

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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SUPERINTENDENT

Todd A. Jaeger, J.D.

March 13, 2020

Dear Amphitheater District Parents and Community:

As we head into Spring Break next week, I wanted to update you with the latest information, resources, and status related to COVID-19 (coronavirus) and the Amphitheater School District. This situation continues to be very fluid and I promise that we will continue to provide you with updates.

The very first thing that I want to address is the unfortunate proliferation of rumors. I want to be extremely direct: we have no confirmed cases of COVID-19 (coronavirus) associated with our schools. We are aware of rumors involving a few of our campuses and some rumors have even made reference to individual students or staff members. These rumors are false.

One thing that has always distinguished our school District community is our collective concern for our students and staff. If we receive word of a confirmed case in our District community, we will share that information with you immediately. So please look to our District website, social media posts, and updates like this one for accurate information. And, please encourage others not to spread rumors that can harm others and our school communities.

Moving forward in this very fluid time, there is one absolute: we are absolutely committed to the health and safety of our students, employees and the wider community. We will continue to make every decision throughout this extraordinary period very carefully, and always with the guidance of our federal, state, and local public health and safety leaders, and with the wellbeing of our most fragile community members in mind.

Issues surrounding school closure

We continue to receive frequent questions about closing schools. Our state and local public health officials have been unequivocal – they are not recommending closures. Our public health officials informed us again just yesterday that they have carefully considered the pros and cons of closing schools and have determined that school closings could actually lead to a worsening of the spread of the virus, rather than a slowing of it.

Dr. Cara Christ, an epidemiologist and Director of the Arizona Department of Health Services, has advised us that school closures could potentially lead to an increase in community spread if students were to be placed in a different environment outside of their regular communities for childcare purposes. She noted that when community spread is minimal, keeping our schools open also provides children with a regular routine that helps reduce panic and fear in the midst of tense times. “Community spread” is defined by cases where someone has the virus and medical professionals can find no connection between them and a known affected area. At this point, Pima County still has only one confirmed case of the virus, and it does not appear to be a result of community spread. And, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) transmission rating for Arizona remains low.

We are also certainly cognizant of the fact that the closure of schools would present extraordinary hardships for our students and their families. If we can remain open, based on the competent medical advice of our state and local leaders, we feel an obligation to do so.

Amphitheater High School • Canyon del Oro High School • Ironwood Ridge High School
Amphitheater Middle School • Coronado K-8 School • Cross Middle School • La Cima Middle School • Wilson K-8 School
Copper Creek Elementary • Donaldson Elementary • Harelson Elementary • Holaway Elementary • Innovation Academy • Keeling Elementary
Mesa Verde Elementary • Nash Elementary • Painted Sky Elementary • Prince Elementary • Rio Vista Elementary • Walker Elementary • Rillito Center

Amphitheater Unified School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion/religious beliefs, gender, sex, age, national origin, sexual orientation, creed, citizenship status, marital status, political beliefs/affiliation, disability, home language, family, social or cultural background in its programs or activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. Inquiries regarding the District’s non-discrimination policies are handled at 701 W. Wetmore Road, Tucson, Arizona 85705 by David Rucker, Equity & Safety Compliance Officer, (520) 696-5164, drucker@amphi.com, or Kristin McGraw, Executive Director of Student Services, (520) 696-5230, kmcgraw@amphi.com.

Again, in such a fluid situation, we must all understand this guidance on school closures could change, but at this point, we are heeding the guidance of these officials and their departments. If their guidance changes, or if circumstances change, we will communicate with you immediately through our website, www.amphi.com. In such an event, we will also use various forms of messaging through our automated phone system, email system and social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).

If you make the decision to keep your students out of school when we reopen after the break, we will understand. We will work with you to provide missed work, and absences will be excused.

Issues surrounding school travel and events

Our state's public health officials have also advised us that they are not recommending cancellation of school travel or school events. The Arizona rate of transmission remains extremely low, so our school events do not pose risk to our community. With respect to travel, they have made it clear that the only travel of concern currently would be to locations where the CDC has issued travel advisories or where the individuals traveling have existing conditions such as heart disease, chronic lung disease, diabetes, and other conditions that cause suppression of immune system particularly among the older adults at high risk for infection.

Students and staff returning from travel, we have also been advised, should only be excluded from school (quarantined) where they have been to a high-risk location, have had actual exposure, or are exhibiting symptoms that may be associated with the COVID-19 virus.

We will consult with our public health officials on a case-by-case basis in such matters for the safety of our entire community.

Resources

Our website contains a list of resources, and we are updating it when new information comes to light. If you are aware of a resource that should be included, please send a link to answers@amphi.com. We will review and add items regularly.

The Pima County Health Department has set up a phone hotline to answer questions from the public and healthcare providers about testing, symptoms, and any other questions about the virus. Call (520) 626-6016 (local) or 1-844-542-8201 (state) to reach a health care professional.

The District has an email hotline that is monitored continuously. If you have questions or concerns related to our schools, please send them to answers@amphi.com. We will respond within 24 hours depending on when you send your message. We typically respond within an hour or two.

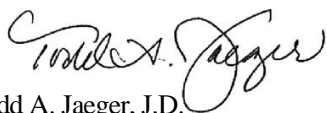
Going forward

We are in uncharted territory with this pandemic, but we do have experience handling other difficult and complicated situations. Please know that all of our teams are working together to evaluate the issues we face as caretakers of children, employees and our greater community.

We are grateful for the efforts you are making to help prevent the spread of the illnesses through the general practices we are now all aware of: handwashing, avoiding touching your faces, and staying home when sick.

Please don't hesitate to reach out through our hotline (answers@amphi.com) to share any questions or concerns you might have.

With you in this and all things for our students,



Todd A. Jaeger, J.D.
Superintendent