

**Minutes of the Regular Governing Board Meeting  
Amphitheater Public Schools  
Tuesday, December 9, 2025**

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A Regular public meeting of the Governing Board of Amphitheater Public Schools was held on Tuesday, December 9, 2025, beginning at 6:00 p.m. at Canyon del Oro High School, 25 W Calle Concordia, Tucson, AZ 85704 in the Fine Arts Auditorium.

**Governing Board Members Present**

Ms. Susan Zibrat, President  
Ms. Deanna M. Day, M.Ed., Vice President  
Ms. Vicki Cox Golder, Member  
Dr. Michael Gemma, Member  
Mr. Matthew A. Kopec, Member

**Superintendent's Cabinet Members**

Mr. Todd A. Jaeger, J.D., Superintendent  
Ms. Tassi Call, Associate Superintendent for Elementary Education  
Mr. Matthew Munger, Associate Superintendent for Secondary Education  
Mr. Scott Little, Chief Financial Officer  
Mr. Richard La Nasa, Executive Director of Operational Support  
Mr. John Hastings, Director of Human Resources  
Ms. Elizabeth Jacome, Director of Curriculum & Assessment  
Ms. Kristin McGraw, Director of Student Services  
Ms. Julie Valenzuela, Director of 21st Century Education  
Ms. Michelle Valenzuela, Director of Communications

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

President Zibrat called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Superintendent Jaeger introduced Ms. Stephanie Hillig, Principal of Painted Sky Elementary. Ms. Hillig asked teacher Ms. Sarah Natale to introduce the students leading the Pledge. Ms. Natale explained the students are members of the National Elementary Honor Society (NEHS) which recognizes outstanding student achievement, leadership, and service. She spoke about the various service projects the students had planned for the rest of the school year and introduced Laurel, Vera, Ava, Luke, Reid, Ben, Noah, and Grace. The students led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. Cox Golder presented the students with certificates of recognition and each student introduced their family in the audience. A picture was taken with the Governing Board, Superintendent Jaeger, Ms. Hillig, Ms. Natale, and the Painted Sky students.

**3. RECOGNITION OF STUDENT ART**

Ms. Hillig introduced Art teacher, Ms. Chelsea Yaffa to speak about the student art displayed at the Wetmore District offices. Ms. Yaffa spoke about the different mediums and techniques her students have experimented with this school year. She also spoke about productive struggle and her students having to work through things that are initially difficult for them. Ms. Yaffa shared that her students have worked on collages, 3D color wheels, mandala inspired paintings and neurographic art.

Ms. Cox Golder presented Ms. Yaffa with a certificate of recognition. A picture was taken with the Governing Board, Superintendent Jaeger, and Ms. Yaffa to mark the occasion.

**4. ANNOUNCEMENT OF DATE AND TIME OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNING BOARD MEETING**

President Zibrat announced the next Organizational Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 13, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. at Canyon del Oro High School in the Fine Arts Auditorium.

## **5. RECOGNITIONS**

### **A. Recognition of Ironwood Ridge High School 2025 Girls Cross Country Division II State Championship and Individual State Runner-Up**

Superintendent Jaeger asked Mr. Armando Soto, Director of Interscholastic, to come forward. Mr. Soto stated that last year, this team was the state runner-up. He asked Coaches Michael Smith and Bob Jones to come forward with the team.

Coach Smith introduced team members Sorella, Sophia, Kylie, Caitlin, Kelsey, Jessica, Olivia, Sophia, and Ash. He explained that in the final meet, the top five finishers' scores combine to become the team's final score. Ironwood Ridge scored 45 points which put them 29 points ahead of the second place team. Coach Smith spoke about the girls' teamwork, preparation, and commitment to one another. He spoke about each girls' finish and gave special accolades to the two alternates who trained all year and were ready to step in if needed.

Dr. Gemma congratulated the team on their state title and asked what each member's average mileage was each week.

Coach Smith stated the girls had been working for about 24 weeks this season and averaged 30-40 miles a week each.

Dr. Gemma presented the team and coaches with certificates of recognition. A picture was taken with the Governing Board, Superintendent Jaeger, Coach Smith, Coach Jones, and the members of the girls cross country team to mark the occasion.

