

Apache Junction Unified School District

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News Release

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Governing Board Directs AJUSD Reorganization

As a first step toward reorganizing and restructuring the school district to better serve students and achieve the goal of making sure that all graduates are readied for “Year 13” educational opportunities, the Governing Board of the Apache Junction Unified School District has directed district administrators to work out the cost savings and details of closing two schools next year.

This move is a key part of a plan being formulated for achieving the academic excellence necessary to attain college readiness for all students. The plan’s foundation will be the three-pronged basis of Rigor, Relevance and Relationships, according to Superintendent Dr. Chad Wilson, and teaching approaches emphasized in classrooms will be individualized instruction and Project Based Learning (PBL), facilitated by 21st Century classroom technology tools employed by both teachers and students.

Schools that are being considered for closure are Gold Canyon Elementary School and Thunder Mountain Middle School. A reconfiguration of the student population would be necessary, entailing a shift to educating students in grades K-6 at the district’s elementary schools, and introducing a new technology-intensive approach to educating 7th and 8th graders in a junior high school setting at Desert Shadows (currently a middle school - 6,7,8).

Governing Board President Wendy Moore has also further instructed that all other areas, items and positions also be examined for changes and cuts that could recover additional savings for the district that could be channeled toward more rigorous and technologically-oriented academic goals.

These directives to examine a reorganization of the school district came as board members are exploring solutions to addressing an enrollment decline, and meeting the challenge of cutting \$2.4 million budget from the district’s 2010-2011 budget due to declining enrollment and the defeat of the continuation of the district’s 10 percent M&O Override at the polls in November.

It was noted that the district would be required to proceed through a legal process of posting notice and holding public meetings before a final decision regarding the school closures is made at a public meeting.

Two letters have been sent to parents. In the first, Superintendent Chad Wilson reiterated the district’s commitment to providing students an excellent education that will prepare all of them for pursuit of post-secondary learning opportunities, and cited financial challenges requiring “bold decisions.”

He further stated, “Closing schools is never a ‘preferred first choice’ solution.” However, he emphasized that having the resources available to realize the attainment of certain crucial academic goals for students may necessitate it.

His initial letter also noted if these closures were enacted for 2010-2011, a reconfiguration of student populations and attendance areas would be necessary, and asked for the patience, support and cooperation of parents.

Two public meetings have been scheduled in January regarding these issues. A second letter to parents announcing the dates of these public meetings to be held at each school was mailed to parents on Dec. 18.

The meetings will be: **Tuesday , Jan. 19 – Gold Canyon Elementary School – 6:30 p.m.**

Wednesday, Jan. 20 –Thunder Mountain Middle School – 6:30 p.m.

A copy of the letters sent to parents and a video message from Dr. Wilson are currently posted at www.ajusd.org under “News.” By Monday, January 4, the district will have in place a special webpage devoted to information on this topic and also a feedback form that will allow community members to send their comments to the Governing Board and Superintendent.