

Time to Play

The importance of being social, active, and outdoors.

Being a kid in today’s technology and post-Covid era is not the same as the carefree hours of outdoor play of yesteryear. Kids are spending countless hours indoors and likely very sedentary. It is more important than ever to be sure kids are remaining active, not just physically but mentally as well.

It begins with attending in-person school, whether public or private. The traditional structure ensures ample time to move throughout the day and engage their brains socially and intellectually. It’s positive to see that school enrollments remain strong, see Figure 1.1, even post-Covid where the remote learning was a must and homeschooling saw an uptick in popularity.

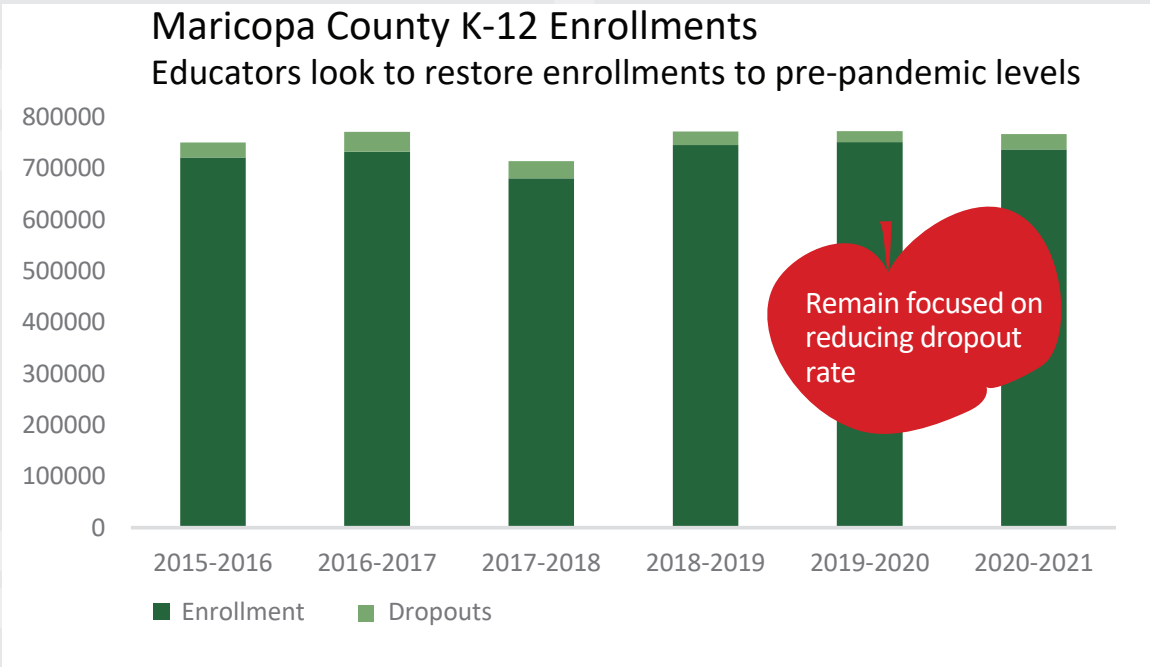


Figure 1.1 Arizona student enrollments and dropout statistics. www.azreportcards.azed.gov

In addition to providing education, schools also provide many services to families, including free or reduced-cost meals, social support, opportunities for physical activity, and mental health services. ” (Godwin, 2021)

Recess promotes social skills

When students attend in-person learning, recess is built into their day. “Kids 5 to 18 should spend an hour outside every day.” It helps children’s physical health, as well as decreases the possibility of depression and anxiety. (California Business Journal, 2022)

In addition to the built-in structured play and social engagement, schools have the infrastructure to provide additional resources for the holistic well being of students. Schools can be counted on for a wealth of services including social support and mental health services. These become vital in recognizing and treating mental health issues that attribute to a alarming number of suicides among students. See Figure 1.2.

