

August 9, 2020

Dear Parents,

There is nothing more exciting or anticipated than the first day of school. Possibility, growth, friendship, and hope are all on the horizon as the journey of a new school year begins. For all of us, that journey will start a little differently Monday via remote instruction.

If there has been one constant since schools were closed by executive order this past March it has been frequent change. The past five months have taught us that adaptation, perseverance, sacrifice, and grace are necessary pursuits to navigate the ever changing dynamics of life in a pandemic.

This past Thursday brought more change. Under the direction of an executive order by Governor Ducey, the Arizona Department of Health (ADHS) released public health benchmarks that are intended to guide the safe return to in-person instruction. ADHS has created an online dashboard explaining these benchmarks and tracking progress toward meeting them. It can be viewed [HERE](#).

The good news is that the benchmarks are trending in the right direction. The bad news is that they are currently above what will be required to open schools for in-person instruction on August 17th.

Further, Pima County issued a statement to school districts on July 28th, that included recommendations from Chief Medical Officer Dr. Francisco Garcia and Public Health Director Dr. Teresa Cullen. In short, the guidance stated that the earliest in-person instruction could safely be anticipated to resume would be after Labor Day, September 7<sup>th</sup>.

I will recommend to the Vail Governing Board that our district follow the public health data provided by ADHS and Pima County Health in determining when it is reasonably safe to resume in-person instruction.

Following these data points will likely mean that in-person instruction won't be an option through at least Labor Day.

The Vail Governing Board will be meeting on Tuesday, August 11th at 7 p.m. to review the ADHS benchmarks and the Pima County Health data. They will also review adjustments to instructional options that may need to be put in place in order to reopen schools.

We recognize that COVID-19 is creating challenges beyond just the physical safe return to school. The social, emotional, and academic well-being of our children is of utmost importance to all of us. As we plan to open schools as soon as possible, we are also dedicated to connecting with your children, welcoming them back to learning, and providing them with the best learning experience possible starting Monday, August 10th.

As we start this school year, we will likely make some mistakes along the way. Operating in a pandemic is historic and unfamiliar for all of us. When we fall, we will do so with every intent of falling forward in the pursuit of creating high quality, safe learning environments for your children. We will get up together. We will adapt. We will persevere. We will sacrifice. And, we will offer grace. Perhaps these are the most important lessons presented to all of us this year.

I wish everyone a safe and blessed school year.

John Carruth

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