



## SAHUARITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

May 2, 2020

Dear Sahuarita Family:

One of my favorite activities on Saturday nights in the Fall is attending University of Arizona football games and cheering on the Wildcats. I take my binoculars so that I can watch the game up close. And, each play, I turn the little disk wheel at the center so that I can get a clear picture as the plays move up and down the field. This is analogous to the constant movement and changing dynamic of the current days. We are moving the disk wheel each day to keep a clear focus and help make the best decisions possible as things continue to change. Once again, I'd like to provide a little more clarity about a few items, as we shift to the last few weeks of the 2019-2020 school year and prepare for the start of school in the Fall.

First, we are creating procedures and routines for the last three weeks of school to support the pickup and return of student and school materials. Specifically, I am referring to things like student projects, work items, personal property, school resources like sports uniforms and computers, caps and gowns, and yearbooks. The District is providing guidance to schools regarding basic parameters, like operating within allowable norms by our government and public health authorities. For example, some schools may operate using a drive-thru format, much like the meal service program that is providing about 2,000 meals per day to children. Other schools may need and choose to have students come on to campus, for example, to remove things from physical education lockers. However, all operations will be done with distancing standards and limitations on the number of people present. More details will be coming from our respective school principals about particular dates, times, and specific procedures at our different schools. One exciting note of progress is that we are launching and expanding an online fee payment option through the PowerSchool portal. This will not only provide an easy, secure, and quick way to pay those outstanding fees, but it also supports the social distancing norms of today. Our online payment systems can be accessed at <https://susd30.us/families/online-payments/>.

Second, I'd like to share some basic, tentative determinations regarding graduation related events. Both of our high schools are deploying creative and innovative ideas to make sure that we celebrate the Class of 2020 like never before, in unique, personalized, and special ways. Once again, the high schools will be providing more details and information. A drive-thru process will take place within the next week or so, allowing graduating seniors to pick up their caps, gowns, and graduation announcements. Second, both Walden Grove HS and Sahuarita HS are planning a

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drive-thru diploma pick up procedure during that traditional last week of school. Of course, it will comply with all public health standards and there will be no congregation of people. Furthermore, we are solidifying plans for the Graduation Celebration. As mentioned previously, this is a dynamic process and final confirmation will be made by July 1, 2020. However, currently, we are planning to stage our Graduation Celebrations at the Tucson Convention Center Arena on Saturday, August 1, 2020. The tentative plan is that one school will hold its celebration in the morning, and the other one will be that same afternoon. This will provide a reasonable, appropriate, and special venue for the Celebration Ceremony. Given the Arena's capacity, it will hopefully provide maximum space, even in consideration of possible social distancing contingencies. This plan also helps to control for two variables that we will likely have to manage in early August, intense heat, and the possibility of a torrential monsoon storm. Of course, we will continue to monitor and adjust to this situation, but want all of our families to have the latest information as best we have it. Thanks for your patience and flexibility with this event. We will do everything that we can to make it extra special and uniquely school centered, even if in a different venue.

I want to share some of the topics we are discussing and evaluating as part of our relentless commitment to supporting a safe and healthy return to school in the Fall. Some of these include enhanced cleaning standards, including regular sanitizing of high touch surfaces like desks, and increased frequency of sanitizing playground equipment, school buses, and cafeterias. Furthermore, we are looking at increasing access to hand sanitizer by significantly adding dispensers around campus. We are also evaluating and adjusting pandemic planning, including academic preparation for a future closure if that happens. These are just examples of the discussion and planning process, thus far. Simply, we are striving to be prepared for any contingency, and advancing our mission of service to students and families. Again, the final determinations will be based upon the best guidance from public health experts and the changing picture of this situation. My message is that we will do whatever it takes to create the safest, healthiest, and best environment possible for the learning of our students.

As usual, I end my letter with some positive examples of how Sahuarita Shines even in these days of school closure. And, as usual, I don't have to look too hard to find amazing examples of success. Daniela Rivera (WGHS '16) recently graduated as the Distinguished Senior in the College of Arts and Letters at Northern Arizona University. Daniela was a member of the WGHS Orchestra and Color Guard during her days as a Red Wolf. She earned a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in International Affairs and Spanish. Congratulations also to WGHS faculty member, Amy Kueck. Ms. Kueck was recently named Air Force Association Chapter 105 Teacher of the Year. Ms. Kueck

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helped start the computer science program. In their first year of competition, she led the team to a State level qualification in cybersecurity.

For those of us with a strong affinity to the University of Arizona, we know the story of John “Button” Salmon, a student body leader, athlete, and scholar at UA in the 1920s. After a tragic automobile accident that ultimately cost Salmon his life, while in the hospital, the coach, J. F. “Pop” McKale asked if “Button” had a message for the team. Salmon replied, “Tell them....tell the team to Bear Down!” Let us Bear Down as a team and, together, we will get to the end zone. Be well.

Sincerely,

Manuel O. Valenzuela, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

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