

Glendale Union High School District No. 205
7650 N. 43rd Avenue
Glendale, AZ 85301

Whereas, during the first regular legislative session of 2005, the Arizona State Senate passed and Governor Janet Napolitano subsequently signed into law Senate Bill 1068, establishing a 13-person School District Redistricting Commission (SDRC) “to consider redistricting to, among many considerations, provide for a more seamless and connected learning experience and alignment of curriculum for the state’s youth, as well as potential savings and efficiencies” ...

Whereas, the SDRC, according to its prescribed mandate, submitted two proposals for the redistricting of Glendale Union High School District on April 30, 2007 ...

Whereas, Glendale Union High School District is to submit comments and recommendations to the SDRC by September 15, 2007 ...

And whereas, Glendale Union High School District holds that unification of this historic district would be detrimental to student achievement and the district’s current operational efficiency, without achieving any of the goals for unification set by the SDRC ...

More specifically, in the case of Glendale Union High School District:

- **Redistricting would *not* improve curriculum alignment,**
- **Redistricting would *not* decrease administrative spending, and**
- **Redistricting would *not* be in the best interest of students, parents or teachers ...**

Therefore, Glendale Union High School District hereby resolves that the following report shall be its official, public response to the School District Redistricting Commission’s recommendations for consolidating with the Glendale Elementary and Washington Elementary School Districts.

Kevin Clayborn, Governing Board President

Vicki L. Johnson, Governing Board Clerk

Kathy Jacka, Governing Board Member

Steve Burke, Governing Board Member

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DISTRICT OVERVIEW

Enrollment:	Approximately 15,000
Number of Schools:	Nine comprehensive schools, two alternative schools
Grade Configuration:	9-12
Performance Labels:	Five Excelling schools, four Highly Performing schools
Socioeconomic Status:	60% of students eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch 47% of students participate in Free/Reduced Lunch
Ethnicity:	Anglo: 43.5%, Hispanic: 42.3%, African American: 8.2%, Asian: 3.1%, Native American: 2.9%
Budget:	\$94 million Operational Budget for 2007-08
Administrative Staff:	Superintendent, Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, nine principals, 27 assistant principals, seven administrators (Community Relations, Finance, Information Technology, Maintenance and Transportation, Operations and Resources, School Safety, Special Services)
Certified Staff:	1,040
Classified Staff:	1,024

Description of School System

Glendale Union High School District (GUHSD) enjoys a rich and celebrated history. Conceived in 1911, GUHSD has grown from a few students attending only one school to approximately 15,000 students enrolled in nine comprehensive high schools and two alternative high school programs.

Throughout the years, GUHSD graduates have made immense contributions to our community, state and nation. The district has many proud alumni who recall their educational experiences with affection, respect and support.

GUHSD serves students in grades 9-12 in portions of the cities of Phoenix and Glendale, Arizona. This 60-square mile urban district serves approximately 200,000 constituents in the Phoenix metropolitan area.

GUHSD has garnered a reputation for excellence that goes beyond local and state education circles to the national level. The district's award-winning programs for teacher mentoring, curriculum assessment and instruction have been cited as models in publications by leading experts on education, including Dr. Harry K. Wong, Dr. Larry Lezotte, Dr. Willard Daggett and Dr. Mike Schmoker. GUHSD has even become a model for success beyond the borders of the United States. Most recently, the district shared its insights into how a data-driven district operates with members of the Egyptian Ministry of Education, who came to Arizona on a study visit as part of that country's current education-reform initiative.

Our Mission Statement

“Empowering All Students for the Choices and Challenges of the Twenty-First Century.”
GUHSD believes that all students can learn if given support and the opportunity.

Our Communities

GUHSD has six high schools in Phoenix and three in Glendale. The district enjoys strong community support, having just completed major renovation and facilities upgrade projects for all schools through bond monies.

Our Teachers

Teachers new to the district benefit from both a nationally acclaimed mentoring program and a well-defined and -designed staff development program for first- through third-year teachers. Moreover, ongoing staff development is provided to all teachers. GUHSD offers its teachers a competitive starting salary and high total lifetime career earnings.

Our Students

GUHSD students consistently score above state and national averages in achievement tests. Over 80 percent of the district’s students enroll in post-secondary education. One tangible measure of GUHSD’s success in preparing students for college is the scholarships its graduating seniors receive. In 2007, the district’s graduates were honored with numerous prestigious awards and four-year scholarships totaling over \$32 million in recognition of their achievements in academics, athletics, the arts and other fields of endeavor. GUHSD students receive diverse educational opportunities that help them become mature, well-rounded individuals. Approximately 70 percent of the district’s students participate in extracurricular programs at school, compared to 50 percent nationally. Moreover, the district’s relatively small, community-based schools have nurtured a student population that is highly active in community service.

Curriculum Delivery and Accountability

GUHSD has dedicated many decades to the development of a district-wide learning system which embodies a total systems approach that dramatically transforms the way teaching and learning take place. The components of the learning system tightly knit together the alignment of curriculum to state standards, the effective delivery of instruction and the continuous assessment of student achievement. This system is based on a stated district mission and a set of student exit outcomes with multidimensional assessments that are focused on the continuous improvement of student learning. GUHSD is a self-renewing organization, constantly growing and changing to address new needs. One of the district’s most significant core beliefs, its commitment to continuous improvement, is manifest in all facets of its learning system. This commitment is reflected in the ongoing data collection and analysis of student progress in achieving success on AIMS and all district assessments. It is also the foundation of the system of professional development activities that allows for the ongoing refinement of the curriculum and the identification of best practices to realize the maximum benefit from instruction.

GUHSD's learning system revolves around its mission: "Empowering All Students for the Choices and Challenges of the Twenty-first Century." This mission expresses the philosophy of both quality and equity for all students. The district's student performance-based and results-oriented learning program promotes high standards and high expectations for all students and faculty.

Student achievement (quality) is coupled with the concept of equity—the belief that ALL students are expected to meet high standards. GUHSD's system is unique because the same high standards and expectations are set for all students, regardless of demographics. All nine high schools, representing a range of socioeconomic areas and family backgrounds, report the same high levels of success for their students. GUHSD's students are consistently successful on local, state and national measures of academic achievement. These results are made possible because of the beliefs and practices embedded in GUHSD's comprehensive learning system, which is the core of the district's school culture. GUHSD is very proud of its five Excelling and four Highly Performing high schools. Given the lower socioeconomic status of the district's schools, these accomplishments are a solid indication of GUHSD's powerful learning system.

Articulation with Partner Elementary School Districts

The components of the GUHSD learning system are shared with partner elementary school districts. Articulation activities occur on a regular, ongoing basis among administrators and teachers of the three districts. Staff members from the partner districts are familiar with GUHSD's assessment system and participate in the evaluation of student work and the refinement of our assessments. Teachers from partner elementary school districts routinely participate in summer professional development workshops. One of GUHSD's award-winning summer activities for incoming ninth graders, Project SHARP, allows for collaboration among the district's high school math teachers and math teachers from partner elementary schools on a daily basis during the program. Articulation efforts have also included school year collaboration on instructional technology, best practices in mathematics, reading intervention and gifted education, to name but a few examples. District-level administrators meet annually to identify upcoming needs for articulation, joining local administrators who work with partner elementary school staff on a regular basis on issues ranging from student registration to course offerings for accelerated students.

What is assumed to be possible only under some form of school consolidation is, in fact, already occurring owing to the efforts of numerous school employees and the priority each district has placed on collaboration for many years. The partner elementary districts are aware of GUHSD's learning system and the results it produces. The curriculum of each school district is aligned to state standards, and the unification of a K-12 system is not a prerequisite for such alignment. The sharing of instructional strategies and assessment methodologies is already occurring among the three districts on an ongoing basis; and again, redistricting is not a prerequisite for that. All districts understand the state's expectation for student success, their community's expectations for student performance and district accountability and their organization's culture, strengths and areas of improvement. GUHSD is meeting those expectations, maintaining its strengths and working to refine needed improvements everyday. To assure that its students receive the greatest chance for success in high school, GUHSD works closely with staff and administrators from

Glendale Elementary School District (GESD) and Washington Elementary School District (WESD) to create opportunities for curriculum alignment, professional development and materials development. The following chart summarizes articulation activities among GUHSD, GESD and WESD since the summer of 2002. Unless otherwise noted, administrators and staff listed are from GUHSD.

