**Pandemic Cripples Public School Districts While Charter Schools Grow**

The news that Gilbert Unified laid off 152 teachers due to enrollment declines caused by the Covid 19 pandemic is indicative of the major decline in Arizona public school enrollment in 2021. Arizona public school enrollment decreased by 38,550 students due to the pandemic this year based on the 2020 October 1 Enrollment Report recently released by ADE. The losses are focused in grades K-6, with preschool and kindergarten taking the greatest hit losing a total of 16,000 students. Grades 1-4 each lost about 2,000 students while grades 5-6 declined by over 5,000 each. High schools actually gained 236 students overall this year.

**Arizona District and Charter Enrollment 2020 2021**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Fiscal Year | 2020 | 2021 | Difference 2021-2020 |
| Total State | Arizona | Arizona | Arizona |
| PS | 21,867 | 14,494 | (7,373) |
| KG | 81,606 | 72,960 | (8,646) |
| 1 | 82,386 | 80,317 | (2,069) |
| 2 | 82,305 | 79,701 | (2,604) |
| 3 | 83,003 | 80,280 | (2,723) |
| 4 | 83,689 | 80,780 | (2,909) |
| 5 | 87,883 | 82,159 | (5,724) |
| 6 | 91,348 | 86,047 | (5,301) |
| 7 | 92,106 | 90,474 | (1,632) |
| 8 | 90,617 | 90,812 | 195 |
| 9 | 91,347 | 90,826 | (521) |
| 10 | 88,945 | 88,938 | (7) |
| 11 | 84,017 | 83,764 | (253) |
| 12 | 89,687 | 90,704 | 1,017 |
| Total | 1,150,806 | 1,112,256 | (38,550) |

Charter schools were the big winners due to the pandemic, gaining an additional 18,000 students this year. Charters averaged about 1,500 new students in grades K-12, adding students in every grade level while the state’s overall enrollment plummeted.

Charter School Enrollment 2020-2021

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Fiscal Year | 2020 | 2021 | Difference 2021-2020 |
| School Type | Charter | Charter | Charter |
| PS | \* | \* |  |
| KG | 17,878 | 18,965 | 1,087 |
| 1 | 18,032 | 19,840 | 1,808 |
| 2 | 17,314 | 19,314 | 2,000 |
| 3 | 17,283 | 18,853 | 1,570 |
| 4 | 17,001 | 18,602 | 1,601 |
| 5 | 17,350 | 18,652 | 1,302 |
| 6 | 18,038 | 19,248 | 1,210 |
| 7 | 16,998 | 18,967 | 1,969 |
| 8 | 16,182 | 18,257 | 2,075 |
| 9 | 11,561 | 12,984 | 1,423 |
| 10 | 12,494 | 12,998 | 504 |
| 11 | 13,212 | 13,684 | 472 |
| 12 | 20,477 | 21,885 | 1,408 |
| Total | 213,820 | 232,249 | 18,429 |

District schools took the biggest hit. While state-wide enrollment declined by 38,550, districts lost over 55,000 students compared with 2020. 16,000 students failed to enroll in district preschool and Kindergarten and grades 1-6 lost an average of 5,000 students. High school enrollment has fared better, losing only 1,700 students in grades 10-12.

District Enrollment 2020-21

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Fiscal Year | 2020 | 2021 | Difference 2021-2020 |
| School Type | District | District | District |
| PS | 19,771 | 13,218 | (6,553) |
| KG | 63,506 | 53,830 | (9,676) |
| 1 | 64,110 | 60,299 | (3,811) |
| 2 | 64,688 | 60,165 | (4,523) |
| 3 | 65,411 | 61,166 | (4,245) |
| 4 | 66,376 | 61,916 | (4,460) |
| 5 | 70,180 | 63,213 | (6,967) |
| 6 | 72,936 | 66,486 | (6,450) |
| 7 | 74,729 | 71,183 | (3,546) |
| 8 | 73,977 | 72,220 | (1,757) |
| 9 | 79,409 | 77,390 | (2,019) |
| 10 | 76,009 | 75,407 | (602) |
| 11 | 69,838 | 69,105 | (733) |
| 12 | 67,573 | 67,195 | (378) |
| Total | 928,526 | 872,813 | (55,713) |

Further study is needed to determine the demographics of both the students enrolling in charter schools and those that failed to show up in public districts.