



Arizona Department of Education
(Office of the State Superintendent)

To the Graduating Class of 2020,

What a year this has been. I wish I could congratulate you in-person and on your campuses to celebrate alongside the teachers, families and friends who supported you through this long journey to graduation. And while I cannot do that, I want you to know that the changes in this year's celebration do not diminish your accomplishments in any way. I hope that you can find unique ways to celebrate your graduation with friends and families as this is such an important time in your life and celebration is warranted!

Graduation marks the culmination of all your hard work and preparation. But your journey is only just beginning. In the coming months and years, you will enter new classrooms, new work environments, and embrace new opportunities. These changes will not only be new because they are changes, but they will also be new because our world is rapidly changing in response to this virus.

And while that reality is filled with uncertainties that present feelings of fear and worry, my travels to schools across the state revealed the depth of passion for learning and teaching that is found within our classrooms. Over the last thirteen years, your teachers and schools poured their energy into preparing you for a world which they could not predict. In turn, you demonstrated incredible leadership and compassion in and out of the classroom. You are truly prepared to grow and lead in this unpredictable world.

Over the last year and a half, it has been my privilege to witness that leadership firsthand. In addition to my address to Arizona's Class of 2020 ([video](#)), I hope these stories inspire you to continue to pursue your goals.

- This past year, the twenty students on the Arizona Department of Education's Student Advisory Council along with the high school and college students on our Latinx and African American Advisory councils met with education leaders to share their experiences and beliefs. These students traveled from around Arizona for each meeting and greatly supported the work and vision of our agency! Here's a [video](#) of the Student Advisory Council encouraging their communities to fill out the 2020 Census.
- Arizona's 2020 US Senate Youth Finalists highlight the power of student engagement in the community. Victor Anaya, a senior at Douglas High School, hopes to be an FDA Medical Officer to support rural medicine in communities like his own. Ashton Redd, a senior at Casa Grande Union High School, is actively

Kathy Hoffman, Superintendent of Public Instruction

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involved in her FFA chapter and is an advocate for Arizona's agriculture community.

- In the San Carlos Apache community, senior Josiah Dawahoya formed the San Carlos High School Apache Braves, a traditional Apache music club. Joined by fellow students Miguel Harney, Cole Patten, Leone Chatlin, Shiloh Burdette, Thomas Patten, Arnesto Irving, Caleb Nozie, Irvin Bonito, Andrew Hutnak, Cohen Patten, Daniel Kayson, and Trevon Alvarado, the San Carlos Apache Braves bear witness to the continuing vibrancy and vitality of traditional Apache music and the Apache language in our school and communities of the San Carlos Apache Reservation.

Finally, I want to leave you with a statement shared with me by the students of Mexicayotl Academy in Nogales which truly underscore the power of your graduating class: *We are not the leaders of tomorrow; we are the leaders of today.* As Arizona's communities, particularly our tribal nations, are some of the hardest hit by COVID19, this message from your fellow students rings even more true. The Arizona Department of Education and I applaud you for resiliency and leadership. Once again, congratulations to the graduating class of 2020!

Best wishes,



Kathy Hoffman, MS, CCC-SLP
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Arizona Department of Education