Tri-District Articulation Since 2002

District	Participants	Discussion Items
July 29, 2002	15 teachers from GESD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participated in Reciprocal Teaching training
August 20, 2002	Karen Budan (GESD); Margaret Garcia-Dugan, Sue Maland, Jim Threadgill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussed dates for future meetings Shared information about summer programs
September 10-12, 2002	Renee Kopcha, Cheryl Thomas (GESD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participated in the three Marilyn McGuire workshops on reading strategies
September 13, 2002	Karen Budan, Cheryl Thomas (GESD); Susie Cook, Jen Cruz (WESD); Margaret Garcia-Dugan, Sue Maland, Debi Plum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decided to hold an all-day workshop for language arts teachers from the three districts Established date of November 19, 2002 Determined location as GESD Board Room Maland was selected as contact person for Marie Mancuso to speak on reading Determined focus would be reading
September 13, 2002 September 27, 2002	Karen Henderson, Sue Maland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Henderson and Maland presented two workshops on Reciprocal Teaching to teachers at Burton School
September 26, 2002	Karen Budan (GESD); Debi Plum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial meeting to plan for development of the math program at GESD, similar to what was accomplished in English in 2001-2002
October 4, 2002	Karen Budan (GESD); Susie Cook (WESD); Margaret Garcia-Dugan, Sue Maland, Debi Plum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned November 19, 2002, workshop
October 8, 2002	Carolyn Cole, Suzanne Kilani, Elizabeth Marcus, Cheryl Thomas (all GESD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GESD sent four representatives to Reciprocal Teaching training
October 25, 2002	Tri-District Meeting, 23 participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussed items on set agenda
November 6, 2002	Susie Cook, Janet Sullivan (WESD); Debi Plum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned for after-school meeting for math articulation scheduled for November 21, 2002
November 7, 2002 November 14, 2002	GESD 4th - 8th grade teachers; Karen Budan, Renee Kopcha, Cheryl Thomas (all GESD); GUHSD 9th grade math teachers (A, G, I), Debi Plum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Began process of vertically aligning curriculum for math from grades 4-9
November 15, 2002	19 GESD teachers, Craig Mussi and other representatives from GUHSD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focused on standards and fitness testing
November 19, 2002	Teachers from three districts and administrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop for teacher-to-teacher articulation in language arts

December 2, 2002	Karen Budan (GESD); Margaret Garcia-Dugan, Sue Maland, Debi Plum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debriefing on November 19, 2002, workshop and discussion of math workshops.
December 11, 2002	Renee Kopcha (GESD); Jen Cruz (WESD); Debi Plum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned and wrote tri-district math-science partnership grant
December 17, 2002	Karen Budan, Renee Kopcha (GESD); Debi Plum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned workshop agendas for next part of vertical articulation • Began planning tri-district math workshop to be held on February 11, 2003
January 15, 2003	Karen Budan (GESD), Susie Cook (WESD); Margaret Garcia-Dugan, Debi Plum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned tri-district math workshop for February 11, 2003
February 11, 2003	GESD and WESD 7th and 8th grade math teachers; Karen Budan (GESD); Susie Cook (WESD); GUHSD 9th and 10th grade math teachers, Debi Plum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards talk by Donna Kongable from Arizona Department of Education • Shared teaching strategies for all standards • Informed all about Project SHARP
February 28, 2003	Curriculum coordinators from all three districts; Karen Budan (GESD), Susie Cook (WESD), Margaret Garcia-Dugan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Meeting
March 28, 2003	Tri-District Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstration of Tetradata • Summer Grading Workshop invitations • Summer Pre-algebra Program
June 2-4, 2003	WESD teachers attended summer grading workshops at MVHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of anchor papers
September 19, 2003	Fall Tri-District Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic planning
November 6, 2003	Language arts teachers from all three districts met at five GUHSD locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further articulation with partner elementary districts
April 2, 2004	Spring Tri-District Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including science and social studies • WOW Conference • SHARP • Math data
October 21, 2004	Language arts articulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6-trait rubric • Walk-about • Scoring of papers
October 22, 2004	General Tri-District Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debriefing the language arts articulation • Math and science articulation • Calendar issues • Read 180 • Social Promotions
October 22, 2004	Karen Henderson, Sue Maland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trained 8th grade teachers at Horizon School on Reciprocal Teaching strategies
November 19, 2004	Karen Henderson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop on ELL strategies

December 3, 2004	Mark Joraanstad (GESD); Susie Cook (WESD); Bob Furlong, Warren Jacobson, Sue Maland, Cory Shinkle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning for February and April workshops
February 8, 2005	Math teachers from the three districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researched best practices for Math 1-2 curriculum
April 8, 2005	Cabinet members from all three districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Tri-District Meeting
April 26, 2005	Science teachers from the three districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacey Wieser, ADE Science Education Program Specialist, gave a presentation on AIMS and science standards. Science teachers then discussed vertical alignment of curriculum.
November 22, 2005	Dina Brulles (GESD); Natalie McWhorter (WESD); Cory Shinkle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepared for January 10, 2006, meeting
January 10, 2006	Dina Brulles (GESD); Natalie McWhorter (WESD); Cory Shinkle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalized plans for math articulation meeting
January 31, 2006	14 WESD teachers and instructional aides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visited and conferenced with GUHSD Read 180 teachers (full-day visit)
February 28, 2006	Mark Joraanstad (GESD); Natalie McWhorter (WESD); Dean Petersen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed CTE Career Exploration
April 13, 2006	Natalie McWhorter (WESD), principals from WESD junior high schools; Tami Strege	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed Read 180 testing of all WESD 8th graders on GUHSD campuses May 8-15, 2006
April 25, 2006	Natalie McWhorter, Barbara Post (WESD); Warren Jacobson, Christine Lord	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed criteria for placement of 9th graders in accelerated science • Discussed alignment of WESD and GUHSD science curricula
May 1, 2006	Superintendents and cabinet-level administrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared common interests and discussed collaboration
June 2006	Approximately ten WESD English teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participated in English 1-2 PBA grading
August 21, 2006	Superintendents and cabinet-level administrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-up to meeting on May 1, 2006. Continued to share common interests and collaborate on projects
September 1, 2006	Mark Joraanstad (GESD); Natalie McWhorter (WESD); Jennifer Johnson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed tri-district articulation needs for 2006-07. Scheduled best practices workshop for math teachers with Cory Shinkle as workshop facilitator
October 17, 2006	WESD and GESD representatives; Cory Shinkle, Sheryl Lovell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned tri-district math workshop
November 15, 2006	Mark Joraanstad (GESD); Deborah Bailey, Natalie McWhorter (WESD); Jennifer Johnson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed tri-district articulation topics/meetings for Spring 2007, including language arts discussion of reading lists
November 27, 2006	GESD and WESD Math teachers; Sheryl Lovell, Cory Shinkle, Kim Thomas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GUHSD presented best practices in Math 1-2, showcased SMART Boards and other technology, helped individual teachers develop lessons using the technology and then had the teachers share their lessons with the whole group

February 27, 2007	WESD middle school English teachers; Patty Bohmaker, Lauren Colombo, Kim Fisher, Patrick Henry, Debbie Hoff, Alicia Hurst, Amy Sherrill, Tami Strege	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of English 1-2 requirements and invitation to WESD/GESD to participate in English 1-2 PBA scoring in June 2007
March 6, 2007	Jody Gallimore, Margie Hourihan, Mark Joraanstad (GESD); Deborah Bailey, Natalie McWhorter, Janet Sullivan (WESD); Jennifer Johnson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed accelerated freshmen science placement testing, ELL and reading issues
March 12, 2007	Jody Gallimore (GESD); Cory Shinkle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected math teachers to participate in Project SHARP in summer of 2007
April 25, 2007	Dr. Sandy Johnson (GESD); Warren Jacobson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75-Minute Discussion: Increasing Opportunities for Collaboration
May 2007	English, math and science coordinators; Jennifer Johnson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed plans for articulation in fall of 2007-08
May 11, 2007	Suzanne Kilani-McCauley (GESD); Jennifer Johnson, Christine Lord, Cory Shinkle, Tami Strege	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met with GESD gifted coordinator to discuss gifted program structure and transition issues
May 16, 2007	Natalie McWhorter, Janet Sullivan (WESD); Jennifer Johnson, Christine Lord, Cory Shinkle, Tami Strege	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met with WESD gifted coordinator to discuss gifted program structure and transition issues
May 19, 2007	Graphing Calculator and Technology Integration workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosted by GUHSD with math teacher(s) from WESD and GESD in attendance
June 4-6, 2007	Sandee Barnes, Anne Ira (GESD) joined workshop for GUHSD teachers; Cory Shinkle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMART Board training and material development workshop for math
June 4-6, 2007	Two teachers from GESD (Coyote Ridge and Horizon); four teachers from WESD (Royal Palm, Mountain Sky, Desert Foothills); Tami Strege	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anchoring, training, scoring of English 1-2 PBAs • Discussed 6-trait rubric, GUHSD expectations for successful papers, scoring and conducted 2 readings of 2,154 papers
June 11, 2007	Natalie McWhorter, Janet Sullivan (WESD); Jennifer Johnson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed tri-district articulation content areas for 2007-08
July 18, 2007	Mark Joraanstad (GESD); Natalie McWhorter (WESD); Jennifer Johnson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed tri-district articulation content areas for 2007-08

Further communication has taken place between individual high school administrators and the partner elementary schools. For example, on October 18, 2004, Tom Hernandez (former principal of Cortez High School) met with principals from Royal Palm, Palo Verde and Cholla elementary schools to discuss reading remediation classes. In addition, curriculum coordinators have ongoing conversations throughout the year with the elementary district lead teachers, curriculum specialists and administrators.

