



## SAHUARITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

April 10, 2020

Dear Sahuarita Family:

In these out of the ordinary days, the only constant seems to be that things are changing. It is my hope and prayer that all of our Sahuarita families are safe, healthy, and supporting each other as we navigate these rough waters together.

More than ever, these times require us to be flexible, nimble, adaptable, and embracing of change. In the last few days, the SUSD team has been tackling some significant issues, with the goal of making decisions that support our mission of service to students, and balance safety, the new reality we're in, and the desire to find solutions. We must acknowledge that the world we're in at the present moment is very different than ever before. Unfortunately, we cannot recreate everything that is no longer there, not possible, and largely out of our control. However, we are methodically, creatively and collaboratively striving to find solutions to some of the most significant milestones that take place in these spring days. In that spirit, I would like to highlight some determinations we've made in the last few days, after a review of survey data, and in consultation with my leadership team.

- **Graduation-** Students completing high school graduation requirements will receive their diploma and be graduates of their respective high schools at the close of the current semester in May 2020. The survey data was clear that the most significant desire of our Class of 2020 and parents is to plan for some sort of Graduation Celebration, understanding that many things about this are uncertain and that it'll be at a later time. In pursuit of clarity, as much as we can create, we are setting the following dates. The Sahuarita HS Graduation Celebration is tentatively scheduled on July 29, 2020, and the Walden Grove HS Graduation Celebration will be on July 30, 2020. That is the first choice. If the public health crisis and related issues still prevent this from happening, then the Celebrations will be shifted to December 16 (SHS) and December 17 (WGHS). By July 1, we will provide a final determination about the July dates and whether they will proceed as planned, or whether the alternative dates will be used.
- **Prom-** With a desire to try and preserve this special tradition for our students, especially our senior students, who are already missing much during the last days of their K-12 experience, I've approved and support the request from the high school principal leadership team to pursue the possibility of rescheduling the prom. They will be working with the respective high school communities regarding preferences, possible dates, times, budget, and such logistics. If

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the public health crisis or other variables make it impossible to hold the prom before the end of July 2020, then it will be cancelled.

- **8th Grade Promotion-** This was a topic of community conversation this past year. Upon the recommendation of the principal leadership teams from Sahuarita MS, Wrightson Ridge K-8, and Anza Trail K-8, we are designating July 16, 2020 as the tentative date of the Promotion Ceremony. It is planned for the Auditorium, at the previously communicated times, for any promoting eighth graders and families, who are available and would like to attend. If the public health crisis still prevents such gatherings, or it is otherwise not practicable, then the Promotion ceremony will be cancelled
- **Grading-** In consultation with our senior academic officer, Assistant Superintendent, Mr. Brett Bonner, we are making an adjustment to our grading practices for the fourth grading period, and current semester. The third quarter grade will serve as a baseline for the semester grade. By statute, as defined in the recent emergency laws, approved by the Legislature and signed by Governor Ducey, schools must continue providing meaningful educational opportunities and experiences to students. We will continue to effectively advance that objective with fidelity and good faith. However, the learning activities, assessments, and experiences of the fourth grading period will serve to improve a student's grade; they will not serve to lower a student's grade. Given the multitude of confounding variables currently before us, this is the reasonable, prudent, and sound determination.
- **Summer School-** Of course, the current pandemic is impacting events and programs of all kinds. In response to this, the High School Summer School is moving to a fully online platform, using our Edgenuity program. We still anticipate offering a robust and meaningful menu of quality program offerings. More information is forthcoming. The K-8 Summer School program is currently under additional review; there will be a final determination about its status for this summer after April 30, 2020.

Unfortunately, many of the wonderful culminating concerts, fine arts performances, sporting events, and ceremonies are cancelled. However, the decisions addressed in this letter focus on striving to preserve these specific milestone experiences for our students, with a special emphasis on the graduating Class of 2020.

Even in the midst of such turmoil, there are positive beacons of light, and I'd like to end with just a few. First, as authorized by the Governing Board, I have just signed an Agreement to launch our new solar energy power program; this is a major step forward in support of energy efficiency and sound environmental stewardship. Our

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concussion management program, CoRTE<sub>x</sub>, under the leadership of Dr. Sarah Dachtyl, is continuing to support students with head injuries, even in these days of social distancing. Thanks also to Dr. Mo Mortazavi, MD, and all of our partners at SPARCC Medicine. Congratulations to Copper View Elementary School students, Sophia Sodari and Alexander Richardson. They placed at the recent MathCounts Regional Mathematics competition and qualified for the State finals!

Finally, I extend immense gratitude to the professional employee team members in SUSD for their creative, tirelessly dedicated, and student-centered efforts to serve our students. Yesterday, I had an opportunity to be a guest reader on Zoom, for Mrs. Kelly Strayer's second grade classroom. It was a true joy, and Mrs. Strayer certainly exemplifies our team's focus upon continuing the learning and delivering on our vision of excellence and mission of student success.

Let us, symbolically of course, in these days of social distancing, lock arms, and continue to walk together as we confront these tough days, one at a time. That is how we will adapt, overcome, and emerge even stronger than we were before. Be well.

Sincerely,

Manuel O. Valenzuela, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

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