



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Stephanie Salazar
(480) 965-9045
Stephanie.Salazar@asu.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**ASU PREPARATORY ACADEMY STATEMENT ON PESD'S VOTE TO TERMINATE LEASE
WITH ASU PREP IN PHOENIX**

Mind-bogglingly, district's best school might be forced - by its own governing board - to close.

Phoenix, Ariz., July 30, 2018 –

ASU Preparatory Academy is disappointed that the Governing Board of Phoenix Elementary School District has voted to terminate the lease between ASU Prep and PESD which could result in the closing of the highest-performing school in the PESD district.

This drastic and avoidable measure follows an equally baffling development: a demand that ASU Prep pay \$2.7 million next year in rent for the building, an 800 percent increase over the current agreement. ASU Prep cannot afford that kind of a rate increase, a fact that the board knows.

If this decision by the board does not end with a reasonable and affordable lease extension, PESD will be responsible for closing down a school with a 100 percent graduation rate and a 100 percent acceptance to higher-education rate. It would also be responsible for eliminating a vibrant community in downtown Phoenix, created by ASU Prep in a building which had previously been vacant and of little value to the district.

If the lease is terminated, the school will have to shut down in the summer of 2019, after the current school year.

"In 2009, the district invited us to design and run a quality high school on the site of a chronically underperforming former school," said Beatriz Rendon, CEO of ASU Preparatory Academy. "We have more than delivered, proving that all students, regardless of background, can be successful throughout their entire K-12 careers. This school in downtown Phoenix has far exceeded the performance of schools around the state and country with similar demographics. ASU Prep Phoenix should be emulated, not closed."

Members of the community are concerned by the news.

"As a long-time community activist who strives to be a voice for the children and families who may not always have a voice, I am deeply disappointed that Phoenix Elementary School District

is considering closing their doors on ASU Preparatory Academy's Phoenix campus," said George Dean, the president and CEO of the Greater Phoenix Urban League and chair of the board of ASU Preparatory Academies. "During a critical time when access to higher education is a key pathway to success, shutting down this school is huge step in the wrong direction."

And parents were caught off guard and shocked.

"I am dismayed that the Phoenix Elementary School District is considering shutting its doors on ASU Prep," said Adrian Fontes, an ASU Prep Phoenix parent. "I have three children in this school who are currently thriving and have clear pathways to college. This action by the board is a tremendous disappointment and does a disservice to all families in our community."

ASU Prep calls on the board of PESD to support its remarkably successful students, their dedicated families and the surrounding community by withdrawing this unreasonable and irresponsible demand for an exorbitant rate increase. ASU Prep is confident that PESD will not seek to close its own budget shortfall on the backs of its most important constituency: its students.

BACKGROUND

In 2009, ASU Preparatory Academy began operating its Phoenix location in the urban, downtown Phoenix neighborhood near the university's downtown Phoenix campus. The school that previously operated at the site served a primarily low-income, Hispanic student population and had been classified by the Arizona Department of Education as "perpetually failing" for its history of poor student academic performance. It was closed and left vacant by PESD, a piece of property and location with seemingly little value to the board.

ASU Prep came in and by 2012, serving the same student population, its high school had earned an "A" state grade, surpassing the average on the state assessment, and far surpassing performance averages for schools with comparable student demographics.

ASU Preparatory Academy shares the same financial pressures other schools do. The university does not supplement the funding available to any of its ASU Prep locations. They have the same budgets as any other charter schools in their respective districts. PESD knows that and still has asked for this baffling rent hike which it must understand is unsustainable and will result in the closure of the school.

The ASU Prep in downtown Phoenix serves a diverse socioeconomic and demographic population who would be affected by PESD's action.

Phoenix Student Demographics: Students: 1,176 (2017-2018)

- Asian/Pacific Islander (2%)
- Black/African American (not-Hispanic) (13%)
- Hispanic/Latino (63%)
- American Indian/Alaskan Native (5%)
- White (non-Hispanic) (17%)
- Free/Reduced Lunch (percentage of students in each school qualifying): Phoenix Elementary School 70%, Phoenix Middle School 66%, Phoenix HS 63%

- SPED Enrollment (percentage of students in each school falling into this category): Phoenix Elementary School 11%, Phoenix Middle School 12%, Phoenix HS 10%

In 2016, ASU Prep graduated 100 percent of its class. This rate of graduation has continued every year since. And 100 percent of the graduates are admitted to a post-secondary educational opportunity.

PESD showed foresight in inviting ASU Prep to take over its vacant, relatively valueless property in downtown Phoenix. That trust was rewarded by ASU Prep when it created a school of unequalled quality to serve the students and families who make up PESD's constituents. ASU Prep's success is an important piece of the overall success and growth of downtown Phoenix, and of the increased value of the land it sits on.

PESD's seeming determination to close ASU Prep is as shortsighted and as narrowminded as the initial decision to invite ASU Prep to downtown Phoenix was smart and self-evidently successful.