



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

DATE OF MEETING: **March 23, 2021**

TITLE: Resolutions and Other Action(s) to Recognize and Honor District Employees for Their Loyalty, Dedication and Contributions; Designation of Specific Dates in April and May as Dates for Appreciation of the District’s Educational Support Personnel, Teachers, and Other Educational Professionals

BACKGROUND:

Each year, the Governing Board recognizes the special contributions of its employees through separate resolutions adopted to coincide generally with “National Administrative Professionals Day”, that occurs in April, and “National Teacher Day”, that occurs in May. The District’s recognition has always extended its recognition of staff beyond the specific groups contemplated by these national recognition days to include additional staff groups – thus assuring that all employee classifications are recognized for their important and essential service to our students, the District, and the community. This year, of course, the essential nature of the contributions and service provided by District employees has been highlighted and made even more visible by our worldwide pandemic.

On March 11, 2021, the World Health Organization observed the one-year anniversary of its declaration of COVID-19 as a world-wide health pandemic. Reflecting over that year, it is astounding how much changed in our world, our community, and our school district due to COVID-19. It has been an extraordinary time for students, families, and the community alike. But, throughout it all, District employees have remained dedicated and steadfast in their service of students.

We know, of course, that some educators did make the difficult decision to leave public education during the pandemic. This was widely reported, and every school district across the country experienced that reality to some degree. Recently, on February 21, 2021, Education Weekly posted an article entitled, “*Teachers Are Stressed Out, and It’s Causing Some to Quit*”¹ which reported:

“Stress, more so than low pay, is the main reason public school teachers quit. And now the coronavirus pandemic has increased the pressures put on teachers.

That’s according to newly released data from the RAND Corporation, which surveyed nearly 1,000 former public school teachers in December. Of those surveyed, 55 percent quit in the two school years leading up to the pandemic, while the others left after March 2020. In both groups, most of the teachers either resigned, retired early, or took an unpaid leave of absence.

Forty-three percent of all the teachers who left voluntarily and before their scheduled retirement said they did so because the stresses and disappointments of teaching weren’t worth it—nearly twice as many as those who said the pay wasn’t sufficient. And among the teachers who left primarily because of the pandemic, 64 percent said they weren’t paid enough to merit the risks or stress of teaching.”

¹ Will, Madeline. “Teachers Are Stressed Out, and It’s Causing Some to Quit.” *Education Week*, Education Week, 3 Mar. 2021, www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/teachers-are-stressed-out-and-its-causing-some-to-quit/2021/02.

Amphitheater has certainly experienced this first-hand in various employee classifications.² Individuals near retirement have reported deciding to retire earlier due to the pandemic. Others have chosen to leave public education entirely for work that does not require them to interact with the public or that can be done entirely remotely.

Since the pandemic began in March 2020, more than 360 employees have left the District. Those leaving included teachers, educational professionals, teaching assistants, library assistants, bus drivers, custodians, and food service employees. In fact, the number of employees who have left mid-year has nearly doubled from last school year.³ Retirement announcements have also increased,⁴ and the District has experienced a significant increase in the number of contract breaches this year.⁵

Yet, through all this turmoil, the District has been able to maintain service to students, albeit in pandemic-caused modalities, because of the continued dedication of its employees who remained in the District's employment and stepped up to meet student and community needs during the pandemic.

Many employees willingly transitioned into new and different roles this year to address student needs. Faculty and staff throughout the District took on new duties, filled in the gaps, and pitched in to substitute for each other to continue the education of students. Examples of this include the following:

- Transportation workers stepped up to supervise students in classrooms all over the District during remote and hybrid learning, as well as to provide increased cleaning and custodial services made necessary by the pandemic.
- Teachers transitioned multiple times between remote, hybrid and in-person learning; they subbed for each other when colleagues had to be absent to isolate or quarantine; and, they provided increased intervention supports for students struggling during the pandemic.
- School administrators, nurses, and health assistants sometimes worked 7-days a week and late evenings, to assist the county health department with contract tracing to keep campuses safe.
- Food service workers stepped up to distribute meals to the community in addition to students at school, sometimes working over holidays or in inclement weather, and served more than 1.2 million meals to make sure kids have access to the most basic essential of life: food.
- Social workers, counselors, and other educational professionals have gone door-to-door to locate children who are not in school this year and to provide supports for students needing to remain home during the pandemic.
- School and District staff have called families to make sure that they are aware of options available for students, provide technical supports for families needing remote access to school, and assist with transitions between learning modalities.

