

The Red State Revolt

The Uniqueness of Arizona's Red for Ed Teacher's Movement

by

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## ABSTRACT

The ongoing Red for Ed movement in Arizona sparks an interesting discussion on its place as a social movement. This thesis examines the movement in close detail, particularly in regard to how it fits within the social movement literature's insider/outsider framework. While partisanship is clearly important for understanding movement successes and failures, this study goes beyond party to explore through the case of Arizona how teacher movements are constrained by 1) teacher associations that operate as outsiders to state politics and 2) school districts that isolate the problem priorities (funding; teacher pay) from gaining large-scale public reaction that can be leveraged to change state policy. In short, I show how teacher movements face significant institutional barriers that localize their messaging and prevent insider access from state politics.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

On April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018, tens of thousands of protesters took to the streets of downtown Phoenix. A sea of up to 70,000 red shirts was symbolic of both the 90-degree temperatures as well as the boiling anger of educators in Arizona. The aforementioned demonstration was in support of the “Red for Ed” movement, the result of a grassroots movement from an organization called Arizona Educators United (Sandler & McCrory, 2019). Arizona Educators United, along with the Arizona Education Association, which is a subdivision of the National Education Association, collaborated with local district associations to make five demands of the Arizona state legislature or else face a massive teacher walkout that would force school closures across the entire state. These five demands included: a 20 percent salary increase for teachers, a restoration of public-school funding to 2008 levels, competitive pay for support staff, permanent salaries including annual raises, and no new tax cuts until education funding has been restored to pre-great recession levels (The Republic | azcentral.com, 2018).

What some journalists are calling the “red state revolt” (Blanc, 2020) is a movement of teachers who are encouraging and participating in teacher walkouts or strikes in response to deep education funding cuts in state budgets. It first started with West Virginia, followed by Oklahoma, and at the time of this writing, Arizona. It is clear that these educators feel as though there is a crisis in their home states, where funding for public education has remained stagnant since its reduction in 2008. Since 2008, school funding has been incredibly stunted. Per pupil spending has decreased by 24% during this time period (Jimenez-Castellanos and Martinez, 2014), and while the state has

recouped most of the money lost from the "great recession" funding for schools has not. In Education Weeks 2016 Quality Counts report, Arizona ranked 48<sup>th</sup> in school financing, 43<sup>rd</sup> in Chances for success, and 45<sup>th</sup> overall when compared to all 50 states as well as the District of Columbia (Ed week, 2016). The overall funding model for students and staffing to educate students has led to new issues for providing quality education, including teachers needing to work second and third jobs (Walker, 2019). West Virginia's teacher walkout achieved a 5% raise and increase in benefits and school funding, and Oklahoma's movement resulted in an average teacher raise of \$6,000. Meanwhile, Arizona's movement led Arizona's governor to propose a 20% raise and increase in school funding of \$100 million dollars, but Arizona has not implemented any of the other aforementioned demands made – making “Red for Ed” in Arizona an ongoing social movement for educational reform.

The use of the words social movement above requires some justification. In the following section, I will defend my use of the term and show how Red for Ed satisfies a practical definition thereof. What is of particular interest to me in this project, however, is while I may be able to justify Red for Ed as a social movement, what theoretical framework does or does not make sense to use as we study it? Often time in social movement literature, movements are defined as insider or outsider movements. This framework suggests that insider movements rely on institutional channels and formal methods for change and that outsider movements rely more on disruptive tactics such as demonstrations and protests (Edmonds-Cady, 2012) (Maney, n.d.). When considering how Red for Ed can fit in this framework, problems arise, and it is those problems that drive this research and has led me to ask the following questions: *What prominent*



*features of Red for Ed make it a social movement? How do teachers assume the role of activists and what are the limits of their activism? And lastly, what aspects of the movement are considered part of an insider/outsider strategic framework and has this shaped the movement's success?*

### *Red for Ed as a Social Movement*

Onset by the financial crises of 2008 and in response to the subsequent cuts in education spending, teachers have emerged on the frontlines of education reform. Yet, limited scholarship has unpacked this contemporary development nor established its connection to social movement theory. One exception is Jean Anyon, who argues in *Radical Possibilities* (2014) for an explicit connection between social movement theory and public policy change in the urban education system. Specifically, Anyon argues that decisions made in the aftermath of the great recession had a disastrous impact on underserved students and families. An even more important reason for examining the contemporary teacher-led reform efforts through a social movement's framework is that there is a fundamental connection between civil rights and education that lies at the core. Indeed, I argue in this thesis that the fight for equal education is ongoing today, which builds on the legacy of important civil rights advancement since *Brown v. Board of Education* required desegregating schools so that every person has the opportunity to an equal and full education.

Education reform was central to the Civil Rights movement. In the landmark decision on *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the U.S. Supreme Court that children deserve to have the same right to quality education as their peers under the Fourteenth

Amendment's Equal Protection Clause. Building on the *Brown* decision, in *Plyer vs. Doe* (1982), the supreme court expanded the constitutional right to K-12 education to undocumented immigrants, arguing that education is so fundamental to persons prosperity that it is a universal right that cannot be denied, regardless of one's legal status. To deny education is equivalent to stripping a person of any chances at a self-sufficient and meaningful life and placing them into a sub-caste in society. The fight for education rights did not end with these important court rulings on who has a constitutional claim to attending schools. Indeed, the fight for affirmative action has continued for more than three decades across states, and a dynamic environment has emerged where public, private and charter schools' complicate questions about education access and equity in the tradition of *Brown v. Board*.

Teacher pay does in fact matter in regard to the right to a quality education, and here I will discuss why. A Learning Policy Institute report (2016) ranked Arizona as 1.5 on a scale of 1 to 5 in terms of attractiveness also ranked Arizona as a 2.2 in terms of working conditions. With less able and credentialed teachers in public schools, public schools will inevitably suffer. Studies have routinely found that "Effective teachers are the most important factor contributing to student achievement." (Stronge & Hindman, 2003). The devaluation of educators further serves to discredit the public-school system by not allowing it to function properly and thereby not provide students with highly qualified teachers. The teacher shortage in states like Arizona has thus reduced children's access to the right to a quality education. If certain schools or districts are not able to meet the market salary demands of qualified teachers while other schools or districts in the state are, then the state's actions bring to mind the *Brown v. Board of Education*

decision that says students should have equal education opportunities. Having a teacher shortage in the state also leads to higher class sizes, less time for teachers to prepare for their lessons, and less individualized attention for students. In many comprehensive rankings of public schools across states, Arizona is near the bottom (McCann, 2020).

Providing students with highly qualified teachers is a problem, but it is not the only problem. Schools are facing crumbling infrastructure and most districts in the state have to rely on passing bond overrides to maintain their capital expenses. Desks and supplies are often falling apart or breaking. In my district alone, we are using textbooks that are over four decades old. Again, while teacher salary and working conditions are important, it is not the only factor when considering what the goals of the movement are.

Essential to my argument that Red for Ed is a social movement more than just a teacher movement (for increasing their pay) is the fact that it has mobilized broad cross-sector and cross-issue support. We can see this support in the organizations that have signed on to support the Invest in Ed ballot initiative, which would put into law a progressive income tax increase created by the leaders of the Red for Ed movement to bring more funding to public schools. In addition to the National Education Association and the Arizona AFL-CIO, supporters of the Invest in Ed ballot initiative include a much broader coalition of organizations such as the Arizona Interfaith Network, the Arizona Center for Economic Progress, the Stand for Children Inc, and the Children's Action Alliance (Kwok, 2020). The presence of growth in this coalition to include children's rights advocacy groups such as those mentioned shows that rights of children are central to this movement's goals. While teacher pay is a piece of the education crisis puzzle, it is

not in fact the problem itself. Rather Red for Ed sees this policy proposal as one of many to remedy the continued struggle for equal education access.

