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SUPERINTENDENT  
Nora Gutierrez

December 9, 2020

Dear TUHSD Parents/Guardians,

In our effort to provide you with the latest information on our plans for the ongoing education of your high school students, we are communicating with you regarding a Governing Board decision that took place at our school board meeting on Tuesday evening. Last night, the Governing Board made the decision to continue online learning through the end of the third quarter of the second semester. Therefore when students return to classes after Winter Break, online learning will continue until Spring Break, Friday, March 12<sup>th</sup>. As a reminder, our Spring Break is the week of March 15<sup>th</sup> – March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Understand that our Governing Board and District Administration do not take these decisions lightly. However, we feel that this is the best decision for the long-term health of our students and staff members.

Sadly, during the course of the 2020-2021 school year, which began on August 4th, TUHSD has experienced COVID-19 positive cases amongst its students and staff members, even though we have not been conducting in-person learning at all this academic year. To date, we have had 96 student cases throughout the District. On the staff side, we have had 108 confirmed cases. Of the 108 cases, 27 were reported in the last seven school days. It is because of this troubling trend that the decision to extend online learning through Spring Break was made.

However, there is light at the end of the tunnel with vaccines being released soon and the thought that we could finally be returning to some semblance of normalcy before the end of the school year. That said, we have no way of knowing exactly how things will turn out for the rest of the school year. The decision to stay with online learning through Spring Break was one that was made for the safety and well-being of our staff, students, and their families. We do not want our schools to become places where the COVID-19 virus can be spread further when we are so close to possibly turning the corner in our fight against this dreaded disease. We hope that you understand our decision with regards to keeping your students safe.

As always, we are basing our decisions for returning to in-person, on-campus learning on data and metrics being provided by state and county agencies. We continue to monitor the data weekly and the numbers for our district have not been good for several weeks now. Unfortunately, the data below (dated December 3, 2020) shows that our district positivity rate is at 16.75%.

State and County health departments have recommended benchmarks to guide the decision to transition from remote learning to in-person learning. The Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) and the Maricopa County Department of Public Health (MCDPH) target benchmarks for the COVID-19 return to in person learning are the following:

- Reported cases less than ten (10) cases per 100 thousand of the population
- A percent positive number below 5% positivity
- The number of COVID-like illnesses below 5%, for two consecutive weeks.

Below are the guidelines as posted on the Maricopa County Department of Public Health online dashboard.

Benchmarks	Substantial	Moderate	Minimal
Cases	> 100 cases/100k	10-100 cases/100k	< 10 cases/100k
Percent Positivity	> 10%	5-10%	< 5%
COVID-like Illness	> 10%	5-10%	< 5%

The data below, also from the Maricopa County Department of Public Health online dashboard, reflects the metrics for the Tolleson Union High School District over the last two weeks. This most recent information was released on December 3, 2020. The information is released every Thursday and can be found on the MCDPH website listed here (<https://www.maricopa.gov/5594/School-Metrics>).

Most Recent Data [1]	
Cases Per 100k People	411.95
Percent Positivity	16.75%
Covid-Like Illness	7.70%
Prior Week's Data [2]	
Cases Per 100k People	304.12
Percent Positivity	15.62%
Covid-Like Illness	6.20%

As always, we will continue to monitor the metrics for our community and we encourage parents to do the same. At the Tolleson Union High School District, our focus remains on academic achievement for all our students.

We want to wish all of our families a safe and happy holiday season. As we come to the end of our first semester, one unlike we have ever experienced, we want you all to know that we are #TollesonStrong and that together we will get through this.

Sincerely,



Nora Gutierrez  
Superintendent