

**Osborn School District No. 8**  
**1226 W. Osborn Road**  
**Phoenix, AZ 85013**  
**602-707-2000**

**Official Response to the School District Redistricting Commission**

This document is submitted by Osborn Elementary District No. 8 as our official response to the Arizona School District Redistricting Commission's recommendation to combine Osborn Elementary with Alhambra Elementary, Central and Alhambra High Schools and alternative schools, Desiderata and Bostrom to form a new unified district designated as Maricopa Central Plan 1—District C. The stated rationale for this recommendation is to "provide for a more seamless and connected learning experience and alignment of curriculum for students as well as providing potential savings and efficiencies."

It is understood that should this issue go to the ballot, there will be two questions—whether Phoenix Union should be subdivided into several unified districts and whether the proposed districts recommended for unification wish to unify to become a separate unified district. Notwithstanding that the most comprehensive research militates against consolidation/unification, as elected representatives of the community we felt it important to hold community input sessions. The sessions allowed for discussion of the issue of unification in general, recommendations as they affect Osborn specifically, and clarification of our understanding of the two questions that will likely be on the ballot.

Staff members in attendance at these sessions were not in favor of consolidation, although the possibility of increased salaries as a result of consolidation was obviously appealing. Community members present, largely reflective of our Hispanic community, expressed strong satisfaction with current student programs and the District as it is currently configured. Therefore, **if as elected officials we were to vote on this issue today, based on research, input from the community and our understanding of the needs of students in the Osborn School District, the vote on both questions would be a resounding "No."**

**Research does not support consolidation:**

As a major component of this official response, we are including a copy of our February 15, 2007 response to the Commission's preliminary recommendations for consolidation. This compilation of research provides a comprehensive review of literature related to two key questions—how will consolidation help Osborn further improve student achievement and how might it save dollars to devote to improved student programs and increased teacher salaries due to possible economies of scale? Since the official recommendation disseminated in April, 2007 is identical to the preliminary recommendation, **our initial response opposing consolidation remains unchanged.** The attached summary of research provides clear evidence that:

- **Consolidation has detrimental effects on student achievement for low socioeconomic students.** Because 83% of the student population in the Osborn School District qualifies for free/reduced lunch, the commonly accepted manner of determining socioeconomic status, we contend that consolidation would put our students further at risk for school failure. In fact, **Osborn students actually outscore most elementary students of similar socioeconomic backgrounds in unified districts.**
- **Consolidation saves money only in very small districts—generally agreed to be in the range of 750-1000 students.** Osborn is designated a medium size district, and thus falls into the broad parameters for economies of scale.

- **Shared Services in many areas, including purchasing, is an alternative to consolidation.** Osborn actively participates in various purchasing consortia including Mohave Educational Services Cooperative (MESOC), Greater Phoenix Purchasing Consortium of Schools (GPPCS), School Medical Insurance Trust (SMIT) and ASPIN Food Services. As a result, the district reaps the benefits of economies of scale by enjoying the same cost savings and efficiencies afforded larger districts. Clearly, **consolidation is not necessary to provide cost savings in purchasing—it is already in place through district involvement in numerous purchasing consortia as outlined in our comprehensive report.**

**Consolidation is not necessary to assure alignment of curriculum K-12:**

The Commission has indicated that a major consideration for consolidation/unification is to “provide a more seamless and connected learning experience and alignment of curriculum.” Osborn works closely and collaboratively with both Phoenix Union and other elementary partner districts on curricular and instructional issues to meet NCLB requirements and improve student achievement. Curriculum consortia include the Greater Phoenix Educational Management Council (GPEMC) with collaboration by superintendents and administrators for finance and curriculum and the Arizona Assessment Collaborative (AzAC) serving approximately 20 elementary and unified districts. These partnerships are self-initiated, strictly voluntary and provide documented evidence of improved outcomes for staff and students including the development and sharing of standards-based report cards, parent guides and benchmark assessments.

More importantly, as stated by the Arizona Department of Education, “Arizona has defined what its children need to know and be able to do in ten content areas: mathematics, reading, writing, science, social studies, fine arts, comprehensive health, technology, foreign language, and workplace skills. The AZ Academic Standards Unit, in partnership with K-12 Literacy, provides leadership, support, and assistance to schools in implementing the Arizona Academic Standards in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies. State-sponsored professional development for implementing these articulated content standards targets leadership teams from counties, districts, and/or schools.”