### **B. Recognition of National Merit Scholarship Commended Students and Semifinalists**

Superintendent Jaeger stated that in addition to athletic recognitions, it is equally exciting to recognize students for their academic accomplishments and this one is particularly significant. He asked Canyon del Oro Principal, Ms. Tara Bulleigh, to come forward to introduce her students.

Ms. Bulleigh introduced CDO's National Merit Commended students, Elijah, Isidoro, Jacob, and Sebastian as well as the National Merit Semi-Finalists, Chad, Cian, and Joey. She spoke about each students various academic achievements, their involvement in multiple extracurricular activities, and their plans for the future.

Vice President Day presented the students with certificates of recognition. Each student introduced their families in the audience and some thanked their teachers as well. A picture was taken with the Governing Board, Superintendent Jaeger, Ms. Bulleigh and students to mark the occasion.

Ironwood Ridge High School Principal, Dr. Oranté Jenkins, introduced his National Merit Commended student, Shawn. Dr. Jenkins spoke about Shawn's academic achievements, involvement in extracurricular activities, and future plans after graduation. Shawn thanked his mother and his chemistry teacher for their support. A picture was taken with the Governing Board, Superintendent Jaeger, Dr. Jenkins, and Shawn.

### **C. Presentation of Distinguished Service Awards**

President Zibrat asked Superintendent Jaeger to introduce the awards.

Superintendent Jaeger stated each month during the school year a certificated and classified staff member are recognized with a Distinguished Service Award. He asked Mr. Chris Trimble, Principal of Wilson K-8 to introduce the classified recipient.

Mr. Trimble introduced Ms. Teresa McCabe, Library Assistant at Wilson K-8. Mr. Trimble described Ms. McCabe as a beacon of curiosity, kindness, and excellence. He spoke about all of the things Ms. McCabe does to enrich the lives of students at Wilson and enhance their love of reading. Mr. Trimble expressed his gratitude for the relationships Ms. McCabe builds with students and what an asset she is to the Wilson K-8 community.

A video played highlighting Ms. McCabe's contributions to the District.

Superintendent Jaeger asked Ms. Samantha Doyle, Principal of Prince Elementary, to introduce the certificated recipient. Ms. Doyle introduced Kelcy Bronson, Preschool Director. Ms. Doyle described Ms. Bronson as an exceptional educator whose dedication, creativity, and leadership make her an invaluable member of the Prince community. She went on to describe her role on the leadership team and as a mentor to others as well as an amazing advocate for inclusion and collaboration. Ms. Doyle spoke of Ms. Bronson's heart for serving others, meaningful lessons, and positive relationships with students.

A video played highlighting Ms. Bronson's contributions to the District.

President Zibrat asked if the recipients would like to say anything. Ms. McCabe stated she appreciated the recognition and thanked Ms. Shephard and her husband for their support. Ms. Bronson thanked her family for their support and commented that she started in Amphi as a kindergardener herself and has now been teaching eleven years.

President Zibrat presented Ms. McCabe and Ms. Bronson each with a certificate of recognition from the Governing Board, a Distinguished Service Award and a gift card donated by the Amphi Foundation. A picture was taken with the Governing Board, Superintendent Jaeger, Ms. McCabe, Mr. Trimble, Ms. Bronson, and Ms. Doyle to mark the occasion.

#### **D. Recognition of 2025 District Legendary Teacher Award Recipient**

Superintendent Jaeger explained that this recognition is special because it is based off of community nominations and the winner is selected by a third party. This year's Legendary Teacher, Ms. Brooke Wood, Kindergarten teacher from Painted Sky was nominated by parent, Ms. Jenelle Davis.

Ms. Davis read her nomination which spoke of Ms. Wood's dedication, compassion, and unwavering belief in her students.

Ms. Wood thanked Ms. Davis and her family and said it was an honor to work with her son and all of the other students in her class.

President Zibrat presented Ms. Wood with a certificate of recognition. A picture was taken with the Governing Board, Superintendent Jaeger, Ms. Wood, and Ms. Davis.

#### **E. Recognition of Finalist for 2025 University of Arizona Athletics Top 10 Teachers of the Year Award**

Superintendent Jaeger remarked that this was one of the most prestigious teaching awards in Pima County which is bestowed by the University of Arizona Athletics Department and Amphitheater is often fortunate to have a top ten finalist each year. He asked Ms. Bulleigh to introduce this year's finalist, Ms. Tenaya Sanchez.

