



SAHUARITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

August 15, 2024

Dear Sahuarita Families:

During the short weeks of summer, I like to take a little time to reflect upon the successes of the past year and look forward to the goals of the upcoming year.

By many accounts, the recently completed 2023-24 school year was marked by many successes. Our approximately 460 high school graduates in the Class of '24 earned over \$16,000,000 in postsecondary education scholarships, which was an all-time high! Over 20 students received the new Pima First - Sahuarita WINS! Scholarship, covering two (2) years of full tuition at Pima Community College. The cumulative savings of dual enrollment college credits earned by our students in the last four years is approximately \$2,000,000, in corresponding tuition costs at the State universities. We had two of our amazing faculty members, Rebecca Oravec (Wrightson Ridge K-8 School) and Clare Contreras (Sahuarita Primary School), named Top 5 and Top 10 Finalists, respectively, in the prestigious Arizona Teacher of the Year program. The Sahuarita NJROTC program was named Unit of the Year among Area 20, which covers five States in the western USA. The Walden Grove HS Girls Soccer team earned an Arizona State Championship. Also in the athletics arena, the Sahuarita HS wrestling team achieved its third consecutive Arizona State Championship. The Walden Grove HS Team earned second place in the US Academic Decathlon Championships in Pittsburgh last April. All Sahuarita USD schools received excellent or good marks on the State Academic Accountability Report Card. Indeed, we have much to celebrate and be proud of as a community.

The forthcoming year brings much reason for hope, optimism and excitement. Last fall, our generous community overwhelmingly passed a \$50,000,000 bond program to invest in all of our school facilities. Additionally, we have pursued and successfully received \$11,000,000 in School Facilities Oversight Board (SFOB) funding, specifically to meet capacity needs at Walden Grove High School. Already, meaningful outcomes have been achieved. For example, we have installed 411 new, state of the art digital security cameras, on all school and District properties, in support of our safety directions and objectives. Also in the area of safety, we have completed the strategic installation of ballistic and riot resistant glass products. Furthermore, this summer, our construction and architect partners are hard at work completing a complete renovation of the field and track at Sahuarita HS and Walden Grove HS. This includes a new 3D Astro Turf synthetic field and modern track and field surfaces. This project is anticipated to be completed in time for the upcoming football and marching band seasons. This upcoming year, we will commence tackling the next projects, including the Walden Grove building additions, field lighting improvements, painting and flooring objectives, and playground improvements at multiple school sites, followed by the construction of new classroom space at the Early Childhood Center, Wrightson Ridge K-8 School, and the new Performing Arts Center!

Office of the Superintendent

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Working as a team to help every student succeed.



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Finally, I must mention that, as pledged, these projects are being delivered to the community while maintaining the school-specific tax rate at the previous level, or below.

In partnership with the Town of Sahuarita, we will be bringing our fourth School Resource Officer (SRO) to support our safety and student support goals. Welcome, Ofc. Gwaltney! In our District Office, Mrs. Darlene Robinson will be assuming the position of Assistant Superintendent for Education Services. I'm also pleased to share that our dedicated Information Technology Services team has deployed over 5,500 new Chromebooks and corresponding charging stations, achieving a goal of having each classroom reach a 1:1 device to student ratio. This was only possible through a combination of the resourceful efforts of our dedicated professionals who sought out Federal eRate funding, combined with the generosity of our local community, through the bond program. These devices are an integral part of delivering an excellent education for the world of today and tomorrow. We will continue our strong commitment to professional development, including comprehensive training on effective behavioral assessments and support to students, and the effective integration of new technology, including Artificial Intelligence (AI).

I look forward to seeing you around campus real soon!

Sincerely,

Manuel O. Valenzuela, Ed.D.
Superintendent

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