GUHSD's Mission: Furthering Student Achievement

GUHSD's mission statement is "Empowering All Students for the Choices and Challenges of the Twenty-First Century." Accomplishing this critically important objective requires that the district maintain its focus at all times on furthering student achievement. Owing to a district culture that insists not only on success but also on continuous improvement, GUHSD students continue to meet and exceed state and national standards, as well as the district's self-defined benchmarks. One measure of GUHSD's success is that all nine of the district's traditional high schools were ranked either "Excelling" or 'Highly Performing' in the most recent Arizona LEARNS school profiles. Moreover, student performance has continued to improve since the implementation of AIMS and the state's school-labeling system. (See "GUHSD Successes" on pp. 14-15 for more detailed information on how GUHSD students perform on AIMS.)

The district's well-established, collaborative relationships with its partner elementary districts also help maximize student performance as students transition into high school. GUHSD's ongoing LAUNCH Program, with its emphasis on small-group learning, will further enhance the 9th grade experience, setting the stage for even greater success throughout each student's 4-year education.

It is worrisome to GUHSD that while the SDRC sets curriculum alignment and a more seamless learning experience as two of its objectives, the commission does not take into account the negative impact of redistricting on student achievement itself—the very *purpose* of alignment and seamless learning. GUHSD strongly believes that student achievement is and must be the single most important factor in education—to students, to parents, to teachers and to the community.

Section Conclusion

It is unlikely that it would be possible to maintain GUHSD's current learning system if either of the proposals for redistricting were carried out. Student achievement is the core purpose of public schooling in Arizona. With that basic fact in mind, there is no clear and compelling rationale for disrupting and possibly disabling GUHSD's successful learning system, which is meeting and exceeding the rightfully high expectations placed upon it.

PURPORTED ADMINISTRATIVE SAVINGS FROM UNIFICATION

The School District Redistricting Commission (SDRC) was charged with studying redistricting for its “potential savings and efficiencies,” among other objectives. It is GUHSD’s position that the two plans put forward by the SDRC for the district will neither save taxpayers money nor increase operational efficiency. This is largely because both plans fail to take into account the significant economic consequences of redistricting

Unaddressed Costs Incurred in Both Plans

Most of the proposed administrative savings in SDRC Plan 1 and Plan 2 would be realized in the area of Business and Central Office Administration. These expenditures include the accounting, payroll, personnel, and information and technology departments, along with a multitude of central office functions such as communications and research. However, once the full costs of unification are factored in, no real savings are realized under either plan.

The SDRC refers to the relatively insignificant expense of “routine formalities” resulting from unification, such as purchasing new signs and letterhead. This oversimplification ignores the tremendous impact unification would have on the operations budgets of the newly created district or districts. Operational expenditures would no doubt be much more extensive and expensive than simply buying new stationery.

For example, both SDRC Plan 1 and Plan 2 would require the combining of three separate salary schedules and benefits packages. From analysis of the three districts’ teacher salary schedules, GUHSD estimates the cost of equalizing teacher salaries alone could exceed \$9 million. Even if SDRC Plan 1 or Plan 2 could deliver on the savings it promises, there is not enough savings in either plan to pay for such a costly undertaking. These findings are consistent with research GUHSD has done on school unification and consolidation in other settings.

The need to combine computer information networks into a new centralized system would result in yet another “big ticket” operational expense unanticipated by the SDRC. Software would need to be merged or new software purchased to consolidate telecommunication systems, accounting and payroll systems, purchasing and inventory data storage systems, student information, food service tracking, transportation radio communications, and a district website. The required software might not be compatible with current computer equipment, resulting in additional capital purchases.

Moreover, research shows that as the size of a school district grows, the size of its bureaucracy grows as well. This is especially evident in the analysis of the mega district proposed in Plan 2. Not considered in the SDRC proposals are the expensive construction costs for building new or expanded district office facilities to accommodate this larger bureaucracy and consolidate K-12 operations, including a bus garage, print shop, and maintenance facilities.

Given the higher costs of operating the new unified districts, GUHSD believes it is likely that any unification proposal will lead to an increase in class size and, eventually, to school closures. In a recent article in *The School Administrator*, Marty Strange, policy director for the Rural School and Community Trust, was quoted as saying, “District consolidation is the shoehorn to

school consolidation. When you close districts, you come back later and close schools—no matter what they are saying now.” (Russo, Alexander. “Mergers, Annexations, Dissolutions.” *The School Administrator*, March 2006.) Larger classes and larger schools are contrary to good educational philosophy and current thinking in the arena of school improvement. These conditions typically lead to higher dropout rates and crime rates, especially in large urban communities.

In addition, both SDRC plans would squander one of GUHSD’s most valuable assets. The district has spent decades and countless resources on the development of a high school learning system that is nationally recognized for its results in student achievement. This learning system is built on a foundation of continuous improvement and requires annual attention by a governing board with a knowledge and appreciation of the district’s history. One of the advantages of the union high school model has been the ability of GUHSD’s governing board to focus solely on high school outcomes. GUHSD is concerned that any plan for consolidation would, in its first years of operation, draw attention and resources away from student achievement as the new governing board struggles to cope with transition issues and the financial consequences of unification.

SDRC Plan 1: A Model of Inequity

SDRC Plan 1 would create two new unified districts by combining some of the high schools in GUHSD with GESD and the rest with WESD. This plan may well face objections from the Office of Civil Rights and the Justice Department because of the inequitable disparity in funding from property taxes between the two new unified districts. In effect, GESD would receive less than half the funding from property taxes that WESD would. (In 2006, property taxes accounted for approximately 20 percent of all Maintenance and Operation revenues for GESD and 30 percent for WESD.)

Comparison of Assessed Valuations

Glendale Elementary 2006 Secondary Assessed Value	\$380,060,625
Washington Elementary 2006 Secondary Assessed Value	\$1,506,048,554
Glendale Elementary 2006 per pupil Secondary Assessed Value	\$29,658
Washington Elementary 2006 per pupil Secondary Assessed Value	\$64,685

The division of the high school district along the elementary school districts’ borders would also pose problems for individual high schools. The boundary of Apollo High School straddles both elementary school districts. The district’s one alternative school and some district-wide programs provide services to high-school-aged students from both elementary districts. SDRC Plan 1 does not address how these assets and services would be equitably divided between two new unified districts.

Moreover, the intended cost savings shown in Table 1 on the following page is more than offset by the costs of redistricting itself, as explained in the section above on unaddressed costs.

Table 1–SDRC Plan 1	Glendale Elementary	Washington Elementary	Glendale Union	3 Districts Combined	SDRC Plan 1*
Attending ADM	12,787.26	23,206.34	14,786	50,779.6	
General Admin per pupil	\$38.70	\$36.98	\$32.59	\$36.13	\$29.89
Business & Central M&O per pupil	\$247.37	\$214.68	\$215.10	\$223.04	\$171.34
School Admin per pupil	\$355.99	\$292.98	\$224.61	\$288.94	\$307.26
<i>*Averages from the four districts below (based on total costs divided by total ADM) as representative of costs under Plan 1</i>					
Unified Districts of Similar Size	P.V. Unified	Deer Valley Unified	Scottsdale Unified	Peoria Unified	Combined Average
Attending ADM	33,186.63	33,335.91	25,534.46	36,228.98	
General Admin per pupil	\$31.41	\$32.71	\$29.88	\$25.89	\$29.89
Business & Central M&O per pupil	\$142.87	\$172.72	\$251.95	\$139.34	\$171.34
School Admin per pupil	\$261.27	\$317.55	\$333.62	\$321.36	\$307.26
<i>SOURCES: 2006 annual financial reports of each district cited and Auditor General 2006 Report on Classroom Spending</i>					

SDRC Plan 2: A Model of Inefficiency

SDRC Plan 2 calls for the combination of all three districts in Plan 1 to create a single unified district of approximately 51,000 students. The Tucson Unified School District is the only district of that size in the state of Arizona, so its administrative costs can be considered representative of the mega district created under Plan 2. As the figures in Table 2 show, SDRC Plan 2 would actually be *less* cost-effective overall than the current administrative spending of the three districts—and this is true even *without* factoring in the additional costs of redistricting.