Recess reduces stress

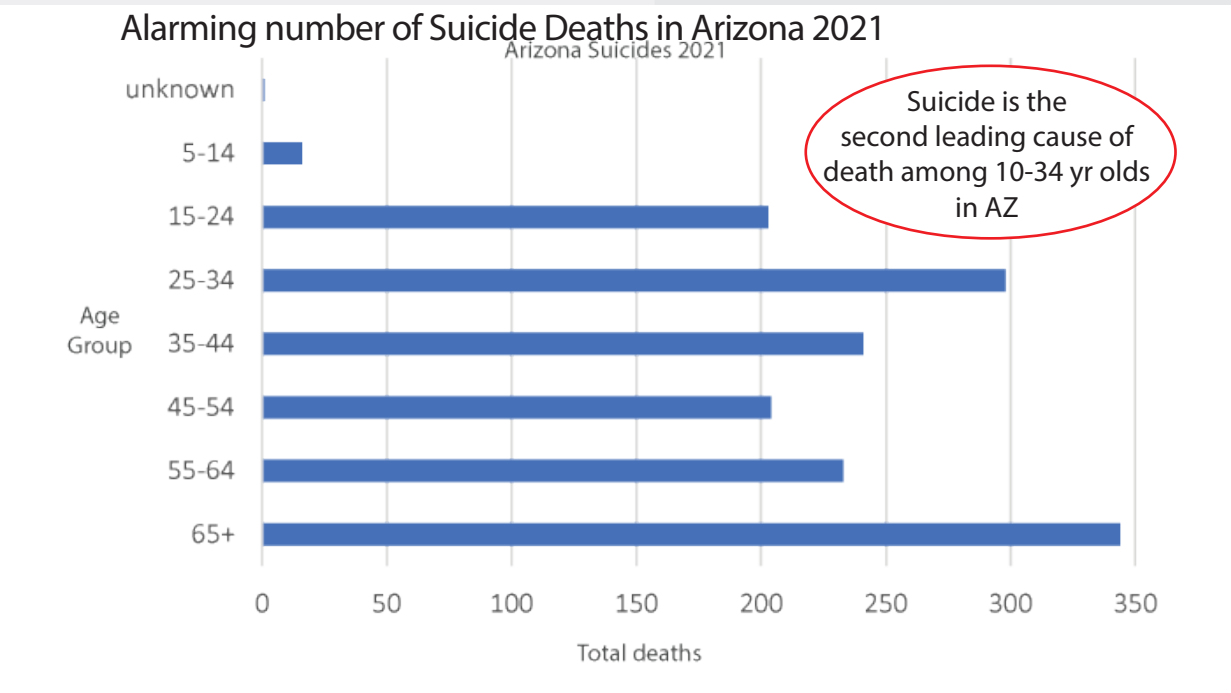


Figure 1.2 Arizona deaths by self-harm, suicide, reported in 2021. Arizona’s suicide rate ranks 20th in the nation.

Recess helps reduce childhood obesity

School-age children benefit from the minimum activity guidelines of an in-person school structure. Kids who play outdoors are less likely to gain weight or become obese. Arizona is ranked above average in childhood obesity compared to national averages. See Figure 1.3.

Playing outside gives a child the opportunity to explore the world around them and learn where they fit into the larger scheme of things.” (California Business Journal, 2022)

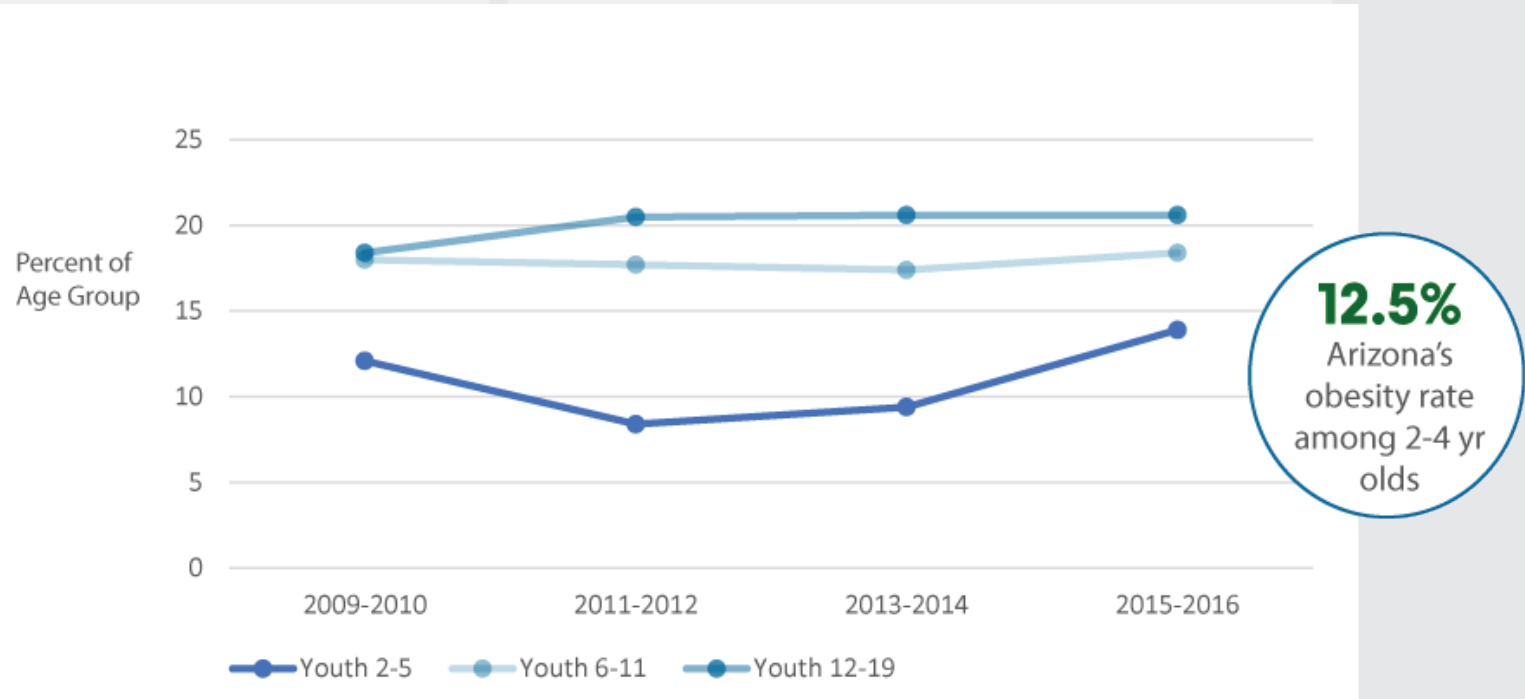


Figure 1.3 Arizona childhood obesity rates are consistently below the national averages.