Ms. Bulleigh shared that Ms. Sanchez has been teaching for 13 years and has watched her blossom into a highly impactful teacher and mentor. Ms. Bulleigh read from her nomination which speaks about Ms. Sanchez's passion for learning and teaching, her contributions to the International Baccalaureate Programme, the REACH gifted program, and her identification as a Highly Effective Teacher each year. Ms. Bulleigh went on to speak about Ms. Sanchez's use of personal choice and high expectation in her classroom and her commitments to leading extracurricular activities on campus for students. Ms. Bulleigh praised Ms. Sanchez as an amazing teacher who facilitates a student-centered classroom and a growth mindset.

Dr. Gemma presented Ms. Sanchez with a certificate of recognition. Ms. Sanchez expressed her gratitude to the CDO leadership and colleagues who are also very deserving of this recognition. A picture was taken with the Governing Board, Superintendent Jaeger, Ms. Sanchez, and Ms. Bulleigh to mark the occasion.

### **6. INFORMATION**

#### **A. Superintendent's Report**

*For the Superintendent's Report PowerPoint see Exhibit 1.*

Superintendent Jaeger shared highlights of recent events in the District.

- Innovation Academy hosted their annual "Balloons Over Broadway" celebration with students parading floats they crafted in class

- Third graders at Prince Elementary became “text-feature” surgeons last month with a hands-on literacy lesson that blended teamwork and critical thinking
- Holaway students and Tucson Police Department kicked off the holiday season with a celebration complete with treats, photos with Santa, and chatting with Police Chief Kasmar
- Oro Valley Mayor Joe Winfield paid a visit to Copper Creek kindergarteners
- Oro Valley Police Dog, Ari, visited Painted Sky to spread holiday cheer
- Elementary and middle school students have been competing in their school spelling bees over the past month. The District bee is January 21<sup>st</sup>.

## **B. Status of Construction Projects**

*For the Status of Construction Projects PowerPoint see Exhibit 2.*

Superintendent Jaeger asked Mr. La Nasa to deliver his monthly report detailing construction projects in the District. Mr. La Nasa shared details about the following projects:

- Amphitheater High School Main Gym floor repairs using bond funds
- Ironwood Ridge High School Cooling Tower Replacement using Building Renewal Grant funds

Mr. La Nasa shared that the grant funding for November 2025 totaled \$463, 542 and total funding so far for the 2025-2026 school year is \$7,261,202. He offered to answer any questions. There were none.

*President Zibrat called for a seven minute break at 7:25pm. The meeting resumed at 7:32pm.*

## **7. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

## **10. STUDY/ACTION**

### **A. Study and Approval of the Revised Expenditure Budget #2 for Fiscal Year 2025-2026; Public Hearing**

*For the Revised Expenditure Budget #2 for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 see Exhibit 3.*

Superintendent Jaeger explained that if there was no objection, he would like to move up the Study/Action agenda item as the information contained in it is pertinent to discussions later in the agenda. There were no objections. Superintendent Jaeger asked Mr. Scott Little to deliver an update on the Budget Revision.

Mr. Little explained that state statute requires school districts to revise their budgets in December to reflect updated projections of enrollment by using attendance during the first 100 days of school. He went on to explain group A and group B funding which categorizes funding for students and utilizes different formula weights for different populations. Mr. Little stated that group A had a drop of 282 students and noted the drop was likely due to Empowerment Scholarships. He went on to say that based on that enrollment decline, the budget revision represents a projected funding drop from last fiscal year of just over \$5.3 million. Mr. Little wished to point out that last year there was a budget balance carry forward that was used to balance the budget. He noted that there will be no budget carry forward for next year. Mr. Little expressed his appreciation to the Board for moving this item up on the agenda so that the public can be aware of the seriousness of the District’s fiscal issues. He offered to answer any questions.

