

City of Chandler Mayor's Youth Commission

Teen Town Hall 2016 Report



Chandler · Arizona



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Staff Liaison

Tony Baumann, Recreation Coordinator II

The Mayor's Youth Commission would like to extend a special thanks to Chick-Fil-A, Sprouts, Einstein Bros. Bagels, and Sam's Club for their donations used to provide breakfast and lunch. We would also like to thank the City of Chandler for providing giveaway items and amenities such as the Council Chambers for the forum.



Mayor Jay Tibshraeny and the Chandler City Council

TEEN TOWN HALL

March 24, 2016



Hosted by the City of Chandler Mayor's Youth Commission

SCHEDULE

8:00 a.m. – 8:25 a.m.	Arrival, Registration & Breakfast Community Center Courtyard
8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.	Opening Session - Council Chambers Welcome Guest Speakers Teambuilding activity
9:35 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	Discussion Groups Sustainability – Community Center Room 109 Education – Community Center Room 110
11:05 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.	Guest Speaker Community Center Rooms 109 & 110
11:50 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.	Lunch (provided) Community Center Courtyard
12:20 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.	Discussion Groups – Resolutions Sustainability – Community Center Room 109 Education – Community Center Room 110
1:35 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	Group Presentations & Closing Remarks City Hall Council Chambers

The Mayor's Youth Commission sponsored its seventh annual Teen Town Hall on Thursday, March 24, 2016 at the Community Center and City Hall Council Chambers. The 162 teens that attended the conference were registered from various Chandler high schools, middle schools and charter schools. The purpose of Teen Town Hall is to bring together teenagers from the community to discuss topics of concern with each other and offer recommendations for practical solutions that the community can implement. To ensure input from all sectors of our community, individuals from numerous private and public high schools and non-profit groups within the City of Chandler were invited to participate.

Teen Town Hall began with Mayor's Youth Commission President, Niharika Karnik welcoming the participants. Niharika then introduced the conference's first keynote speaker, Steven Douglas. The topics that Steven discussed were diversity and inclusion. Steven began his presentation by sharing experiences from his life. He used examples from his upbringing in a rough neighborhood to illustrate not only the harsh reality of life, but also how diversity can serve as an escape from that reality. He explained how diversity played a major role in his life and opened many doors of opportunity for him. Because of these opportunities, Steven was able to attain a higher education and become a banker at BMO Harris Bank. Lastly, he noted how wonderful it was to have such a diverse group gathered for the Teen Town Hall.

After the conclusion of Steven's speech, the participants were led in an icebreaker activity presented by Shawn Peoples, Recreation Coordinator I for the City of Chandler Teen Programs. The icebreaker was a Simon Says game. The final two participants standing were awarded with vouchers for movie tickets at Harkins Theatres.

When the icebreaker activity was complete, Niharika invited Intergovernmental Affairs Coordinator Ryan Peters to discuss the process of creating a bill and getting it passed in Congress. Ryan began by outlining the basics of a bill and walked participants step by step through the drafting process. He also explained the places a bill must pass through. Last, Ryan described how teens can bring forward issues to local councilmembers.

After Ryan concluded, Mayor's Youth Commission Secretary, George Gilliam presented the schedule for the day and had participants break into their respective groups. Participants were assigned to either **Sustainability** or **Education**, and then further broken down into groups of 10-11 for discussion. Each group was led by a member of the Mayor's Youth Commission.

Each group was assigned a question related to their topic to discuss. Commission members educated participants on their assigned topic, encouraged participation, and asked their group to think critically about the issue and come up with possible solutions. Leaders helped the groups define the problem, identify possible contributing factors, and discuss what is currently being done.

After the discussion groups had met for an hour and a half, the conference reconvened for a speech by Jenn Kaye. This was the third year that the Teen Town Hall had invited a guest to speak to the group. In her interactive presentation, Jenn discussed the power

of presence. She started by highlighting challenges she encountered at a young age, then asked the participants to share their definition of success. Many of the answers she received were materialistic definitions. She explained to the participants that money, fame, etc. should not dictate how successful a person is.

Jenn also spoke on the importance of confidence and about how authenticity, courage and trust can have an impact on whether or not an individual is confident. She gave the participants a chance to fill out a worksheet that shared three ways to increase confidence. During her presentation, she emphasized that being who you are is the best way to become confident.

Following lunch, participants were divided back into their groups to create resolutions for the issues outlined in their first discussion. Groups were given an hour to focus on solutions to address their assigned question and develop practical recommendations that could easily be implemented within the City of Chandler. After the discussions, the participants gathered in the City Hall Council Chambers to present their solutions. Each discussion group selected a representative to speak to all Teen Town Hall participants about their group's issue and proposed recommendations.