Table 2–SDRC Plan 2	Glendale Elementary	Washington Elementary	Glendale Union	3 Districts Combined	SDRC Plan 2*
Attending ADM	12,787.26	23,206.34	14,786	50,779.6	
General Admin per pupil	\$38.70	\$36.98	\$32.59	\$36.13	\$76.07
Business & Central M&O per pupil	\$247.37	\$214.71	\$215.10	\$223.04	\$148.78
School Admin per pupil	\$355.99	\$292.98	\$224.61	\$288.94	\$346.31
<i>*Figures from Tucson Unified (see below) as representative of Plan 2</i>					
Unified Mega District	Tucson Unified				
Attending ADM	57,168.67				
General Admin per pupil	\$76.07				
Business & Central M&O per pupil	\$148.78				
School Admin per pupil	\$346.31				
<i>SOURCES: 2006 annual financial reports of each district cited and Auditor General 2006 Report on Classroom Spending</i>					

GUHSD's Current Financial Efficiency

GUHSD has implemented many programs over the years to increase and ensure cost effectiveness. The district currently spends less on administration than the state and national averages according to the *Auditor General 2006 Report on Classroom Dollars and Proposition 301 Results*. GUHSD also currently exceeds the state average for expenditures in the classroom. The data below is from the *Auditor General 2006 Report*.

Expenditures by Function	GUHSD	Arizona	National
Classroom dollars	59.8%	58.3%	61.5%
Non-classroom dollars (administration)	8.1%	9.4%	11.0%

Arizona ranks 49th out of 50 states in current education expenditures per-pupil spending—approximately \$6,184 per student compared to the national average of \$8,701 per student. (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "National Public Education Financial Survey (NPEFS)," fiscal year 2005, Version 1a.)

The *Arizona Public School Districts' Dollars Spent in the Classroom, Fiscal Year 2006* report (February 2007) noted the following percentages:

Table 3—Expenditures	GUHSD	Arizona	National
Classroom Dollars	60	58	62
Administration	8	9	11
Plant Operations	14	11	10
Food Service	4	5	4
Transportation	3	4	4
Student Support	6	7	5
Instruction Support	5	6	4

This information indicates that the difference in classroom spending is not due to higher administrative costs, but is due to lower overall funding. Assuming that administrative and operations costs are largely a product of district type, school size and square footage, additional funding by the state comparable to the national average would significantly increase the GUHSD percentage spent on instruction, easily exceeding the national average.

High School vs. Elementary School Expenditures

One rationale being put forward for unification is to address differences in the state funding formula for high school vs. elementary students. The state funding formula currently provides an additional weight of .110 per student for high schools. A 1979 cost study conducted by the Arizona Department of Education serves as the basis for current support-level weights. According to the study, this additional funding is intended to address the higher costs incurred by high schools for guidance and psychological services, interscholastic athletics, utilities and plant maintenance. Providing additional funding for these operational costs is no different from

providing additional weight at the elementary level for kindergarten and preschool operations. Trying to pick apart the state funding formula one weight at a time will lead to greater disparity and less correlation between the funding formula and actual expenditures. GUHSD agrees that the state should address the issue of adequately funding school districts but does not see tweaking the state funding formula as justification for wasting millions of dollars in taxpayer funds to unify districts that are already cost effective and highly successful.

GUHSD Purchasing Procedures

GUHSD's purchasing procedures—conducted in accordance with Arizona state law and the district's own stringent guidelines—ensure that fair competition among vendors yields the best quality at the best price. In so doing, they help ensure that the district continues to operate at peak financial efficiency.

In addition, to maximize the district's buying power and to make taxpayers' dollars go as far as possible, GUHSD is a member of the following purchasing consortia. GUHSD's participation in these consortia already gives the district the buying power that the SDRC cites as an advantage of creating larger school districts.

- Arizona Department of Education (ADE)
- Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT)
- Arizona School Partners in Nutrition (ASPIN) Food Services
- Arizona State Procurement Office (AzSPO)
- Greater Phoenix Educational Management Systems (GPEMC) for Superintendents and Administrators for Finance and Curriculum
- Greater Phoenix Purchasing Consortium of Schools (GPPCS)
- Mohave Educational Services Cooperative (MESOC)
- School Medical Insurance Trust (SMIT)
- Strategic Alliance for Volume Expenditures (SAVE)
- Western States Contract Alliance (WSCA)

Section Conclusion

GUHSD has a long and rich history of maintaining its focus on student learning while continuing to be fiscally conservative and financially sound in its business practices. GUHSD prides itself on its accomplishments, both in the classroom and in the management and operation of its high schools. The district's students currently perform in the top 25 percent both statewide and across the nation. Among all the figures cited, this figure perhaps speaks most directly to GUHSD's success in effectively investing its resources in student achievement. Students, parents, taxpayers and the community at large have long benefited from GUHSD's constant, responsible stewardship of those resources. Either of the SDRC's redistricting proposals would dismantle this successful and cost-effective system.

GUHSD SUCCESSES

GUHSD received the national Leadership for Learning award from the American Association of School Administrators. The district is consistently portrayed as a model district for curriculum assessment and instruction, both on the state and national levels. GUHSD teachers have been recognized for state and national honors in their fields. Additionally:

- GUHSD schools were identified in a study by the Arizona Department of Education and Arizona State University as benchmark “front tier” schools. ADE will use the findings of the study to help lower-performing schools with similar characteristics improve student achievement.
- A GUHSD school was selected by the U.S. Department of Education as a model school for a study on how schools in communities with varying economic resources have improved and sustained student achievement.
- GUHSD hosted over 20 educators from Egypt on April 25, 2007. The Egyptian delegation, which included two undersecretaries from the Ministry of Education, came to Arizona to study American schools as part of an education reform effort undertaken by the ministry. While conducting research on how to improve the country’s schools, Egyptian officials found and contacted Don Enz, the Executive Director for Arizona NCA/CASI, and a regional leader in AdvanceED, a group made up of national education accreditation groups. GUHSD, one of only three districts in the state selected for the study visit, was chosen because the visitors were looking for a school district that excels in accountability and models school improvement.
- GUHSD maintains one of the lowest dropout rates in the state of Arizona and has consistently reduced that rate over the past six years. It also accurately accounts for students who withdraw from the district.
- GUHSD has consistently achieved a much higher graduation rate than the state average. Furthermore, the graduation rate has continued to rise over the last six years.
- GUHSD’s 10th grade students consistently outperform students in the state of Arizona on the AIMS reading, writing and math assessments. Many of those students have matriculated through unified school districts.
- Cohort data indicate that GUHSD students consistently pass the AIMS reading, writing and math tests. Ninety-seven percent of the district’s 2007 graduating class passed AIMS reading, and 98 percent passed both writing and math. All students who were on track to graduate received a diploma. No student was denied a diploma because of failing to pass AIMS. Students who had not yet succeeded on AIMS met graduation requirements through the grade augmentation process.
- A high percentage of GUHSD graduates go on to enroll in post-secondary education programs. On average, from 2003 to 2006, 81 percent of GUHSD graduates went on to participate in post secondary education, enrolling in colleges, universities, technical schools and the military.

- Beginning in 2003-04 and continuing through 2006, all GUHSD schools made Adequate Yearly Progress under No Child Left Behind. In 2006, five GUHSD schools earned Excelling labels, and four earned Highly Performing labels under the Arizona LEARNS accountability system.
- Based on the total number of seniors in GUHSD over the past six years, 24 percent were enrolled in Advanced Placement courses. During that time, 46 percent of all students enrolled in GUHSD earned college credit through the AP program.
- Over the past five years, parents have consistently indicated that they are satisfied with the education their children are receiving at GUHSD schools. In a 2007 survey, 95 percent of parents within the district answered that they were satisfied with the quality of their child's education.
- Every year since 1990, GUHSD has received the Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Association of School Business Officials International. This certification program "reviews the accounting practices and reporting procedures used by school districts in their Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports and enhances the award winners' credibility among stakeholders." (from the website of the Association of School Business Officials International)
- Also every year since 1990, GUHSD has received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting (CAFR) from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA). "The GFOA established the CAFR Program ... to encourage and assist state and local governments to go beyond the minimum requirements of generally accepted accounting principles to prepare comprehensive annual financial reports that evidence the spirit of transparency and full disclosure and then to recognize individual governments that succeed in achieving that goal." (from the website of the Government Finance Officers Association)

Section Conclusion

GUHSD's past and current success as a district cannot be in doubt. However, the future success of GUHSD and its students is contingent upon the survival of the district itself and of the proven learning system it has established. GUHSD urges the SDRC to reconsider the effects of redistricting on student achievement, the truest measure of any district's success and efficiency.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

When the new school year begins in the fall of 2011—just four years from now—Glendale Union High School District will celebrate its 100th anniversary.