Teaching to the Arizona standards is not optional. These standards provide the needed alignment of curriculum whether a district is elementary K-8, high school 9-12 or unified K-12. Clearly, **consolidation is not necessary to provide curriculum alignment—it is already in place through implementation of the state standards and through inter-district curriculum collaboration.**

**Dismantling Phoenix Union is not in the best interest of Osborn students:**

Just as we can find no educational or monetary value in supporting consolidation for the Osborn School District, we can articulate no valid rationale as to why Phoenix Union should be dismantled given that the district has made steady progress to reduce the drop-out rate and increase student achievement. We applaud the efforts of Phoenix Union to provide choice for students and parents through its magnet programs and more recently the creation of specialty schools that tend to be smaller and focused to meet students’ unique needs and interests—Cyber High School, Bioscience High School, Franklin Police and Fire High School.

We believe that creating multiple unified districts would severely limit options currently available to Osborn students. At this point it is unclear as to what kinds of issues would be created by open enrollment should current Phoenix Union high schools be doled out among elementary feeder districts as specified in the Commission’s recommendations based strictly on

geographical boundaries. In fact, the matter raises more questions than answers. **We oppose any changes that would reduce high school program choices for Osborn students.**

Further, we believe that there are distinct advantages to maintaining elementary and high school districts as separate entities. Our focus as an elementary district is on achievement and educating the young learner. In addition to academics, high school districts are deep into athletics and other extra curricular activities. We believe that mass confusion would be created by consolidation. That chaos, and taking on the long-term responsibilities of a high school, will disrupt our targeted focus on achievement for our elementary-aged learners.

**Unifying/Consolidating Districts Does Not Equate to More Money in the Classroom:**

One of the assumptions of moving toward consolidation is that it will save money and allow for more dollars in the classroom because unified districts are more cost effective. Research reviewed by the district along with evidence from the Auditor General's Office on *Dollars in the Classroom* simply does not support that assumption. The Auditor General's report is very misleading because comparisons are made based only on percentage of dollars spent and not on actual dollar amounts per student in the classroom. Actual dollars spent is a more accurate measure of actual classroom impact because dollars pay for results, percentages do not.

The Auditor General's report states that "higher per-pupil total spending does not equate to higher classroom dollar percentages. In fact, on average, districts that spent the most per pupil have lower classroom dollar percentages." This is certainly true in Osborn's case. When one compares Osborn with unified districts in the greater Phoenix area, it is clear that **although Osborn's percentage of dollars in the classroom (50%) is lower than all of these districts, Osborn actually spends more dollars per student in the classroom (\$3,702) than Deer Valley (\$3,649 - 61.2%) and Dysart Unified Districts (\$3,347 - 59.4%) and only \$25 less per student than Chandler Unified (\$3,727 - 63.7%).** Despite this fact, Osborn is ranked 181 out of 229 districts in percent of dollars spent in the classroom, Deer Valley 29, Dysart 54 and Chandler places an amazing 10<sup>th</sup> place with only a \$25 actual dollar difference from Osborn as mentioned above. It is worthy of note that the state funding formula provides more Maintenance and Operations (M & O) dollars per high school student ADM than elementary student ADM making it even more remarkable that Osborn, an elementary district, can outspend a unified district in per student classroom dollars.

**DOLLARS IN THE CLASSROOM**  
From the 2006 Arizona Auditor General Report on Classroom Spending

***A Comparison of Osborn Elementary School District, Phoenix Union and Greater Phoenix Unified Districts***

Ranking by % of Dollars in Classroom of 229 Total Districts		181	29	54	17	18	36	37	10	89
	State	OSBORN	Deer Valley	Dysart	Mesa	PV	Peoria	Scottsdale	Chandler	PUHSD
% in class		50.00%	61.20%	59.40%	62.70%	62.10%	60.60%	60.50%	63.70%	56.80%
% non class		50.00%	38.80%	40.60%	37.30%	37.90%	39.40%	39.50%	36.30%	43.20%
\$ in class	\$3,981	\$3,702	\$3,649	\$3,347	\$4,296	\$3,996	\$3,919	\$4,135	\$3,727	\$5,285
Non class \$	\$2,852	\$3,696	\$2,311	\$2,292	\$2,555	\$2,435	\$2,551	\$2,696	\$2,126	\$4,023
TOTAL	\$6,833	\$7,398	\$5,960	\$5,639	\$6,851	\$6,431	\$6,470	\$6,831	\$5,853	\$9,308

