



**GOVERNING BOARD AGENDA ITEM
AMPHITHEATER UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 10**

DATE OF MEETING: **October 5, 2010**

TITLE: **Amphitheater District Receipt of "What Parents Want Award" from SchoolMatch.com**

BACKGROUND: SchoolMatch.com is an online resource for parents and families who are seeking information about choices for their children's education. Hailed by the Wall Street Journal as, "The best source of test scores, student-teacher ratios, spending and education level of residents," the website is a research and database service company that collects, audits, integrates, processes and manages information about public and private elementary and secondary schools across the nation.

An operation of Public Priority Systems, Inc., the site describes itself and its services in the following manner:

Firms such as Publix, Walt Disney World, Fleet Bank, Allstate Insurance, AT&T, Bank One, Bell Atlantic, Coca-Cola, Eastman Kodak, Hewlett-Packard, Johnson & Johnson, KPMG, Merck, Pfizer, Pepsi-Cola, State Farm Insurance, UPS, Lexis-Nexis, Ernst & Young, Chase Manhattan Mortgage, Fidelity, USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, American Demographics, MONEY magazine and others knowledgeable in data collection have relied on SchoolMatch® for school evaluation and information.

SchoolMatch® is the only school information provider that employs credentialed, experienced and seasoned educational researchers to compile and audit school data. More than 30 professionals with doctorates in educational research or related fields and experience in tests and measurements, school finance and accreditation collect SchoolMatch® data. More than 900 "Audits of Educational Effectiveness" have been conducted by SchoolMatch® staff, on site, in school systems.

SchoolMatch® begins with the research, and prepares its reports using the accepted building blocks of credible educational research. Other known school information purveyors tend to "skip to the end number," ignoring the research process that turns "data" into "information", and appear to spend little if any time validating data. They assume that if the school system provided the data it must be correct. "Raw numbers," oftentimes collected over the telephone by seasonal employees with little or no educational training, appear to be the basis of their efforts. The data user could have a serious liability when challenged if, for example, the sum of the parts in a particular data field greatly exceed the whole. In other words, if expenditures per pupil are totaled, the end result might be much greater than annual national expenditure on education.

In contrast, the SchoolMatch® ethic mandates careful screening of each data item in each school system in each state before presenting information to clients upon

which they rely to help make important, life-changing decisions for their families. SchoolMatch does this with confidence and credibility, since data are collected from sources to which school systems must certify accuracy, completeness and timeliness. By definition, data collected merely by telephone or mail survey cannot be certified. In short, SchoolMatch® data is auditable. "Raw data" from other firms is not.

A "research-first" approach allows SchoolMatch® to provide its clients with information not available from other firms anywhere. For example, the "pupil performance on scholarship examinations" data element is the only uniform comparison of academic achievement of all the nation's schools. No other firm can make that claim.

SchoolMatch® validates comparability, assures continuity, focuses on school effectiveness criteria and makes sure clients can easily understand results. In contrast, "raw data"-based firms often face situations where information without context can be misleading and not easily interpreted by the average individual.

<http://schoolmatch.com/ppsi/advantage.cfm>

Each year, the firm issues its "What Parents Want Awards". Awarded to only about 16% of the nation's schools each year, the award is based upon specific criteria which include:

- A close match to what SchoolMatch® users most often request. Compilation of over 97,000 parent questionnaires completed by SchoolMatch® clients reveals parents most often look for school systems that are:
 1. competitive in academic test scores and academically solid, but not so rigorous as to intimidate their children
 2. accredited
 3. recognized for excellence by a national foundation or by the U.S. Department of Education
 4. competitive in teacher salaries
 5. above average in instructional expenditures on a national percentile basis
 6. above average in expenditures for library/media services on a national percentile basis
 7. known for small class size
- Availability of programs at the secondary level. Since relocating parents often focus upon finding a school system that produces a certain quality of "end product" (a high school graduate), only school systems that provide secondary school programs are eligible for the award.

<http://schoolmatch.com/ppsi/wpwlist.cfm>

In Arizona, only nine (9) school districts across the state received the prestigious honor in 2010. Amphitheater is one of the nine. A letter confirming the award is forthcoming.

RECOMMENDATION: This item is simply provided for the Board's information at this time. No action is required.

INITIATED BY:



Todd A. Jaeger, Associate to the Superintendent

Date: September 29, 2010



Vicki Balentine, Ph.D., Superintendent