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SUPERINTENDENT

Todd A. Jaeger, J.D.

November 2, 2022

Dear Amphitheater Family and Community:

The State of Arizona released its “grades” for the state’s public schools on Tuesday. These “grades” provide a simple means of assessing and comparing individual school performance across the state. The grades assigned to schools are largely derived from student achievement (standardized testing), as well as some other performance measures such as college and career readiness, student academic growth, and other key areas of interest to families and the general public.

Arguably, the complete assessment of a school’s performance should not be so largely tied to a single standardized test given on a single day of a school year, but this is the system we currently have in Arizona and, for better or worse, it does provide that common and consistent bar by which all public schools in Arizona are evaluated and labeled.

When illegal political signs were recently posted throughout our District that contained false and misleading information about the achievement of our students in Amphitheater, I know many of you wondered about the truth. So, I am pleased to share our school grade labels and other data with you in this letter, because in these days of scorched earth political tactics that spread the poison of misinformation, there is no better antidote than the truth.

We all know, of course, that the pandemic had a tremendously negative impact on student learning across our nation and state over the last two years. The data released by the State of Arizona, however, does provide some very encouraging realities within the Amphitheater District:

- Ten (10) Amphitheater District schools earned “A” grades last year – more than ever before in our history. Six (6) of our schools received “B” grades, and five (5) received “C” grades. (See Table 1 below for individual school grades.)
- Unlike other districts across Arizona, Amphitheater had no schools receive a D or F label.
- Amphitheater students are rebounding in their learning, and our students’ achievement is generally outpacing that of the state average.
 - Overall in Math, Amphitheater students at all grade levels grew more in mathematics than the state did from 2021 to 2022. In fact, Amphitheater student Math achievement improved by an average of 7% overall last year, compared to 2% growth across the state.

Amphitheater High School • Canyon del Oro High School • Ironwood Ridge High School
Amphitheater Middle School • Coronado K-8 School • Cross Middle School • La Cima Middle School • Wilson K-8 School
Copper Creek Elementary • Donaldson Elementary • Harelson Elementary • Holaway Elementary • Innovation Academy • Keeling Elementary
Mesa Verde Elementary • Nash Elementary • Painted Sky Elementary • Prince Elementary • Rio Vista Elementary • Walker Elementary • Rillito Center • Amphi Academy Online

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- Amphitheater’s Grade 11 Math ACT scores were 11% higher than the Arizona state average.
- Overall in English Language Arts (ELA), Amphitheater students improved by an average of 5% last year, compared to 3% across the State of Arizona
- Amphitheater’s Grade 11 ACT scores for ELA were 7% higher than the state average.
- Amphitheater’s Grade 11 ACT scores not only outperformed the state average, but also outperformed those of our local peer districts in Pima County (districts having similar socio-economic learning profiles).

Notwithstanding the gains and growth our students experienced last year, we still have significant work to do to help our students rebound further, and our dedicated and caring teachers and other educators are more committed than ever to the learning and achievement of each and every Amphitheater student. They are working to ensure that our students fully recover from learning losses suffered through the pandemic. The good news is that their efforts, and the hard work of our students themselves, have already borne fruit as this recent data demonstrates, and I know we will continue to build upon these successes for the remainder of this year and beyond.

Table 1 – Individual State of Arizona School Grades for Amphitheater District Schools

Canyon Del Oro High School	A
Copper Creek Elementary School	A
Cross Middle School	A
Harelson Elementary School	A
Innovation Academy	A
Ironwood Ridge High School	A
Mesa Verde Elementary School	A
Painted Sky Elementary School	A
Walker Elementary School	A
Wilson K-8 School	A
Amphi Academy Online	B
Coronado K-8 School	B
Donaldson Elementary School	B
Holaway Elementary School	B
La Cima Middle School	B
Rio Vista Elementary School	B
Amphitheater High School	C
Amphitheater Middle School	C
Keeling Elementary School	C
Nash Elementary School	C
Prince Elementary School	C

That being said, we recognize that not all our school grades, and certainly not all of our student performance measures, are where we want them to be. There is much room for improvement, and we will continue to improve. But, as we do so, we must also recognize that making generalizations across school districts largely based on single test scores ignores the great diversity and challenges we have across our state's school districts and, indeed, across our own district. This is especially true because some variables, such as students' socio-economic circumstances, tend to be highly correlated with test scores. We must also remember the American values we embrace as a traditional public school district when we welcome and serve every student who comes through our doors, including those with special needs, language barriers, and the consequences of trauma and poverty.

We are grateful for the support of our community and our parents, and we are fully invested in the honor granted to us to educate their children in the Amphitheater District. While much work still lies ahead, the work is necessary, important and meaningful. Encouraged by the growth and improvements we have already seen, we look forward to the work ahead and the promise embodied in every student who graces the door of an Amphitheater District school.

Please believe in and rely upon that truth and all the others I have shared in this letter.

Yours in service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd A. Jaeger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial 'T'.

Todd A. Jaeger, J.D.
Superintendent
Amphitheater Public Schools