



Tom Horne Reports to Educators

Volume III, Issue VIII November 2006

A Message from the Superintendent

1. Teacher Raises

The Department is working hard to be sure that the \$100 million that the legislature passed for new teacher raises, actually ends up as additional raises for teachers. Please see the attached press release by [Clicking Here](#).

2. "Highly Qualified" and "Appropriately Certified"

A number of teachers have expressed frustration about the rules pertaining to "highly qualified" and "appropriately certified." The "highly qualified" rules are imposed on us by the federal government. In this, and many other areas, the federal Department of Education is being unreasonable, and I am trying, on a national basis, to build a constituency for a more

reasonable statute, and a more reasonable interpretation of the existing statute. (See my letter to Congress attached to last month's Tom Horne Reports to Educators. [Click here for this letter.](#))

"Appropriately certified" is a requirement of Arizona statutes. The Arizona Department of Education does not agree with all laws that it is forced to administer. My philosophy has been for the Arizona Department of Education to implement "highly qualified" and "appropriately certified" in as liberal a manner as possible, consistent with the federal rules, and Arizona statutes.

In the meantime, if we can help you with any issues pertaining to "highly qualified" or "appropriately certified," please see our updated website www.ade.az.gov/aboutade/ihaveaquestion.asp, or for personal attention call 602-364-2190.

Sincerely,

Tom Horne
Superintendent of Public Instruction

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Positive Nurturing

2006 Mega Conference "Great Expectations"
November 15-17, 2006
Wigwam Spa and Resort

Speakers:

Superintendent Tom Horne
Vickie Phillips from Portland Public Schools
Dr. Steven Constantino from Family Friendly Schools
Dr. Larry McBiles, AZ School Improvement Expert

Additional Information Coming Soon!

The Grand Canyon State Games
Student Essay Contest

Pens and paper await the ideas and thoughts of students from grades K-12. The Fulton Homes Grand Canyon State Games Essay Contest Presented by APS and Sponsored by Ottawa University promotes self-improvement and empowerment through writing as an effective method for youth across the nation to express their dreams and ideas.

Encourage your students to put their thoughts and ideas into words! The purposes of the Grand Canyon State Games Student Essay Contest are to encourage all students to develop their critical thinking skills, to reward students who devote the required time and effort to improve their research skills, to reward, indirectly, the families and teachers who encourage students to develop those skills, and to prove that today's youth are interested in improving their communities.



Themes range from topics on of hard work, honesty and perseverance, building a better world, to Inhale Life be Tobacco Free, moral character, the importance of being healthy and respect for yourself and your community.

The contest is free and begins November 1st. Gold, Silver, and Bronze medals will be awarded to the top winners from each grade. Two Ira Fulton Scholarship Awards, in the amount of \$2500, will be awarded to the person with the top essay from grades 6, 7, and 8 as well as a the person with the top essay from grades 9, 10, 11 and 12.

There is an opportunity for everyone within the Grand Canyon State Games! If you are athletically inclined don't forget our Winter Games Kick off in January. More details will follow on both events in a later issue of the newsletter or you can always visit the Games website at www.gcsfg.org.

"Together We Have the Power to Make it Happen"



Got a story idea, picture, or celebration?
We'd love to hear from you! Email us at: ADENews@ade.az.gov

Research Shows a Positive Nurturing Culture and Climate is a Prime Component for Continuous School Improvement

By: Oran Tkatchov and Shelly Pollnow, Academic and Instructional Support

There are many schools in Arizona and throughout the nation, where a visitor senses a warm and welcoming attitude the moment he or she walks through the front door. More often than not, this inviting attitude permeates the entire campus community. The visitor can immediately grasp that this is a place where there is a "commonly shared purpose for student learning" (<http://cnx.org/content/m12922/1.2/>). One way to ensure that continuous learning and school improvement efforts become embedded is to create a healthy school climate in your building.

Data show that there is indeed a direct link between a school's ability to provide an optimistic, nurturing climate and their ability for continuous school improvement (Macneil and Maclin, 2005). Students who find a meaningful role in their school are less likely to engage in disruptive behavior than students who feel out of place and are deprived of individualized involvement (Stephens, 1995). The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, a study of 90,000 middle and high school students, found that students who have strong and quality relationships with teachers are more likely to have heightened academic achievement, as well as better behavior and attitude. Similar studies have found similar results. (Verdugo & Schneider, 1999; Gottfredson, 2002).

Teachers can help keep students interested in school by providing a challenging and engaging curriculum in an environment that promotes respect and an appreciation for diversity. Students are most motivated to learn, and display the sense of success and achievement when they are able to succeed at tasks that they find interesting and that widen their capacities. Engaged students also tend to have better school attendance and lower drop-out rates. (Finn, 1989, 1992; Lee & Smith, 1999; Sergiovanni, 2001; Shouse, 1996).

After providing an engaging curriculum, there are other steps teachers can take to improve the culture in their school and classroom:

- Reply to students in a caring and supporting manner. In the beginning of the year, create rules regarding behavior and homework, and consistently implement these rules.
- Remember you are a role-model. Model the behavior you expect from your students, and consider this as important as the teaching of academic standards.
- Rewards for good behavior and sanctions for unacceptable behavior.
- Take time to explain instructions to students. Make sure they understand what it is you are expecting them to complete.
- Coordinate with other teachers. Talk to other teachers in your building about what they are assigning as work, so students aren't overwhelmed.
- Give specific feedback. Explain to students why they did a great job on an assignment, or specifically explain how they can improve.

The Arizona Department of Education has created the [Standards and Rubrics for School Improvement](#), as a tool to be used by schools across our state in order to identify the strengths and limitations of their overall program. The indicators are defined within the following four standards: Leadership; Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development; Assessment; and School Culture, Climate and Communication. The Standards and Rubrics for School Improvement are anchored in the scientifically research-based principles and indicators that consistently distinguish top-performing schools.

Per the Standards and Rubrics for School Improvement, in order to create a strong school culture and climate, the school must function as an effective learning community, supporting a climate conducive to student achievement, and possessing an effective two-way communication system.

For more information:

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 Shouse, R. D. (1996). Academic press and sense of community: Conflict, congruence, and implications for student achievement. *Social Psychology of Education*, 1, 47-68.

MacNeil, A., & Maclin, V. (2005, July 24). Building a Learning Community: The Culture and Climate of Schools. Retrieved from the Connexions Web site: <http://cnx.org/content/m12922/1.2/>
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 Verdugo, R. & Schnieder, J. (1999). Quality schools, safe schools: A theoretical and empirical discussion. *Education & Urban Society*, 31(3), 286-308
 Sergiovanni, T. (2001). *The Principalship: A reflective practice*. 5th ed. San Antonio, TX: Trinity Press