The Teen Town Hall ended with closing remarks from Mayor's Youth Commission Member, Jocelyn Alvar. Jocelyn thanked the participants for attending and contributing to the discussion. Jocelyn informed the participants that the results of their hard work would be compiled into a report that would be shared with the Mayor and members of City Council at a City Council meeting in the near future.

In addition, this Teen Town Hall report will be made available to various agencies, organizations, clubs, and schools for review. It will also be used as a resource in our community. In this way, the Teen Town Hall provides both teens and adults the opportunity to communicate openly with one another about important issues that affect them.

The following pages provide details on each of the two topics of discussion at this year's Teen Town Hall, as well as the specific recommendations for change developed by each group.

SUSTAINABILITY DISCUSSION SUMMARY

How can compost be implemented in the community?

OBJECTIVE

To give an understanding what composting is and how it can be successfully integrated into the community.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

- What the motivation for composting is and how it contributes to a more sustainable planet
- Ways compost can be used and who uses it (farmers)
- Companies active in promoting compost (CompostCab, Safeway stores, city programs)
- Pilot programs that are currently being tested in communities in Seattle, New York and Delaware and the pros and cons of the programs
- Current education and outreach on the topic

PLAN OF ACTION

- Current composting program in Chandler
- Ways to motivate people to compost
- Getting the word out and educating the people on composting
- How money would play a factor – should citizens receive a stipend if they compost? Who would pay them? Where would that money come from? How much money can be allocated to implement a new program?
- Where to place composting bins – in individual homes or in selected locations within the community?
- How current technology can be used to help promote composting

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Implement a composting pilot program that would model the current trash and recycling programs. A composting bin would be given to selected residents. This bin would provide information on what can and cannot be composted and would be picked up weekly by volunteers and then taken to the correct facility for further use. An app could be developed for residents to use to schedule pick-ups and learn more about composting.
 - IMPLEMENTED BY: Volunteers and City of Chandler staff
 - PURPOSE: To provide an easy way to compost so that more people participate in it

2. Create an outreach program to educate community residents on composting. Discussions would take place at the weekly farmer's markets in Downtown Chandler. Mayor's Youth Commission members and teen volunteers would speak with residents about composting and give out compost bins to those who are interested.
 - IMPLEMENTED BY: Mayor's Youth Commission and teen volunteers
 - PURPOSE: To get the word out about composting and to raise awareness on how important and eco-friendly composting is.

 3. Develop an educational program on composting and implement it in schools and businesses to educate people on the topic. This would create more awareness for the issue of sustainability and get more people involved in finding a viable solution to the problem.
 - IMPLEMENTED BY: Schools and Local Businesses
 - PURPOSE: To further educate students, businesses and residents in the local community about composting and sustainability so they can become more aware of and interested in the problem.
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How should sustainability be incorporated in local businesses?

OBJECTIVE

To identify which local businesses are environmentally friendly and to develop new ways for businesses to incorporate sustainable practices

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

- Identification of environmental problems and how they relate to business practices – carbon emissions, landfill waste, recycling, energy use, chemical use, etc.
- Overview of which businesses (and schools) in Chandler are practicing sustainability (SRP, Intel)
- Take an in depth look at how environmental problems are created by grocery stores, restaurants, department stores and malls, farms, and factories through food waste, plastic bag usage, pollution, energy usage, etc.
- Neighborhood issues – trash, litter, sprinklers, running water fountains

PLAN OF ACTION

- How to reuse and recycle everything to its full potential
- Ways plastic bags can be reduced/eliminated
- How much energy businesses use vs. how much energy businesses can get by with using

- Ways to conserve water and prevent water contamination (especially within farms)
- Discussion of alternative energy sources – solar energy, natural sunlight, hydroelectricity, wind power, kinetic energy – and how they can be used in business practices
- Specific ways businesses can become more sustainable:
 - Grocery stores: provide incentives for using reusable bags, charge for plastic bags, use skylights to light building during the day, use recyclable packaging
 - Restaurants: avoid pre-preparing food, eliminate styrofoam take-out boxes, use more eco-friendly cleaning methods, donate excess food, use cloth napkins instead of paper ones
 - Department stores and malls: provide incentives for shoppers to use reusable bags, charge for plastic bags, eliminate shoe boxes or implement ways to reuse the boxes, limit energy use for A/C and lights, supply more eco-friendly materials in products
 - Farms: require more sustainable and organic methods of producing food, improve cleaning methods to eliminate chemical use, avoid pesticide use and use aquaponics instead
 - Factories: set up a more effective transportation system, implement hydrogen fuel, create energy-efficient factories, limit and discourage carbon emissions

