

Governor Ducey Announces Additional Dollars, Flexibility and Clarity To Arizona Schools

PHOENIX — Governor Doug Ducey today announced additional resources, flexibility and clarity for the start of the 2020-2021 school year.

This “Arizona: Open for Learning” plan provides maximum options for Arizona families, ensures students receive a full academic year of education, invests a total of \$440 million in federal dollars to our schools, and gives local school leaders the flexibility and public health guidance to make the best decisions for their students.

The Governor’s plan, developed in consultation with school leaders from across the state, school advocates and Superintendent Kathy Hoffman, includes the following:

Learning must start immediately:

- 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 hours, whether a family chooses to do so in person or via distance learning.

Requirements for on-site learning and support services:

- To qualify for enhanced funding, schools must begin offering free on-site learning and support services for students who need a place to go during the day as already required by EO 2020-41 on August 17, 2020, as prescribed by EO 2020-44.
- 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 of these options shall be provided by schools to all parents. Special attention should be paid to students enrolled in free or reduced price lunch programs, special education students, English language learners and those in the care of the Department of Child Safety or foster care, and schools must make contact with the parents of these specific students.

Benchmarks and flexibility for opening safely:

- 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 on 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.

Resources to support:

- 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 investment in K-12 education from federal CARES Act dollars: A total of \$370 million in grant dollars to schools. This will ensure budget stability, even with more students learning online, and provide additional dollars when students do learn in the classroom — recognizing the additional costs in-person learning will bring to districts this school year.
- To qualify for these dollars, schools will need to provide the on-site learning opportunities and support services, outlined above, for students who need somewhere to learn.

Face coverings:

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

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.
- The Governor has made the following additional investments to mitigate these impacts:
 - \$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

“From academics to health and nutrition, to social and emotional development and child safety, schools are the backbone of our communities,” said Governor Ducey. “This plan provides maximum options for Arizona families, ensures students receive a full academic year of education, and gives local school leaders the flexibility, resources and public health guidance to make the best decisions for their students. I am grateful to all the education stakeholders and leaders, including Superintendent Hoffman, for their continued advocacy for the children of our state.”

"Despite facing a tremendous amount of uncertainty over the past five months, Arizona schools have continued to be pillars of our communities, finding creative ways to keep our students engaged academically, socially, and emotionally," said Superintendent of Public Instruction Kathy Hoffman. "Today's Executive Order provides much-needed guidance and clarity for schools as they prepare for the upcoming academic year. I am grateful to all of our school leaders, educators, and Dr. Christ and Governor Ducey, for their work supporting Arizona's students."

"This plan gives our families options, and empowers our local education leaders to make decisions that make sense for their schools," said Representative Michelle Udall. "I want to thank Governor Ducey for his commitment to protecting the health and safety of kids and families while ensuring our students continue to learn and grow."

"I thank Governor Ducey for his leadership in providing flexibility to schools, especially in rural communities, to determine their best course of action in reopening schools," said Senator Sylvia Allen. "The additional resources will make certain that schools who do reopen for in-person instruction will have all the assistance they need to protect the health and safety of students, teachers and staff. This will also ensure that to the greatest degree possible, we will give every Arizona child the quality learning environment that will serve them well."

View details on the Arizona: Open for Learning plan [HERE](https://azgovernor.gov/sites/default/files/open_for_learning.pdf)
(https://azgovernor.gov/sites/default/files/open_for_learning.pdf) [1].

View today's Executive Order on education in Arizona [HERE](https://azgovernor.gov/sites/default/files/executive_order_2020-51.pdf)
(https://azgovernor.gov/sites/default/files/executive_order_2020-51.pdf) [2].

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Related Documents:

 [open_for_learning.pdf](https://azgovernor.gov/sites/default/files/open_for_learning.pdf) (https://azgovernor.gov/sites/default/files/open_for_learning.pdf) [1]

 [executive_order_2020-51.pdf](https://azgovernor.gov/sites/default/files/executive_order_2020-51.pdf) (https://azgovernor.gov/sites/default/files/executive_order_2020-51.pdf) [2]

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[1] https://azgovernor.gov/sites/default/files/open_for_learning.pdf

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