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Positive step toward boosting public education

Our view: Tucson Values Teachers will improve support for area educators/////An effective teacher, and a supportive community, are essential to student learning - this is common sense and it's been borne out by research. This is the impetus for an undertaking called "Tucson Values Teachers."

The campaign, which is being launched today at the event "The State of Education: A Community Conversation on K-12 Education," is a much-needed effort to improve education in Tucson schools.

As our public education system goes, so goes our community. The effects of a great public-school system show up in myriad ways: quality good-paying jobs, cultural opportunities, a growing economy, an educated citizenry.

The effects of an underperforming public-school system also reveal themselves in ways no region wants: Companies don't want to locate or stay there, school dropout rates are higher, educational achievement is lower - which affects lifetime earnings for people, which in turn affects tax revenues, and by extension public services.

Tucson must be on the winning end of that equation, and Tucson Values Teachers effort will help our community get there.

It won't solve all the problems, largely because state legislators must do their part and change the funding mechanism. It's a start, however, and a good one.

Tucson Values Teachers has the potential to attract great people to the teaching profession.

Teachers here need our support. Consider this: Half of the University of Arizona graduates who go into teaching in our communities leave within five years, according to Ron Shoopman, president of the Southern Arizona Leadership Council, which is highly involved in the effort.

"(Teachers) believe in themselves and what they're doing, but they don't believe this community values them," Shoopman said. "Teachers are every bit on the front lines of survival for this nation. If they don't succeed, we will not succeed as a nation."

Tucson Values Teachers aims to address challenges teachers face through public awareness, professional education, incentives and educational resources.

We're particularly interested in the internship program that will link teachers with local businesses over the summer so teachers and employers can both see firsthand how each connects to the other.

Tucson Values Teachers has the support of not only school people, but business people. The Tucson Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, Tucson Regional Economic Opportunities and several major corporations have signed on.

The benefits of education are not contained to the schoolhouse - nor should be the work needed to make the educational system better.

Tucson Values Teachers is deserving of your interest and support.

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