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Replace plastic bags with cloth or reusable bags in grocery stores and retail shops. Stores would be required to charge a small tax for each plastic bag used. Revenue generated from this program would help support finding solutions to other environment problems.
 - IMPLEMENTED BY: Grocery stores and retail shops and the government
 - PURPOSE: To prevent pollution and crowding of landfills by eliminating unnecessary plastic use and waste
2. Incentivize businesses to use solar power and reduce energy usage. The City of Chandler would purchase solar panels for businesses who are interested in participating. This would allow businesses to save money on energy costs and help contribute to creating a cleaner environment.
 - IMPLEMENTED BY: Businesses, the City of Chandler and the government
 - PURPOSE: To avoid using other sources of energy that cause environmental harm
3. Implement a program to increase water conservation in local restaurants. Water is often wasted by restaurants so a plan to only serve patrons water if they ask for it should be put into place. This would decrease the amount of water wasted.
 - IMPLEMENTED BY: Local restaurants
 - PURPOSE: To reduce water waste and promote conservation

4. Have shoe stores offer a small discount if customers do not take home the shoe box when they purchase new shoes. By doing this, stores can recycle or reuse the boxes to cut back on recyclable materials ending up in landfills. This solution would be done in an attempt to eliminate shoe boxes completely.
 - IMPLEMENTED BY: Shoe stores
 - PURPOSE: To avoid cardboard/material waste and promote recycling
 5. Schools need to increase recycling and environmental awareness. Environmental clubs could implement an updated recycling program in schools to educate students and collect specific types of items for recycling.
 - IMPLEMENTED BY: Schools and environmental clubs
 - PURPOSE: To reduce the amount of waste that ends up in landfills.
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How can energy use be reduced?

OBJECTIVE

To gain an understanding of how much energy is wasted and to develop ways to reduce energy use, especially in schools

SUMMARY

- Overview of sustainability – what it means and how it impacts people and the environment
- Motivation for more sustainable practices in the City of Chandler
- Discussion of pollution and global warming
- Drought in California and the possible ramifications it may cause here in the Chandler community
- Types of energy and the pros and cons of each – nonrenewable and renewable sources
- Importance of solar panels, ways solar panels are effective

PLAN OF ACTION

- How schools and local businesses are currently using energy vs. how they should be using it
- Ways to educate people on the need for energy conservation – too many people are unaware of the severity of the problems energy use creates
- Places where solar panels and motion sensor lights would be effective – car dealerships, schools, etc.
- Could schools offer an incentive for carpooling, using less paper and completing homework online?
- How Homeowners Associations could play a role in funding solar panels

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Provide education in schools through posters and social media campaigns. Place posters in cafeterias, near trash and recycling bins and in the hallways as a simple and effective solution. Host a contest through social media to help teens conserve energy could also be implemented. Provide a prize or other incentive to get classrooms and individuals to lower their use of energy.
 - IMPLEMENTED BY: Schools and individuals
 - PURPOSE: To cut back on energy use
 2. Introduce a city-wide monthly blackout. The blackout could take place overnight for a few hours once a month to encourage residents to conserve energy. Once residents realize how much energy is saved just from a few hours of eliminating its use, they may be more motivated to follow other sustainable practices.
 - IMPLEMENTED BY: The City of Chandler and residents
 - PURPOSE: To conserve energy and to educate residents on energy use
 3. Host educational meetings once a month for residents in the community to discuss environmental issues and to learn about reasons to conserve energy. These discussions could be led by professionals or volunteers.
 - IMPLEMENTED BY: The City of Chandler and volunteers
 - PURPOSE: To educate residents about energy use and provide a place where people can talk about environmental issues and ways to solve associated problems.
 4. Reduce the amount of energy used in schools by installing sensed lighting. This would help reduce unnecessary and wasted energy from lights that are on when no one is using them.
 - IMPLEMENTED BY: Schools
 - PURPOSE: To conserve energy
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How can sustainability awareness be raised most effectively?

OBJECTIVE

To raise awareness on the topic of sustainability so more people are conscious of the concerns associated with it.

