



## SAHUARITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

July 30, 2020

Dear Sahuarita Family:

As I write this letter, my Arizona Diamondbacks just defeated the Texas Rangers in a Major League Baseball game. There is no doubt that this new season is both the same and also very different. The game, strategy, gifted athletes, and action are the same as always. Yet, the 48,000 seat stadium is basically empty, unless you count the sprinkling of cardboard cutouts behind home plate. Similarly, we are preparing to start the new school year. The mission of teaching, learning, and student success remains the same. However, the environment is quite different.

For the first time in history, we begin the new school year on **August 10, 2020**, with all students fully online. The majority of our students are enrolled at our traditional schools, but starting the year via Distance Learning. The Distance Learning framework has been significantly refined and further developed since we first jumped into it when schools closed last March. It will provide a quality educational structure for teaching and learning when traditional classroom learning is not possible. Meanwhile, about 1,500 students have chosen the new, fully online Sahuarita Digital Pathways Academy (SDPA) for this year. Regardless of the educational platform at a given time, the objective is the same: quality, individualized instruction that is focused upon student success. The Distance Learning Plan, like the traditional in-person model, is in alignment with State law, specifically, ARS 15-802, which meets school instruction standards in all basic academic content areas. Our State approved Distance Learning Plan incorporates approximately 25-45 daily minutes per day for each class in grades 6-12, and 15-25 minutes per day for each subject in grades K-5.

The PowerSchool Parent/Student Portal will open at noon on Friday, July 31, 2020. Parents/students will be able to access class schedules for the 2020-2021 school year by using the PowerSchool Parent/Student portal. Furthermore, each of our schools will be distributing educational materials to support distance learning for all SUSD students during the week of August 3, 2020. Specific school schedules can be found on the District website under [The Road Back: School Opening 2020-2021](#). I want to thank all of you for your trust in us, to continue delivering quality education and outstanding service to you, even in these unpredictable days. We are ready to begin the year and totally committed to serving you with excellence.

Last week, Governor Doug Ducey issued his latest Executive Orders, including EO 2020-51. There are a few basic impacts for us. First, a concrete date to return to traditional school in the buildings was not given. Instead, the Order states that local education agencies, like SUSD#30, must consider yet to be released benchmarks and indicators from the State Health Department, and, in consultation with the County Health Department, make determinations. The Order conveys that this guidance shall be published by the State no later than August 7, 2020.

### Office of the Superintendent

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 [www.susd30.us](http://www.susd30.us)

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*Working as a team to help every student succeed.*



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This week, the Pima County Administrator, Mr. Chuck Huckelberry, wrote a letter to Pima County's School Superintendents, in which he summarized the current assessment of COVID 19 in Pima County. Furthermore, Mr. Huckelberry conveyed the professional opinion of Pima County's chief medical team members that the earliest foreseeable day for starting in-person learning is after Labor Day, which falls on September 7, 2020.

Our next step, as directed in the Governor's Executive Order, is to review the pending State public health benchmarks, anticipated next week. We will review these latest considerations from the State and County, and then communicate next action steps to all of our families and staff. We expect to provide an update shortly after receiving the State benchmarks next week.

In order to expand options, and increase the likelihood of getting our students back to the schoolhouse as soon as safely possible, I've asked my senior staff to begin revisiting the hybrid program concept. Again, this concept model allows closer alignment with CDC guidance by reducing the number of students physically in the school building on a given day. This might allow for a more timely return, based upon the foreseeable expectation that smaller groups of students will further minimize the risk of virus spread. This hybrid option would likely require significant instructional planning adjustments, and we are working to address them. Again, the goal is to be as prepared as possible and to have as many instructional tools and models at our disposal to safely advance our mission.

On the operational front, action steps continue in regards to procedural norms, enhanced cleaning, sanitation, PPE ordering, physical school modifications, planning, and training. When the time comes, we will be ready to welcome our students back.

In summary, please know that we are ready to serve and very much looking forward to getting this new year off the ground. Although it starts in a cloud of uncertainty, there is clear readiness to serve our students with excellence and to adapt to the changing landscape. Our short term goal is to receive the public health benchmarks, review and evaluate the data, and use the information to guide the determination of a physical return date, complete with associated program structure, and plan details. In support of good communication, I hope to provide parents and staff with as much notice as possible before making any programmatic shift, including setting a physical return to school date. Meanwhile, let us get ready to start the new season. Even if it is not the ideal situation, it is time for school to start, and that is a great thing!

Be well,

Manuel O. Valenzuela, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

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