

May 14, 2018

Dear GPS Staff,

I want to express my gratitude for the transition since the school closure period. I also want to thank you for the diligence and focus you are demonstrating to support our students during the remaining days of the school year.

Now that we are back, I am asking for your assistance on the matter of adhering to the District's dress code while you are on campus or otherwise "on duty" and being paid by the District. Specifically, as you may already know, Administrative Regulation GBEBA-R provides that employees are to dress and maintain a general appearance that reflects their position and does not detract from the educational program of the school.

The dress code was relaxed in past weeks to allow all teachers and other staff to wear RedforEd or similar T-shirts to school. However, at this time, I am genuinely concerned that T-shirts are distracting from our educational program. Therefore, my direction and expectation moving forward is that staff will no longer wear any T-shirts or other shirts that contain words or messages on them. Exceptions include standard name brands of the manufacturer and the school's own logo wear, on the same basis as those items have been permitted in the past.

By way of further explanation, our mission is to create a safe, welcoming educational environment for all of our students and staff. As set forth in Policy GBEB, the school employee:

- Make decisions based on the best interests of students.
- Demonstrate positive and appropriate relationships with students, parents, staff members, and others.
- Refrain from using school contacts and privileges to promote partisan politics, sectarian religious views, or propaganda of any kind. Avoid using position for personal gain through political, social, religious, economic, or other influence.

It has become evident that not all members of our school community are in accord with recent teacher activities or the RedforEd movement. Further, parents and students are expressing their strong desire that the remaining days of the school year focus on instruction and not advocacy for legislative or election action. Finally, there are community members who are asserting that the RedforEd movement now falls within the purview of A.R.S. § 15-511, which prohibits the use of school resources (including buildings) for the purpose of influencing the outcome of an election. "Influencing the outcome of an election" means supporting or opposing a candidate for nomination or election to public office or the recall of a public officer or supporting or opposing a ballot measure, question or proposition, including any bond, budget or override election and supporting or opposing the circulation of a petition for the recall of a public officer or a petition for a ballot measure, question or proposition in any manner that is not impartial or neutral. A school district employee found to have violated this law may be subject to a personal fine, by the Attorney General, of up to \$5,000.00 for each violation of the law. By law, the fine must be paid by the employee and may not be paid by the District. We would never want any employee to be placed in a position of having to defend this type of claim or be subject to such fines if the law were deemed to apply.

I am not in a position to know whether A.R.S. §15-511 is applicable to any particular employee at this time. However, I am not basing my direction regarding dress code on that law. Rather, I believe that it is in the best interest of students and our overall educational mission to avoid potential or actual conflicts, discomfort or other negative outcomes and instead, focus on student instruction and professional responsibilities.

Please be assured that nothing in this letter is intended to prevent you from exercising your First Amendment rights or engaging in political action when you are acting as a private citizen, rather than while you are being paid by the District to perform your assigned duties.

Thank you again for your steadfast commitment to public education, our students and community.

Respectfully,

Shane McCord
Superintendent