



SAHUARITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

March 26, 2021

Dear Sahuarita Family:

This week, we welcomed back all of our K-5 students for full time, five day, in-person learning. After the last twelve months, this is a monumental milestone, and one that we hope will set the stage for the long-term return to traditional operations and service models. Our compass for making decisions continues to be multifaceted: evaluation of dynamic disease-related data, consultation with medical and public health experts, and our own local community and organizational evaluation.

The indication of current trends is that the level of spread is moving favorably. For example, the number of cases per 100,000 in Pima County has shifted from a peak of over 800 cases in January 2021, to about 55 at the current time. The Pima County Health Department (PCHD) remains supportive of our phased return to full time learning, beginning with the identified elementary student populations, and moving methodically to the secondary levels. I spoke to Dr. Francisco Garcia this week, and he was most affirming of our efforts, but also stressed the importance of a continued strong mitigation protocol.

As you may have heard, the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recently communicated amended guidance in regards to distancing norms. The Agency shared research findings suggesting that a 3' distancing standard did not yield statistically significant differences in disease numbers among students in a classroom setting, compared with the traditional 6' standard. Furthermore, a key element of the findings was the importance of managing community spread through continued strong fidelity to mask use, implementation of detailed cleaning and sanitation, tracking and tracing protocol, and strict mitigation action steps. We will continue to stress physical distancing and all mitigation plan components, to the greatest extent possible. Additionally, this week, Governor Doug Ducey issued Executive Order 2021-06, which lifted some prior COVID related restrictions. In support of communicating clarity, I wanted to convey that AZDHS Emergency Measure 2020-04 is still in effect. This measure mandates that masks are worn on school campus, on school buses, and during school associated activities, by all students, staff and visitors. Mask wearing will continue to be a standard expectation at all SUSD schools, facilities, and events.

Based upon the evaluation of all of these considerations, including data trends, emerging research, public health counsel, and our local conditions and management, we are initiating the next phase of the Road Back Plan. **Specifically, we will bring back our middle and high school students for full, five (5) day in-person learning on April 5, 2021.** Our strong mitigation practices will continue with focus, resolve, and fidelity. This includes mask-wearing, classroom and campus distancing to the extent possible, managing group gatherings, cleaning and sanitation practices, tracking and tracing, and corresponding procedures and routines at playgrounds, lunch, and buses.

This has been a tremendously challenging year, and we have endured it through significant patience, creative problem solving, and teamwork. We must remain in a mutual commitment to doing our respective parts as educators, parents, students and community members, to continue the forward momentum on a path of long-term sustainability and return to normal school and life. Together, we can continue to make a difference! I look forward to seeing you around campus.

Sincerely,

Manuel O. Valenzuela, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Office of the Superintendent

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Working as a team to help every student succeed.