

**ARIZONA**



**OPEN FOR LEARNING**

**JULY 23, 2020**

As Arizona faces COVID-19, we're committed to making sure we resume educational opportunities for Arizona students — with as much flexibility for families and school leaders as possible. We know this pandemic has upended the lives of students, parents and teachers. Arizona teachers have demonstrated dedication and creativity in remaining present in the lives of their students through distance learning. From academics to health and nutrition, to social and emotional development and child safety, schools are the backbone of our communities.

As we embark on the 2020-2021 school year, the goal is to provide students the closest thing to normality and consistency in learning as possible, while prioritizing their health and safety. This presents the greatest challenge to public education in our lifetimes, and Arizona has the opportunity to lead the nation in providing the best learning experience to kids during this crisis.





**LEARNING STARTS: ASAP**

**SETTING STUDENTS UP FOR SUCCESS**

**DATA-DRIVEN, INFORMED DECISION-MAKING**

**FACE COVERINGS**

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**TARGETING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP**

## LEARNING STARTS: ASAP

While much of the public discussion has been focused on a “date certain,” learning needs to start ASAP.

The focus should be on ensuring that Arizona students have a successful academic year — and that will, in fact, look different than ever before given the ongoing pandemic.

Regardless of when regular in-person classroom learning begins, each school district and charter school needs to begin teacher-led distance learning by the first day of their traditional instructional calendar. For some districts that date lands in July; for others it lands in August. Schools will continue to be required to provide 180 days of instruction, or equivalent instructional hours, whether a family chooses to do so in person or via distance learning.



## SETTING STUDENTS UP FOR SUCCESS

It's a priority of the state that students who need a safe learning environment have somewhere to go. This is especially important given that some parents work in critical and essential occupations and are unable to accommodate virtual teacher-led instruction in their homes. We also know that many children don't have access to technology. Given income inequality issues in our communities, we must provide on-site learning options and support services for students.

Notification shall be provided by schools to all parents. Special attention should be paid to low-income students, special education students, English language learners and those in the care of the Department of Child Safety or foster care, and schools shall make contact with the parents of these specific students.



## **DATA-DRIVEN, INFORMED DECISION-MAKING**

Governor Ducey is providing maximum flexibility to local school leaders, recognizing they need the expertise of public health professionals and data to guide their decision-making.

By August 7, the Arizona Department of Health Services will develop and release public health benchmarks for the safe return of in-person, teacher-led classroom instruction.

Local school leaders will make the determination of when to physically open for regular classes, and consider these recommendations, guidance from county health officials, community needs and available resources to determine when to open. This provides maximum flexibility to school leaders, with public health guidance.



## FACE COVERINGS

To facilitate the safe return to the classroom, all schools will develop face covering policies to protect their students and staff.

Exceptions must be made for students when they can socially distance, are outside in playground settings with distancing, breaks for students to take their masks off in a safe environment, and other exceptions outlined in CDC guidelines. Cloth face coverings should NOT be worn by children under the age of 2 or anyone who has trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

No matter what school leaders decide to do, this school year will inevitably look different than last school year.

Governor Ducey is announcing an additional one-time investment in K-12 education from federal CARES Act dollars, a total of \$370 million to provide grants to school districts and charter schools. This will ensure budget stability, even with more students participating in distance learning, and provide dollars when students are learning in the traditional classroom setting — recognizing the additional costs in-person learning will bring to districts this school year.

To qualify for these grants, schools will need to provide the on-site learning opportunities and support services, outlined above, for students who need somewhere to learn.

Schools will be eligible for one of the following options, whichever generates the higher amount on the 40th day:

**Option A:** 5% grants for all students

- i. Those students in an in-person classroom setting will be eligible for 1.0 average daily membership (ADM) that the state funding formula provides, plus the 5% grant totaling 1.05 ADM
- ii. Those students who will be learning virtually (that is, on a device with a remote teacher, or at home with packets and other distance learning materials) will be eligible for the .95 that the state formula provides plus the 5% grant, totaling 1.0 ADM

**Option B:** 98% of the prior year's weighted ADM.





## TARGETING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

According to a 2020 analysis by McKinsey & Company related to the impacts of the pandemic, learning loss will probably be greatest among low-income, Black, and Hispanic students.

“Lower-income students are less likely to have access to high-quality remote learning or to a conducive learning environment, such as a quiet space with minimal distractions, devices they do not need to share, high-speed internet, and parental academic supervision.”

Additional investments are being made to assist these students and target closing the achievement gap and bringing kids up to speed.

- **\$40 million** to expand broadband in rural communities to bridge the digital divide
- **\$20 million** to bring in extra support for high-need schools
- **\$6 million** for the Arizona Teachers Academy to assist with the teacher shortage
- **\$1 million** in microgrants to support innovative programs to continue educating Arizona students
- **\$1 million** for vehicles for the Arizona School for the Deaf and the Blind
- **\$700,000** for leadership development through Beat the Odds Leadership Academy
- **\$500,000** for tutoring from Teach for America to provide tutoring to kids most in need, in schools most impacted across the state



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