In addition to this broad coalition, Red for Ed meets other definitions of a social movement such as the definition provided by McCarthy and Zald (2006). The broad but encompassing definition mentioned is as a set of sustained, “collective challenges by people or groups engaged in a political or cultural conflict,’ who employ repertoires of contention (petition drives, strikes, sit-ins, marches, rallies, traffic block-ing, pamphleteering, boycotts, etc.) in order to change some elements of the social structure and/reward distribution of society.” (Milkis and Tichenor, 2009). Red for Ed meets this definition in several ways. One is in regard to the sustained effort regarding education funding and inequities from institutionalized organizations such as the Arizona Education Association (AEA). Policy change goals are another feature of social movements. Throughout this project I will discuss the relative success of the movement. The political conflict here has outcomes that are easy to measure. These include the aforementioned salary goals, and restoration of funds. While the movement has yet to have all of their five demands met, they have made gains in regard to the 20% salary increase and a restoration of \$100 million dollars to school funding overall (this still however, does not meet the demand of restoring funding to 2008 levels when adjusting for inflation). The other demands mentioned have sought to be addressed in a ballot initiative to be voted on in the November 2020 general election. In regard to achieving these policy goals, Red for Ed has had a measurable level of success.

Tactics of the movement also meet the aforementioned definition of social movements. The “repertoire of contentions” from Red for Ed included but was not

limited to: walk-ins, petitions drives, marches, rallies, and even as noted above, a strike. In the table below, I summarize the key features of the Red for Ed social movement. In the next section, I will use prior literature on social movements to help make sense of these tactics in terms of how they fit within the insider outsider framework.

### Social Movement Features of the Red for Ed Movement

Goals/Outcomes	Strategies/Tactics	Activists
<p>Increased teacher pay to attract and retain highly effective teachers.</p> <p>Restoration of state school funding to pre-2008 recession levels.</p> <p>Competitive pay and positions for support staff (counselors, social workers, cafeteria workers)</p> <p>In tandem, these goals seek to be a means in which the desired quality of education for children is met in an equitable fashion</p>	<p>Insider Tactics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AEA lobbying for legislative agenda</li> <li>• Using network infrastructure to communicate goals and tactics</li> <li>• Lobbying district level leadership for support</li> </ul> <p>Outsider Tactics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walk-in demonstrations</li> <li>• March on capital</li> <li>• Walk-out (strike)</li> <li>• Ballot initiative</li> </ul>	<p>Frontline Activists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers</li> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Students</li> <li>• Support Staff</li> </ul> <p>Broader Coalition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progressive Groups</li> <li>• Children’s Advocacy Groups</li> <li>• Labor Groups</li> <li>• School Districts</li> </ul>

#### *Framing Red for Ed: Building on the Social Movement Literature*

This project explores teacher walkouts as a social movement, particularly in regard to how it does or does not fit within the insider/outsider social movement theory framework. The purpose of this literature review is to briefly draw on social movement

literature in regard to how activists in these movements have utilized insider and outsider tactics. This will be used to provide context to the Red for Ed movement's deployment of similar tactics. The positionality of teachers as insiders in their school districts, yet outsiders of policy makers is of interest here. It's also interesting to see that teachers are choosing activism here on behalf of the students and families they represent. Social movements are typically led by those being marginalized the most, we do have some precedent, however, of the mobilization of attorney's as activists in other social movements (Sarat & Scheingold, 2006) (Epp, 2009). The teachers as activists can be somewhat encapsulated by the actions of the Arizona Education Association and Arizona Educators United as this group worked heavily and in coordination with association members and nonmembers alike. In our traditional sense of insider/outsider social movements it is difficult to understand where associations fit. Typically, insider tactics of social movements involve formal institutions, whereas outsider tactics involve challenges to the established order. This means the typical legislative process is not conventional of outsider social movements (Maney, n.d.). The intersections of these tactics within teachers' associations will be explored in depth in Chapter 1 of this work. The role of teachers as activists mobilized through associations is important to consider as both an insider and outsider strategy because, as Adams and Shriver (2017) explain, "grassroots shifts from insider to outsider tactics stem from a loss of trust in elite institutions and citizens' understanding of the organization of power in society." However, we do not have to fit associations as purely insider or outsiders in this movement, in fact, as I will show in the review of other literature, many social

movements have had a dynamic relationship with insider and outsider statuses, and have used both to become more formative and effective at creating social and political change.

The civil rights movement during the mid to late 20th century illustrates my point that the dynamism of insider and outsider tactics are at play. Despite the ongoing struggle for civil rights, many see the success of that particular movement culminating in the Civil Rights Act (1964) and Voting Rights Act (1965). Scholars see the success of this movement originating with the outsider strategies of protests and demonstrations, but emphasize the multi-faceted insider strategies of movement organizations as critical for ultimately reforming policy (Andrews and Gaby 2015; Francis, 2014; Zepeda- Millán, 2017; Polletta, 2002; Flexner, 1996). Demonstration and protests are in fact, however, vital factors that influence policy change, according to Andrews and Gaby (2015), because it causes political elites “to see the movement as pervasive, enduring, and disruptive to the nation’s broader interests.” In parallel with building sustained pressure from the outside, successful models of social movement have employed insider strategies and leveraged political opportunities to influence the drafting and passage of civil rights legislation (Jenkins et al, 2003). When outsider and insider strategies operate in parallel, a social movement is better equipped to achieve meaningful long-term reforms in law and society. This thesis seeks to unpack these dynamics in the Red for Ed movement to understand how teachers as activists employed both insider and outsider strategies, simultaneously building its support from public officials while also pressuring for change through disrupting the everyday lives of the public.

Outsider strategies vary, but can be considered as a continuum scale from non-violent to violent tactics. The modern civil rights movement under the leadership of Dr.

Martin Luther King Jr. is most well-known for its non-violent tactics, which effectively shocked the nation into an awakening of the horrors of Jim Crow repression, while placing sustained pressure onto segregationist economies through boycotting businesses and public transportation systems (Colbern and Ramakrishnan, 2020). Of course, as Sidney Milkis and Daniel Tichenor make clear, the ways in which outsider and insider strategies are pursued and succeed depends on who is in office in formal government, as illustrated by movement's they call militant (Milkis and Tichenor, 2019). As Megan Ming Francis (year) help show, the civil rights movement was largely excluded having access to formal politics until the 1950s and 1960s, when the courts and president finally took on a leadership role in addressing civil rights.

Much like the early civil rights movement (prior to the 1950s), today's Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement is largely excluded from formal politics at the nation level and has only made some headways in states like California through criminal justice and policing reforms. Sidney Milkis and Daniel Tichenor, thus, describe BLM as a militant movement that is largely secluded to outsider tactics and framed as threatening. Some scholars go further, unpacking how BLM is also being delegitimized by the Black community. Vincent Lloyd (2019) describes activists associated with the BLM as embracing anger – particularly over policing – and working in opposition to an older generation of Black leaders invested in the politics of respectability. The civil rights movement non-violent outsider strategies had sparked wide-spread, multi-racial support. By contrast, Dewey Clayton (2008) argues that BLM is unable to mobilize large public support or following because of its narrow focus on policing (Clayton, 2018). In contrast, the Red for Ed movement can be argued to predominantly feature insider



strategies and lacks signs of militant outsider strategies. Yet, as I will explain in the thesis, the teacher movement's insider access can often pose a barrier rather than opportunity for achieved real reforms.

Contrasts BLM's perceived militancy as an outsider strategy, Red for Ed is much more similar to women's rights movements, both appearing less threatening when employing an outsider strategy. Soule et. al (1999) observed, "two different types of women's movement events: collective action that took place outside of the institutional political arena (outsider events) and collective action that took place within that arena (insider events). In all, there were 101 outsider events and 318 insider events during the 1956-1979 period. "(p. 243). Collective action was an effective outsider strategy, but importantly, this was done in parallel to even more insider events that could formalize the movement's goals into policy.

While these movements draw some comparisons to the education movement, there are some glaring differences. The most obvious is that teachers have the ability to opt-out of their identity as such, they could pursue other careers or teaching careers in more progressive states. The power dynamics at play with teachers compared to those who have been historically oppressed because of identities that they cannot nor should be expected to opt out of are completely different. Teachers have the ability to not be teachers whereas someone cannot choose to not be a person of color, or a woman. Again, it is not my purpose to do a comparative analysis on these movements in juxtaposition with the Red for Ed movement, but rather to draw on the literature's framework for how movements are or are not successful when utilizing both insider and outsider tactics in tandem or by shifting between the two types of tactics. Another difference is the fact that

both the women's rights movement and the Black Lives Matter movement are both national, and have what seems to be a larger amount of staying power. Because school policy is so localized, it's easy to see why many of the education walkouts occurred at the state level, and not on the Washington mall. This may be a result of the decrease in general of local news coverage, but also may have to do with seemingly more objective and concrete goals of the Red for Ed movement. In other words, there may be less ambiguity and nuance over school justice, if the main indicator that activists and policy makers are examining is per pupil spending.