The highlighted areas above show that:

- **Osborn spends more dollars per student in the classroom than Deer Valley & Dysart Unified Districts.**
- **Osborn spends more total dollars per student than any of the greater Phoenix unified districts identified above & more than the state average.**

This same graph also shows that:

- PUHSD spends more dollars per student in the classroom than any of the greater Phoenix unified districts identified above & more than the state average.
- PUHSD spends more total dollars per student in the classroom than any of the greater Phoenix unified districts identified above & more than the state average.

One might ask why **Osborn spends more total dollars per student than any of the greater Phoenix unified districts and more than the state average (\$7,398 v. \$6,833)**. Because of our poverty level, students come to us with physical, social, emotional and learning needs that can't be met totally by dollars available through all too limited state funding or totally by the classroom teacher. Because of this discrepancy, Osborn aggressively pursues state and federal grants and private partnerships that will further enhance student welfare and learning. As a result, the district spends a higher than average amount on Instructional Staff Support and Student Support to help meet the needs of our students. Programs such as counseling, health services, after-school tutoring and enrichment classes and targeted professional development are all paid for with non-classroom dollars and are absolutely vital in order to maximize student achievement. The rationale for pursuing additional dollars should be evident by comparing the % Free/Reduced Lunch students by district as shown below. Simply stated, it costs more to educate an urban child from a low socioeconomic background.

Ranking by % of Dollars in Classroom of 229 Total Districts		181	29	54	17	18	36	37	10	89
% F/R Lunch Per ADE Website	State	OSBORN	Deer Valley	Dysart	Mesa	PV	Peoria	Scottsdale	Chandler	PUHSD
	50.58%	82.83%	19.31%	48.51%	46.09%	27.17%	30.7%	19.9%	29.15%	62.27%

Although the purpose of this report is to clarify Osborn's stand against unification/consolidation, it is certainly worthy of note that Phoenix Union High School District, with a ranking of 89 out of 229 total districts with 56.80% of dollars in the classroom—lower than the percentage for all of the unified districts in the greater Phoenix area—actually outspends each of these unified districts in total dollars in the classroom and total overall expenditures. This fact gives cause to ask **what will be gained by dismantling the Phoenix Union High School District?** Given the actual dollar allocations discussed above as they relate to Osborn and Phoenix Union, **what is to be gained (lost) by unification in terms of more dollars in the classroom?**

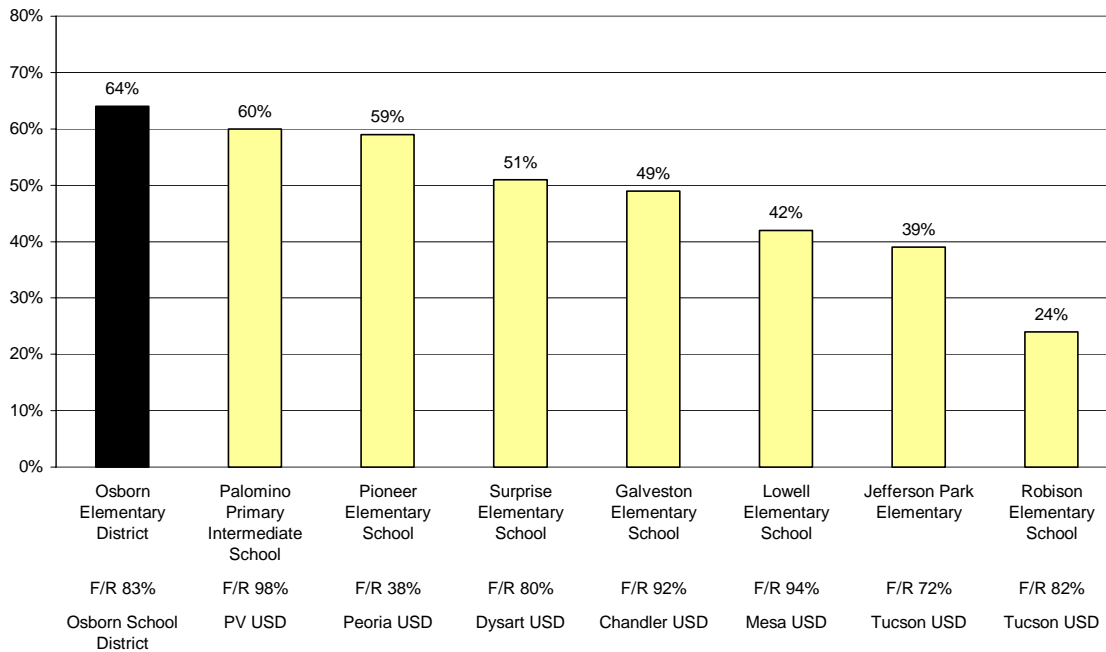
**Unifying/Consolidating Districts Does Not Equate to Higher Achievement:**

