



SAHUARITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

October 16, 2020

Dear Sahuarita Community:

One of the many challenges of navigating a pandemic is accurately managing information in a rapidly changing and sometimes unpredictable environment. In the interest of creating factual clarity, I wanted to address some emerging perceptions and issues surrounding the high school football season.

I am proud of our high school leadership and coaching staff in all sports for their professionalism, dedication, and extra attention to operating sports programs with enhanced safety protocols. Their efforts are facilitating the opportunity for our young people to have these integral educational experiences to the greatest extent possible, and in the safest environment possible.

First, the Sahuarita School District has not canceled the football season, nor have all of the Pima County school system leaders agreed to do so.

Second, you may have read the letter from Pima County, which recommends refraining from full contact sports until minimum spread is achieved. I understand and respect the professional training and opinions of our public health experts, and evaluate their recommendations with thoughtfulness. However, these decisions are complex and involve multiple considerations. In speaking with senior staff at the County Health Department about this latest letter, I believe that there is a shared level of mutual trust and respect, and an understanding that these decisions often involve many variables. We are evaluating the Health Department information and other factors, including the recommendations of the Arizona Interscholastic Association (AIA), local infection rates, our specific football context, school district protocol, and our individualized plan and practices.

Third, I understand the need to make decisions and communicate with corresponding stakeholders, as soon as all the relevant information can be evaluated. The challenge is that the context of these unprecedented scenarios is evolving over time, and clarity can be elusive. We also want to make sure that communicated decisions are balanced, accurate, thoughtful, and sound. We anticipate making these specific determinations in the next few days.

Finally, I have been briefed about recent communication circulating in the community suggesting that there is a Public Meeting of the Governing Board today. In the interest of communicating clarity, that is not correct. Those meetings are always appropriately communicated to the public, as required by law. The last Board Meeting was on October 14, 2020, and the next meeting is on October 28, 2020. I am regularly meeting with appropriate staff about different decisions and determinations. For example, since the pandemic began, I have been meeting with athletic directors and principal leadership team members about this changing landscape of high school

Office of the Superintendent

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athletics, and continue to do so. As always, any determinations about our athletics programs will be appropriately communicated through the corresponding channels, generally by the respective high school athletic departments and coaches.

I hope that this information is helpful. In summary, I share the desire to continue moving steadily toward the normal operation of our wonderful educational programs, including athletics. We will continue working every day to adapt and find solutions to the challenges we face and provide students with the absolute best educational experiences possible, even in these less than ideal times. Our shared commitment to safety practices, communication, and mutual support will help advance our common goals. Thank you for your ongoing patience and trust, as we continue working together, always focused on the success and well being of our students.

Sincerely,

Manuel O. Valenzuela, Ed.D.
Superintendent

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