SUMMARY

- Trash and recycling programs currently implemented in the community
- Recycling, pollution, reusable energy, energy usage
- Sustainability issues in the community and what sustainability means to people

- Cost of disposing of trash, benefits of recycling and level of landfill waste
- Why sustainability is important
- Discussion of electricity – more efficient lighting, motion sensor lighting, city black out, skylights, use of A/C, etc.
- Topics of landfills, farmers markets, carpooling, e-waste, food waste, water conservation

PLAN OF ACTION

- How environmental problems affect people individually and ways they could be more motivated to make a difference
- How to use graphics and visuals to show the consequences of non-sustainable practices
- Current events, activities, signs, websites, commercials, social media, and advertisements that raise awareness of sustainability
- Ways to convince residents to cut back on plastic bag use
- Are recycling bins placed everywhere that they could be?
- How a community garden could be created in the City of Chandler

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Create a parade float, made out of reusable items and powered by solar panels, which would participate in city parades and other local events. This parade float would be designed by the Mayor's Youth Commission and other teen volunteers interested in the issue.
 - IMPLEMENTED BY: Mayor's Youth Commission and teen volunteers
 - PURPOSE: To raise awareness on sustainability in a more creative way
2. Lobby for a bill to be passed requiring recycling bins at fast food restaurants. The city could be in charge of picking up this recycling to make sure it is being disposed of properly. Recycling in fast food restaurants would cut back on the amount of recyclable items disposed of in landfills and would make residents more aware.
 - IMPLEMENTED BY: Fast food restaurants and the City of Chandler
 - PURPOSE: To cut back on the amount of recyclable items disposed of in landfills and provide additional locations where recycling is available
3. Design and run an advertisement on pollution and energy use. Because technology is such a big part of people's lives, it would be effective to reach individuals through commercials and social media advertisements. The ads would include statistics and propose a 'what-if' scenario to show what the city could become if more sustainable measures are not taken.
 - IMPLEMENTED BY: Mayor's Youth Commission and the City of Chandler
 - PURPOSE: To educate people on the consequences of environmental problems through a relevant method

Sustainability Group Facilitators:

Isabella Tassinari, Mayor's Youth Commission Member

Monet Tam, Mayor's Youth Commission Vice President

Anuj Shah, Mayor's Youth Commission Member

Jocelyn Alvar, Mayor's Youth Commission Member

Niharika Karnik, Mayor's Youth Commission President

Brennan Zhou, Mayor's Youth Commission Points Commissioner

Farin Shiehzadegan, Mayor's Youth Commission Member

Aditya Ashar , Mayor's Youth Commission Member

EDUCATION DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Should homework be optional?

OBJECTIVE

To determine how effective homework currently is and to determine whether or not schools and students would benefit from making homework optional

SUMMARY

- Many students are overloaded with homework and become less motivated about school as a result
- Students get left behind or struggle from not being able to complete homework
- Homework is often busy work and does not end up helping in the learning process
- AP classes and standardized testing
- Pros of homework – shows you can apply the material on your own, helps students understand ideas better, improves responsibility, etc.
- Cons of homework – time consuming especially if students you have extra-curricular activities, is essentially the same thing as what was done in class, covers topics that weren't discussed in class, students may not even want to pursue that certain field of study

PLAN OF ACTION

- How tutoring programs could be used in place of homework – require students to attend tutoring instead of overloading them with assignments
- How to give students a voice to make this issue important
- Proposition 123 and its importance
- Ways to make homework more manageable for students

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Present education in a new light to inspire positive school ethics. School districts are often pressured to teach in a way that ensures students will perform well on tests. This involves a homework overload and takes away from the 'learning' aspect of school. Altering the system in which students learn for the sake of learning and do homework because it benefits them will shed a better light on education.
 - IMPLEMENTED BY: Chandler Unified School District, teachers and students
 - PURPOSE: To take some of the homework load off of students and to foster more positive attitudes towards education

2. Give students a certain number of “circumstantial leniency slips.” These slips would prevent students’ grades from slipping just because they did not have enough time to complete a homework assignment due to extracurricular activities. When presenting the slip (with a parent’s signature), students would be given one additional day to complete the assignment.
 - IMPLEMENTED BY: Chandler Unified School District
 - PURPOSE: To provide students with another opportunity to complete homework assignments without a grade drop when they are busy with extra-curricular activities.

 3. Create a work study program for students. This optional program would give students the opportunity to obtain a job in a field they are passionate about. Instead of homework, students would work a set number of hours a week in a job that they can use to further their education and skill set.
 - IMPLEMENTED BY: Chandler Unified School District
 - PURPOSE: To provide students with additional educational and vocational opportunities while taking a small load of homework off of the students’ shoulders.
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Should students be introduced to more vocational training throughout high school?

