

Thank you Susan, thank you Jonah for taking the time to teach us about these incredibly important topics.

Hi everyone! How you doing out there? It's a lot to soak in isn't it? I know sometimes at events like this I get so excited I literally jump up and down thinking about possibilities and opportunities, and other times I just want to go home and take a nap I'm so overwhelmed.

But that's why we're in this together right? To make it less overwhelming.

I'm Megan Irwin – the acting executive director for Stand for Children in AZ. I've had the tremendous pleasure of meeting many of you over the past several months and hearing your stories.

I want to take just a second to tell you mine.

I grew up in Tucson. Until I was in high school my dad was a landscaper and my mom sometimes cleaned office buildings on the weekends. I went to public school. I ate free and reduced lunch. No one in my family had ever graduated from college. From the time I was in 2nd grade I was determined to be the first, though I suppose statistically speaking I shouldn't have made it.

So why did I?

No one told me I couldn't.

My parents weren't college-educated, but they did believe I should be. And I got REALLY lucky – I had a series of excellent (and tough!) teachers who demanded the best from me. Mrs. LaRue, my 6th grade teacher at Gale Elementary, Mrs. Pavlick, my middle school science teacher, Mrs. McFarlane, the scariest, smartest, best teacher at Sahauro High school.

They wouldn't let me fail. Lucky me. (Though, as an aside, my parents were actually the first people in our family to graduate from college. They went back to school when I was in high school and beat me by a few years.)

But someday, when I'm telling the story of Arizona's public education system, I don't want to tell a story that has ANYTHING to do with luck. When I tell my future children about the place mommy is from, I hope I can tell them about a place where concerned teachers and parents came together and said no to the status quo and intentionally built a better system.

I want to be able to talk about a state where:

- teachers and principals get the support, the respect, the meaningful feedback and the development they need to excel.
- Where because we focus so intently on quality, every child has an excellent teacher every year.

- Where we appropriately invest in our children and schools and where we are appropriately open to innovation that helps us do that better.
- Where zip code doesn't predetermine college completion.

I want us to take advantage of this INCREDIBLE opportunity to change our lives and the lives of our kids.

So. What do you want?

Here's your chance to think about what we've learned tonight and dream BIG. If you open your folders you'll find a sheet of paper that looks like this (HOLD IT UP) and a pen.

Please take 5 minutes now to think about what you want and write it down. Make it real. Commit.

Go on.... We'll collect these from you as you finish and we will create a book (yes, you can get a copy!) that will remind us of where we are tonight, May 20th, 2010 and help us track our progress.

(5 MINUTES)

So, what did you write? Did it feel crazy or impossible? Good. "Impossible" is a good goal when it comes to our kids isn't it? Now think about what you can do today to make your dream possible. And YEP –you guessed it, we have something you can do today.

Here's one way you can help us do it. See those sheets of paper on the back wall? Each of those represents a topic – reform, ELL and funding reform. If you want to go deeper with us on these topics this summer, write your phone number on your name tag and stick it on the topic that interests you the most. You'll be hearing from me in June about the opportunity to examine these issues deeper and help us develop our policy platform.

But, first, I want to introduce Monica Meza – a Camelback High School parent who is going give you the opportunity to join Stand for Children if you are not already a member.