

Just a reminder you're receiving this email because you have a student enrolled at one or more of our Desert Heights Charter Schools campuses. Don't forget to add [noreply@desertheightsschools.org](mailto:noreply@desertheightsschools.org) to your address book so we'll be sure to land in your inbox!

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# DESERT HEIGHTS CHARTER SCHOOLS

## From the Desk of Mr. Jiles

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Dear Desert Heights Family,

I rarely struggle with words when speaking to our Desert Heights Family. Perhaps it is because so many of you have verbalized your support for the community that we are. Perhaps it is because so many of you have thanked us for our commitment to transparency and for taking measures to keep your child(ren) safe during a pandemic, something none of us have ever experienced prior to the onset of the Corona Virus. Or maybe it is the strong connection that I believe we have with you, our families.

Admittedly, I have struggled mightily with how to write to you today because what I am compelled to address feels so absolutely foreign to our family, our community. I am hearing of threats if we do not return to in-person instruction on February 16<sup>th</sup>. I am hearing of plans of a mass exodus of students if we continue to abide by the mask mandate. I am hearing of parents galvanizing other like-minded parents to storm the doors at our next board meeting. I am hearing of accusations that our leadership team at Desert Heights has fallen victim to agenda pushing, that we are collectively governed by some motive other than keeping our kids, staff, and larger community safe. All because we simply want to be as safe as possible? When we survey our parents to gather their comforts, to evaluate and meet their needs, there is no agenda. When we listen to our teachers to gauge their receptivity to returning to teach your child, there is no agenda. When we subject our own children to the social, emotional, and developmental hardships that all students are feeling every single day, there is no agenda. Our greatest offer to one another right now should be patience, support, compassion and understanding, as we do our absolute best to navigate this miserable, emotionally taxing situation. Rest assured that our goal is to offer a return to Phase 3 (in-person and virtual) on February 16<sup>th</sup>, but we will not be bullied into doing so. We will continue to make the most educated decisions based on metrics, state and federal guidance, and the pulse of our collective community. It is imperative that we stick together despite our philosophical differences and beliefs. That is what a

strong family does when confronted with adversity. This IS NOT a political issue for us, nor is it unique to Desert Heights Charter Schools. ALL schools are struggling in their own unique way. It has always been, and continues to be, a safety issue. To suggest otherwise is simply offensive given the time, effort, and dedication our team has invested in trying to teach under such constraining and undesirable conditions.

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## Resources and Support

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the toll and anguish this pandemic has caused you and your family; the prolonged disruption to your work life, the unconventional nature of your child(ren)'s education, the unprecedented stress and internalization you have observed in your children, your spouse or significant other. Just today, Dr. Patrice Harris, former President of the American Medical Association, stated that COVID-19 has had a disproportionately negative impact on women and mothers. We DO understand your frustration. We DO share in your desire for normalcy and traditional education. And we WILL get there soon...together. Please consider accessing mental health support, resources, and advice from the following:

- The American Psychiatric Association
  - The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at [www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)
  - Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19 at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
  - [Everydayhealth.com](http://Everydayhealth.com)
  - [Childmind.com](http://Childmind.com)
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## Our Seniors continue to Amaze!

Take a moment to consider the emotional and intellectual fortitude it must take to stay focused on your future under present conditions. There is a remarkable lesson for all of us to embrace when it comes to the accomplishments of our Seniors and their unwavering commitment to our Three Pillars: Academic Excellence, Integrity of Character and Social Awareness. Congratulations to the following Seniors!

- Griffin Horton accepted into Northern Arizona University
- Kooper Lind accepted into Northern Arizona University and Arizona State University
- Kate MacTough accepted into Grand Canyon University and Northern Arizona University
- Joshua Garcia attending Glendale Community College
- Jonathan Gephart accepted into Grand Canyon University
- Ruben Ioachimciuc attending Glendale Community College
- Mehakpreet Kaur attending Paradise Valley Community College
- Ryan Jenkins accepted into Ken University
- Naviee McGonigle-Moreno attending Glendale Community College

"It is not as important where you go, as it is that you go" ~Unknown.

Excellent job Seniors! Stay focused and keep setting the bar high for future Coyotes!

Best Regards,

**Mr. Jiles**, President of Desert Heights Charter Schools

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