Research has found that “smaller schools and smaller districts with large numbers of economically disadvantaged students are likely to have higher average test scores than their counterparts in larger systems.” The Osborn School District has found this to be true as evidenced by a review of 2007 AIMS achievement data. The following charts compare Osborn students in grades 3, 5 and 8 with students in elementary schools of similar size within unified districts and with similar socio-economic backgrounds as measured by percentage of students qualifying for free/reduced lunch.

The following graph shows that the percent of Osborn students meeting/exceeding the **3rd grade math standard** is higher than most elementary schools of similar size within unified school districts and with similar socioeconomic backgrounds as indicated by percentage of free/reduced lunch students.

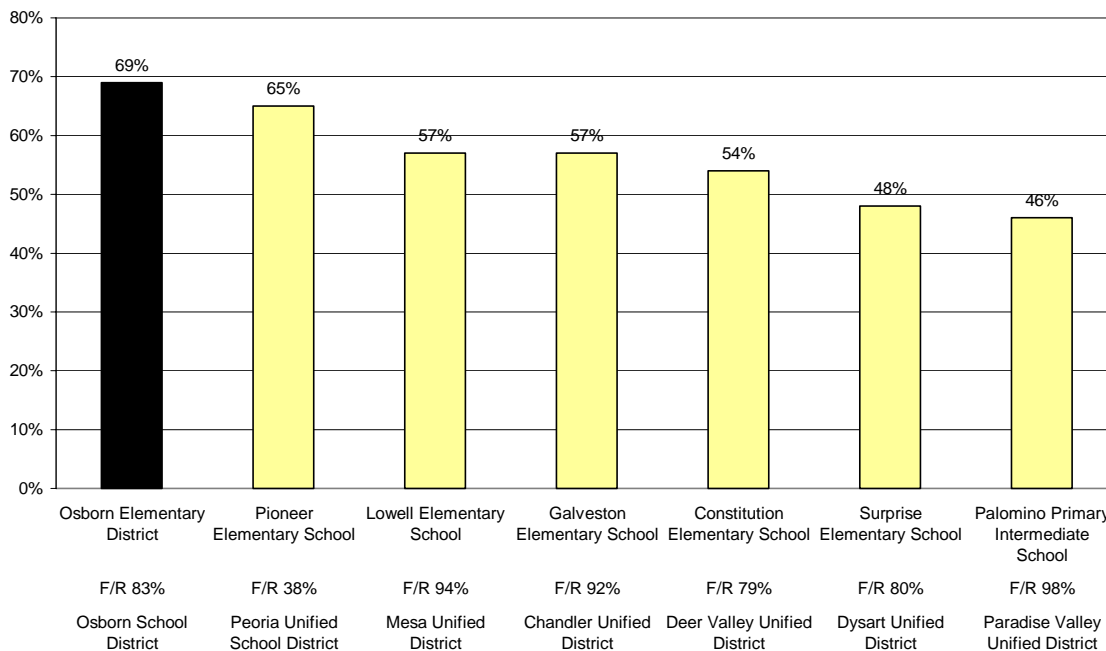
Note also that Osborn actually scored higher than similar schools in unified districts, even those with a lower percentage of free/reduced lunch students—Peoria, Dysart, and Tucson.