In its first century, GUHSD will have grown from a district of 17 students enrolled in one school with 25 desks to a district with approximately 15,000 students enrolled in nine schools with state-of-the-art facilities. It will have produced tens of thousands of well-educated, well-rounded graduates who have gone on to contribute to our state, nation and society in immeasurable ways in all variety of careers.

Any educational institution that has continuously met the high expectations of the community to be on the threshold of celebrating its centennial has more than proven its merit. It has established beyond a doubt the value of its schools and of the learning system it has developed, a system painstakingly created over the years and decades through the combined talents and resources of countless teachers, administrators and involved parents and community leaders.

And yet the SDRC, in both of its proposals for GUHSD, needlessly calls for the dismantling of this successful district with its rich history and deep roots in the communities it serves. Common sense dictates that the citizens and institutions affected by these proposals ask: Why? To put it in other words, familiar to all: If it isn't broken, why fix it? Clearly, GUHSD is *not* broken.

The SDRC's stated objectives are "to consider redistricting to, among many considerations, provide for a more seamless and connected learning experience and alignment of curriculum for the state's youth, as well as potential savings and efficiencies." But is redistricting necessary to accomplish those objectives? Is redistricting capable of accomplishing them?

- The SDRC suggests that a compelling reason for unifying districts is to allow for a fully coordinated, continuous instructional plan for K-12. There is no hard evidence to suggest that this cannot and does not already happen between high school and elementary districts in Arizona. In fact, as this report has demonstrated, successful tri-district articulation already occurs between GUHSD and its partner elementary districts. Moreover, having a fully coordinated, continuous instructional plan for K-12 is problematic for the majority of unified school districts nationwide. Empirical evidence suggests that many K-12 districts have as much difficulty coordinating activities from elementary to middle school, and middle school to high school, as would be expected between any K-8 and 9-12 districts. No evidence is available to suggest that unification would improve the quality and continuity of K-12 education in Arizona.
- As for the economics of redistricting, the SDRC is trying to apply a business paradigm—economies of scale—to an educational system. In business, the bottom line is profit; in education, the bottom line is student learning and academic achievement. A significant body of knowledge indicates that the purported economic efficiencies associated with consolidation or unification efforts are rarely realized, while at the same time such efforts generally result in poorer student outcomes. Moreover, GUHSD's current financial efficiency is well established by many measures, including comparisons to state and national averages for classroom spending.

- Overall, the argument for unification and consolidation posed by the SDRC appears to be mostly hyperbole. Little or no empirical evidence is provided or available to support the claims about the benefits of consolidation and unification. All of the arguments proposed by the SDRC are essentially flawed because they fail to address the most important product of any educational organization or system—student learning and academic achievement.
- In addition, much of the argument for unification comes from two reports produced by the Office of the Auditor General in 2000 and 2002. The major flaw with these reports, once again, is that they do not evaluate to any degree the effectiveness of the various schools or the academic achievement of their students.
- It is also worth noting that the SDRC has repeatedly revised its definition of an “optimal size” school district. To date, its optimal size district has grown from an original range of 6,000-30,000 students to an estimate that now approaches 100,000 students. These proposed ranges are not supported by empirical research. In fact, some of the researchers cited by the SDRC suggest that optimal district size for cost savings related to economies of scale is between 2,000 and 4,000 students. Research conducted by the American Legislative Exchange Council indicates that there is an inverse relationship between district size and academic achievement, where students in smaller school districts perform better on nationally recognized achievement exams (SAT, ACT, NAPE).

Recommendations

When it was established, the SDRC was granted the option of recommending that *no* changes be made to the configuration of an existing school district. GUHSD strongly urges the SDRC to re-evaluate its proposals for the district and recommend to the governor and the public that *no* changes be made to the district’s composition.

In the case of GUHSD, unification makes no sense—by any of the criteria established by the SDRC. It is a high-stakes gamble that will affect countless students, parents and teachers for years to come. There is no tangible evidence demonstrating that this gamble will yield the results purported by the SDRC. There is, however, much compelling evidence that unification negatively affects student learning. As GUHSD prepares to enter its second century of service to the community, let it continue in its mission of “Empowering All Students for the Choices and Challenges of the Twenty-First Century.” When the school bells ring in 2011, let there still be a GUHSD to empower those students with the education and opportunities for achievement they deserve.

APPENDIX A

Summary of Parent/Community Meeting

A meeting was held on the evening of March 8, 2007, in the Big Hawk Conference Room on the campus of Apollo High School. The meeting was attended by parents, neighbors and school administrators from all nine GUHSD attendance areas. The questions that follow are a mere sampling of the issues and concerns that were raised during the meeting. The questions, generated by the parents in attendance, are provided for the SDRC's reflection and have been classified and categorized using a technique modified from *Taking Charge of Change* by Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin and Hall, ASCD 1987.

Questions from the Apollo Community

Informational

1. If the recommendation is the split plan, how much will Glendale taxes increase?
2. If the recommendation is the split plan, how will Apollo students be divided?
3. For either plan, what will it cost to unify?
4. How will the communities be notified of the SDRC's recommendation?

Governance

1. Will the boards elected in 2008 relinquish their seats immediately if unification passes?
2. Is there an operating budget of a large K-12 unified district that can be reviewed?
3. Voters will be the ones to make the final decision about unifying.

Teachers/Staff

1. How will either plan deal with teacher salaries?
2. Given the unknowns about teacher salaries, what keeps good teachers from leaving?
3. How does either plan help to align curriculum?

Students

1. How does the split plan ensure that GUHSD's academic excellence continues?

Consequences

1. Unifying with Glendale Elementary could create a dysfunctional district.

Questions from the Cortez Community

Informational

1. If the recommendation is the split plan, from which district will taxpayers see a tax increase and which a decrease?

2. Do the taxpayers of the new district(s) inherit the debt of the three previous districts?
3. How are tax base issues resolved when districts consolidate?

Governance

1. What will be the process for selecting the governing board for the new district?
2. What is the perceived estimated savings of unification and where would the savings go?
3. What, if any, administrative savings are expected through unification?

Teachers/Staff

1. Will the salaries of elementary and high school teachers be equalized?
2. How will support staff in the current three districts be affected?
3. How will curriculum issues be addressed? How might curricular teams change?

Students

1. How will unification affect student/teacher class size?

Re-Focus

1. What are the agendas that aren't on the table?

Questions from the Glendale Community

Informational

1. Will the state legislature assist property owners affected by the unification with some type of tax relief?
2. Who pays the costs of holding the unification election?
3. Unification does not appear to save money.
4. Is there still student growth money for districts?

Governance

1. If the recommendation is the 3/6 split, where will the administrative offices be?
2. If either plan necessitates the building of a new administrative center, where will the money come from?
3. Who will structure the organization, etc., of a new district?
4. Will some high schools have to close?

Teachers/Staff

1. With either plan, salary issues may discourage teachers from staying/teaching in the district.
2. Starting salaries for teachers are not the same across the three current districts.

Students

1. Will band and other high school extracurricular activities remain?
2. How will new attendance boundaries be drawn?
3. How would open enrollment be affected?
4. Will student attendance variances still be an option?

Consequences

1. Glendale Elementary struggles academically—expect that unification will cause GUHSD to suffer.

Re-focus

1. Have ideas other than unification been proposed?

Questions from the Greenway community

Informational

1. Do mega districts like Mesa and Tucson operate well?
2. Once the SDRC makes a unification recommendation, how will the community be notified?
3. What are the proposed benefits by unification supporters?
4. Concerned that the SDRC will make a recommendation that does not consider the facts, community concerns, ideas and overall impact on students.
5. The unification effort feels like a repair for something that is not broken.

Teachers/Staff

1. Will unification cause salary and benefit problems?
2. Salary freezes in GUHSD are a concern.
3. Staff instability in Washington Elementary may also become a GUHSD issue.

Students

1. How can the SDRC guarantee that either plan will meet the needs of students and the community?

Governance

1. Unification is not a solution for poor management.
2. Unifying is more about fixing the poorly performing elementary districts than supporting what is best for GUHSD.
3. High school supply budgets may decrease.

Consequences

1. Unification will result in a loss of quality for GUHSD.
2. Either plan makes the district too large.
3. Tax increases for some.
4. GUHSD has high quality leadership that may be jeopardized by unification.

Re-focus

1. The SDRC should look at how other states organize school districts.
2. The SDRC should identify problem school districts, then determine if unification is a solution for some, all or none.

Questions from the Independence Community

Informational

1. What happens if the vote fails? Does GUHSD remain the same or is the SDRC again charged to devise another plan?
2. Is there a way to hear the SDRC's point of view?
3. How will parents be educated about unification?
4. Is there a maximum number of students allowed in a mega district and what are GUHSD's projections for growth?
5. Are the redistricting plans unique to Arizona or is the SDRC following another state's plan?
6. I am looking for proof from the SDRC that unification is worth it.
7. What have been the positive or negative effects of redistricting in other states?