President Zibrat declared the public hearing open and asked for any comments from the public. Seeing none, she declared the public hearing closed

*President Zibrat moved to approve the Revised Expenditure Budget #2 for Fiscal Year 2025-2026. Mr. Kopec seconded the motion. Voice vote in favor-5. President Zibrat, Vice President Day, Ms. Cox Golder, Dr. Gemma, and Mr. Kopec. Opposed-0.*

## **8. CONSENT AGENDA**

*Details of agenda items, supporting documents, and presentations are available in the electronic Board Book by clicking on the hyperlink below.*

*President Zibrat asked if any items needed to be removed for further discussion or comment. There were none.*

*Ms. Cox Golder moved for Consent Agenda Items 8. A.– N. be approved as presented. Dr. Gemma seconded the motion. Vote in favor – 5. President Zibrat, Vice President Day, Ms. Cox Golder, Dr. Gemma, and Mr. Kopec. Opposed – 0. Consent Agenda Items 8. A.-N. passed.*

**A. Approval of Appointment of Non-Administrative Personnel**

*The Governing Board approved the Appointment of Non-Administrative Personnel as submitted in Exhibit 4.*

**B. Approval of Personnel Changes**

*The Governing Board approved Personnel Changes as submitted in Exhibit 5.*

**C. Approval of Leave(s) of Absence**

*The Governing Board approved Leave(s) of Absence as submitted in Exhibit 6.*

**D. Approval of Separation(s) and Termination(s)**

*The Governing Board approved Separation(s) and Termination(s) as submitted in Exhibit 7.*

**E. Approval of Stipend for Coaching Volunteers**

*The Governing Board approved Stipend for Coaching Volunteers as submitted in Exhibit 8.*

**F. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting(s)**

*The Governing Board approved minutes from the November 18, 2025 meeting as submitted in Exhibit 9.*

**G. Approval of Vouchers Totaling and Not Exceeding Approximately \$1,233,554.64**

*A copy of vouchers for goods and services received by the Amphitheater Public Schools and recommended for payment has been provided to the Governing Board. The following vouchers were approved as presented and payment authorized as submitted in Exhibit 10.*

Voucher #	Amount	Voucher #	Amount	Voucher #	Amount
1136	\$58,545.50	1137	\$53,336.04	1138	\$6,573.81
1139	\$13,826.89	1140	\$40,534.77	1141	\$43,075.12
1142	\$7,199.30	1143	\$29,745.81	1145	\$115,308.15
1146	\$42,172.37	1147	\$106,537.62	1148	\$215,522.06
1149	\$90,643.24	1150	\$166,098.15	1151	\$18,600.49
1152	\$114,301.10	1153	\$104,140.28	1155	\$7,393.94

**F. Acceptance of Gifts**

*The Governing Board approved the Acceptance of Gifts as submitted in Exhibit 11.*

**G. Approval of Parent Support Organization(s) - 2025-2026**

*The Governing Board approved CDO Girls Basketball Booster, IRHS Girls Soccer Booster, CDO Men's Soccer Booster, and JOM Indian Education Committee as submitted in Exhibit 12.*

**H. Approval of Disposal of Surplus Property via PublicSurplus.com**

*The Governing Board approved Disposal of Surplus Property via PublicSurplus.com.*

**I. Approval of 2026-2027 Governing Board Meeting Schedule**

*The Governing Board approved the 2026-2027 Governing Board Meeting Scheudle as submitted in Exhibit 13.*

**J. Joint Resolution Expressing Concern and Disapproval Regarding the Draft Plans for a Potential Pima County Joint Technical Education District (JTED) Special Bond Election**

*The Governing Board approved the Joint Resolution Expressing Concern and Disapproval Regarding the Draft Plans for a Potential Pima County Joint Technical Education District (JTED) Special Bond Election as submitted in Exhibit 14.*

## **K. Approval of the 2025-2026 District 301 Plan**

*The Governing Board approved the 2025-2026 District 301 Plan as submitted in Exhibit 15.*

## **N. Approval of Out of State Travel**

*The Governing Board approved Out of State Travel as submitted in Exhibit 16.*

## **9. STUDY**

### **A. Review of Superintendent's Proposal for Consolidation of Schools Due to Declining Enrollments, to be Effective for the 2026-2027 School Year:**

- a. Closure of E.C. Nash Elementary School, with Students to Attend Walker Elementary and Keeling Elementary;
- b. Closure of Francis Owen Holaway Elementary School, with Students to Attend Rio Vista Elementary;
- c. Closure of Marion Donaldson Elementary School, with Students to Attend Mesa Verde Elementary and Walker Elementary; and
- d. Closure of Copper Creek Elementary School, with Students to Attend Harelson Elementary and Wilson K-8.