Sidney Milkis and Daniel Tichenor (2019) make the argument that movements that employ both insider and outsider tactics such as these can be called formative movements, and that formative movements can be particularly effective especially when compared to institutionalized movements, marginal movements, or militant movements. This work seeks to contribute this case study of the Arizona Red for Ed movement to this discussion as it has worked to move from an institutionalized movement with associations playing a large insider role to a formative one in which outsiders contribute to policy change as well.

Sidney Milkis and Daniel Tichenor (2019) also provide an in-depth analysis of how national social movements interact with the executive branch of the federal government. They do this both from an insider perspective of building partnerships with the president, but also discuss the "non-institutional" methods deployed by outsider groups. I draw on this research to make comparisons on how these relationships, albeit mostly adversarial, in the education movement map onto the local relationships with the movement and local executive leaders such as mayors and governors.

Building on this literature, which connects social movement theory to formal politics, this project seeks to unpack how the teacher movement faces unique institutional barriers for engaging as insiders and outsiders. This research also seeks to explore whether education reform falls under similar notions of progressive change. At the time of this writing Arizona Educators United, the group behind the “Red for Ed” movement, along with the AEA is now pushing educators and activists to put their efforts behind a ballot initiative, because the governor has refused to meet or negotiate with either organization. The association president in Oklahoma called for a return to the classroom, not necessarily because demands were met (remember the deal passed was the same as the deal offered before the walkout), but rather cited a shift in strategy to focus on electing education friendly candidates. More research and theoretical work are needed to better understand the national trends of teacher movements.

### *Being on the Ground*

Before I discuss how this project will take shape, I would like to discuss my personal experience in this movement. Personally, I have been lucky enough to work in a district that has found ways to give teachers raises nearly every year that I have been employed. That being said, this has not been the case, even in my district, for thousands of teachers whose salaries were frozen for nearly a decade following the financial crisis of 2008. Many teachers left the state, or pursued other careers when experiencing these cuts in funding. While popular opinion agrees that teachers should, in general, be paid more, when discussing the movement with family and friends outside of the movement, I struggled to convey that the low salary of teachers was only a fraction of factors

contributing to the indignation of educators. While making more money could go a long way in attracting talented educators, what motivated me to action was not what I was seeing on my paycheck, but what I was seeing in my classroom.

The reason this should be considered a social movement, and not a labor dispute, is because students and families were being shortchanged and suffering the consequences of the systematic defunding of education by the state. These choices had a disproportionate effect on minority students and those living in impoverished parts of the state. It was common for me to not have enough desks in my classroom for forty or more students. I would have to assign a student to be a “floater” meaning they would get the empty desk when another student was absent. I saw multiple ceiling tiles crumbling, and insects infesting my classroom. Oftentimes, schools did not have enough teachers or rooms for the number of students they had. Teachers had to pick up the slack by picking up a class in their prep time, sharing rooms, or having administrators overcrowd their classrooms. Again, this movement was not about salary, but more about how we saw kids being affected by choices outside of their control.

Another aspect of being a high school teacher is seeing the evidence that the school system has failed many students before they reach my classroom door. As many as two thirds of my students do not have the requisite academic skills to be successful in my class. As a normal classroom teacher, neither myself or my colleagues have the ability to fill in the gaps for over a hundred students and satisfy the curriculum requirements of my course. To address these gaps effectively, the school district needs to have intervention programs that involve extra class sections, reduced class sizes, and more teachers to take on this responsibility.

I've also had several students that have fallen through the cracks. Whether they had special needs or learning disabilities, these students were able to reach 10<sup>th</sup> grade or higher without being caught as someone who needs additional accommodations or had serious at home issues. This is a direct result of not having adequate special education or social worker staff on site, and teachers having too many administrative tasks to handle and therefore was not able to follow up if the student needed academic or social and emotional support.

The mobilization of the movement happened fast, and I was unaware of it while it was happening as my social media presence and activism is below average. I happened to be wearing a red shirt one day in the copy room when another teacher asked me if I was wearing "red for ed" that day. It was then I started to research what was happening, particularly in the online space. At the same time news of teacher strikes in West Virginia began to make national news. While I considered the possibility, I thought the school year was too close to an end for Arizona teachers to force a walk out. My level of activism in this movement was mostly through demonstrations, the walk-ins (which I will discuss further in the association's chapter), my vote in the affirmative for a walkout, and the sit-ins and march on the state capital. The further extent of my activism involved conversations with my site leaders communicating what I thought the best strategy for teachers and kids were as the movement developed, and site leaders would then take these points to association leadership. I was not unique in this aspect, all teachers, regardless of their support or association membership status were encouraged to share their opinions, and it spoke to the bottom up strategy of that made the movement feel inclusive. In other words, I held no leadership role in this movement, and would consider

myself one of the rank and file teachers that the movement relied upon, and through this project, I hope to seek further understanding of how this movement can be theorized to improve not only the inequities of public education, but other institutionalized injustices as well. While this study is not an autoethnography, I hope that my position as a teacher in this work breaks through.

### *Methods and Data for this Project*

In this project, I will rely heavily on my experience in the movement as rationale for why I've chosen to investigate associations and districts as to why they mattered in the movement. I have chosen to use my leverage as an insider of this movement and my positionality as a basis for the concepts I will build in later chapters. This is a bottom up method of concept building rather solely relying on those constructed a priori (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2012).

The position as a teacher for myself and in general is an interesting one in this movement. There are some tensions here that must be addressed before I move further. For one, teacher can opt in and out of a movement in which they are not the directly impacted by the population they attend to. While I, and many other teachers care about education rights, teachers could choose another profession, or move to state with more progressive education policies.

My position as a white male, and as having the ability to opt in and out of this movement limits how I can relate to or express the struggle over education rights. On the other hand, my positionality as a teacher in the movement leads me to have a greater insight into the movement. This can be seen through my choice to study this movement

in a social movement framework, and in my choice to focus on associations and districts as drivers of the movement. Those who examine this movement from the outside may not have had the same insights.

Because of the rich description I will be able to provide with being so close to this movement, in spite of some lack of access, I have decided to make this project a case study of the Arizona Red for Ed movement. While some of the interviews from legislatures and association leaders would have added to this case study, I still believe that their comments made in media reports along with the primary documents mentioned and my personal experiences provide evidence into how the Red for Ed movement fits into the social movement literature and how it can challenge the insider outsider theoretical framework.

Only one legislature on the Arizona education committee returned my request for contact, she was a former teacher that was elected after the Red for Ed march in 2018 midterms. I had another response and interview scheduled with a Democrat on the committee, but that member canceled and did not reschedule. No Republican committee members responded to my request for interview. While this was not entirely surprising, it illustrated that my position outside of politics was a limiting factor in my research. I had also hoped to have direct contact with association leadership, despite my membership status in the association, multiple email requests for comments or data were not returned. When I asked for good contact for association membership rates across ten particular school districts, I was told by my association representative that the leadership may be skeptical of my request as a possible means of using that data as a means to do damage to the association.

I draw further evidence for my claims based on media coverage of the movement, particularly coverage from late April to early May of 2018. In addition, I use interviews with colleagues and my district site leader to abductively provide rational and triangulation of my arguments (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2012). Particularly in the chapter on district leadership, I use publicly available documents such as district board meeting agendas and minutes along with district salary information, made available through the state's board of education website to discuss why district leadership was important to the movement. Other primary sources of data I use are emails from association site leaders, district governing boards, and the superintendent of the school district I work for.

### *Outline of the Project*

Chapter 1 unpacks the role that teacher associations play and why this is unique from other movements. How can we make sense of teacher associations through an insider/outsider framework? On one hand, they are a formal body with political power and influence, but on the other hand, they have no legal right to negotiations the way traditional unions do. Because association leadership was instrumental to the organization and collaboration of the teacher walkouts, they provide an essential institutional structure to the movement's success, particularly its connection to state politics by shaping whether they operate as insiders and outsiders.