**Percent of Students Meeting/Exceeding  
Mathematics Standard - 3rd Grade Math 2007**



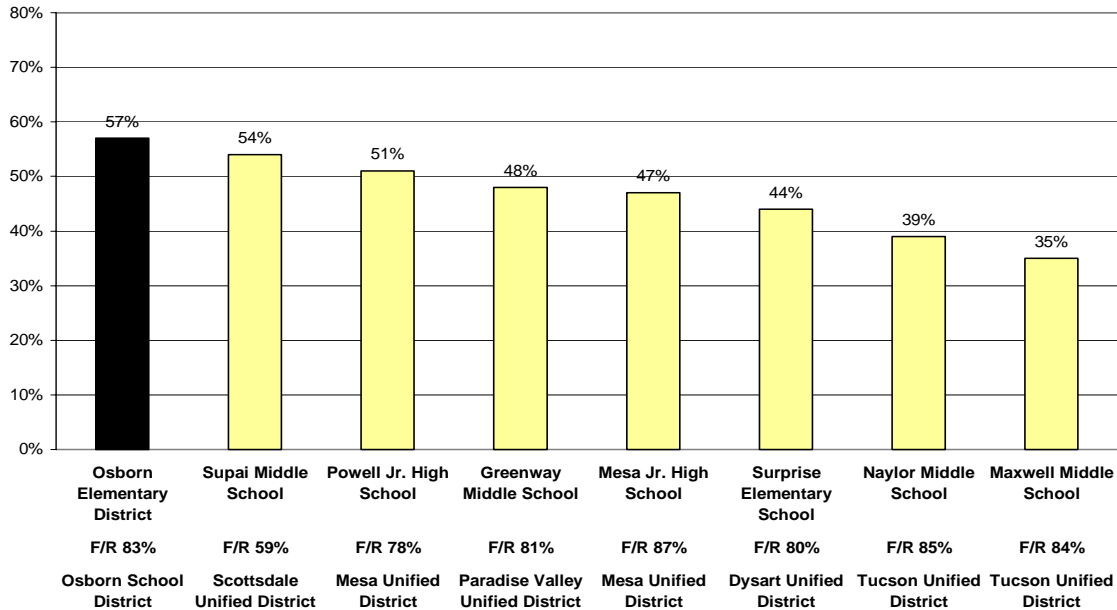
The graph below shows that the percent of Osborn students meeting/exceeding the **5th grade math standard** is higher than most elementary schools of similar size within unified school districts with similar socioeconomic backgrounds as indicated by percentage of free/reduced lunch students. Again, Osborn scored higher than similar schools in unified districts that have a lower percentage of free/reduced lunch students—Peoria, Deer Valley and Dysart.

**Percent of Students Meeting/Exceeding  
Mathematics Standard - 5th Grade Math 2007**



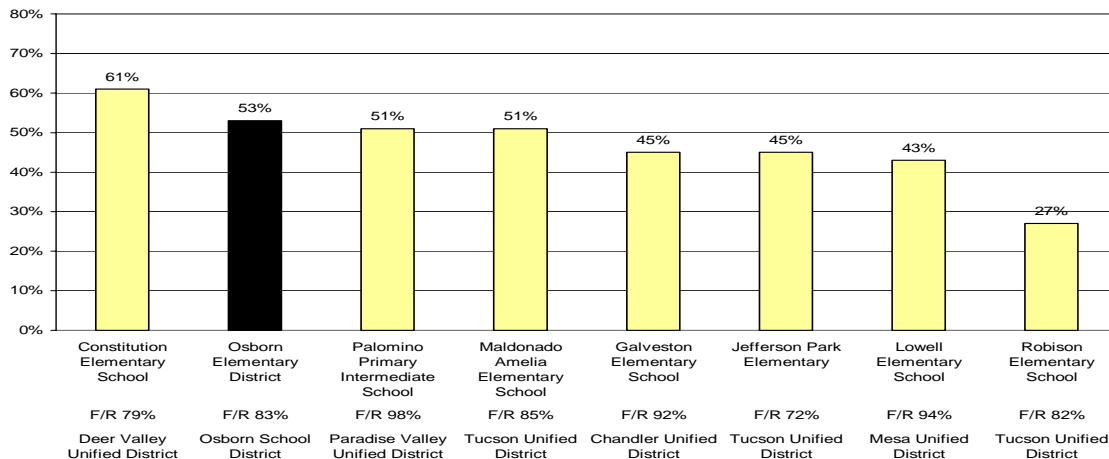
The graph below shows that the percent of Osborn students meeting/exceeding the **8th grade math standard** is higher than most elementary schools within unified school districts with similar socioeconomic backgrounds as indicated by percentage of free/reduced lunch students. Again, Osborn outscored schools in unified districts with a lower percentage of free and reduced students—Scottsdale, Mesa, Paradise Valley, and Dysart.