Governance

1. How do the boards of the elementary districts feel about redistricting?
2. Could a meeting among all board members be arranged?
3. Who decides if the new board is 5, 7, or 9 members?
4. If a choice between the two proposals were required, which plan would GUHSD support?

Teachers/Staff

1. How do the unions in the districts feel about redistricting?
2. Will salaries be frozen? What salary schedule would be followed?
3. How will unification affect retiree benefits?
4. Would teacher associations be merged? How?

Students

1. Will class size increase and will student programs decrease?
2. Will the new governing board be so overburdened with unification changes that students' needs go unnoticed?
3. Will athletics and other extracurricular activities be negatively affected?

Consequences

1. The chaos during transition to a unified district will have a negative effect on students.

Re-focus

Educate current high school students about redistricting and how to encourage them to vote?

Questions from the Moon Valley Community

Informational

1. What is known about the effectiveness of Tucson and Mesa unified districts?
2. Must the communities representing all three districts approve the final recommendation?
3. Is redistricting a good decision for some districts?
4. How will bond debt be shared, absorbed or distributed?
5. Why take gold and turn it into silver?

Governance

1. In a mega district, how can parents be ensured that problems will be attended to and resolved quickly?
2. Would redistricting increase the percentage of dollars that goes to the classroom?
3. Do large districts have more central office administration than currently exists at GUHSD?
4. Who is going to decide who will run the new district?

Teachers/Staff

1. How would the equalization of salaries impact GUHSD teachers?
2. Concerned about frozen salaries for high school teachers and other staff.
3. Curriculum system in GUHSD has existed for 25 years. No reason to change it.

Students

1. Students would benefit from a K-12 aligned curriculum.
2. If separate works for students, why change it?

Consequences

1. The size of the proposed mega district will have negative consequences on the now efficient operation of GUHSD.

Re-focus

1. When will GUHSD develop a plan to educate the community and timelines for implementation?
2. Get the word out in the community and send as many concerns as possible to the SDRC.

Questions from the Sunnyslope Community

Informational

1. Can we trust the Arizona legislature to redistrict?
2. Is redistricting a way to save money by creating one mega district, or could the SDRC recommend the creation of three small districts?
3. Why is the SDRC looking to unify GUHSD when it is so successful?
4. Are there any provisions in the law to opt out of unification?
5. What would be an effective way to communicate with the SDRC?
6. Could this be an attempt by the state to spend less on schools?
7. Why isn't the SDRC more interested in hearing community opinions?
8. Why is this disruption being imposed on GUHSD?
9. Why is a person from APS involved in school unification?
10. How will unification affect bonding, and how does unification impact the utility companies?

Governance

1. Have the feeder and high schools districts met and made any joint or separate conclusions?
2. Do unified districts engage in better collaboration at all grade levels than non-unified districts?
3. Will school boards continue to hold meetings before a recommendation goes to the governor?
4. The ability of the elementary districts to govern, manage and organize the high school district is questionable.
5. In a mega district, can issues be handled as expediently?
6. How will governing boards equalize money if the 3/6 plan is recommended?

Teachers

1. Which salary schedule will teachers use?
2. Would high school teachers' salaries have to be frozen?
3. Do unified districts have better aligned curriculum?
4. What impact will unification have on recruiting new teachers?
5. Do large mega districts have different salary schedules for elementary and high school teachers?

Students

1. Washington and Glendale Elementary districts have large at-risk populations. Wouldn't the creation of a mega district be detrimental to these students?
2. Do unified districts have higher student achievement?
3. What evidence is there that shows large, unified districts are better for student achievement?
4. Washington Elementary is very overcrowded. How can high school class sizes remain low?
5. How will GUHSD's learning system of 25 years be incorporated into a new district?
6. Students leave GUHSD having made huge accomplishments.
7. An inordinate amount of time and energy will be expended to unify districts, and it will be at students' expense.
8. In a 3/6 split, what happens to programs in the economically disadvantaged district?
9. Students will suffer regardless of the recommended plan.
10. Would school boundaries change?
11. Will student variances be affected?

Re-focus

1. Instead of involving GUHSD, suggest that to start, only unify the elementary districts.
2. Consider unification for only small, rural districts where consolidation would be cost effective.

Questions from the Thunderbird Community

Informational

1. If unification fails, does the SDRC leave GUHSD alone?
2. Before a recommendation is made, the SDRC needs to consider the demographics.
3. What will happen to the tax rate in all districts?
4. There is loss of familiarity and community in a mega district—too large.
5. In the 3/6 split, an economically disadvantaged district would be created.

6. It's mind boggling if the recommendation is the 3/6 split.
7. Currently each district has its own technology philosophy and structure. Unification could bring common platforms.
8. How many families will be affected by a change in boundaries?

Governance

1. A mega district just means more administrative levels. No money saved.
2. Each district currently has a unique philosophy. Nearly impossible to blend.

Teachers/Staff

1. How will the salary schedules be managed?
2. Curriculum articulation can always be improved.
3. Would we really achieve a better alignment of curriculum? Isn't that the purpose of the state standards and the AIMS tests?

Students

1. Would unification discourage out of district students to want to attend?
2. Expect that students would choose to leave the district—high mobility rate.

Re-focus

1. When strategizing a campaign, consider that the Washington Elementary community usually votes yes.

Questions from the Washington Community

Informational

1. How would the new information system, Infinite Campus, be combined? A technical nightmare.
2. How will unification affect home values in the community?
3. In a 3/6 split, how does an economically disadvantaged district maintain high standards with less money?

Governance

1. Communication will decrease because unification will require added administrative layers.
2. Parents and teachers will be less comfortable about their schools and probably changes.
3. Will a new central office need to be built?

4. Why aren't the elementary districts expected to reach high standards? Combining them with GUHSD is not a solution. Hold the elementary districts responsible for what they do instead of creating one mediocre district.
5. Smaller districts can be run more efficiently and respond more quickly to community needs and concerns.

Teachers/Staff

1. How will a new district equalize salaries? Where will the money come from?
2. High school teachers may elect to leave the district.
3. Will additional staff need to be hired to handle all the details of unification?
4. Will recruiting qualified teachers and staff during a long, challenging unification process be difficult?

Students

1. What data, evidence related to student achievement supports unification?
2. How is shifting the focus from students to unification good for students?

Re-Focus

1. The SDRC should consider another plan: Successful districts should be able to opt out.
2. Take time to analyze all the services one high school provides its students.

Questions from GUHSD Staff and Administrators

1. Will the proposed redistricting plan dismantle GUHSD?
2. Will the proposed redistricting plan create an economically disadvantaged GUHSD?
3. Will the current bond and budget debt of the three school districts be absorbed by all the taxpayers in the new district?
4. Will the redistricting plan place the increased tax burdens on parents?
5. Will the proposed redistricting plans create two K-12 districts with elementary and high school students sharing the funding?
6. Will budget decisions rest with a newly created governing board?
7. Will GUHSD's nationally recognized "student learning system" be weakened or forgotten as a result of the redistricting?
8. Will the anxiety and uncertainty of redistricting encourage our highly qualified teachers to seek employment in other districts?
9. Will district administration be forced to divide its focus between elementary and high school students?
10. Will the high school students' needs no longer be a priority?

11. Will high school size and class size be impacted by redistricting?
12. Will school and class size compromise student achievement?
13. Will some high schools be closed as a result of redistricting?
14. Will high school attendance areas be changed?
15. Will students have to change schools?
16. Will high schools become large and impersonal?
17. Will student safety be compromised with the potential increase in school size?
18. Will new and costly bureaucratic administrative levels be created?
19. How will school district debt, such as bonds and overrides, be distributed?
20. How does the proposed redistricting plan save the community money?
21. Will businesses pay reduced taxes as a result of redistricting?
22. What is the anticipated impact on student achievement?
23. Why is redistricting needed when Arizona standards are already articulated for every grade level?
24. Will GUHSD teachers' salaries be reduced or frozen?
25. Will salary schedules for elementary and high school teachers be the same?
26. Will GUHSD's retirement benefits be eliminated?
27. Will the nationally recognized "student learning system" in GUHSD be preserved?
28. Will elementary teachers be required to adopt the practices associated with the student learning system in place in GUHSD?
29. Will the high school curriculum and instruction department be dissolved?
30. Will teachers lose their jobs?
31. Will high schools still have sports and other extracurricular activities?
32. Will Advanced Placement students still be able to take AP tests free of charge?
33. Will parents have to pay fees for student classes and activities?
34. Will elective courses such as band, art, music be discontinued at the high school?
35. Will special education services for high school students decrease?
36. Will high school ELL students continue to be served by an award-winning program?
37. Will student programs be cut because of decreased resources for the high school student?
38. Will the new districts be able to support 21st Century technology for high school students?
39. Will fewer students have the opportunity to earn academic and athletic scholarships?