Chapter 2 turns to exploring the role that district administrative support, similarly asking how this shapes the movement's insider/outsider status. Districts have been able to enable teacher walkouts by preemptively closing schools before accounting for who is



calling out of work. This provides some level of protection for teachers who walk out, and also protection from backlash from peers of those who do not. This also gives protection from state level retaliation, because by preemptively closing, the state has no means of knowing who would call out sick. This is important because in Arizona, several state level lawmakers have threatened to revoke teacher licenses. To explore this, I will look at the most populated districts in Arizona, and look for public commentary or resolutions from superintendents or board members declaring support or condemnation for teacher walkouts.

The third chapter concludes by briefly exploring the future of the education movement and reflects on how it contrasts other social movements. I hope to further explain what there is to gain by studying Red for Ed as a social movement, and how seeing it in another framework would undermine the progress that has been made.

As I conclude my introduction I would like to remind the reader that I feel justified in my portrayal of the Red for Ed movement as a social movement. If we were to consider it otherwise we would be missing the opportunity to contribute such a strong challenge to such a conventional social movement framework. In addition to defining what a social movement is and how Red for Ed meets that definition, I have also drawn on prior social movement literature to build the concepts necessary to explore how Red for Ed operates as both an insider and outsider movement.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE ASSOCIATIONS

Media outlets who covered the protests tended to frame the actions taken as either by solely rank and file teachers or orchestrated entirely by the teacher's union, neither of these framings however, are correct. Being in the movement myself and in conversations with my coworkers, it was clear to see that teachers' associations were instrumental in the success of the movement. Looking past associations and solely at teachers as individual actors would miss the fact that the movement would not have been sustainable without the organizational structure the association provided. Framing this movement as though it was orchestrated entirely by the Arizona Education Association also misses the point. As I will discuss later, the AEA was somewhat nudged from the outside into supporting a work stoppage. In this section I will discuss why the state association was critical, but also not the sole driver of the movement. This has deep ramifications for how education or similar movements could operate in the future. It is somewhat difficult to pin exactly where teachers' associations can or should fit on the insider outsider framework in regard to this social movement. When one thinks of the Red for Ed movement, outsider grassroots organizations played a large role. In Arizona, such organizations included but were not limited to Arizona Educators United and Save our Schools. These organizations were critical in the movement's success, but I will argue that said success may have been less so if it weren't for pre-established teacher organizations and their insider infrastructure. In fact, it may have been the hybrid of both tactics that could have led to some semblance of success. The reasons I choose to focus on the teacher association here are twofold. Without the association presence, the movement could not have

happened at all, but more importantly, associations working symbiotically demonstrate the nexus of teachers as activists using both insider and outsider strategies. This hybrid of tactics described in this chapter, will support my argument that the typical dichotomy of insider/outsider status of activists in this social movement should be challenged, and can be done so when closely examining the Red for Ed movement in Arizona. I will use some of the theoretical concepts described in the social movement literature to make this point as I discuss how the Arizona Education association played such a pivotal role in the movement.

### *A Recent History of the AEA*

The Arizona Education Association (AEA) describes itself as follows, “AEA is a professional association and a labor union, advocating on behalf of students, staff, and teachers in Arizona.” (AEA, n.d.). A question that gets a little lost in the conversation is this, Is the AEA and therefore its parent association, the NEA, actually a labor union? The AEA and NEA both assert that they are in fact labor unions, however what differentiates a union from an association is that labor unions have a legal right to negotiate with their employers. This point is somewhat moot because most sub associations at the district level are able and expected to negotiate with district leadership in good faith. With that being said, district leadership, while having some control over working conditions and salary, are somewhat handcuffed by the budget they get from the state. Therefore, one could ask, is a school district the employer, or is it in some form or another, the state? If it is in some part the latter, then the definition of having a right to negotiate comes into play and is important. As a leader in passing the state budget, and

with his party in control of the Arizona state legislature, Arizona Governor Doug Ducey refused to even meet with association and movement leaders, let alone negotiate with them (Welch, 2018). In this regard it seems as though associations do not have an insider track to making social change, or that the current political makeup of the state does not validate that process. This is where we can see the first hint of the concepts from Milkis and Tichenor (2019) that argue formative movements need to adjust their insider or outsider tactics based on what political actors were in leadership come into play. Up until this point, the association had framed their policy advocacy using insider strategies. As this issue began to take form as a social movement, in response to the gutting of school budgets, the AEA would soon be forced to adjust their tactics accordingly if it wanted to ensure any policy change in the near future.

On the other hand, the AEA has engaged in multiple activities that one could consider insider tactics. For decades, the AEA has engaged in legal fights with the state using the legislative process. One proposition implored the state legislature to indefinitely increase the budget for funding schools by 2% per year or by the change in GDP that year, whichever is smaller (Pitzl, 2013). Because the Arizona constitution was founded on the principle that voters are direct members of the legislative body, one must consider this progress in regards to Arizona citizens making a conscious decision to secure resources for their children. Arizona legislators however would eventually choose to simply ignore measure while creating new budgets in subsequent years. While a decade passed before the Arizona legislature followed through with ignoring the provision put in place by Proposition 301, hints that they would do so emerged as early as 2003, only three years since the proposition was passed. Penny Kotterman (2003),

president of the Arizona Education Association at the time, wrote the following concern in the Arizona Republic, "In direct violation of the voter approved Proposition 301, legislators plan to extinguish the 2 percent inflation adjustment for everything except transportation and charter schools." The idea that lawmakers would ignore the proposition is suspect in it of itself, but to cut public school funding while maintaining that of charter schools would be direct evidence that one type of school would be hoped to succeed over the other.

Arizona did in fact choose to ignore the 2 percent rule in 2010. This provoked Cave Creek Unified school district, along with other districts, and the Arizona Education Association to file a lawsuit against the state. By the time the case reached the Arizona Supreme Court, the plaintiffs argued that between the years of 2010 and 2013, Arizona schools lost 250 million dollars in funding (Pitzl, 2013). In *Cave Creek Unified School District vs. Ducey*, defendants for the state argued that voters do not have the ability to appropriate funding, that in fact, Proposition 301 was merely the expressed will of the voters, a suggestion if you will. The state supreme court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs arguing that the state acted unconstitutionally when ignoring the proposition because of the Voter Protection Act put in place in 1998 (ACLPI, 2015). This act was designed to limit the Arizona legislature in altering laws passed by the voters. One may think this court ruling would settle the issue of funding schools, at least in terms of maintaining an adjustment for inflation when budgeting for education.

When the Arizona legislature yet again ignored its legal obligation to adequately fund education, a constitutional crisis emerged. Here the voters and the courts agreed on more dollars going to public schools, and the legislative and executive branch of the state

government resisted. Ironically the very bodies meant to enforce a law clarified for them by the state supreme court were the ones ignoring it. Eventually, a settlement was reached. Arizona would partially pay schools money that was legally owed to them by withdrawing larger funds from the Arizona State Land Trust. (ACLPI, 2015). This resulted in the passage of Proposition 123 in May of 2016. Proposition 123 provided millions of dollars in back payments owed to schools. However, the future of education in Arizona became less clear as the state circumvents the 2000 proposition and can now legally cut education funding in the state if education takes up more than 49% of the state's budget. It should also be noted that Arizona had a surplus of money in the state's general fund at the time of the passage of 123, enough to pay what the schools were legally owed ("Arguments filed against Proposition 123", 2016).

The above saga of recent decades education funding in Arizona demonstrates the AEA's insider tactics through legislative actions in propositions, and legal challenges to the state's interpretation of voter approved measures. What we see in the continuous failure to break through some of these institutional barriers is the loss of faith and trust in the institutions to respond to organizational power mentioned by Adams and Schiver (2017).

This lack of trust in the legislature led the AEA president, Joe Thomas to take note of the teacher strikes in West Virginia and asked on twitter if Arizona teachers were willing to take similar actions (Karvelis, 2018). This demonstrates that the association was beginning to see the promise of demonstrating as an outsider tactic. At the same time the limitations of these tactics are evidenced by the continued lack of funding for schools despite legislative victories at the polls and in courtrooms. The history of

proposition 301 displays a constitutional crisis in which the will of the legislature is at odds with the will of the voters. I will discuss the impact and framework of ballot measures in a later chapter. It was these limitations and systemic blocks to insider tactics that led the organization working beyond the normal lobbying and insider framework towards the outsider tactics of demonstrations and work stoppages. In other words, decades of limitations in the Arizona legal system led to a lack of trust in the state legislative institution, which in turn gave inception to the deployment of outsider tactics. Again, this pattern is in line with Adams and Shriver's (2017) work on organizational power. These institutional barriers, such as state partisanship and lack of a legal right to negotiate limited the power of the association to advance their legislative agenda. Every election, the AEA advocates for education friendly candidates, but that strategy simply did not resonate with voters, nor did it put pressure on conservatives to moderate their stance on public education funding. It seemed as though, despite its best efforts, the AEA had reached a perpetual dead end in their efforts.

