

Amphitheater Public Schools

S Message about School Consolidations in 2026-2027

Superintendent Jaeger • 2 months ago • Thursday, Oct 2 at 10:00 AM • **Amphitheater Public Schools**

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Dear Amphitheater Families,

Last school year, and again earlier this year, I shared that Amphitheater, like many public school districts, is experiencing a sudden and steep decline in student enrollment, resulting in several million dollars of lost funding. I'm writing today to update you on this ongoing reality and the steps we are taking to keep our 132-year-old school system strong for generations to come.

Even as we face these challenges, Amphitheater remains a district of excellence. We serve students in 22 schools (12 elementary, two K–8, three middle, three high schools, a virtual school, and a special education learning center), and we are proud that we have highly rated schools, nationally recognized teachers, innovative academic programs, and outstanding college and career preparation. Our strength and commitment to students guide every decision we make.

Public school districts across Arizona are navigating a convergence of historic pressures: declining birth rates, expansion of private school vouchers, growth of charter and private schools, rising housing costs, and sustained underfunding by the state. These factors have created new financial and enrollment strains here and in other Arizona districts that have recently closed schools or are in the process of closing schools.

Enrollment in Amphi schools has declined nearly every year for the past decade. Last year, however, we saw a sudden \$4.3 million loss due to a particularly steep decline. The trend of declining enrollment continued into this year, with a projected enrollment loss of about 300 students currently. A review of demographic forecasts gives us little reason to believe this will turn around for many years to come.

In addition to the financial impact on the District, the under-enrollment of schools limits the programs and services that schools can provide. We must take steps now to ensure we can maintain educational opportunity for our students and financial stability for our community for generations to come.

We currently believe we will need to close no more than four elementary schools, but it is possible we might need to close as many as five – depending upon a number of factors we continue to evaluate. The result will be stronger, more cost-effective schools that continue to offer, and perhaps expand, the programs and services Amphitheater is known for providing.

The school consolidation plan must be in place for the start of next school year (2026-2027.)

The closure of schools is one of the most difficult decisions a school district can face, and it is certainly not a decision I ever wanted to face or make as your Superintendent. The moment weighs heavy on my mind and heart, as I know it does on yours, but it is our responsibility to ensure we balance our budget, use our facilities

wisely, and provide strong school communities and programs where our students thrive.

What Will Not Change

Although our District will look different next year, the heart and soul of Amphitheater will remain the same. We will continue to:

- Put students first. As we evaluate change, our first and most important consideration is how decisions will impact our children.
- Provide academic excellence. The Amphitheater District has more A-rated schools than ever before, several A+ Schools of Excellence, nationally recognized teachers and programs, including gifted and special education, and top-notch college and career preparation programs.
- Maintain our current class size commitments. We will follow Governing Board policy regarding class sizes and the reduced class sizes for grades K-3 made possible by our voter-approved budget override.
- Offer free, full-day kindergarten. The state of Arizona only funds half-day kindergarten. Amphitheater, however, funds full-day kindergarten at all our schools – thanks again to our K–3 budget override.
- Expand access to technology. The District is proud to maintain a one-to-one ratio of laptops for students and continually evaluates technology needs to ensure students have what they need in today's digital world.
- Offer a full and perhaps expanded range of programs, including preschool, gifted education, special education, career and technical education, STEM, and the arts.
- Value our District's history, legacy and tradition of excellence and service to our students and our community.

These commitments reflect the values that have guided our District for well more than a century, and they will continue to guide us into the future.

Key Points

As we work through this process, there are several important things for you to know.

- No decisions have been made yet about which of our schools will be consolidated or closed.
- District leadership, in collaboration with several advisory bodies composed of District constituents, are continuing to study enrollment, facilities, and budget data to guide and enable thoughtful, careful, and sound decisions.
- The ongoing consultative process includes input from all stakeholders: staff, parents, community members, and students. In addition to long-standing advisory groups within our District, we also established a new Budget Advisory Committee for this specific issue to obtain a variety of perspectives.

Our goal is to approach this process with care and transparency so that the final plan reflects what is best for our students, staff, and families — not just for today, but for years to come. We also want the decisions made to be the product of collaboration and common agreement as much as possible.

Next Steps

Over the next two months, we will continue to gather information, listen to input and feedback, and prepare for

our very consequential decision.

- District leadership and advisory committees will examine demographic data, including birth rates and enrollment projections, to better understand future trends.
- We will analyze additional factors such as attendance boundaries, transportation needs, and the programmatic, cultural and community impacts of consolidation.
- In November, we will hold community meetings to share the decisions, the rationale for those decisions, and our next steps with families, staff, and community members.
- In December, we will finalize our decisions and begin the implementation of those decisions for next school year.
- In May, at the end of the current school year, the school consolidations will take effect.

The timeline of this process, which has been underway since my announcements last school year, will allow time for discussion and planning so that our families and staff can have clarity and understanding well before the start of next school year.

How to Learn More

We know you will have questions as this process moves forward, and we want to be sure you have clear, accurate and timely information. To support you, we have created [a webpage with information, including an extensive “FAQ” section](#) with answers to commonly asked questions in 11 categories, with an intention to update that information regularly.

We will continue to share information and maintain transparency throughout this process. Your feedback along the way is not just welcome, it is essential. Please share your thoughts or questions by emailing answers@amphi.com.

The changes we face will not be easy, but they are necessary, and I am committed to making decisions that will secure the future of our District and continue our service to the children of this community for many years to come.

Thank you for your ongoing support and concern.

Sincerely yours,

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