



SAHUARITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

April 24, 2020

Dear Sahuarita Family:

I hope that all of you are healthy, adapting as much as possible to this new reality we find ourselves in, and hopefully finding some ways to create positive outcomes from the unfortunate aspects of this situation.

Despite the closure of traditional school, there continue to be shining examples of success in our community. On Wednesday evening, we successfully completed our first virtual Governing Board meeting. Our CFO, Lizette Huie, and her business services team, are completing a significant system addition to our student management portal, which will make expanded online fee payments a reality very soon. Clearly, these stressful days are tough on all of us, including our students. In partnership with the Better Together Coalition, our community is continuing the “Let’s Talk” sessions with Dr. Celeste Bryson to a virtual format, starting next week. The topic will be “Coping Skills To Manage Anxiety.” Our Sahuarita graduates continue to succeed and demonstrate great service to our community and Country. Yaseli Mariscal (SHS ‘18) recently completed U.S. Air Force Basic Training in Texas and is now in technical school. Ronald Jaramillo (SHS ‘19) is currently serving in the Arizona Army National Guard in support of COVID – 19 relief efforts in our State. Starting next Friday, May 1, 2020, we will begin registration for the 2020-21 school year! This is for all returning students. Families will receive a message from the District prompting them to log in, and complete and update all required forms.

As I write this letter, my phone buzzed with a news alert that Pima County has just documented its 1000th case of COVID-19. I perceive that we all share some sense of worry and anxiety about the current situation. Perhaps, there is a little comfort in the fact that, although we are more isolated than six weeks ago, we are all sharing in the same experience and feelings. For me, part of that apprehension is the uncertainty, and the fact that this virus is new and so much is yet unknown. Furthermore, many of the rapidly changing variables are beyond our control. This makes it hard to adjust. However, I want to convey to all of you, who place the safety, well being, and education of your children in our hands, that we are working every day to not only finish this year with success, but to be ready for the future, regardless of what it may look like. For example, we are already planning with our leadership team to consider different contingencies and possible adaptations. Some of them are: even more regimented and meticulous cleaning and sanitizing standards of schools playgrounds, and buses; spacing and distancing norms; program structures and

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adjustments; enhanced screening norms; pandemic planning; and further standardization of distance and hybrid learning models. Whatever it takes, we will adapt to the changing landscape, overcome the challenges before us, and be here and ready to uphold our noble mission of serving all of you in providing our community's children with a safe and high quality education. One thing that has been reinforced in my own mind over the last six weeks is that education is fundamentally a human endeavor. The experiences that students have on campus through day to day interactions, classroom activities, school events, and extracurricular programs are an integral part of helping achieve our mission and preparing young people for success in today's complex 21st Century world. I remain optimistic and hopeful that we will be opening the schoolhouse doors on August 3, 2020 and, more than ever, what a special day that will be!

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the men and women who serve on our Governing Board, Shari Lowell, Kevin Opalka, Elaine Hall, Denise Reis, and Dr. John Sparks. Their wise governance, dedicated public service, and strong support and leadership are a key to the success of our Mission. And, in these extraordinarily challenging days, those attributes are only magnified, and are truly making a difference for us.

Please continue to take care of yourselves, your families, and one another. We will continue working together through all of this, one step at a time.

Sincerely,

Manuel O. Valenzuela, Ed.D.
Superintendent

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