



## SAHUARITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

November 6, 2020

Dear Sahuarita Family:

Although it may not feel like it, the Fall season is here. Halloween has passed, and Thanksgiving is just over two weeks away. Indeed, the temperatures today are still reaching 90+ degrees, the uncertainty of the pandemic is ongoing, and this continues to be a year unlike any in our memories.

Yet, despite everything that is different and challenging these days, there are still many successes to celebrate, and many things to be thankful for. Last week, Sara Mora was officially honored as one of Arizona's Top 5 Finalists for AZ Teacher of the Year, Ambassador for Excellence. This fall, Copper View and Anza Trail Schools were named Arizona A+ Schools of Excellence by the Arizona Educational Foundation. This week, Jessica England, SMS music educator, will be honored with the prestigious Raytheon Leader in Education Award. And, two of our students, Eva Scholtes and Karla Lopez, recently won National recognition in Vistaprint's "Masks By Me" design contest.

Thus far, our approach of slow, methodical, and steady actions has helped generate numerous signs of progress. First, we were the first public school district in Pima County to open for in-person hybrid learning, for grades K-5, on September 17, 2020, followed by opening for grades 6-12 on October 15, 2020. Through a total team effort, and tireless hard work, instructional effectiveness is in place. That does not mean that it is easy or perfect. However, our faculty and staff have worked tirelessly, adapted, and overcome the challenges before us. They have built hybrid practices that support appropriate in-person learning during a moderate spread phase, and guided instruction which allows academic progress and pacing with learning goals and objectives while managing a blended and sometimes flipped learning model. Second, as I walk the school hallways, classrooms, and offices, I see evidence of effective fidelity to the mitigation plan. Some examples include spacing norms, classroom adaptations, use of face coverings, movement procedures, presence of PPE, and high-frequency cleaning norms. Again, our team members, students, families, and staff have risen above the norm to new heights of excellence. For example, members of our facilities and custodial services team have adapted their schedules to work an overnight shift to execute the daily cleaning routines more effectively. Our wonderful food services partners at SFE have adapted meals to provide nutritious and free meals to all students, and in a safe manner that includes enhanced spacing and sanitation, and self-contained packaging of the meals. Likewise, transportation services have adjusted their service model, procedures, and schedule to support appropriate load sizes, to the extent possible, and the delivery of high quality and safe service every day. These are people who have always been doing great things. However, the demands of the current situation are showing us all what is truly inside of us, exposing who we are, and what we are capable of doing. I have such admiration and

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



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respect for our community and how we are striving to work together in these tough days.

As you may have been following in the media, the number of COVID19 cases has been rising in Arizona, and many parts of the USA and world. We will continue to follow the metrics, in addition to our local numbers, mitigation plan, and instructional status. We will make calculated and thoughtful determinations over time. Clearly, the goal is to keep making forward motion, keep our schools and programs open, and continue moving through the process, striving to get back to full in-person instruction as soon as practicable. However, we understand that path, like much of this entire situation, will continue to evolve over time. Nonetheless, we will be ready to adapt to the situational variables and continue delivering quality education services to our students. Additionally, we will strive to avoid abrupt decisions, and we'll provide timely communication to all of our families as possible.

In closing, I do believe that, for whatever the future may bring, we will continue to be better by working together to personally follow the basic procedures and routines. Our individual sacrifices, and common purposes, will help us be safe, keep schools open, support our economy, and help one another as a community. I ask all of us to please be mindful of basic norms, as provided by local, State, and Federal authorities: wear masks, wash hands often, avoid touching the face, be aware of keeping a 6' distance as much as possible, and avoid large congregations, to the extent possible. Together, our efforts will support our common goals of safety, student success, and keeping schools open and programs operating.

Be well,

Manuel O. Valenzuela, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

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