364
(928) 919-7203

YUMA SOUTH (K-6)
2098 South 3rd Avenue
Yuma, AZ 85364
(928) 329-1100

COUNTRY CLUB (K-8)
1150 N. Country Club Road
Tucson, AZ 85716
(520) 620-1100

CAMELBACK (K-8)
1333 W. Camelback Road
Phoenix, AZ 85013
(602) 532-0100