



*Schools of Opportunity that Welcome, Love, and Inspire all to Go Places and Do Things that Matter*

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## Nationally Recognized Superintendent, Dr. Chad Gestson, to Depart Phoenix Union, Lead at State and National Levels

PHOENIX, AZ:

This morning, Dr. Chad Gestson announced that this will be his final school year as Superintendent of the Phoenix Union High School District (PXU). Dr. Gestson has served as Superintendent of PXU, our state's largest high school district, for the last eight years - the longest superintendent tenure in PXU in over a half century and one of the longest in the district's 128-year history.



In a statement released by Northern Arizona University, Dr. Gestson will serve as the founding Executive Director of the new *Arizona Institute for Education and the Economy*. The *Institute* will launch on July 1, 2023 at NAU and be located in the Phoenix Metro area. Education, the public sector, and the economy are unquestionably and inextricably linked - the *Institute* will work to put that fact front and center in pursuit of solutions that will impact generations of Phoenicians and Arizonans. In addition to leading the *Institute*, Dr. Gestson will serve as a Special Advisor to NAU's President, Dr. José Luis Cruz Rivera, on K-12 Initiatives.

At a national level, Dr. Gestson will continue to advance both policy and practice in his roles on the Board of Directors of Chiefs for Change in Washington, D.C. and the Council at the Stanford University Hoover Institution Education Success Initiative. In addition, he will continue to support the Carnegie Foundation in Palo Alto, CA, as Carnegie and districts across America boldly rethink schools of the future, including the Carnegie Unit.

"Bittersweet. I can't think of a better way to describe my emotions," said Dr. Gestson. "PXU is my family. I love this place. I love our people. I have deep, life-long relationships here. Yet after 22 years of working *in* the system, it is now time for me to step *out* of the system in order to work more effectively, aggressively, and unapologetically *on* the system, locally and nationally."

Dr. Gestson said in a personal statement that he believes now is the right time for his next chapter, not because of the opportunities that lie ahead for him, but because of the current state and incredible momentum of PXU.

"We have emerged from the pandemic - and the unmodernized era - stronger than ever. Our brand and our portfolio are nationally recognized. In September, we surpassed our highest single-day enrollment in over a half century. We have more A and B-rated schools than ever before and, for the

first time in PXU history, no D or F schools. We led the city, state, and nation through the COVID pandemic.

We now have 24 schools in our portfolio. Phoenix Coding, Wilson, Abril, GTA at Maryvale, ARCH at Chavez, and Phoenix Digital been developed and successfully launched. PXU City is now forcing our country to think radically differently about the future of high schools. Phoenix Educator Preparatory will soon produce our state's most talented and diverse education workforce. The new property on Central will incubate even bigger and bolder ideas. We will soon launch the Phoenix Engagement Center.

We have laid one of the strongest financial foundations in the nation - and have the infrastructure to back it up. We have the highest school district minimum wage in Arizona. We restructured our salary schedules to put more money into the hands of ALL of our most deserving educators. We have our state's first electric bus fleet. We have an incredible strategic plan, and our commitment to equity is as clear on paper as it is in practice. We officially launched the Phoenix Public Schools Collaborative with our thirteen partner districts to improve alignment. We are now in the national spotlight because we are a national model. The momentum is palpable. The future is certain and bright in PXU."

Governing Board President, Naketa Ross, wrote the following statement:

"On behalf of the Governing Board, we are incredibly grateful to Dr. Gestson for his service to the PXU family. Dr Gestson has successfully navigated the district through many successes and challenges. I cannot imagine a better leader to lead us through some of the toughest years our city, state, and nation have ever faced. PXU is now a national model.

We are fully confident that the strides and successes of PXU over the past several years have created the conditions for a smooth transition at the top. We greatly appreciate Dr. Gestson's commitment to a seamless transition.

As a District and Board, we will soon announce the details for the selection of Phoenix Union's next Superintendent. We wish Dr. Gestson the best of luck in his next chapter."

"It was my honor to be the Board President nearly 8 years ago when we first selected Dr. Gestson," said Senator and board member Lela Alston. "Since that time, Dr. Gestson has become a Broad Academy Fellow, a council member at Stanford, and a board member of the Council of the Great City Schools as well as Chiefs for Change. He was named the Arizona Policymaker of the Year by our state's health association, the Arizona Superintendent of the Year by our state's school public relations association, and Arizona's 73<sup>rd</sup> Man of the Year by Valley Leadership. He even received a personal phone call from the President of the United States to recognize his incredible leadership. Phoenix Union is stronger today than it has been in decades, is a now statewide and nationwide leader, and is fully poised for transition."

Dr. Gestson spent 14 years in Phoenix Union, first as the principal of Camelback and then as the District's Director of School Leadership. Aside from national boards, he is a board member of the George Washington Carver Museum and Cultural Center, Valley of the Sun United Way (VSUW), and the Arizona Business and Education Coalition (ABEC). Prior to coming to PXU in 2009, he served as a middle school principal and elementary assistant principal in the Isaac School District and a teacher in the Roosevelt School District. He began his professional career as a carpenter and commercial construction superintendent in Seattle, WA.