**Percent of Students Meeting/Exceeding Mathematics Standard - 8th Grade Math 2007**

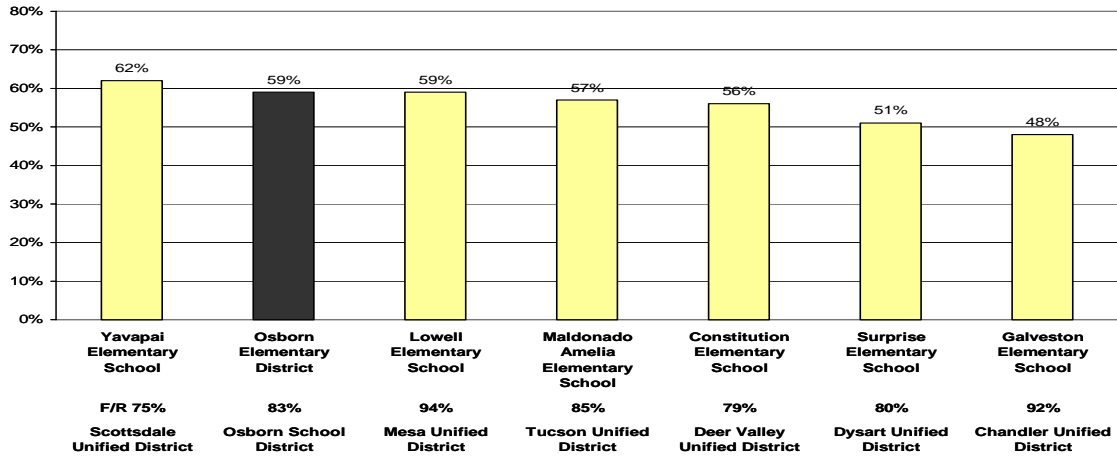


The remaining graphs show that the percent of Osborn students meeting/exceeding the **3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading standards** is consistently higher than most elementary schools within unified school districts with similar socioeconomic backgrounds as indicated by percentage of free/reduced lunch students. Note again those areas in reading where Osborn outscored elementary schools in unified districts with a lower percentage of free/reduced lunch students.

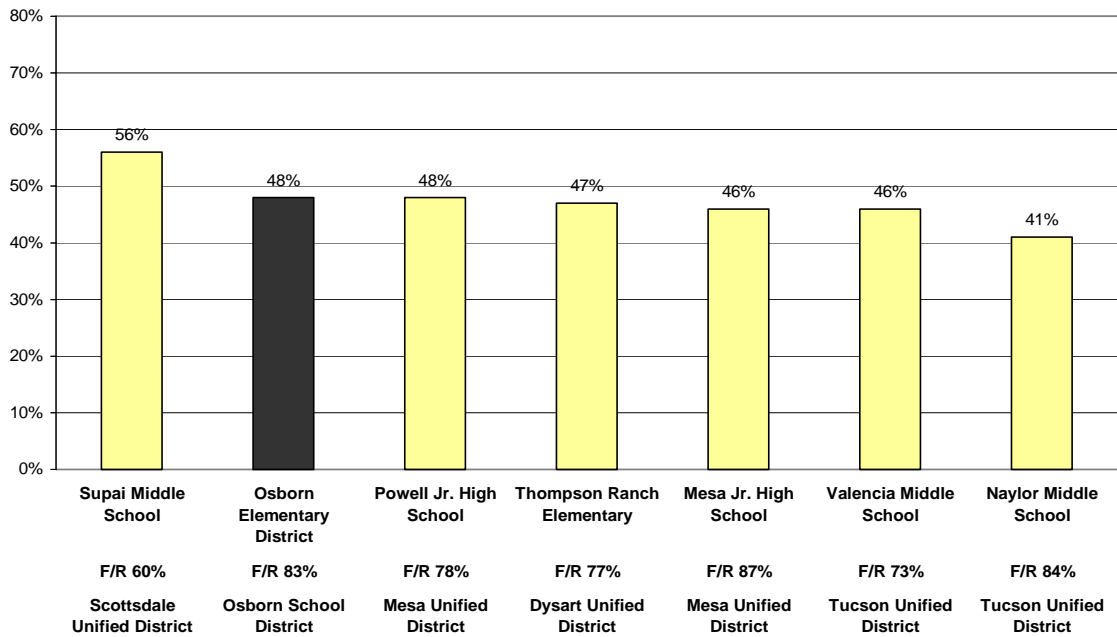
**Percent of Students Meeting/Exceeding Reading Standard - 3rd Grade Reading 2007**



