

Truth Tellers

Political season is upon us, and Arizona will once again be at the tip of the national political campaign spear until November. We are a red state, turning-purple, with thousands of “permanent visitors” arriving every year for a little more sunshine and to join the economic boom. The Deer Valley Unified School District (DVUSD) sits in the geographical middle of the largest foreign investment in American history - the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company’s (TSMC) expansion into multiple chip factories. Exciting times in DVUSD!

While DVUSD boundaries have seen population growth over the last decade, the proportion of school-aged children per family continues to decline. Families are having fewer children, and enrollment in Arizona’s public, charter, and private schools continues to decline statewide. A majority of our “permanent visitors” will continue to be retirees from other states, but the scale of the TSMC project will eventually bring more students to DVUSD from sheer volume.

The good news is DVUSD has beaten our demographers’ enrollment projections six years in a row, largely because of open enrollment - students from other districts and returners from charter, voucher, and private schools to the tune of just under 3,000 students each year. The data also shows our neighboring public school, charter, and private schools have actually declined at a greater rate. The bad news is that DVUSD will continue to slowly decline until the TSMC factories, and their surrounding support systems take off in the next three to five years. Today, open enrollment and excellence are keeping DVUSD on top of the educational mountain.

Even as more charter and private schools pull up their southern Arizona tents and move into DVUSD boundaries to get in on the economic gold rush, DVUSD will continue to outperform them even though they “choose” their students. While the average lifespan of a charter school in Arizona is four years, we’ve been here for 92 years, and we’ll be here for another 92, accepting all students, every day.

The reasons for our excellence are plentiful such as: 1) All 42 DVUSD schools are rated A or B; 2) DVUSD wins more than 70 state titles every year in academics, Career & Technical Education, athletics, and fine arts; 3) *Forbes* has honored DVUSD as one of Arizona’s Best Midsize Employers six of the last seven years and nationally three of last seven; 4) Our teachers and staff are highly trained, certified, and recognized statewide for their excellence; and 5) We offer a valued high school diploma.

If someone is spinning DVUSD’s perceived downward trends, they aren’t a Truth Teller – the data says the opposite. Those preaching about DVUSD’s demise are picking and choosing data points to create an incorrect story. We show our data in context. If you ever see educational data anywhere in this state, always ask yourself: “Compared to what?” Welcome to Arizona’s political season, where slanted journalism and attacks on public education are in style, and supported by outside money. If you want the real story, find a Truth Teller who shows you the data in context.

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