



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

DATE OF MEETING: **December 7, 2021**

TITLE: **Approval of Increase in Daily Rate of Pay for Substitute Teachers**

BACKGROUND:

Amphitheater Public Schools recently set aside November 19, 2021 as a day of recognition for the valuable work that substitute employees provide this school district. As noted in the Board’s Resolution for Substitute Employee Day, substitute teachers are essential to the education of our children. Substitute teachers step in to permit educational processes to continue and serve students with minimal advance notice when an employee needs to be absent due to illness, personal reasons, professional development, or to provide a community service, *i.e.*, serving as a juror or witness. They are also a source of respite and peace of mind for the classroom teacher who wants, and needs, continuity in the learning process, as well as a safe and healthy learning environment, for their students when they are absent.

On July 27, 2021, the Governing Board approved an increase to the daily rate of pay for substitute teachers. Substitute teachers are currently paid at the following daily rates for their service:

Daily Rate for Serving as a Certificated Substitute Teacher

- Full Day - \$125.00/day
- Half Day - \$62.50/day

Daily Rate for a Long-Term¹ Substitute Teacher

- Full Day Long Term Assignment - \$195/day

Shortly thereafter, neighboring school districts took similar action to increase their daily substitute teacher rates as well. A recent survey of pay rates for substitute teachers in surrounding school districts reveals that Amphitheater Public Schools is again at the lower end of the pay scale for short-term substitute teacher assignments. Neighboring school districts currently start substitutes between \$125 to \$140 a day, with some providing an increase to \$150 per day after the first 11 assignments and others offering an incentive of \$150 per day for Friday work. The average daily rate for a brand-new substitute teacher in Pima County school districts is \$132, and the average daily rate for a substitute teacher who has worked at least 20 assignments in the current school year is \$138.

Employee absences are more frequent since the pandemic started as employees isolate or quarantine for compliance with Pima County Health Department’s Sanitary Measure 2021-01 (*Slowing the Spread of COVID-19 in Schools*). This year, the District experienced its highest number of staff absences since the 2018 “RedforEd” movement, which closed schools across the state due to staffing shortages. Also, some classroom teachers have the benefit of having more personal leave than usual this year since teachers carried forward unused personal leave from last school year.²

¹ A “Long-Term Substitute Assignment” means the substitute teacher is assigned to cover the same assignment for a minimum of twenty (20) consecutive school days and in doing so, acts in the role of a teacher for all intents and purposes during the assignment, including, but not limited to, working the same hours as a classroom teacher and taking on responsibility to prepare lesson plans while in the assignment

² Last spring, classroom teachers were allowed to carry forward unused personal leave from school year 2020-2021, rather than have it convert to sick leave as required by District Regulation GCCB-R, in order to promote attendance, reduce the number of substitute teachers needed for personal (non-sick) teacher absences, limit the number of certificated staff covering classes where a District substitute was not available, and reduce interruptions to instruction being experienced by students as they finally returned to fully in-person learning after a year of remote and hybrid learning modalities.

When a classroom teacher is absent, education continues through instruction provided by a substitute teacher. Each day, District personnel work tirelessly to fill classroom teacher absences with certificated substitute teachers and, throughout the pandemic, have been able to keep classroom teacher absences filled at a daily rate of at least 76%. However, when a District substitute is not available to cover a classroom teacher absence, the site administrator or designee assigns a certificated employee to cover classes in accordance with Governing Board Policy GCGB (Arrangements for Substitute Staff Members). While those teachers are compensated for the class coverage at one-fifth (1/5) of the certificated substitute pay rate for each hour of lost planning time, this option is not ideal. When a teacher covers for their absent colleague, they teach all day with only a 30-minute lunch break and they end up working longer hours into the evening to do work that they should have been doing during their planning period. Prior to the pandemic, this option was used occasionally, but as teacher absences have increased, it is being used more often, which is leading to stress, exhaustion and burnout of our dedicated teaching staff.³

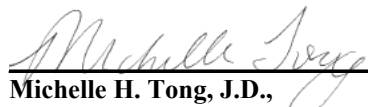
For the foregoing reasons, Administration again recommends that the Board approve increasing the daily substitute rate to \$140 per day to meet (not exceed) Pima County market rates. No change is recommended for the District long-term substitute rate since it still exceeds market standards. It is also important to remember that increasing the daily substitute rate similarly increases the hourly compensation under Policy GCGB for teachers who cover a class in the absence of a substitute. The District is presently able to cover the anticipated costs of the proposed rate increase through the available funding from the American Rescue Plan and savings from substitute vacancies during school closures.

Administration recommends that the District meet, rather than exceed, the higher of the current Pima County regular daily substitute rates to avoid unnecessarily driving up the substitute market rates. The State of Arizona does not provide school districts additional funds during time of high inflation and never gave school districts additional funds to meet mandatory minimum wage increases. Therefore, it is in the best interest of all local school districts that they avoid further efforts to out-price each other in this regard. Moreover, substitute teachers who continue to work for Amphitheater Public Schools can qualify for additional funding at the end of the year through the retention stipend, an option that is not available in all of the other school districts.

RECOMMENDATION:

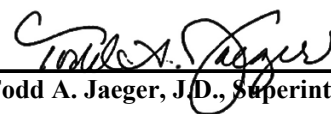
The Administration recommends that the Board approve increasing the daily rate of pay for certificated substitute teachers to \$140 per day effective December 8, 2021. The daily rate of pay for Long-Term Substitute Teachers (as defined in the agenda item) does not need to be adjusted and should remain at \$195 per day.

INITIATED BY:



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

Date: November 29, 2021



Todd A. Jaeger, J.D., Superintendent

³ Amphitheater Public Schools is not alone in this regard. The problem is nationwide. See Lieberman, Mark. "How Staff Shortages Are Crushing Schools." *Education Week*, Education Week, 26 Oct. 2021, <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/how-staff-shortages-are-crushing-schools/2021/10>. In fact, local media report that the problem exists throughout the Pima County school districts. See "Teacher Burnout: Sub Shortage at a Crisis Level." <https://www.kold.com/2021/10/08/teacher-burn-out-sub-shortage-crisis-level/>.