



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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October 15, 2018

Dear Amphitheater Parents, Staff and Community:

On Oct. 5, the Arizona State Board of Education publicly released letter grades (A-F) for all schools in Arizona. These letter grades were calculated using the results of the AzMERIT tests and other data from the last school year (2017-18). I would like to provide you with some background information that may be useful in understanding your school's letter grade and share some plans we have for the future.

While Arizona's A-F Accountability System results in a simple letter grade for schools, those grades are generated through fairly complex formulas. These formulas are largely based on measures of student proficiency and growth, as well as acceleration and readiness, and have been created within certain parameters. It's important to note that the grades are placed on a bell curve. That means that the state awards a certain number of each grade. Roughly speaking, 17% of the state's K-8 schools earn an "A," 34% earn a "B," 37% receive a "C," 9% receive a "D," and 3% receive an "F" grade.

The school grading system provides schools with feedback: identification of areas where they have been successful, as well as areas of focus for the future. The grading system can thereby help schools improve, help identify schools needing additional support, and help prioritize the application of limited resources.

Of the Amphitheater School District's 19 schools receiving a grade under this new system:

- 5 schools received an "A"
- 5 schools received a "B"
- 8 schools received a "C" (*pending planned appeals*)
- 1 school received a "D" (*pending a planned appeal*)

Initially Innovation Academy was issued an "A" grade, but a few days later the Arizona Department of Education sent a notice that new schools should not have a letter grade. Innovation Academy's grade was changed to "NR," which means Not Rated. No Amphitheater schools received an "F" grade.

A complete list of schools and preliminary letter grades is provided [here](#). (link to grade list)

Beyond the “Grades”: Evaluating Our Schools

Although we recognize and appreciate the importance of measuring student achievement through quantitative data and consistent statewide measurements and labels, no single assessment of school performance can possibly provide a wholly accurate picture.

A variety of important factors contribute to a positive and successful school environment for students. Families, therefore, should not only consider things like school grades or other performance labels, but also look at other qualitative factors such as:

- the social and emotional environment which their children experience;
- the skilled and highly qualified teachers who serve their children;
- the quality and diversity of programs and services available at their child’s school;
- the active involvement and support of the community; and
- the achievements of students or staff.

This year, Amphitheater Public Schools has developed the Portrait of a Graduate, a roadmap for ensuring every student develops skills in key areas, some of which can be measured by a school grading system and others that are not as easily quantified.

The Portrait of a Graduate provides a vision of the skills and qualities our Amphi graduates will have obtained during their K-12 experience with us. Areas of emphasis are Academic Content, Communication, Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, Caring, Problem-Solving, Citizenship and Collaboration. We believe that ensuring our students grow in these areas is the best way to prepare for college, career and the world beyond high school.

Amphitheater Public Schools takes great pride in the academic achievement of our students. Our teachers and other staff are fully committed to the success of each and every one of the students in our Amphi Family. We are proud to play a part in making the dreams of students and their families come true, and we will continue to work hard to earn the trust you place in us.

If you would like more information on the A-F Accountability System, you will find it on the Amphitheater Public Schools website: www.amphi.com. And, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at (520) 696-5206.

Sincerely,

Todd A. Jaeger, J.D.
Superintendent