OBJECTIVE

To assist students in making a career choice early on so they can prepare and gain experience in their field before college

SUMMARY

- Pros and cons of vocational schools
- Vocational school vs. traditional school or a combination of both?
- How people without a high school diploma attend college
- Skill and experience vs. education
- Germany’s education model – more vocationally focused; students divided into 3 tracks based on academic potential
- What careers students are most interested in today – technology-based, business, medical, etc.
- East Valley Institute of Technology

PLAN OF ACTION

- Could tax money be used for vocational schools?
- It is difficult to change the system, but is there a way to do it?
- Current educational job/vocational school opportunities in the community
- Determine whether it would be better to integrate vocational learning in high school or to maintain the current system
- Ways to improve the current the East Valley Institute of Technology

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Implement surveys in Junior High Schools to determine how interested students are in vocational education. This would determine how to integrate vocational training courses into the current educational system. Vocational speakers could talk to students to educate them on opportunities.
 - IMPLEMENTED BY: Junior high schools and the City Council
 - PURPOSE: To determine the importance of and interest in vocational training and to expose students to a different form of education
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Should civic education be integrated into the high school curriculum?

OBJECTIVE

To become aware of the lack of civic education and to encourage more in-depth study of it in schools

SUMMARY

- The lack of basic, fundamental knowledge of our country's and state's legal systems
- Voter eligibility, the Electoral College, representation in government, etc.
- How much students actually know vs. how much they should know about our local, state and federal governments

PLAN OF ACTION

- Introduction of mandatory civic tests
- Possible ways to include more civic education topics in schools

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Design and require civic education courses in high schools. Adding a civic education course to the required curriculum would ensure that all students understand their government and the role they play in it. Students would lobby to the Chandler Unified School District to encourage this requirement.
 - IMPLEMENTED BY: Students attending monthly school board meetings and contacting local school representatives
 - PURPOSE: To better educate today's youth on government
2. Include more civic questions on the test senior students must take before graduating from high school. Knowledge could be taught throughout high school and students would have to pass a set number of questions on an exam their senior year. This will help prepare students for life after high school and help them have a better understanding of our country's government.

- IMPLEMENTED BY: Chandler Unified School District and students
 - PURPOSE: To provide knowledge to students about the government to help them become more informed citizens
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How should graduation requirements be altered to be more applicable to societal needs?

OBJECTIVE

To help students become more well-rounded and prepared for ‘real world’ situations and interactions

SUMMARY

- School should be more than just a place to learn
- There should be classes to help students find a career
- Current classes and electives offered and the importance of each
- Government, business, technology, health and wellness classes should be offered sooner in high school
- Importance of health and physical education classes and life application courses
- The same topics, ideas, etc. are learned over and over with no new knowledge being taught.
- World history, art, etc. classes should be optional and only taken if a student wants to pursue it as a career.
- School start and end times – should start school later in the day to improve attendance, attitudes and brain function
- More internship opportunities and volunteer hours required

PLAN OF ACTION

- Ways to incorporate classes that teach/encourage “people skills”
- What grade these types of classes should be taught in
- How to implement classes with real world application
- More compelling electives
- What classes don’t apply to students anymore?
- Ways to get all different types of student engaged in learning (i.e. outgoing kids vs. shy kids)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Schools should implement individual classes and programs that pertain to students' interests in today's world (technology, business, medical, etc.) These classes would be career focused and require internships and/or volunteer hours to be completed. A survey could be completed by current students to gauge interest in course topics.
 - IMPLEMENTED BY: Schools and students
 - PURPOSE: To provide students with more classes and career learning opportunities to better set them up for life after high school
2. Students need to start lobbying to school boards to make sure their voices are heard. This could be done to help address specific issues (i.e. school start time) or to shed light on different problems.
 - IMPLEMENTED BY: High school students in Chandler
 - PURPOSE: To give students a voice and to bring forward issues that students see as needing improvement

Education Group Facilitators:

Justin Zhu, Mayor's Youth Commission Member
Swaneyya Babu, Mayor's Youth Commission Member
Rahul Ramesh, Mayor's Youth Commission Member
Ritika Bharati, Mayor's Youth Commission Member
Momen Adbelkarim, Mayor's Youth Commission Member
George Gilliam, Mayor's Youth Commission Secretary
Lydia Chew, Mayor's Youth Commission Member
Heba Shiban, Mayor's Youth Commission Member
Sarah Gilliam, Mayor's Youth Commission Guest
Shahd Adbelkarim, Mayor's Youth Commission Guest