



SAHUARITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

March 27, 2020

Dear Sahuarita Family:

The U. S. Army General, George S. Patton, Jr., once said, “Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what needs to be done, and they will surprise you with their ingenuity.”

Over the course of the last couple of weeks, I’ve seen countless examples of initiative, ingenuity, sharing, and tireless hard work, which have allowed us to successfully transition to this rapidly changing and uncertain world we now find ourselves in. Almost literally overnight, we moved to deliver a solid distance learning program. I acknowledge that it is not perfect, and we will continue to refine and make it the best that it can be. However, teachers are connecting with students, and learning is taking place across our school community. Similarly, this week, we launched a meal program, which is providing approximately 1,300 healthy meals per day to our youngsters.

Our amazing employee team members have exemplified this spirit of teamwork, collaboration, and relentless commitment to our mission of serving students. Some examples include innovative problem solving to support our online delivery model, access and sharing of supplemental resources, creating videos to provide read-aloud bedtime stories for young children, and creatively finding ways to share school supplies and goodies to children in the community, while still supporting the CDC social distancing norms and guidelines.

I want to briefly address a few points that have emerged, with hope that this information will give a little clarity to our efforts in these fluid and dynamic days.

- **Graduation-** Please know that the topic of our high school commencement exercises, and other spring events, including prom, are on our minds. Unfortunately, there are many uncertain things for all of us. I genuinely feel for our senior students as they approach these culminating days of their K-12 educational experiences with such uncertainty. However, I assure you that we are working to adapt and overcome, to the greatest extent possible. This includes evaluation of different options, including flexibility with the dates, if that is necessary and workable. I cannot promise anything specific at this time, other than we are pursuing it with focus and resolve to find a solution. Similarly, there are questions about pending out of Town field trips and major events. We’re working with sponsors to get further clarity, address questions, evaluate options, make determinations, and communicate information as soon as possible.
- **Academics-** Distance learning is not like a traditional school environment. Frankly, this situation has served to further solidify, at least in my mind, that the interpersonal dimension of education is truly the essence of what we do. One of the biggest things I miss these days is the limit on my ability

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to personally interact with people. Nonetheless, we will adapt and overcome. Faculty members have been asked to be sensitive to the new environment, and current context, by providing and managing assignments and assessments with intentionality and focus. The goal is to target the main objectives and to think about quality versus quantity. It is hoped this will give students a reasonable learning environment at home, and support the sharing of available resources, including technology devices at home. If your student is struggling with access to assignments, please let your teacher(s) know. We have, and are still building, structures to overcome obstacles and make sure every student has access to learning activities. For example, next week, I anticipate that we will have a hard copy option for high school students' materials, in those special situations where other options may not be possible. We already have that option for grades K-8.

- **Student Meal Time Program-** Thanks for your patience. I observed some car congestion on the first day, but it generally seemed to operate rather smoothly as the week went along. Our foodservice partners at SFE are just that, true partners in our shared mission to serve students and families with excellence. It was nice to wave to all of you and to see our students' smiling faces. Starting Monday, the program is being expanded to additionally offer remote mobile sites, via school bus service. This is specifically to the outlying ranches and more distant areas. We don't want distance to preclude our children from getting these healthy meals.

Let us focus on the big and most important things. First, please take care of yourselves and your families. We are your partners in the effort. Second, we are in this thing together; the COVID-19 virus does not discriminate. We will overcome it by working together on the required norms and practices to mitigate sickness and spread out the rate of illness. Furthermore, let us work together to give our students the best education that we can, even if it is different. In the end, this experience will teach them lessons that stretch beyond academic content. They are learning resiliency, perseverance, sacrifice, problem-solving, adapting to change, and working as a team with others.

In the words of Bob Marley, "You never know how strong you are until being strong is the only choice you have." Let us be strong together, for ourselves, our children, our families, our community, our Country, and our humanity. And together, we will continue to make a difference!

Sincerely,

Manuel O. Valenzuela, Ed.D.
Superintendent

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