*For the Superintendent's Proposal for Consolidation of Schools PowerPoint, see Exhibit 17.*

Superintendent Jaeger acknowledged the burden on each of the Board members' shoulders at having to consider the recommendation to close schools. He reiterated the dire budget situation that Amphitheater as well as other Districts across the state are facing as the Board has been studying the various factors contributing to the necessity of closures over the last year.

Superintendent Jaeger offered an overview of the history of the Amphitheater District which was founded in 1893 with one schoolhouse and eleven students, ballooned to more than 18,000 students in the early 2000's, and the eventual decline of enrollment leading to a current enrollment of approximately 10,500 students.

He went on to speak about recent District achievements including:

- Implementation of a Promise of a Graduate
- Substantially improved letter grades for all schools
- Three schools earning the A+ School of Excellence designation
- District-wide rigorous standards-based curricula
- Expanded inclusion and CTE programs
- Growth of technology access

Superintendent Jaeger offered detailed explanations of the current challenges that are having an affect on public education and enrollment:

### **Birth Rate**

- Dropped 36% between 2006 and 2023 with Pima County reporting the lowest birthrate of all major Arizona counties
- Demographers advise that the current trend of birth decline will not change by any significant measure until at least 2050

### **Charter Schools**

- The 1990's saw the birth of charter schools in Arizona
- Amphitheater has 12 charter schools within its boundaries
- Charter school enrollment continues to grow throughout the state but it is also being affected by private school vouchers

## Vouchers

- Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESA's or vouchers) offer parents state funding for private schooling
- Arizona is currently issuing over 96,000 vouchers totaling over \$1 billion
- There is very little oversight and instances of fraudulent spending of funds for non-educational items
- In 2024, families of 1,367 students within Amphitheater boundaries took vouchers amounting to more the \$9.5 million which would have funded public education if the students had enrolled in a public school

## Operational Costs

- Amphitheater operated at 231 square feet per pupil in 2024; the state average is 158 square feet per pupil
- Estimated expenses for operating the additional square footage in 2024 was \$7.2 million
- The state has withheld \$7.2 billion from public schools to support building improvement which exacerbates operational cost impacts

## Inflation

- For years, the Arizona legislature has failed to comply with state law mandating inflationary increases at the rate of inflation until they repealed the law altogether in the 1990's.
- The rate of inflation is outpacing the rate of state funding increases

Superintendent Jaeger stated that each of these factors have contributed to the recommendations being brought forth. He spoke about Isaac School District which was placed into receivership after failing to promptly respond to enrollment decline and also spoke to the nearly 40 schools that have been closed statewide with more coming.

Superintendent Jaeger spoke about the negative outcomes that would result if schools are not consolidated including financial insolvency, reduction in programmatic offerings, fee increases for families, wage and benefit freezes, and significant job losses. He offered an overview of the review and recommendation-making process that has occurred over the last year which has included:

- Cost reductions of \$3.6 million last school year
- Announcement of consolidation planning
- Formation of a Budget Advisory Committee to study data and provide recommendations
- Discussions with various advisory groups (Teacher, Support Staff, Community Council, and Student Advisories)
- Set non-negotiables for the consolidation plan
- Reviewed data (enrollment, capacity, costs)

Superintendent Jaeger shared capacity, current enrollment, percent of current capacity, and annual operational costs of each elementary school to illustrate why each school was chosen for consolidation. His recommendation is as follows:

Closing Buildings	Welcoming Schools
Copper Creek Elementary School	Wilson K-8 and Harelson Elementary Schools
Donaldson Elementary School	Mesa Verde Elementary School
Nash Elementary School	Keeling and Walker Elementary Schools
Holaway Elementary School	Rio Vista Elementary School

He went on to outline the low enrollment at each school, high operational costs, and the benefits of consolidating with the chosen welcoming schools). Superintendent Jaeger explained that students will have access to more programmatic opportunities, transportation effects will be minimal, food service will be unaffected, and students with special needs will continue to receive services. He went on to explain feeder patterns will be maintained, receiving schools have the same or a higher academic achievement profile, and class size ratios set forth by district policy and the current override will be maintained. Superintendent Jaeger also went on to say that families may apply for open enrollment at any District school and any current open enrollment students do not need to reapply. He stated that students with special needs will receive personalized coordination regarding placement and supports for the next school year. This will ensure a continuum of programming and services and provide continuity of IEP services for students.

