

## BOARD STATEMENT FOLLOWING LEGAL REVIEW OF EMPLOYEE DISCLOSURE

A District employee recently sent a letter to the Board alleging that some teachers who taught courses in the District's credit-recovery program were required to change student grades from an F to a passing grade or face possible discipline or retaliation. The letter also alleged that the grade changes were improper and possibly illegal. Additional concerns were shared with media and in public that the grade changes may have been done to raise the District's graduation rate in order to qualify the Superintendent for additional performance based pay.

Given the serious issues raised and the Board's commitment to integrity, transparency, and educational excellence an outside investigation was conducted. The investigation included over 25 interviews of teachers, department chairs, counselors and district administrators, review of hundreds of documents and legal analysis of the accusations. The investigation revealed that **the letter was based almost entirely on second-hand information**. It also showed that any teacher who changed their student's grade used their professional judgment and applied legitimate grading criteria in doing so. The eleven grades that were changed did not impact the District's graduation rate and did not have the purpose or effect of impacting the Superintendent's performance pay.

During the spring of 2022, site level and District level administrators developed an optional grading alternative that allowed a teacher of record to change a student's grade who met stated criteria from an F to a P. The grading alternative was an organic idea collectively generated by that group at their weekly meetings. Pursuing the idea was a consensus decision of the group not a directive from the Superintendent. **The alternative grading format had the potential of benefitting 28 seniors. Ultimately, 11 of them had an archived F changed to a passing grade by their teacher. Those grade changes were consistent with course requirements and related state standards.**

Teachers used their professional judgment when deciding whether to apply the optional grading alternative. Teachers were also given other options to work with seniors who were not on track to graduate. For example, some teachers reopened Edgenuity classes to allow students to complete work and receive a letter grade. Some teachers and department chairs chose not to implement the new grading option. **No teacher or department chair was disciplined or reported any retaliation for exercising their professional judgment to change or not change a grade.**

Site administrators at Vista Grande High School and Casa Grande Union High School took different approaches to announcing the new grading option. There was no evidence of any effort by any District administrator to force this option on teachers.

Finally, **there was no evidence that the Superintendent pursued the grade change option to boost her performance pay or that the option had that effect.** The District's graduation rate is not a goal set out in the performance pay plan between the District and the Superintendent and the Board has complete discretion as to what impact, if any, an increased graduation rate would have on its decision whether to award performance pay and, if so, the amount awarded. Additionally, the optional grading format had a negligible effect on the graduation rate.

We share this information to clarify what is factual and to dispel inaccuracies. We hope for improved communications with parents, students, staff, and community. We are committed to helping our students obtain the quality education they will need to succeed as they choose their path in life.

Jack Henness  
Board President