### *A Necessary Partnership*

While associations played a major role in the relative success of the Red for Ed movement, a point which I will argue more strongly later, they did initiate what many consider to be the most effective component of the movement. Many educators realized the collective leverage they had in a work stoppage, in other words "walking out". Polling by Ipsos and NPR (2018) found that just 1 in 4 Americans believe that teachers are paid fairly, 2 in 3 are supportive of teachers' unions, and 3 in 4 believe that teachers

have a right to strike. With public opinion behind them, and Arizona having particularly challenging working conditions for educators, a strike did seem somewhat inevitable.

As demonstrated above however, the AEA has traditionally used insider tactics when advocating for education reform. A work stoppage of teachers is much more disruptive to the everyday lives of community members than almost any other field. With over 800,000 students impacted by the walkouts statewide, a strike of this magnitude would be unrivaled by recent memory (Cano, 2018). The AEA likely knew this risk and considered it in situations prior. Some have even criticized the AEA for not considering striking sooner (Campbell, 2018). Then came in the grassroots organization called Arizona Educators United.

The Arizona Educators United (AEU) was founded by Noah Karvelis who started organizing on Facebook with a simple call to action to wear red on Wednesdays to support funding public education. Through localized Facebook organization, teachers were encouraged to not only wear red, but also share on social media reasons why they were ready to act. Such reasons included but were not limited to, “I live with three other teachers just so we can afford rent.” and “We elementary teachers are more than 20 percent below the national average for teacher salary.” (Karvelis, 2020). The AEU in its decision to bring outsider tactics to complement and somewhat challenge the advocacy work of the AEA is what allowed and pushed the decade long institutionalized movement of the education association into the formative movement of Red for Ed.

Before a walkout was considered, several weeks went by when teachers would not only wear red on Wednesdays, but also gather on the sidewalks of main roads outside of their local schools, and then walk into their buildings in solidarity when they were



scheduled to be on campus. The movement labeled this tactic as a “walk-in” both as an attempt at building community support and to draw contrast with what the movement was willing to do next, a walkout. While there is no scientific polling on the Red for Ed movement in particular because of how quickly it developed, I personally remember standing on the sidewalk holding a Red for Ed sign, 30 minutes before I was required to be on campus and feeling bolstered by the amount of support perceived from cars driving by. Again, while it was tough to know how the community felt on an objective basis, the feeling amongst educators was that parents and civilians were on their side. I had many conversations with teachers myself that had been in the profession for over 20 years that said things like, “I’ve never seen anything like this” and “It’s been this bad for years, I’m glad we’re finally doing something about it”.

The walk-ins are often ignored or neglected in recaps and analysis of the Red for Ed movement, but it was these movements and the resulting winning of public support that led the governor to propose a 20% teacher pay raise. Here we see evidence of Tichenor and Milkis (2019) argument that, “movements have proved most viable in their pursuit of contentious change when they have combined conventional political leverage with credible disruptive threats to orderly politics.” While the proposal ignored four out of the five demands from the AEA and AEU, it showed that something was working and that the movement was shifting towards higher stakes. These tactics from the AEU lead to an energy and momentum that had not been felt before in years prior, despite the AEA’s best intentions and actions. These actions also lead the grassroots movement to push the AEA to embrace the use of outsider tactics (Campbell, 2018).

Karvelis made the following point when describing the AEU's coalition, "There are no political parties pulling the strings. There are no candidates pulling the strings or unions behind the scenes pushing agendas," Karvelis said. "It's just educators advocating on behalf of other educators and families and their students." (Campbell,2018). So how then were the associations critical to the movement making funding gains? This was done through a unique partnership with the association and the grassroots movement. By providing infrastructure and resources to Arizona Educators United, and playing more of a supportive role, this social movement gained an effective balance of insider tactics provided by the union, and outsider tactics provided by the grassroots movement. In order for strikes to be effective there needs to be a critical mass of organization members to make the walkout effects noticed. The catch, is that oftentimes the loudest voices are not necessarily representative of everyone's individual decision on collective action. Perhaps the association's greatest contribution to this movement was having inside access to the individual districts and individual schools.

Despite the localization on Facebook, movement leaders needed access to teachers who were not on social media and perhaps those of differing political views. Taking a representative survey of all state employees would be a daunting task for any outside group. That is where the AEA came in. Because the association had built local sub organizations in every district, and site leaders at every school, they were able to offer a simple vote to all teachers on any given campus regardless of whether they were association members or not. This level of infrastructure simply could not have been put into place in a matter of weeks by the AEU.

The vote was fairly straight forward, a ‘yes’ vote meant that you were in favor of an indefinite work stoppage before the end of the school year, and a ‘no’ vote meant that you were not. This vote was not conducted as official school business, but teachers were made aware of their opportunity to vote by word of mouth through association members or those following the Red for Ed movement closely. Even teachers who were not supportive of the walkout were encouraged to make their voices heard, because the association and the movement did not want to have a false sense of support among the rank and file. This vote included over 57,000 educators and while some schools voted against the measure by narrow margins, 78% of respondents voted in the affirmative for a teacher lead walkout (Cano, 2018).

The aforementioned vote was critical for several reasons. One, the governor had proposed a 20% raise for Arizona by the year of 2020 a week prior to the vote to walkout. While this proposal seemed promising, it had not been approved by the Arizona state legislature and leaders of the movement sensed the move as a reaction to escalating tactics from the Red for Ed movement. As mentioned above, the proposal from the governor ignored one of the main motivators for action and that increased funding for classrooms and improved working conditions, not just a raise for teachers. This last point is important because there was a sense that opponents of the movement tried to paint teachers as wanting more money for themselves. While raises were important, teachers often became most impassioned about non-pay related issues, such as having 45 students in a class, leaks in their classrooms, or teaching with half-century old textbooks. It was important for teachers to let the public know that they were fighting for their kids and not only themselves. Teachers also had a sense that this money was not guaranteed and felt

as though they had been burned before. That being said, it was important for both AEU and the AEA to see how teachers felt in reaction to this news (Cano, 2018).

Another reason the vote was important is that it provided a strong sense of support for both organizations to act and support escalating tactics. “This is undeniably and clearly a mandate for action,” said AEA president Joe Thomas (Cano, 2018). It also allowed for the organizations to send a message to lawmakers that teachers were united in this effort and strategies to send divisive messaging to the public and or to teachers were futile because of overwhelming support for public schools. This mandate led to one of the largest demonstrations ever held in the state of Arizona.

Along with the vote, the AEA and AEU had started to importantly build support of the community which added to the argument that the AEA had a mandate for action. It was not uncommon on the way to work to see multiple small business establishments hang Red for Ed sign in their windows, or signs that said explicitly, “we support the Red for Ed movement”. Along with the Ipsos polling mentioned earlier and the support from children’s advocacy groups mentioned in the introduction, the coalition to cement Red for Ed as a social movement was indeed expanding. Els De Graauw (2016), makes the argument that such coalition building is incredibly useful in advancing the goals of a social movement.

Obviously, this walkout and subsequent march on April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018 made a difference in the outcomes realized by the movement. The overall deal reached was not significantly different than the one proposed by the governor initially, but it did force the legislature to cement the proposal and built the coalition necessary to lay the groundwork for the next steps of the movement. We see this method employed by social movements

such as the Civil Rights movement where in addition to outsider pressure from disruptive tactics, insider strategies can then be leveraged for political opportunities to influence the drafting and passage of legislation suitable to the movement (Jenkins et al, 2003). Here in the Red for Ed movement, we see a similar tandem effect in which the outsider method of a strike not only led to policy changes within the state legislature, but also laid the groundwork for an even more substantial legislative change in the invest in ed ballot initiative.

I will address this in the next chapter, but this show of strength more or less forced the hand of local district boards and superintendents to more or less support teachers in their efforts as well. This, along with massive teacher shortages in the state of Arizona, which can be attributed to budget cuts in education, lead teachers to feel secure in their jobs and act as though they had nothing to lose.