Superintendent Jaeger stated staffing decisions would be based on long-standing District policy and that District administration has already met with the staff at affected sites to discuss the transition. He explained 50-60 teachers are hired each year due to staff attrition even with last year's enrollment declines and every attempt will be made to place displaced support staff into other available positions.

Superintendent Jaeger outlined the plan moving forward:

- Matter submitted for Governing Board action on January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2026
- If decision is finalized, work will begin developing new community relationships, preserving history, honoring traditions, ensuring families feel welcome in welcoming schools
- Operational plans for new boundaries, bus routes, food service will be developed and communicated
- District teams will work to determine best uses for the closed buildings and land with community input

He went on to discuss positives and possibilities brought forth due to the consolidation:

- Continued focus on student achievement and growth
- Expansion and strengthening of programs
- Larger grade level teaching teams with greater opportunities for collaboration and professional learning
- Opportunity to create shared values and a cohesive school identity
- Reduction in underutilization of buildings
- Freed up budget capacity to meet other needs

Superintendent Jaeger concluded with summarizing a vision for the future which includes program expansion, continuing to meet the need of the community and students, ensuring the promise of every student is realized, continuous improvement in learning and working environments, and a continuing culture of care for students, staff, parents, and community. He opened the floor to Governing Board members to ask questions or make comments.

Dr. Gemma expressed his appreciation for such a thorough presentation. He asked what has been done to attract and maintain students.

Superintendent Jaeger explained that the primary way to attract students is by elevating the district's reputation through professional staff development and curricula which has resulted in rising test scores. In addition, three schools have received the A+ designation from the Arizona Educational Foundation with the hope of more next year. He went on to speak about marketing tactics such as sending postcards to families in other zip codes, highlighting STEM education and Maker Spaces in schools, and considering crossing county lines to transport students from Oracle who may wish to attend Amphitheater schools.

Dr. Gemma stated having worked in the District in the early 2000's, he can attest to the progress made over the last 16 years. He thanked the staff for their expertise in this proposal.

Mr. Kopec asked if the birth rate has hit the floor of the decline and if there are any notes on residential development that may bring in more students.



Superintendent Jaeger stated it is unknown if the birthrate decline has hit the lowest point, but it is down about 38% according to demographers. He went on to say that homes located in the District are expensive and rather than being filled with families, they are being bought or already occupied by retirees. Superintendent Jaeger noted that families are drawn to places like Vail and Marana where housing is less expensive.

Vice President Day asked about data detailing which grade cohorts most utilize vouchers.

Superintendent Jaeger stated the state doesn't offer a lot of specific information because the system has little accountability, but Amphitheater does see a lot of students return to public school for ninth grade because families recognize the robust offerings of our public high schools with programs like Career and Technical Education.

Ms. Cox Golder stated that most of the feedback she has received has been from Copper Creek parents and she understands many moved to that neighborhood because of the community school located within it. She acknowledged it closing may feel like a major loss for families in that neighborhood, but noted that the money saved by not keeping it open can be funneled to their new home schools which will greatly benefit all of the students and their children will grow to love those schools as well.

Mr. Kopec acknowledged the unfortunate situation the District is in with having to consolidate schools, but acknowledged the alternatives such as financial insolvency are unacceptable. He spoke about the state's mismanagement of education funds and the necessity to make fair, data driven decisions in the best interest of the District as a whole.

President Zibrat stated that it was time to hear from the public on this specific issue. She directed people who wished to speak to fill out a blue comment card if they hadn't already. She read the guidelines for public comment.

January Multhrup is a teacher at Copper Creek Elementary. She stated she is not in disagreement with the dire financial situation the District is facing, but asked the Governing Board to reconsider the recommendation to close Copper Creek. Ms. Multhrup spoke about the disruption of splitting up teams of students and staff particularly the cross-categorical students from the rest of the student body. She went on to speak about the highly trained and experienced staff and their inclusive models. Ms. Multhrup suggested a better option would be to move Painted Sky students to Copper Creek instead.

