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DESERT HEIGHTS CHARTER SCHOOLS

From the Desk of Mr. Jiles



Dear Desert Heights Family,

On Tuesday, Superintendent of Public Instruction Kathy Hoffman shared that it is very unlikely that any school would be prepared to offer a safe, in-person educational experience for their students. Yesterday, the Arizona Department of Education reiterated this sentiment, stating that few-if any-school communities will meet the benchmarks for in-person or hybrid instruction. Consequently, it is safe to assume that all of you are contemplating what this means for the start of the school year at Desert Heights Charter Schools.

Our administrative team, with the consult of our Governing Board, has concluded that it is in the best interest of our entire community to start the school year **ONLINE ONLY starting August 17th, 2020**. We have delayed making a decision regarding any changes to our previously communicated start (in-person instruction and online) because we wanted to gather as much information as possible to make the best decision for our community and all stakeholders. In light of what is transpiring in schools presently offering in-person instruction around the country, coupled with Arizona not meeting established benchmarks for safely returning students to campus, it has become very difficult to justify asking any member of our community to return to campus for in-person instruction.

As stated by Governor Ducey, schools must provide in-person instruction for vulnerable populations, essential workers and safe havens for students who have no other options. We will be reaching out to our families to determine who falls into these categories and parents can expect additional information from **Mrs. Miller, Mrs. Davis** and **Ms. Martin** regarding the criteria that constitutes eligibility for these respective categories, along with other pertinent information regarding our plan for our August 17th start. To date, our intent is to offer online instruction until the state benchmarks and metrics meet the criteria for us to safely return in person.

We do understand that this decision, and the timing of communicating this decision, may cause you undue stress and inconvenience. Please know that this has never been our intent. Honesty and transparency has always been our approach, and in this case, we have struggled mightily as a Team to establish a definitive position that we collectively embrace. Simply put, the danger is too great, and our students, teachers and staff mean too much to us to expose them beyond what is presently required. We will continue to evaluate the benchmarks as communicated by state leadership and the Arizona Health Services Department every two weeks, in hopes of being able to return our students to campus safely prior to the end of the first quarter.

Thank you in advance for your patience, support and cooperation during this very difficult and uncertain time. We will do our absolute best to support you during this unprecedented time. As a family, we will get through this together.

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