The aforementioned vote that required infrastructure and experience is just one demonstration of how instrumental the association was to the success of the movement. “Our union leaders realized that we had been able to ignite a spark that they were unable to cultivate and told AEU that they wanted the teachers to remain at the helm of the movement.” (Karvelis, 2018). Grassroots organizers and the AEA localized the movement by creating a network of site liaisons. This network of over 2,000 teachers were able to monitor the activity of their campus along with having a pulse on what rank and file teachers were feeling and doing. While for some site liaisons, it was their first organizational leadership position, the movement had a large batch of association leaders well established in the school system to draw from. In my personal experience, every “go-to” local movement leader had also had experience being a site representative in the

Glendale Union Highschool Educators Association (GUEA, a subgroup of the AEA). The organization of this network led to being able to communicate effectively what the next step in the movement was and hold physical after school meetings to discuss strategies and concerns. Without the association's infrastructure the movement would not have had these tools.

### *Associations and the Insider/Outsider Framework*

What has been demonstrated thus far, is that the outsider tactics of Arizona Educator United, such as organizing symbolic awareness (wearing red shirts), using mass demonstrations (the march in late April), and local demonstrations (the walk-ins) galvanized public support and created a mandate for the Arizona state legislature to act. On the surface it seems that these outside tactics alone were what drove the success of the movement. That being said, the tools, support, and infrastructure of the Arizona Education Association had some effect as well and it's difficult to say the movement could be considered a success at any extent without them. While the AEA has traditionally used insider tactics to advance their legislative agenda, with results that were not satisfactory to its members, was it the marriage of insider/outsider tactics of the AEU and AEA that lead to the movement's success? Or did the AEA merely embrace outsider tactics from the AEU as a result of losing faith in the institutions that had stalled progress up to this point? At this point I will argue the latter, but with a few caveats. The AEA may not have had a choice in ignoring the desire to take more aggressive action, especially from its members, and what clearly drove action from the Arizona legislature was the demonstrations and the threat with follow through of the walkout. Importantly

this adds credibility to Red for Ed being a social movement, because we see so many other social movements shift between insider and outsider tactics and that is what has made them effective. The walk out simply would not have been possible without years of building infrastructure through the use of insider tactics and organization. The building of trust and good faith with the association and rank and file teachers lead to access and message discipline. So, while the AEA has been traditionally an insider advocacy group, it's embraced or some may argue, getting out of the way of outsider tactics is partially what made this movement different from many others that we have seen. This is consistent with Pettinicchio's (2012) findings that "institutional activists' – insiders with access to resources and power who proactively take up causes that overlap with those of grassroots challengers" make up a critical role to many social movements including, but not limited to the civil rights act. This exploration of associations adds to the conversation that the insider/outsider social movement framework may in fact be a false dichotomy to the extent it is meant to be dichotomous at all.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE DISTRICTS

Often overlooked in the Red for Ed movement is the role administrative leaders played at the individual district level. I will argue in this chapter, that like the associations, my experience with the movement lead me to see that without gaining or utilizing the support of district leadership, the movement would not have been as impactful. The nature of localizing the movement from the ground up, such as the district level, helped to mitigate some of the institutional barriers set up by the state, and as such districts deserve to be investigated. As mentioned prior, teachers had some leverage in a sense because once a critical mass of teachers decided to walk out, there would not be enough qualified adults to fill in their roles in even supervising let alone educating children. Some districts forced teachers to use their sick days before making the decision to close. Other districts, like my own, observed the plans of the AEA and AEU, and preemptively closed schools. The strategy of the former may have been to say that they would make an effort to stay open if the critical mass of teachers did not walk out. What is the rationale for preemptively closing? I argue here that it is for showing support for their teachers. I will discuss this further that while district leaders' hands may have been forced a bit, that movement leaders utilized this support to their advantage as an insider tactic. In this chapter, I will examine the ten largest districts in the state of Arizona in terms of number of students. I will often refer to this group of districts as "the top ten" districts. Again, this reflects their size, not their rankings in regard to working conditions for teachers or any other quality metric. I will also weave in my personal experience in what I consider a well-paying district in the state that from my perception,



does well by its employees. These experiences will include conversations with coworkers and movement leaders.

There were lots of reasons for teachers to feel confident that they had the momentum and leverage to strike. Since there was a well-known teacher shortage in Arizona, many of us had the thought, “What are they going to do, fire us?”. That being said, there was still reason to be nervous for many educators when they weighed the decision to strike. One obvious worry was whether or not they would be paid during a work stoppage. Teachers already are underpaid, so this risk was significant. Teachers usually have some level of paid time off through sick or discretionary leave, but would they be allowed to use it in this instance? Teachers had no idea how long the standoff would last, were they committed to depleting all of their earned time off if they were forced to utilize it? Would they face retaliation from their administrators, or district leaders? Assuming the strike was successful, how would a teacher who did not strike be treated if their peers knew they were not on the front lines of the movement, but still got a raise? Educators had to weigh these risks, but district leadership also had forethought into these potential consequences. The members of district boards, and superintendents had enormous influence over outcomes and mandates to the legislatures.

Washington Elementary is the tenth largest district in the state of Arizona, and the largest school district in the state that does not have secondary schools in its district. The following is an excerpt from a letter to educators from the Washington Elementary School district governing board and superintendent (2018) regarding events leading up to the eventual teacher walkout:

*“...Across America, there is an educational crisis occurring that began long before this school year. School staff have chosen this profession because they are passionate about serving children, but stagnant wages and the lack of basic school resources have made continuing in their positions incredibly difficult. Educators have raised their voices, asked for education funding reforms, petitioned their government, rallied at the state capitol, and protested the stream of anti-public-school measures that continue to defund our schools. The pleas of the public education community to Arizona’s legislators have been ignored, petitions dismissed, and claims publicly denied; this has resulted in educators feeling disrespected. From West Virginia to Oklahoma and now Arizona, educators and supporters have come together to protect our students’ right to a quality public education. Educators across the state have joined together in solidarity to demand clear, sustainable solutions to Arizona’s educational funding crisis. You will see us wearing red, like many of you, in support of our teachers. We support the teachers in their advocacy in ways that are lawful and do not disrupt the educational mission...”*

These displays of support may seem trivial, but speaking from experience, and discussions with my colleagues, I can say that from a personal level and from a tactical level, that support such as this was critical to the movement. The support may have translated into real dollars for educators as well. Of the top ten biggest districts in the state, Washington Elementary had the largest salary increase, it was nearly double the next highest salary level. The table titled District Support below shows the salary

changes of the top ten most populous districts in Arizona before and after a deal to end the walkout was struck.

### District Support

District	Average Salary 2017	Average Salary 2019	% Change	Public Support Red for Ed?
Chandler	\$55,701.00	\$57,940.00	4.02%	No (not a board issue, per superintendent)
Mesa	\$52,923.00	\$56,907.00	7.53%	Yes
Tucson	\$50,276.00	\$47,105.00	-6.31%	Yes
Deer Valley	\$46,416.00	\$49,855.00	7.41%	Yes
Peoria	\$48,598.00	\$52,370.00	7.76%	No resolution
Gilbert	\$51,125.00	\$53,750.00	5.13%	No resolution
Paradise Valley	\$48,299.00	\$51,500.00	6.63%	Introduced by superintendent, no record of it being adopted.
Phoenix Union	\$62,782.00	\$64,179.00	2.23%	Yes
Dysart	\$51,181.00	\$55,421.00	8.28%	No resolution
Washington Elementary	\$43,901.00	\$49,900.00	13.66%	Yes, letter of support
<b>Average for top 10</b>			<b>5.63%</b>	
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>\$48,372.00</b>	<b>\$52,411.00</b>	<b>8.35%</b>	

Also, in the table is whether or not the state publicly expressed support for the movement. Again, while average salary is not the only indication of overall success in the movement, especially when considering the other four demands of Arizona Educators United, it does serve as a proxy for follow through from governing boards allocating salary. Before I continue to discuss why this level of district leadership is important, particularly in regard to the insider/outsider strategies of the movement, I would like to address a couple of non-intuitive findings in the table.