APPENDIX B

The following three reviews were compiled and presented by Dr. Wilma Basnett, superintendent of Osborn Elementary School District. They are reproduced verbatim. Please see the Osborn redistricting response for full citations of references. (Copyright © 2006 Osborn Elementary School District, 1226 W. Osborn Road, Phoenix, Arizona 85013, U.S.A. All rights reserved.) The findings of this research are supportive of the GUHSD governing board's position on redistricting. Moreover, the questions that begin the first two reviews could just as easily be asked of GUHSD, with its 15,000 students, 47 percent of whom participate in the free/reduced lunch program.

Review of Literature on Size of District and Achievement

We have referenced some of the major findings from research as they relate to two key questions—how will consolidation help us further improve student achievement and how might it save dollars to devote to improved student programs and increased teacher salaries due to possible economies of scale? In addition, we looked briefly at alternatives to consolidation. Although we have not done an exhaustive search, nor have we gone back to source documents from the various studies reviewed, the following research findings give us cause to ask the Commission to reconsider consolidation/unification plans related to the Osborn School District specifically and consolidation in Arizona in general.

1. How might consolidation affect student achievement in the Osborn School District, a school community of 3,900 students, 83% of whom are on free & reduced lunch?

The Executive Summary from The Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, *Small School Districts and Economies of Scale*” May 14, 2003, provides a good summary of the literature available on school districts and economies of scale and highlights consistent emerging themes which are evident in the literature, many of which are included below:

- Ohio University conducted a study and summarized it in a publication of the Rural School and Community Trust: *Small Works in Arkansas: How Poverty and the Size of Schools and School Districts Affect Student Achievement in Arkansas*.

The Arkansas findings were that “the higher the level of poverty in a community served by a school, the more damage larger schools and school districts inflict on student achievement. In more affluent communities, the impact of school and district size is quite small, but the poorer the community, the stronger the influence. The achievement gap between children from more affluent and those from less affluent communities is narrowed in smaller schools and smaller districts and widened in larger schools and larger districts. Smaller schools are most effective against poverty when they are located in smaller districts; they are less effective when they are located in larger districts. Poverty dampens student achievement most in larger schools located in larger districts.”

- In addition, researchers from Ohio University analyzed test scores from every Arkansas school on seven state-mandated tests to determine if students from low-income communities do better in small schools and districts or in large ones. Their conclusion is that, “across the board, smaller schools and smaller districts are most effective in reducing the predictable effects of poverty over student achievement.”
- In a study of 13,600 schools and 2,300 districts, Howley and Bickel refer to “excellence effects” of size, in which smaller schools and smaller districts with large numbers of economically disadvantaged students are likely to have higher average test scores than their counterparts in larger systems.

In the six states they studied, Howley and Bickel found a consistently predictable relationship between smaller schools and school districts and higher test scores. They also found a pattern called “equity effects” of size. The analysis focuses on the strength of the relationship between socio-economic status (SES) and achievement. Generally, the odds of getting high test scores are improved by high SES and reduced by low SES. In smaller schools and districts, Howley and Bickel found that the relationship between aggregate achievement (student achievement averaged for a school or district) and SES was consistently weaker. Replication of the Howley Bickel study in Washington State in 2002 apparently confirmed these findings.

- According to Florence Webb, researchers have fallen into two camps on the question of district size and student achievement: those who see no advantage for big districts and those who find “that achievement drops as enrollment levels rise.” She states that this is even more evident in lower socioeconomic populations. “There was a strong, consistent negative correlation between district size and student achievement in low income populations.”
- *Size, Excellence and Equity: A Report on Arkansas Schools and Districts* conducted by the Educational Studies Department of Ohio University (Feb. 2002) extended previous studies in Alaska, California, Georgia, Ohio, Montana, Texas and West Virginia that found that smaller school/district size mitigates the negative effects of poverty on achievement. These studies suggest that the higher the level of poverty of the school, the smaller the school/district size should be to maximize student achievement. (Howley & Bickel, 1999) Socioeconomic status was determined by the proportion of school/district enrollment receiving free/reduced meals even though there are problems with these measures in that they are subject to conditions that may be unrelated to socioeconomic status—1) willingness of the parent or guardian to apply for the subsidized meals, 2) procedures used by the district to secure applications (some are more assertive or persistent than others) 3) high tendency of high school students to decline participation. [Osborn identifies these same problems and feels that our documented 83% free/reduced lunch might indeed be higher. In addition, based on our study of a *Framework for Understanding Poverty* by Ruby Payne, Ph.D., quoting the renowned educator, James Comer “No learning takes place without a significant relationship.” Simply stated, critical relationships are easier to form and more likely to happen in a small school/district setting.]

Results in Arkansas were consistent with results in the other seven states. Smaller size facilitates academic performance among schools and districts serving impoverished students and it does so whether the measure of performance is norm-referenced or criterion-referenced test.

The report goes on to state, “If making incremental improvements, we advise that education decision makers refrain from adopting policies that enforce widespread consolidations and school closures. The belief that smaller schools and districts are more expensive to operate is generally given as the reason for consolidation and closure, yet the existing literature suggests (a) money is not saved and (b) educational outcomes are likely to be harmed. Smaller schools and districts may be *somewhat* more expensive to operate than larger districts and schools, but that marginally greater expense seems, on the basis of this study and others like it, to be required to improve the adequacy and equity of educational *outcomes*—measured as student achievement on state-mandated tests. Very large districts and schools, however, are both ineffective (they exhibit poor educational outcomes) *and* inefficient (they are more costly).”

Two of the four recommendations from this study appear pertinent to the Arizona situation: Recommendation No. 1: Build on the Strength of Smaller District Size—...“Widespread district consolidation is, on the terms of this study and its predecessors, likely to degrade the adequacy and equity of educational outcomes in the state. Arkansas is not extreme in the number of districts it maintains, but further district consolidations will likely (1) decrease community and parental involvement in education and (2) erode the excellence and equity of school performance. Furthermore, consolidation will not be likely, even at the expense of excellence and equity of outcomes, to save Arkansas much money.”

Recommendation No. 4: Create Smaller Districts from Larger Districts—“According to this report, benefits to the equity of school performance seems to be maximized most consistently among smaller schools in smaller districts. Unfortunately, Arkansas has 550 ‘larger schools in larger districts.’ This is nearly 50 percent of all schools in the state ... Maximum benefits to the equity of school performance would be predicted to ensue from making smaller schools *and* smaller districts in these places. Just making smaller *schools* does *not* seem to provide dramatic improvements to school-level achievement equity.”

It appears from the literature that people are beginning to recognize problems inherent in big schools and districts so that the surge to create larger districts has slowed. One has simply to look at the literature available from the various states to see that many are raising the same questions Arizona educators are raising about consolidation—Utah, Arkansas, Louisiana, West Virginia, California, Texas—to name just a few.

Review of Literature on Size of District and Economies of Scale

2. How might district consolidation save Osborn dollars to enhance student programs and teachers' salaries?

Regarding economies of scale—literature supports the idea that very small school districts face relatively high per-pupil costs, often created by the required minimum level of education inputs. Increased economies of scale can favorably affect the per-pupil cost of administration, building maintenance, support programs and purchasing of equipment and supplies.

- Some authors conclude that for certain sized schools and districts; there is evidence of economies of scale. Imerman and Otto (2003) studied district expenditures with respect to district size in Iowa. They report “expenditures per student generally rise as district sizes fall below about 750 students and expenditures per student are relatively constant at enrollment levels above 1,000 students.
- Cox (2002) reports when examining Utah’s administrative cost per pupil, showed little difference between large and small districts unless the enrollment dropped below 1,000 students; below 1,000 students, administrative costs rise.
- The Center for Policy Research, Syracuse University (Feb. 1994) addressed the issue of consolidation or reorganization of school districts due to the perception that there are significant cost savings from consolidation of small school districts due to economies of scale. They find “little consistent evidence on whether school district consolidation saves money while maintaining educational quality.” The results of their analysis indicate potentially sizeable cost savings from consolidation of small school districts—those with fewer than 500 pupils and relatively small diseconomies of scale even for the largest districts in the sample (50,000 pupils.) They go on to state, “our findings suggest that states interested in studying possible reorganization of school districts for efficiency reasons, should focus their attention on districts with 500 or fewer pupils.”