Lorella Ritzell is a Copper Creek staff member. She spoke about her early experiences with Copper Creek as a parent and then eventual employee. She asked that the Governing Board consider putting a pause on closing Copper Creek. Ms. Ritzell spoke about the strong inclusion model, use of AVID strategies, and the importance of maintaining their strong teams. She stated putting more students on their campus would offset the operating costs and she encouraged Board members to visit the campus.

Gina David is a Special Education teacher and spoke about the importance of a stable, consistent, and caring environment for students, particularly those with special needs. She stated that the decision to close a school needs to be more than just budgetary, but a decision that will disrupt the least and create the best student outcomes. Ms. David spoke about the negative impact of disrupting a school with such a large special education population, the amazing dedication and effective model of inclusion Copper Creek is operating, and the ability of Copper Creek to easily absorb more students from another site.

Caitlin Provencio is a Holaway parent and asked the Governing Board to reconsider the current recommendations. She stated moving forward seems like a rushed decision made without adequate input from families. She stated alienating families will have a financial impact as they will opt to explore other educational opportunities for their students. Ms. Provencio spoke about walking to Rio Vista not being a realistic option so if she has to drive her students to school she may as well explore her out of district options as well. She shared her family's long history with the District, but her dissatisfaction with this process.

Jenn Price is a parent and spoke about her son's difficult experience in kindergarten two years ago, but the eventual turn around due to the relationship he was able to build with a very skilled teacher who took the

time to get to know her son. She spoke about the research supporting the importance of positive teacher/student relationships and that breaking up cohesive teams will have a damaging affect on students.

Andrew Perkins is the parent of a Copper Creek preschool student with special needs. He expressed a concern with the demographer's data stating a declining birth rate is being offset with an influx of people moving to Arizona. Mr. Perkins questioned whether the Board was moving too quickly to close schools and urged the Board to put off the vote and allow the parents and teachers to have a third party audit the findings and recommendations. He concluded that a rushed decision demonstrates that the District has abdicated its fiduciary responsibility.

Brad Stein is a parent of a Copper Creek student. He noted that the decision to close four schools seems reactionary rather than visionary and would only provide temporary relief. Mr. Stein stated public schools lack competitiveness and so parents are choosing alternatives. He spoke about expanding the effective model demonstrated by Innovation Academy and making investments to expand Amphibious's competitiveness. He spoke about the alternative of using Copper Creek's large campus to serve as a hub of excellence that attracts students from local charter schools.

Halley Lowry is the parent of a Copper Creek student and spoke about the correspondence she has shared with the Governing Board on several occasions outlining her concerns related to the school closures as well as possible non-compliance with state statutes. She went on to speak about the petition signed by Copper Creek families, the attorney general's investigation on ESA fraud, and the District's deficiencies pointed out by the Auditor General. Ms. Lowry asked that the Board consider the data and information she provided in her correspondence and pause before moving forward with the closure of schools.

Virginia Morris is a Copper Creek parent and asked the Board to consider the human aspect of closing a neighborhood school like Copper Creek. She spoke about the disruption to students' routines, displaced staff, and the loss Copper Creek alumni will feel not being able to return to their school in the future. Ms. Morris asked the District to look deeper into this issue and to explore another solution.

Megan Mascareno is a Copper Creek parent and spoke about her children's teachers over the years and the importance of their neighborhood school. She questioned the cost savings of moving students from Copper Creek, but yet having to maintain the empty building. Ms. Mascareno questioned if the cost savings would be greater if another school was closed instead.

#### **11. PUBLIC COMMENT**

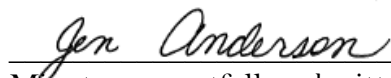
There was no further public comment.

#### **12. BOARD MEMBER REQUESTS FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Mr. Kopec asked for responses to the concerns brought up by the public during the call to the audience.

#### **13. ADJOURNMENT**

*Vice President Day moved to adjourn. Ms. Cox Golder seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Voice vote in favor-5. President Zibrat, Vice President Day, Ms. Cox Golder, Dr. Gemma, and Mr. Kopec. Opposed-0. The meeting adjourned at 9:48pm.*



Minutes respectfully submitted for Governing Board Approval  
Jen Anderson, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent & Governing Board

December 23, 2025

Date

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Susan Zibrat, Governing Board President

January 13, 2026

Date