

September 12, 2023

Superintendent's Report





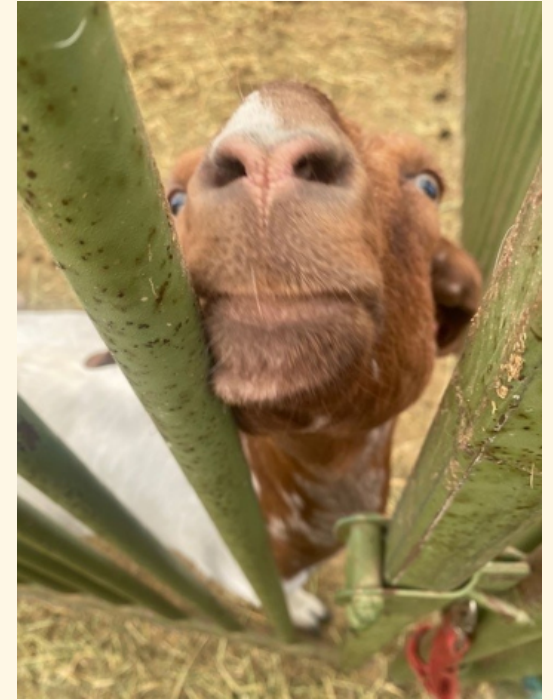
Around Our Schools



September is P.O.G. Creative Thinking Month in the District. We asked everyone to kick off the initiative on Sept. 1 by wearing pink to match our Portrait of a Graduate. Each month this year, we are highlighting a characteristic from the Portrait of a Graduate. Above we see Painted Sky, far left is Donaldson, and at left is La Cima.



Around Our Schools



Students from Amphi High School's Agriscience class visited the District's Land Lab for the first time on Tuesday, getting to meet the pigs, goats, cattle and lambs that are part of the CTE experience in the Amphitheater District. The program was also featured on KGUN-9 News.



Around Our Schools



Amphi High's Marian Johnson has made it to the finalist round (1 of 5) for the Arizona Educational Foundation's Teacher of the Year. The winner will be announced on October 14 in Phoenix. Congratulations to Ms. Johnson. The honor is considered the "Oscars" of teaching in our state.



Around Our Schools



Canyon del Oro High School seniors gathered for the traditional Senior Sunrise last month. They watched the sun rise together and enjoyed a breakfast provided by CDO counselors. At the end of the school year, the students will celebrate the Senior Sunset. We hope they all have a great year!



Around Our Schools



Copper Creek held its annual Hawk Walk last month. Ms. White won (or lost?) the Penny Wars, which earned her a seat in the chair next to Ms. Hillig in the Human Sundae Messy Zone! This event is an annual fundraiser organized by the school's PTO. Thanks to everyone for supporting Copper Creek!





Around Our Schools



More than 75 advocates for public education came together at Amphi High School for a Public Education Townhall on Saturday, September 9. The panellists included representatives from the Legislature, school districts and community partners who care about public education.



Thank You



The Amphi Foundation's Shoes to Smiles program was back in action for the Rillito Center last month. As a reminder, the Shoes to Smiles program provides shoes and socks to our students.



Aloha!



Dr. Scott Baker, Board Member, sends his regards to the Board and all in attendance from beautiful Hawaii. We're sending him, his wife Windy, and their (and our) friends the Heinemanns well wishes for an enjoyable and restful vacation.

See you next month, Dr. Baker!



Upcoming Event

Gifted Education In Amphi

REACH Institute:

Vanessa Hill, Amphitheater REACH (Gifted Education Coordinator) and the Amphi Foundation are sponsoring a REACH Institute on **Saturday, September 16th** from 9:00 – 12:00p.m. here at Wetmore.

This exciting opportunity is open to parents, students, and teachers. This year's special guest is Dr. Paul Beljan, co-author of Misdiagnosis and Dual Diagnosis for Gifted Children and Adults.



Upcoming Event

Standards- Based Grading

The Office of Learning and Instruction will offer a professional learning session for teachers in grades K-3 on standards-based grading and reporting for elementary students.

Teachers will learn how to use instructional materials and resources aligned with the AZ Math and ELA Standards and our District adopted curriculum to guide instruction and to inform standards-based grading practices.

The meeting is scheduled on **September 13th**, from **1:30-3:30** at the **Wetmore LPDC**.