### *Observations of District Support and Salary*

The clear outlier in this data is the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) in which the average teacher salary actually decreased. This phenomenon is rather interesting because it gives the impression that the governing board went back on their word. In the case of TUSD, 2017 salaries may have been over inflated to begin with because of a large one-time payout from Proposition 301. The following excerpt comes from a Tucson local news report which investigated the manner, “A tweet by the Governor's office in late April had TUSD teachers shaking their heads. It showed the average teacher salary is about 50-thousand dollars and the governor's new plan would boost it to 60-thousand by the year 2020. But teachers told us the first number of about \$50,000 is wrong so they'll never get to projected amount of \$60,000.” (Cavazos, 2018). The report went on to say that the Tucson superintendent confirmed this notion that the average salary was overinflated. This is important because Tucson teachers did in fact earn a raise even if the average salary went down. First year teachers in the district were given a starting salary of over \$40,000 for the first time. It also gave a flat raise of \$1500

to each teacher across the board, which means the percentage increase varied depending on experience (Bailey,2019). This flat increase, coupled with attrition from higher earning older teachers, and having an overinflated 2017 salary may partially explain why the average salary of teachers actually decreased following the heat of the Red for Ed movement.

The other head scratching finding is that Phoenix Union High School District (PUHSD) had a much smaller salary increase, especially when compared to one of its feeder districts, Washington Elementary School District. This can be explained by noticing that the average salary in PUHSD was already substantially higher than the other top ten districts before the walkout. In fact, it was the only district in the top ten that had an average teacher salary over \$60,000. It is unclear if state funding formulas that resulted from the deal that ended the walkout allowed for districts with a higher than average starting salary to increase their particular workers salary, or if districts were only able to adjust to proposed raises for average Arizona teachers. PUHSD still does have the highest average salary of the state's top ten districts regardless of the small increase in terms of percentage.

Even explaining away, the two cases where a public resolution did not correlate with a high change in salary, one can see that these resolutions and displays of support did not seem to make much difference in regard to how significant a raise teacher in a particular district got. There are examples of no resolution and significant raises, but there is also not an example in the top ten in which there was no resolution and the district teachers received a raise over the state average. So how did these public displays of support matter? Or did they at all?

Again, I argue that these displays were of some importance. The first reason is that these resolutions were made prior to when the walkouts took place, but also while said walkouts seemed imminent. These pledges of support from district leadership, in effect, gave cover to employees seeking to up the ante. By district leadership taking the side of the teachers, many felt that their actions were justified, and importantly they did not feel as though school closures would spur retaliation from their immediate supervisors. This permission structure was lobbied for by teachers and parents using an insider tactic of community members and educators getting on governing board meeting agendas, speaking at these meetings with conviction, and pushing board members and superintendents to be on the record taking a side. A reasonable question here is, did these school boards have a choice? Public school policy is one politic that is not as polarizing as others, though it has been politicized increasingly over the years. It is one area in politics that can be lobbied through the public arena, and because of its highly localized nature, importantly, most arguments and concerns expressed at these meetings are done so in good faith. This is important because it provides us some insights as to whether the Red for Ed movement is one of insiders or outsiders. Here we recall that institutional barriers existed that did not allow teachers or teachers associations to negotiate or effectively lobby state level policy makers. So, while the movement had to resort to outsider tactics in order to actually change policy, movement leaders used the less polarized channel of local school boards to advance their agenda. Because these movement leaders were mostly employees, and grievances expressed and lobbying of governing boards and superintendents were made through institutional channels, these efforts should be considered as insider tactics. By garnering the support of the

substantially more powerful and influential institution of school districts, the movement had a higher chance of success than it would have otherwise.

While not every school district deliberately expressed support for such an unprecedented movement, the half that did not express support at the very least did not condemn the movement. The closest thing I could find to condemnation was the somewhat dismissive comments from the Chandler Unified Superintendent that said school funding is not a board issue, but rather a state issue. While this is true, it did not stop other districts from expressing their support for the movement.

#### *Chandler's Cautionary Tale*

CUSD Superintendent Camille Casteo was in fact a proponent of Governor Ducey's proposals. She also shared a tweet of his remarks on the teacher strike. With the size of CUSD, and the politically leaning of the superintendent, many in the movement feared that CUSD's original decision to push through the strike and reopen schools before a deal was accepted would be a significant blow to the movement's momentum. After preemptively closing on Thursday April 26th and 27th of 2018, the superintendent said that the plan was for CUSD to reopen the following Monday, April 30th. Again, no deal to end the walkout was in sight. District leadership expressed to the media that the decision to reopen without a deal was based on an internal poll of staff that said they would be willing to return to work (Flaherty, 2018). However, in a surprising reversal, the following day CUSD announced that it would remain closed indefinitely as hundreds of staff members called the district to say that they would not be showing up on Monday (Flaherty, 2018). So here we have an example of a large and influential district

not being actively supportive of the Red for Ed movement, and actually tried to undermine it. Why didn't this strategy of breaking the strike work for CUSD? The most likely answer is that they had to back down because public support for the movement was too high to not back down. Through primarily Facebook groups, Chandler teachers expressed anger at the decision to reopen (Flaherty, 2018), parents in these groups did so as well. Perhaps the other large districts choosing not to push for a reopening also played a significant role. Another reason Chandler did not have as much leverage as they thought here is because they did not want to be seen as hostile to their teachers, especially in a moment where teacher shortages in the state were being consistently highlighted. Perhaps they didn't realize that by pre-emptively closing schools in the first place, that their power in this situation had been significantly compromised. What this seems to say is that even though district leadership was not nearly as supportive in this case, the insider tactics of lobbying said leadership were effective regardless of their overall friendliness or expression of support to the teachers. In other words, while not overtly antagonistic towards the Red for Ed movement, their non-supportive posturing did not preclude teachers within the movement to use these insider tactics to advance the movement.

### *Pre-emptive Closures*

In this section we will see a tangible benefit of broadening the Red for Ed coalition to include administration officials. I will begin the discussion on preemptive closures with some pertinent excerpts from an email announcement given to us from Glendale Union High School District's (the district in which I'm employed)



superintendent, Brian Capistran in regard to preemptively closing district schools during the walkout.

*I informed you Friday that we would be explaining early this week how GUHSD would operate during a walkout. We have finalized the details of the plan, and I am writing to announce that we will be closing all GUHSD schools during the walkout.*

*If there are not any changes between now and Wednesday, the school closures will begin this Thursday, April 26. We do not know the duration of time our schools will be closed; however, we are certain that the school year will be extended. In order to reach the state-required number of instructional days and to fulfill contract obligations, the school year will be extended one day for each day our schools are closed...*

*... **Employees on a certified contract (non-administrator positions) will not report to work on school closure days.** They will continue to be paid; however, to receive their full annual contract amount, each employee on a certified contract will be obligated to make up the number of school closure days following their contract end date\*. Any day that a school is closed when it is scheduled to be open will have to be made up at the end of the school year, which will extend the school year...*

Before I continue, I do want to mention that in regard to days needing to be made up at the end of the year, the district gave certified personnel the option to make up days on weekends, late afternoons, or on nonscheduled school days. Teachers also had the option of making up some or all of their missed days with their discretionary days off or sick time. Students did not have to make up extra days as they had already met state requirements for the school year. School administrators were also fairly lax in approving these makeup days and some teachers thought that there was an unwritten understanding that verification of these makeup days would not be audited by school administrators. While we did not know how days would be made up at the time of this email, the supportive nature of the district gave teachers the reassurance to follow through with their strike.

I along with others in our district, were prepared to go through the normal procedures for accounting for our absence on April 26th, but upon receiving this email, it was clear that we did not have to call in sick or put in for a substitute per the usual procedure. My district was not alone in this decision, in fact over 20 of the largest school districts in Arizona decided to preemptively close their schools without forcing teachers to call out sick (Flaherty, 2018).

One reason a school may close early without knowing which teachers are actively engaging in the walkout is to give the community time to plan for said closures. Telling parents that their school is temporarily closing ahead of time allows for families to make accommodations for the disruption in their daily routines like finding childcare, for example. While this consideration is possibly a necessary condition for preemptive closures, it is not sufficient as to why so many schools chose to do this. Similarly, to how

teachers felt supported in public resolutions, teachers also felt supported when their districts closed schools for them, and did so on an indefinite basis.

