

Tempe's education legacy powers a citywide partnership

ASU, city of Tempe and school districts unite for Thrive in Tempe initiative

By Jr De Chavez, ASU News
October 30, 2025

For generations, Tempe has defined what it means to be an education city — a place where learning shapes identity, opportunity and community life.

From its beginnings as the home of the Territorial Normal School, Arizona's first institution of higher education, to today's community recognized for its top-ranked university and public schools, Tempe's commitment to education has guided its growth and innovation.

That tradition of excellence continues through Thrive in Tempe, a collaborative effort bringing together the city of Tempe, Arizona State University and Tempe's three public school districts, Kyrene, Tempe Elementary and Tempe Union High School District.

The new initiative aims to connect more families with exceptional schools, innovative programs and community resources that expand pathways from pre-K to postsecondary success, supporting a strong workforce and sustaining a thriving community.

"Education has always been at the heart of Tempe — it's what makes our community thrive," Tempe Mayor Corey Woods said. "Through Thrive in Tempe, we're connecting families to award-winning schools, ASU's culture of innovation, and city and business partnerships — so every student has a chance to succeed and every family has a reason to be proud."

The Tempe City Council formally recognized this shared commitment earlier this month by proclaiming Oct. 23 as "Thrive in Tempe Day." The proclamation serves as both a celebration and a symbol honoring a collaborative movement that continues to shape Tempe's future.

Tempe city councilmember Berdetta Hodge, a lifelong Tempe resident and graduate of the city's public schools, helped launch Thrive in Tempe. Also a member of the Tempe Union High School District Governing Board, Hodge's advocacy for aligning education, city resources and community priorities helped ensure the effort reflects local voices and values.

Hodge said the collaboration is as much about economic vitality as it is about education. It highlights Tempe as a city where people can both work and raise their families, encouraging those employed to enroll their children in Tempe public schools.

“When families choose Tempe schools, they strengthen our neighborhoods and our workforce,” Hodge said. “It’s all connected.”

The Tempe Chamber of Commerce sees the same link.

“In Tempe, education isn’t just a value — it’s a business imperative,” said Robin Arredondo-Savage, president and CEO of the Tempe Chamber of Commerce. “This initiative strengthens the talent pipeline that local employers depend on.”

That same sentiment is shared across city and university leadership.

“It’s an incredible moment where every level of leadership — the mayor, city council, school districts and the university — shares a deep commitment to education,” said Quintin Boyce, associate vice president for outreach with ASU’s Educational Outreach and Student Services.

Boyce serves as convener of the Tri-District team, the group that conceptualized Thrive in Tempe and began meeting nearly two years ago to align long-term goals, track enrollment and student success outcomes, and build collective strategies that link education, workforce development and community well-being.

“Together, we’re creating a continuum of learning that supports students from preschool to PhD, and helps strengthen Tempe’s future,” Boyce said.

Tempe’s record of achievement shows the impact of that shared vision. In 2025, all six Tempe Union high schools earned “A” ratings from the Arizona Department of Education, and eight campuses citywide, including Aguilar Elementary in the Tempe Elementary School District, Marcos de Niza, Mountain Pointe, Desert Vista high schools and four Kyrene schools, were named A+ schools by the Arizona Educational Foundation.

Additionally, the Tempe Elementary School District was ranked the No. 1 Elementary School District in Arizona by Ranking Arizona for two consecutive years (2024 and 2025), underscoring the city’s long-standing commitment to student success at every level.

These achievements complement Tempe’s recognition as one of the top three innovation hubs in the West for talent attraction and employment according to the 2025 Western Innovation Survey.

“By bringing together education, business and civic partners around a common mission, Thrive in Tempe builds on the city’s proud legacy as a place of learning and innovation,” Boyce said. “This effort demonstrates that when a community invests in its learners, everyone benefits.”

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



Leaders from the city of Tempe, Kyrene Elementary School District, Tempe Elementary School District, Tempe Union High School District and Arizona State University gathered at Tempe City Hall on Oct. 23 as the city council proclaimed "Thrive in Tempe Day." Photo by Joey Setti/ASU Educational Outreach and Student Services