



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

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**DATE OF MEETING: July 23, 2013**

**TITLE: Approval of Physical Therapist and Occupational Therapist Salary Schedules  
(July 22, 2013)**

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**BACKGROUND:**

As mandated by IDEA, Amphitheater provides a full continuum of special and “related” services to meet the needs of our special education students. Those related services include physical therapy, which has been determined under the law to be a service necessary to ensure a student can benefit from their education.

For many years, the availability of physical therapists has fluctuated in the job market, on an almost cyclical basis: the private sector outpaces public sector compensation; we lose staff to the private sector; we are compelled to contract with private sector vendors for coverage; we increase pay; we are again able to hire and retain therapists; and the private sector outpaces our compensation, starting the process all over again. The heavy and increasing utilization of physical therapy in the medical service marketplace has, in fact, accelerated the pace of this cycle.

We are again at a point in such a cycle where we are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain qualified physical therapists due to the scarcity of applicants. Not only is competition for therapists in the private sector difficult again, but we are now also finding that other school districts are much more competitive for these vital service providers. Over the course of the last school year, we had a vacancy that we were unable to fill. As a result, we were forced to contract for services (at twice the cost of an employee) to ensure that we could meet physical therapist obligations of the District under IEP’s.

This past year’s long difficulty in hiring and the threats of resignation from existing personnel necessitated that we conduct a job market study and review of current salaries for physical therapists to ensure we are at least competitive with other districts and also, to the extent possible, with private organizations.

**METHODOLOGY:**

A wage analysis of physical therapist positions within the community and surrounding area was conducted, producing the following data:

<b>District/Organization</b>	<b>Salary</b>
Amphi	\$46,608
Catalina Foothills USD	\$73,374
Flowing Wells USD	No Data Available
Marana USD	\$72,809
Santa Cruz USD	\$49,806
Sierra Vista USD	\$64,000
Tanque Verde USD	No Data Available
Tucson USD	\$57,416
Vail USD	\$42,207
Carondelet Health Network	\$50,400
University of Arizona Medical Center	\$58,497

The mean starting salary for the organizations compared, not including Amphitheater, is \$58,564.00. As indicated above, Amphitheater's current starting salary is \$46,608.00, which is \$11,956.00 below the average.

Additionally, a national salary review was conducted, but the disparity between prevailing wages and national averages did not allow for accurate and relevant comparison. Therefore, national data was excluded.

**CONCLUSION:**

Comparability data and the year long vacancy and associated expense demonstrate the need for an immediate salary increase for physical therapists. The District's minimum starting salary for physical therapists should be no less than the community mean of \$58,564.00. This will, in fact, be our proposal.

Currently, physical therapists are paid on the "OT/PT & Audiologist" Professional/Non-Teaching schedule. Consequently, physical therapists should be moved from its current placement on the schedule and a new placement be created solely for physical therapists with a minimum starting salary of \$58,564.00, allowing for typical hiring range differentials for those applicants with prior experience. To stay aligned with the other schedules, the "Physical Therapist" schedule will also include a doctorate differential with a minimum starting salary of \$61,251.00.

This proposed increase should permit the District to stay competitive for some time; although we would be more than naïve to conclude it will end the cycle described above. The other thing to be mindful of is that occupational therapists and physical therapists had long been paid the same. That changed last fiscal year, when we implemented a \$10,000.00 essential recruitment stipend (ESR) for that position at a time when occupational therapists were very scarce. Because we will be placing the physical therapists on their own salary schedule, we will also recommend that the occupational therapists' ESR be incorporated into the base salary, allowing greater clarity for occupational therapist applicants about what the position really pays.

We are not recommending any increase at the current time for occupational therapists, because the District's compensation (inclusive of the ESR) seems sufficient to compete in the market currently.

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

It is the recommendation of the administration that a new salary schedule be created for physical therapists with a minimum starting salary of \$58,564.00. The administration also recommends a new salary schedule be created for occupational therapists in which the current ESR be incorporated.

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**INITIATED BY:**



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Todd A. Jaeger, Associate to the Superintendent

Date: July 22, 2013



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Patrick Nelson, Superintendent