



SAHUARITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

May 15, 2020

Dear Sahuarita Family:

A few days ago, Governor Doug Ducey communicated that the stay at home order would expire at the end of the day on May 15, 2020. We've observed the process to slowly allow opening up restaurants, hair salons, and, most recently, gyms and swimming pools, all with conditions. However, there remains a significant amount of uncertainty, debate, and perspective about the best path forward. This uncertainty probably adds to the anxiety and level of concern.

In the Sahuarita Unified School District, we are working with intentionality and resolve to prepare for the start of the 2020-21 school year and anticipate that school will start on time, as scheduled. With that focus, it is still imperative that we are prepared to manage the wide array of contingencies, which may present themselves. We are methodically reviewing literature, information about best practices from referent authorities, and working among the leadership team to formulate a comprehensive readiness plan. From an operational perspective, the focus is on hygiene, screening procedures, and distancing norms. Like a good lesson plan in the classroom, the effectiveness of these things is directly related to the fidelity with which it is delivered and implemented. For example, hand washing itself is a significant variable. A study published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine (Ryan, 2001) looked at the variable of handwashing in a large group setting and found that a regimen of washing one's hands five times each day correlated with a 45% reduction in the incidence of respiratory illness. Our focus is to have specific procedures and practices in place, which will be taught and reinforced, just like we teach and reinforce other classroom procedures every year. Through this teaching process, these norms will be solidified in our daily routine, and their value and effectiveness will be maximized. Some of the practices which will be in place include handwashing norms, enhanced daily cleaning procedures, norms to maintain distance, and practices to screen and identify folks who may have symptoms of respiratory illness. Fidelity and common purpose will be keys to our success. For example, we will all have to share in the duty to monitor ourselves and our families for symptoms, and to act accordingly, to keep sick students and staff out of classrooms. It will take a true team effort, but teamwork is a core element of our culture, and we will get it done.

We will be ready for a continuum of contingencies, including those which would be more challenging, disruptive, and, frankly, we hope that we don't have to implement. These include readiness for full school closure, rolling closure in the event of isolated case(s) in a particular school, adjustments to lunch schedules, or even operating on a hybrid structure, where only a fraction of a classroom's students physically attend school for a given period each week. I just want to stress that we are preparing for the entire spectrum of possibilities and we will be ready to teach the children, meet their individualized needs, adapt to whatever emerges, and overcome the

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challenges that may present themselves. We will continue to share specific action steps as they become clarified in the coming weeks.

The summer will be a time of transition, a time where we are planning to implement and pilot practices, and slowly and methodically re-open our facilities, and in-person services. Our dedicated facility services team will further enhance maintenance, grounds keeping, and custodial cleaning and sanitation work, to further support cleanliness, facility operations, and readiness of our physical plants. We anticipate opening our offices, in a calculated and incremental process, on June 1, 2020. Through June 30, our offices will move to more access, although with more limited hours, procedures, and abbreviated in-person staffing than past summers. The goal is to expand to a more normalized structure in July, as the new school year approaches.

I wanted to share some additional updates from this week.

- Here is an exciting update about the accomplishments of our graduating Class of 2020. Our seniors from WGHS and SHS have earned \$10,500,000 in scholarships for college, university, and other postsecondary education. This is a record! And, it is further testimony to the achievement, resiliency, and character of this group of young men and women.
- Speaking of our seniors, I'd like to thank Ms. Dru Sanchez, publisher of the Sahuarita Sun / Green Valley News, for creating an online memory yearbook for our seniors. This provides our seniors with a chance to connect, and communicate memories and wishes in regards to their high school years, as they prepare to graduate. Given the abrupt shutdown of the schools this spring, this thoughtful initiative certainly adds a special value and meaning to our students.

Sahuarita High School Student Submission Form:

<https://wickcommunications.knack.com/green-valley-and-sahuarita-high-school-graduations#add-student-sahuarita/>

Walden Grove High School Student Submission Form:

<https://wickcommunications.knack.com/green-valley-and-sahuarita-high-school-graduations#add-walden-grove-high-school-student/>

- We have now registered 144 students for our high school summer school program. Once again, this year it will be a fully online learning platform.
- On May 13, 2020, at its regularly scheduled Meeting, the SUSD Governing Board approved the three-tier school start schedule, effective with the 2020-21 School Year. Basic information about the new times for all schools can be found on the [website](#).
- I'm pleased to share that the Sahuarita Unified School District, in cooperation with Southwest Foodservice Excellence (SFE), will be continuing the current breakfast and lunch meals program, through June 30, 2020. It will operate in the same manner as right now, with Monday – Friday, “Grab and Go” service, at Wrightson Ridge K-8 School and Soporì

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Elementary School. This includes mobile service through Meals on the Move to our outlying areas. Furthermore, the program will include a Weekend Meals component where children will receive a weekend meal pack each Friday. This effort required significant resourcefulness, intentional effort to bring this summer program to our area, and flexibility to operate it in this manner. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the program will continue past June 30, 2020, but we will keep everyone updated as those [program details](#) become more clear.

- In the midst of this situation, there are such examples of goodwill and caring, which lift my spirits, and affirm that everything is going to be alright. At Copper View Elementary School, the last few years, they have built a thematic learning approach focused around the idea of gardening. The students and staff grow a variety of plants and vegetables, and integrate it to the learning, across a variety of disciplines. A highlight is the planting and growing of about 1,000 Texas sweet onions, which they eventually harvest and sell at a big community event in the spring. Obviously, things were different this year. Last week, Ms. Strayer and the Copper View team donated 585 pounds of Texas sweet onions to the Sahuarita Food Bank. Perhaps, this was the most valuable lesson of all.

As we continue along this journey, which I call the road back, I think it is normal to look in the rearview mirror and yearn for the days before the world changed for all of us. We all miss the things that we took so much for granted, like big family gatherings, concerts, going to the movies, attending church in person, and watching sports! However, by adapting to our new reality, finding common ground, developing solutions to the challenges we face, and supporting each other, the road will bring us back to a new beginning, and a future that propels us forward to even greater things. In the words of the British writer C. S. Lewis, “There are far better things ahead than what we leave behind.” Be well.

Sincerely,

Manuel O. Valenzuela, Ed.D.
Superintendent

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