

LETTER TO GPS EMPLOYEES

August 7, 2018

Dear GPS Staff:

Thank you for the start to a great school year. We have some very positive momentum heading into this year and I want to keep it going! Our students will benefit from such an upbeat atmosphere!

Our country and our state are in the midst of the primary elections and the general elections will be occurring in November. It is extremely important to remember what is expected of each of us as Gilbert Public Schools professionals. In May of the last school year, I sent out a letter addressing my expectations related to the District's dress code and how A.R.S. § 15-511 applies to us as employees.

As you all know our mission is to create a safe, welcoming educational environment for all of our students and staff. As such, the following policies are applicable; *GBEB - Staff Conduct*, *GBEBA - Staff Dress Code*, *GBEF - Staff Use of Social Media and Electronic Devices*, and *GBI - Staff Participation in Political Activities*. Therefore, all District employees are expected to:

- make decisions based on the best interests of students.
- refrain from using school contacts, resources 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. This includes, but is not limited to, using your work email or social media accounts where you represent yourself as a GPS employee.
- refrain from wearing T-shirts, clothing or accessories that may detract from the educational process. Exceptions include standard name brands of the manufacturer and the school's own logo.
- demonstrate positive and appropriate relationships with students, parents, staff members, and others.

It can now be asserted that the #RedforEd and #InvestinEd movements fall 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 and possible disciplinary action by the District. By law, the fine(s) must be paid by the employee and may not be paid by the District.

The Governing Board and 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. Please remember, any time you are engaging in any political activity, you may not represent yourself as a GPS employee.

Thank you again for your steadfast commitment to Gilbert Public Schools.

Respectfully,
Shane McCord
Superintendent