Again, one reason this level of protection was important is because some legislatures did in fact threaten retaliation. The House Majority Whip, Kelly Townsend announced on Twitter that she would be exploring the possibility of a class action lawsuit for those who were affected by the teacher strike (Roberts, 2018). It's not clear who she intended to sue, but the anonymity of the teachers responsible for the strike did not allow any clear case. Legislatures clearly recognized this as one proposal, H.B. 2017 would have precluded school districts from shutting down other than approved breaks, or environmental emergencies. Another bill, H.B. 1232, was introduced to weaken teacher association by making it illegal for union dues to be collected using payroll deduction. While the second bill mentioned was not directed at district administration per se, it speaks to the intent of some to retaliate against teachers and to the importance of the level of protection provided to them by districts who decided publicly support them and also the decision to preemptively close.

#### *Districts and the Insider/Outsider Framework*

An examination of the role district administrators played in the Red for Ed movement leads us to see that when compared to the role associations played we see some similarities. Both of these critical components were utilized from an insider's perspective. While associations had infrastructure and tools to organize, districts had the power to adopt official resolutions of support using institutionally established procedures. These resolutions were pushed for by movement activists through this official channel.

In addition to official resolutions, districts had the authority to legally close schools that, intentional or not, provided cover for teachers in the movement.

With associations we saw the AEA embrace and turn to outsider tactics that were made easier to execute based on decades of using institutional bodies to build the networks necessary to orchestrate a walkout. This decision seemed to be made out of necessity and convenience, while the leveraging of district support for the walkout was more intentional. With districts, we see more of a layered approach to the insider/outsider theory, in that the movement utilized insider tactics with the effect of making the walkout have more power than it would have without.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSIONS AND LOOKING FORWARD

#### *How the Standoff Ended*

On Wednesday, May 2nd, 2018 the AEA and AEU called on teachers to end the walkout and return to their classrooms if a proposed budget that resulted in 300 million dollars was passed into law. While some may say that the indirect agreement between both sides was essentially the same deal that was proposed to them before the walkout started, teachers essentially forced a follow through of state legislatures to pass the budget into law. Governor Ducey's budget did in fact meet resistance within his own party, and was also criticized for relying on optimistic budget projections in forthcoming years (Flaherty, 2018). This budget was passed and enacted on Thursday, May 3rd, 2018, and the walkout ended. While teachers did earn a 19% raise to be given out over three years (9% the first year, 5% the second, and an additional 5% on the third year), it's worth noting here that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the state has not enacted the third-year increase of 5% in salary. The budget proposal also restored \$100 million in funding for schools not related to salary. As mentioned in the introduction, however, the Red for Ed movement did not have 80% of their demands met. So why did the movement take the deal and end the walkout? One reason is that some were skeptical as to how long the movement could maintain public support (Flaherty, 2018). Another is because the movement did not consider the momentum they had to be over. Looking at the polarization of school funding in the state, those in the movement decided to shift strategies towards a ballot initiative that would increase the income tax on wealthy individuals as a means of increasing funding for schools within the state.

### *The Invest in Ed Initiative*

During and leading up to the walkout, movement leaders saw the limitations presented by institutional barriers set up by those of political power. One such limitation was when the state banned the right of public sector unions to bargain collectively in 2012 (Fischer, 2012). As many progressives are starting to realize, the insider tactic of lobbying change with elected representatives was not a viable option for advancing a progressive agenda. Therefore, the tactic of blue state federalism has begun to take hold, especially in regard to progressive causes such as immigration and healthcare. Many people associate federalism with the state's rights argument that was seen as a deterrent to the national civil rights movement. Lately, however, progressives' groups are beginning to turn this notion on its head and some have found that progressive legislation at the state level has more staying power and durability than regressive policies at the state level or progressive policies at the federal level (Colbern and Ramakrishnan, 2020). The education movement has begun to follow suit by utilizing the oftentimes ignored democratic power to bring initiatives into laws by ballot initiatives.

Movement leaders knew that they needed to find funding for their proposals, and the state was unwilling to repeal the tax cuts made on individuals and corporations. Using the method of public polling and message testing, leaders in the AEA and AEU found that the idea with the most public support was to impose a 3.5% income tax increase on individuals making over \$250,000 or families making over \$500,000 a year. Some estimates of this increase in revenue are in the neighborhood of one billion dollars per year that goes directly to state education. Of this new revenue, 50% of it would go to teacher and support staff salaries, 25% would go to schools for student support services

staff, 10% to teacher retention programs, 12% to career and technical education programs, and 3% to the Arizona teachers Academy (Altavena, 2020).

The initiative was written in 2018, and the required hundreds of thousands of signatures were collected by volunteers, myself included, that should have put the “invest in ed” initiative on the ballot. That being said, in the election year of 2018, the Arizona Supreme court decided that the legislation was confusing to voters in terms of a percentage tax increase versus a point percentage increase. Advocates of the measure claimed that ruling was political in nature, especially given that the majority of the court were appointed by Governor Ducey. Below is an email I received from my AEA site leader when the news of the decision came out:

*“Good evening,*

*If you haven't heard by now, the Supreme Court ruled by a majority that The Invest in Education initiative should be kicked off the ballot. There is no further path for appeals, so Invest in Ed will no longer be on the ballot in November.*

*I have no words to describe my frustration, anger, or sadness. We have put in time, effort, and money to get this initiative certified for the ballot, and it has been taken away from the educators, students, and parents of this state. You should be fuming. For everyone's knowledge, the Supreme Court's decision was based off of an incredibly weak argument that the description on the signature sheets was misleading to voters. It is certainly an unprecedented decision. The arguments on the signature sheets and through all facets of the process were vetted by many attorneys, judges, and everything was upheld by the lower courts. This afternoon, the Supreme Court of AZ overruled everyone.*

*They did it with a majority opinion, not a unanimous one, which is an important distinction.*

*In 2016, Governor Ducey expanded the Supreme Court, adding two seats to the court and appointing people closest to him. There is a lot of icky, dark money conversation that can happen here, but I'll save that for in-person conversations so I don't muddle the point.*

*The point is that our voices were ignored. The point is that our state, again, has silenced the voices of teachers, parents, students, businesses, families, nonprofit organizations, and other community stakeholders. The list of people who supported the ballot initiative was immense, but we did not have the money or the amount of Supreme Court justices in our pocket that the opposition had.*

*I'm mad. Really, really, mad. They took away our signatures, they took away our hard work. They cannot take away our vote. We need to show up en masse on voting day, and we need to vote for public education candidates if we want anything to change.”*

This email speaks to the frustration teachers and movement organizers continue to feel as the potential of Red for Ed seems not have been realized. It also speaks to continued barriers that have been constructed for social movements, particularly in states with conservative legislatures. The same ballot initiative, rewritten under even higher legal scrutiny was introduced in 2020, but this time the state supreme court allowed it to stay, and the voters will decide its fate on November 3rd, 2020 (Hernandez, 2020).



### *The Future of Red for Ed and Conclusions*

The fate of the Red for Ed movement in Arizona, for now, seems to be tied to the Invest in Ed initiative (Prop 208). Even if it does pass, association leaders should be prepared for more legal challenges as evidenced by the state's response to previous voter approved measures involving the state education system. If it does not pass, it shows the need to adapt even further and perhaps, the battle to properly fund public schools in Arizona will be over, at least until the next election cycle.

As we examine the context and evolution of the Red for Ed movement, we can say that the organization of a walkout and the result in increased education funding (with or without the progressive tax dedicated to schools) was neither a purely insider or outsider movement. Rather, the movement relied on both aspects to become successful. In regard to associations, their infrastructure and legal resources allowed them to organize the movement and put forward a ballot initiative in record time, yet at the same time the AEA had to resort to embracing the outsider tactics of demonstrations and work stoppages. The movement also recognized that if it relied purely on outsider tactics that legal consequences and institutional barriers may have been difficult to break through. Therefore, they used their insider status and built coalitions with their local districts as a work around for these aforementioned barriers. Ballot initiatives in general are tough to peg as insider or outsider as well. On one hand, anyone, including outside groups, can propose a ballot initiative, but the organization required for gathering signatures and campaigning on the issue require strong organization and sometimes elite partners, similar to that of an insider tactic.

This movement speaks to how when barriers are in place to social movements such as legislation that bars collective bargaining, an opposition party having total control of government, or partisan courts, that some progress can still be made. The Red for Ed movement was successful because it utilized both tactics. While this may be unique to the field of education, given that a majority of Americans rely on it every day for childcare, other causes should embrace the organizational structures they exist in, while at the same time challenging the legitimacy and intentions of those structures.

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