Duncombe and Yinger (2001) studied New York’s extensive consolidation efforts from 1985-1997 to determine whether or not consolidation cut costs. They indicate that central administration has to exist whether or not the district has 100 or 5,000 students and this central administration may be able to serve a significant range of enrollments; therefore, increasing student enrollment by consolidation will result in an output at a lower average cost. Holding student performance constant, however, they found “evidence that district consolidation (using New York state districts) substantially lowers operating costs. Larger districts are able to negotiate bulk purchases of supplies and equipment or by using their monopsony power to impose lower wages on their employees to lower their operating costs.” Williams (1990) reports that large districts can gain economies of scale in busing and purchasing power and can attract more grant money.

While there is research that supports the notion of economies of scale, there is also an abundance of literature that discredits the notion.

- A Nevada Policy Research Institute Analysis (2004)—*Does School District Size Matter?* Found that “School district size does matter, and students, teachers, parents and taxpayers all do better in smaller school districts with smaller schools.” It seems clear that large school districts arose in an era dominated by large-scale manufacturing and their resulting efficiencies. Most people believed that economies of scale would exist in large school districts, making for more efficient delivery of educational services. As a result, consolidation of small school districts has been one of the most dramatic changes in public education during the last century. We began with 150,000 school districts in the US—there are now less than 15,000.

The study referred to statistics from the National Center for Educational Statistics website that supports the fact that, “as the size of the district increases, the percentage of budget spent on teachers, books and materials actually tends to decline.”

- Even though Duncombe and Yinger, (2001) report economies of scale in consolidating small districts, they also express that “despite widespread consolidations of school districts in the United States, there exists little direct evidence on how consolidation actually affects school districts in the medium or long run.”
- Williams (1990) discussed the term “diseconomies of scale” that he defines as the act of ignoring the additional capital expenditures, salaries and operating costs associated with greatly increased transportation required by consolidation.
- Webb and Ohm (as cited in Cox, 2002) found smaller districts are “more efficient than larger ones in both dollars per student and number of administrators per student”
- Antonucci (as cited in Cox, 2002) found there are “penalties of scale.” Instead of making up a larger percent of the budget as school district size increase, the percentage spent on teachers, books and teaching materials decreases. “Paradoxically, the larger a student district gets, the more resources it devotes to secondary or even non-essential activities.”

Antonucci also writes, “And let’s not forget the labor implications. Which district is more likely to have difficult contract negotiations or work stoppages? The district with 15 bus drivers or the one with 677 bus drivers?”

- “Despite substantial literature on economies of scale in education, there is little consistent evidence on whether school district consolidation saves money, while maintaining educational quality.” (Duncombe, Miner & Ruggiero, 1994)
- Other researchers conclude that “Accumulated evidence points to the clear conclusion that, except for consolidations of very small districts, there are no economies of scale to local education” (Walberg & Fowler; as cited in Galles & Sexton, 1995)
- Looking at the broader scope of things and not just on economics, Lawrence et al. (2002) report that there are several other subtle costs that discredit the economies of scale cost savings ideals. The other costs of larger schools and districts are lower graduation rates,

higher dropout rates, high rates of violence and vandalism, higher absenteeism and lower teacher satisfaction.

- Walberg and Fowler (1986) report that “it appears that the smaller the district, the higher the achievement when the socioeconomic status and per-student expenditures are taken into account because the superintendent and central staff awareness of citizen and parent preferences, the absence of bureaucratic layers and administrative complexity, teacher involvement in decision making, and close home-school relations.” These may account for the efficiency of small districts. Overall, research indicated that school district consolidation and reorganization should not be founded on only opportunities to reduce costs.
- The Goldwater Institute Policy Report (2004) states “economists find little evidence that economies of scale improve school district efficiency and empirical consolidation research indicates smaller, decentralized school districts are significantly more efficient than larger, centralized districts. Likewise, in Arizona, data show that small and medium districts consistently spend as much as or less on administration than the state’s largest districts.”

There is no universal consensus on what constitutes a large school district or a small school district, nor universal agreement on the ideal size for schools or districts. Florence Webb, in a 1971 Education Research Service study of 26 reports completed between 1939-1969, stated the most common recommendation for district size was 10,000 students (as cited in Cox, 2002).

- More recent research indicates that 4,000-5,000 students in a district is a reasonable threshold (Lawrence et al., 2002).
- Duncombe & Yinger, (2000) suggest that the optimal district enrollment is approximately 6,000.
- Augenblick & Myers (2001) reported that researchers and practitioners believe that to offer an appropriate curriculum, extra-curricular activities and a safe/nurturing environment, a district should enroll at least 260, but no more than 2,925 students.
- Literature suggests a workable definition of a small district as between 400-600 students and diseconomies of size begin to occur as district size exceeds 6,000 students. (Vicki Murray 2004 and Louisiana Dept of Education 2003).

A “brief” Review of Literature on Alternatives to Consolidation

We completed a cursory review of literature related to alternatives to consolidation—specifically things a school district can do to, as a Deloitte Research study, *Driving More Money into the Classroom: The Promise of Shared Service* states, “educate students like a small district and still have the economies of scale and buying power of a large district.”

- The Deloitte study reports that consolidation can “have some serious downsides: it is politically unpopular, reduces local control, can negatively impact educational outcomes and eventually can lead to even higher costs due to the dead-weight of bureaucracy. In short, consolidation may not be the most effective strategy to help districts direct more money into the classroom.” Their answer is shared services, a technique that has been employed in both

the private and public sectors for many years and is apparently growing rapidly due to its proven ability to reduce costs.

The study further indicates that shared services can “yield very real operational efficiencies around facilities, transportation, food service, real estate management, procurement, human resources, information technology, security and even instruction.” They divide shared service opportunities into two general areas: 1) Direct services to students and 2) indirect services to staff or infrastructure. Two of the seven major benefits of sharing services include saving money and gaining economies of scale.

- As early as 1988, Rincones explored alternatives to district consolidation and found that “shared services such as personnel, programs, equipment, instructional materials, teachers, ancillary services, transportation, staff development, counseling services, special education and vocational education allows school districts to remain separate, while gaining additional curricular programs of higher quality. These alternatives build on strengths of smaller districts, do not rely on reconfiguration, but are focused on sharing or contracting services in efforts to reduce costs while bringing needed services to students thus allowing states to retain existing smaller schools and districts.”

Additional Points: Goldwater Institute Policy Report No. 189

GUHSD also cites the following additional points associated with the Goldwater Institute’s Policy Report No. 189. (“Competition or Consolidation? The School District Consolidation Debate Revisited.” Policy Report No. 189/January 12, 2004. Goldwater Institute.)

- The reason Arizona has a greater percentage of dollars going to administration and fewer dollars going to the classroom is because education in general is extremely under-funded in the state. For the past several years, Arizona has ranked between 45th and 50th in the nation for per pupil spending on education.
- The majority of administrative costs are at the local school level and not at the district level. As a result, any potential positive fiscal impact of unification is likely to be mitigated.
- The vast majority of empirical research indicates that district consolidation efforts in other states have resulted in larger, not smaller, administrative staffs and higher administrative costs overall.
- Research has shown that district consolidation/unification efforts have resulted in larger schools and higher student-to-teacher ratios. While this may or may not lead to fiscal efficiency, both of these established effects of unification have been proven to negatively impact student learning and academic achievement. It is well established in the school effectiveness literature that lower student-to-teacher ratios, as well as smaller schools and learning communities, are much more effective in terms of facilitating learning and improving student achievement. Recently published studies also indicate that smaller learning communities are more suited to meet the social and emotional needs of students. Recent data indicate that the student-to-teacher ratio in the state of Arizona is 19.8 students per teacher, though this figure is likely a much lower estimate than what is actually

happening in the majority of Arizona classrooms due to recent population growth. Arizona's current student-to-teacher ratio is much higher than the national average and exceeds the ratios commonly found in the nation's largest schools. Unification would likely result in even higher student-to-teacher ratios, larger schools, and as a result poorer student academic achievement.

- According to William Ouchi, professor at UCLA's Anderson School of Management, smaller schools and districts better meet the need of at-risk students and the population generally served by GUHSD. According to Ouchi, "data generally show improvements in average [student] achievement across every ethnic group and every grade." This is especially important to note in light of current state and federal accountability measures that have been established in education. Furthermore, this is important to consider in light of the populations served by GUHSD, WESD and GESD.
- According to research results published by the American Legislative Exchange Council, fewer students per school and fewer schools per district have been associated with higher SAT, ACT, and NAPE scores. Longitudinal trend line analysis from 1981 to 2001 indicates an inverse relationship between school district size and academic achievement, where smaller districts have demonstrated higher academic achievement as measured by well-recognized, standardized tests (SAT, ACT, NAPE). The unification proposal would likely result in more schools per district and more students per school, which is exactly contrary to research results if learning and student academic achievement are considered.
- GUHSD already spends a lower percentage on administrative costs and a higher percentage in the classroom compared to other districts in the state of Arizona.