**Percent of Students Meeting/Exceeding  
Reading Standard - 5th Grade Reading 2007**



**Percent of Students Meeting/Exceeding  
Reading Standards - 8th Grade Reading 2007**



Due to anomalies in scoring of the 2006 writing portion of AIMS, per the Arizona Department of Education, we are not including writing comparisons at this time.

The sharing of this achievement data in no way reflects the district's satisfaction with the current level of achievement of Osborn students; however, the charts do provide clear documentation that students in the Osborn "Elementary" School District do as well as, and in most cases better than, students in schools of similar size and with similar socio-economic levels in "unified" districts. This analysis of achievement data supports the research that "smaller schools and smaller districts with large numbers of economically disadvantaged students are likely to have higher average test scores than their counterparts in larger systems." This finding causes us to ask, **what is to be gained by Osborn students from consolidation/unification in terms of achievement?**

**Summary/Recommendation:**

The Osborn School District is driven by data and best practices based on research. Improving achievement for all Osborn students is our top priority. As Governing Board members we stated at the outset that if research showed that students in Osborn would likely improve in achievement or that we could save dollars that could be put to good use in the classroom we would support movement toward consolidation/unification. Our extensive review of literature as well as our analysis of how Osborn compares to elementary schools of similar size and socioeconomic level within unified districts simply doesn't support that premise and we feel would seriously harm our students.

**We are opposed to consolidation/unification based on research that identifies the negative impact on low socioeconomic students like those in Osborn and our own findings that students in Osborn do better academically than most students in elementary schools with comparable percentages of free/reduced lunch students in unified districts.**

**We are opposed to consolidation/unification based on data showing that Osborn actually spends more dollars in the classroom and on student and instructional support than is spent in unified districts in the greater Phoenix area.**

Given our findings **we once again strongly urge the Commission to reconsider its recommendations for the formation of District C.** Senate Bill 1068 specifically grants the Commission the ability to “determine that an existing common school district should remain a common school district and not be included in a new unified school district recommendation.” That same legislation requires the Commission to “consider the recommendations of the governing boards of the affected school districts.” We urge the Commission to seriously consider the abundance of research evidence against consolidation and its effect on low socioeconomic students as outlined in this official response and the attached review of research. It is unconscionable to expend time and resources asking voters to respond to recommendations that are detrimental to Osborn students and have no basis in research. Such actions will have a serious negative impact on Osborn School District's ability to focus on our top priority—student achievement.

The stakes are too high for this Commission to have any agenda other than improving academic achievement for the children of Arizona. If we really want to leave no child behind, we need to make a genuine commitment to improve the quality of education in our state, a state that was recently ranked #43 on achievement indicators in the Education Week annual *Quality Counts* research report. We have important work to do. We know what our students need to improve their academic achievement and we must commit the necessary resources to respond to this need. This is our mission.

Osborn District Governing Board:

---

Marilyn Rollins, President

---

Kelly Parker, Clerk

---

Sarah Hall, Member

---

Maxine Radtke, Member

---

Dean Wolcott, Member