Suffice it to say, employees have gone above and beyond to serve students this year in new and different ways. They have been loyal, open, and incredible public servants. At a time when educators continue to leave public service in significant numbers due to significant salary differentials available in the private sector, the stresses of the job, and the burdens of unfunded mandates, it is important that this year, more than ever, the employees

² At the March 9 Board meeting, the Governing Board authorized two options for the District to re-hire ASRS-retirees to assist the District in filling vacancies. As explained at that time, challenges already faced in hiring educators in a national teacher shortage have now been exacerbated by COVID-19. Prior to the pandemic, 8% percent of teachers left the profession each year and 9 out of 10 teachers hired each year were hired to replace a teacher who left the profession voluntarily. (Partner, ACSA. "Teacher Turnover: What You Need to Know." ACSA Resource Hub, 11 Aug. 2020, content.acsa.org/articles/teacher-turnover-what-you-need-to-know.). In Arizona, hiring difficulties have also extended to educational support personnel due to wage compression created by Arizona's annual minimum wage increases and the mandatory withholdings set by the Arizona State Retirement System.

³ To date, 165 employees have left their positions mid-year as opposed to the 69 employees who left mid-year in SY 2019-20.

⁴ There has been 57 employees retire since the pandemic started. This number is already higher than the prior school year, and the offers of contracts and/or employee computation sheets have not even gone out for SY 2021-2022 for the District to truly confirm which employees plan to return to their positions next year.

⁵ This year, breaches of contract currently sit at 21. Last year, there were 5 breaches of contract.

who have been loyal to our students and our District be honored for their extraordinary service through this unprecedented pandemic.

As in years' past, it does serve a purpose to set aside specific days of recognition for our staff member groups. Contributions of school employees should, of course, be appreciated every day. However, focusing a celebration of their efforts on specific dates helps to crystalize that appreciation and remind everyone how much school personnel do for students and, in turn, our community as a whole.

In light of the extra efforts employees have made this year, it is particularly important that the Governing Board set aside dates for these employee recognitions and do so earlier than usual to permit the Administration, as well as students, families and the community, to celebrate employees appropriately and to acknowledge their loyalty and extra efforts to serve students during the pandemic.

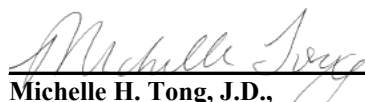
The continued service of faculty and staff of Amphitheater Public Schools is absolutely essential for this District to be able to serve students through the summer interventions, such as the AMP UP program, as well as when students return to schools next school year. Thus, while minor in comparison to the work that the employees have done this year, a month-long "thank you" is one way to ensure that employees know that they are valued and appreciated.

For this reason, two separate Resolutions have been prepared for consideration by the Governing Board as part of this agenda item. The first identifies Wednesday, April 21, 2021 as "Educational Support Personnel Day" to recognize the important and essential contributions of all hourly (non-contracted) support staff. The second remains consistent with the National PTA recognitions for teachers and recognizes the week of May 3-7, 2021 as "Teacher and Educational Professionals Appreciation Week" and Tuesday, May 4, 2021 as "Teacher and Educational Professionals Day".

RECOMMENDATION:

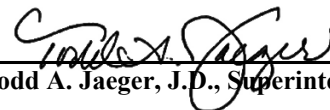
The Administration recommends that the Governing Board take suitable and appropriate action to recognize those employees who have remained in service to the District, its students, and the community we serve throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, to include the adoption and dissemination of the attached forms of Resolution and the designation of the specific dates to be set aside for recognition of appreciation of our district staff members.

INITIATED BY:



Michelle H. Tong, J.D.,
Associate to the Superintendent and General Counsel

Date: March 16, 2021



Todd A. Jaeger, J.D., Superintendent