



SAHUARITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

August 8, 2020

Dear Sahuarita Family:

Thank you so much for your patience, trust, and cooperation as we continue to move through this trying chapter of our lives. All of us are ready for school to start. All of us are ready for things to return to normal. The challenge is that there are multiple considerations to address in getting to that outcome. However, we will address them successfully by addressing them together, methodically, and with patience. There are definite reasons to get kids back to school as fast as possible. There are definite risks associated with coming back too quickly.

The fact is that infection rates, although improving, are still beyond the norm of reasonable standards to fully return to school. This has been validated by the professional opinions of the [Pima County Health Department](#), the [AZ Dept of Health Services](#), and the [AZ Department of Education](#). The prevalence of the [COVID 19 virus in Pima County](#) is still rather widespread. Furthermore, the knowledge and professional opinions about this disease are diverse and changing every day. All of this just suggests that much is still to be learned.

When it comes to making decisions among multiple important objectives, the health and well-being of people is always going to come first. This is especially true when we have the option of delivering our mission, to a significant degree, in an alternative and phased way. In the big picture, this helps to mitigate the spread of the disease, and then allows us to move intentionally and more expediently to a more traditional place. It is a process of moving cautiously and where “slow and steady wins the race.” It is a marathon more than a sprint, where we need to move slow to move fast, in the long run.

Our approach to managing all of that, and in consideration of the recent [public health benchmarks](#) and feedback, is to move in a methodical and phased process.

We will remain in Distance Learning mode through the Labor Day holiday. The first day of school is August 10. For our students on the Sahuarita Digital Pathways Academy (SDPA), they will start on August 10th and foreseeably remain in the program for the course of the year, just as planned. For students in our traditional programs, that means they will be operating in Remote Learning mode through Labor Day, September 7, 2020. The Governor’s recent Executive Orders, specifically EO 2020-41 and EO 2020-51, do require that the school offer “onsite learning opportunities,” specifically for students that need a place to go. This is not regular school. During online phases of programming, the ideal place for kids to be is learning at home. However, we will provide a place for students who absolutely need it. This onsite opportunity will provide a space, staff supervision, access to some school resources, and meals. We must still operate within the domain of Public Health norms. Please help us to serve these students in the best and safest way possible by accessing this program only if a critical need exists for the service.

Office of the Superintendent

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 www.susd30.us

Working as a team to help every student succeed.



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After the Labor Day holiday, we will plan to transition to a form of in-person learning. This assumes continued favorable movement among the health dashboard indicators. Depending on the emerging numerical indicators, this could be a move to a hybrid plan, or we may be ready for a full return.

If the hybrid plan is used, it will be as a phased transition to full in-person learning, and only for a period of time. For its challenges, the hybrid model has a few advantages. First, it allows all students in our traditional schools to return to a level of in-person instruction with their teachers and real interaction with their classmates. Furthermore, it provides a manageable number of students in the class, which supports distancing objectives that are cited as important for student and staff safety. It helps work out the details of classroom and school operations in a smaller setting. Once again, if this model is used, we will still provide a safe, onsite place during the non-contact days for students who absolutely need it. The hybrid model does provide benefits in managing potential infections. For example, if a person does become ill, it isolates the situation among a smaller group, which helps to manage the incident and likelihood of spread and also minimizes the potential need of larger group quarantine. Again, in this scenario, students participate in classroom learning from home, while tuning in to synchronous and independent learning, when they are not in a physical class. This supports student engagement with ongoing learning and also helps maintain learning objectives and instructional calendars, to the greatest extent possible.

Finally, we will strive to provide at least a two (2) week notice regarding any concrete determinations of this phased return to school. We will all need to continue being flexible and adaptable to change. Furthermore, we will continue to monitor the data and consult with public health experts in the ongoing evaluation of the information and determination of when it is safe to move on to the more traditional school norms with all students attending.

Flexibility will continue to be a key norm of operation, and the ability to collectively adapt to the dynamic nature of this situation will be a key to our success. We are prepared to move from different operating platforms, in order to keep delivering our educational services.

One thing that is not changing is our organizational commitment to serving our families with excellence. Again, thank you for your patience, trust, and support.

Sincerely,

Manuel O. Valenzuela, Ed.D.
Superintendent

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