Voucher Update

- “Empowerment Scholarship Accounts” – public money vouchers which may be used to pay private school tuition.
- 2006 version ruled unconstitutional. Retooled thereafter.
- FY22 was last year of “unrestricted” vouchers. Those vouchers were limited for use by students with special needs and circumstances.
- Last school year was the first year of unrestricted vouchers, after Governor Ducey and the legislature expanded their use to every child in the state, regardless of need.
- The new program loads taxpayer dollars onto debit cards, which parents can then use to make purchases.
- The State of Arizona reimburses for individual purchases made through Amazon, Venmo and other service providers.



Voucher Update

- Wholly contrary to public school requirements, there are no curriculum standards with ESA vouchers.
- Wholly contrary to public schools, there is no tracking of educational outcomes or assessments of student progress and proficiency.
- Wholly contrary to public schools, there is virtually no financial oversight of ESA vouchers and how they are spent.



Voucher Update: Fact Checks

- False: "ESA vouchers save Arizona money."
- The Truth: Every ESA voucher actually costs Arizona more money than a public school education would.
- The minimum ESA voucher costs \$424 more than district public schools receive for each elementary and middle school student and \$540 more for each high schooler.



Voucher Update: Fact Checks

- False: “These funds just allow public school students to make a choice.”
- The Truth: Most of the \$900 million in state funds currently spent on ESA vouchers goes to families that had already chosen private options.
- More than 75% of ESA voucher recipients were already in private school or homeschool and therefore no state funding was spent on their education before these vouchers. Each one of these vouchers is an entirely new cost to taxpayers and represents a cost to the state budget with no revenue source.
- These numbers are estimated because ADE has no standardized reporting system to officially track these students, but if all of the students in private schools ask for vouchers, \$500 million MORE in taxpayer subsidies will be drained from the state’s budget.



Voucher Update: Fact Checks

- False: “Vouchers are necessary to help all those fleeing public schools.”
- The Truth: Public school enrollment is steady.
- If ESA vouchers were enabling students to leave public schools, we would expect a dramatic drop in enrollment. That hasn’t happened. A comparison of Arizona’s 2021-2022 public school enrollment with 2022-2023 enrollment shows little change.
- The vast majority – 92% – of Arizona families still choose public schools despite vouchers.



Voucher Update: More Truth

School Type	FY 2022 Enrollment	FY 2023 Enrollment	Difference
Public School Districts	875,517	873,827	(1,690)
Public Charter Schools	220,494	223,773	3,279
State Public Sch Subtotal	1,096,600	1,097,600	1,589
ESA Voucher Students	12,127	61,689	49,562



Voucher Update: Fact Checks

- False: “Vouchers give students from low-income families a choice.”
- The Truth: Vouchers don’t cover the costs of most private schools.
- Arizona’s average private school tuition is \$9,756 for elementary schools and \$15,165 for high schools -- thousands more than the average ESA voucher.
- Therefore, vouchers can only be used by those who can afford the difference.
- Most voucher recipients live in the wealthiest zip codes in the state, such as Paradise Valley, Scottsdale, and Deer Valley. School districts in these areas run entirely on local property taxes without any state tax monies. So, for each student in these districts that takes an ESA voucher, the cost comes entirely from state taxpayer dollars, not the school district’s local funding.
- And since private schools can and do say no to students, there is no “school choice”; rather it’s the school’s choice.



Voucher Update: Fact Checks

- False: “Parents receiving vouchers provide accountability for taxpayer dollars.”
- The Truth: There is no accountability or transparency for taxpayers — or parents.
- Unlike detailed accounting requirements for public schools that accounts for every taxpayer dollar down to the last penny, ESA vouchers provide taxpayers with no way to see how their money is being spent or what (or whether) children are learning.
- Voucher-funded private schools have no requirements for accreditation, registration, licensing, approval, teacher certification, or special education and are not required to assess or report academic achievement.
- Home school voucher spending is similarly unregulated; as long as an item can be tied to an ill-defined “curriculum, it is an “allowable expense”. Many parents use their ESA vouchers for purchases like laptops, espresso machines, and bounce houses.
- In February, ADE boasted that it approved over 111,000 expenses in one day with no receipts, equating to approximately ten expenses every second. These approved expenditures are not available for public scrutiny.



Voucher REALITY

- In 2022, the state spent \$188,763,061 on Vouchers.
- In 2023, the state spent \$587,464,347 on Vouchers.
- This year, vouchers will cost approximately \$950,000,000 -- \$320,000,000 more than the state budgeted for.
- How will the state fund this funding shortfall. Finding new revenues in Arizona has always been a political fight given the fact that the Arizona Constitution requires a two-thirds supermajority vote from both chambers of the legislature to increase taxes.
- The only other solution is to cut spending. The last time the state had to come up with \$900 million, Arizona lawmakers slashed funding to our public schools.

