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**Payson Unified School
District No. 10**

Press Release

PUSD Response to Building Healthy Relationships Assembly at PHS

Payson, AZ, October 6, 2016: On Tuesday, September 27, 2016 and Wednesday, September 28, 2016 the students at Payson High School had an opportunity to attend two different assemblies on building positive relationships. As a result of questions about the message of the assemblies and the format of the assemblies the District wanted to provide clarifying facts and information on the assemblies.

The decision to hold these assemblies was the result of the overwhelmingly positive response by students two years ago for the same assembly. The high school's administration worked with the school's site council, comprised of parents and staff, the Gila County Health department, and a couple of local entities to secure funding for the assembly. As part of these discussions a video of the presentation was shared with the various groups. Based on a review of the video and the positive responses to the previous assembly the decision was made to move forward with the assembly.

On the afternoon of Sunday, September 25, 2016 parents of students at the high school received a message from the high school administration. This message was received as a voice mail and as an email. The message invited parents to attend the presentation on teens building positive relationships on the evening of Tuesday, September 27, 2016. Parents were also notified that students would be attending assemblies on Tuesday and Wednesday on this same topic. The message provided parents with the website address of the speaker so that they could review the message of the presenter and his presentation. In addition, the message provided the email address for Mr. Mabb, if the parents decided they would like to excuse their student from attending the presentations.

On Tuesday, all students at the high school attended the initial presentation. In the presentation there were staff members from PHS as well as PCS supervising the assembly. That evening the same presentation that students saw was given to parents, unfortunately only five (5) parents were able to attend this presentation. The next day there were separate assemblies for the boys and girls and these assemblies were a follow up questions and answer session to the assembly from the previous day.

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The message of the presentation was building positive relationships and the overall theme was the definition of true love is choosing the good for other person in the relationship. The presentation was not one-sided but aimed at members of both sexes. The message of the presentation was never intended to be about sexual violence, date rape, or dating violence. As a result this information was never presented in any of the assemblies. If an individual did not attend the initial presentation on Tuesday they may not have received the message of the presentation and may not have had context for the follow up question and answer assemblies on Wednesday.

The decision on the structure for the assemblies on Wednesday was made based on the fact that the format on Wednesday was a follow up question and answer session to the original presentation. Based on this fact and that the presenters experience, over thirty years of making this presentation to middle school, high school and college students, the decision was to separate the assemblies. The District regrets the implication of the message as a result of the decision to separate the assemblies and takes responsibility for not providing more specific information on the format of the Wednesday assemblies. The message of building healthy positive relationships when dating is an important message for our students to hear and that was the intent and focus of the presentations.

In public education there are many topics that are presented that some may feel are not appropriate for their child. Parents and the students always have the option to request an optional assignment in lieu of listening to a topic they feel is not appropriate. In the case of these assemblies, If parents or students had objections to the message they were permitted to opt out of the either or both assemblies. Since the assemblies were not part of a class they would not have been provided with an optional assignment, but would have been permitted to work on their school work.

The high school administration and district administration has spoken with parents that have expressed concerns with the assemblies and the message that was intended or implied. Those conversations were designed to provide information on the decision making process used to select this speaker and the rationale for the format. The District welcomes parents to become engaged in their child's education and will continue to provide information to parents about activities at all the schools. Parents are encouraged to call their child's school principal if they have any questions or concerns about any school activity or assembly their child may be involved in.