



State of Arizona
Department of Education
Office of Diane M. Douglas
Arizona Superintendent of Education



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Communications
Communications@azed.gov
602-542-5072

Superintendent Douglas Implores Teachers to Reconsider Walking Out

(Phoenix, Ariz., April 20, 2018) – Following the decision made yesterday evening by teachers to strike next Thursday, Superintendent of Public Instruction Diane Douglas has implored teachers not to walk out of their classrooms if their salary demands are not met by that time.

"I have long been a vocal proponent of providing teachers with significant pay raises," Superintendent Douglas said. "No one has more respect for the jobs that teachers do, which is why I proposed a viable, meaningful increase in their salaries last year, as well as sustainable funding specifically for them and school facilities."

"But if the teachers do not give the leadership at the Capitol the time to implement their salary increase, I'm afraid that striking will only hurt students and parents, while simultaneously setting back their own cause. I know that if we put the students first, we will be able to resolve all of our issues, and that is the role the Arizona Department of Education and I plan on playing until this issue is resolved."

In preparation of a potential walk out on Thursday, the Department will issue guidance in the coming days from program areas such as School Finance, Health and Nutrition and Assessment. The Department is already working with schools that are deciding to remain open to provide free and reduced meals, as well as provide direction regarding the legal amount of annual instructional hours necessary for schools that close.

"Since my first priority is the children," Superintendent Douglas continued, "in the unfortunate event that the teachers proceed to strike on Thursday, I'm calling on the communities, businesses and faith-based organizations near the schools that decide to close to please make contingencies on behalf the students that do not have anywhere else to go, especially the children of single parents. It's an absolute shame that it has come to this, but now that we are all in this situation, I hope that the teachers and Capitol leadership can rebuild trust and come together to resolve this matter as quickly as possible for the sake of our students."

Superintendent Douglas will also present more guidance and provide an update at the upcoming State Board of Education meeting on Monday regarding a potential walkout.

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