

## Joint Statement from Phoenix Public Schools Superintendents

We, the K-12 public school system of Phoenix, span over 220-square miles and 32 zip codes, consist of 13 elementary and one high school district, and jointly serve over 100,000 students and 10,000 educators. We share the same communities, same neighborhoods, same parks, same stores, same places of worship, same families, same students. We also share the same vision and values for our city.

We believe in the limitless potential of the beautiful youth that we serve. We believe in equity, access, and opportunity for all. We must remove barriers to, and create systems that, ensure high levels of learning for every child in Phoenix. We know that students, parents, and caregivers want quality school choices that meet the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of their children. We know that our educators – our teachers, our counselors and social workers, our education support professionals, and our administrators – are all essential to the growth and development of our students. Our youth must be known, loved, respected, and supported in order to meet their full potential.

Phoenix has certainly been hit hard by the spread of COVID-19. Our families, our employees, and our districts have been impacted dramatically and, in some cases, tragically by the virus. For the past six months, the fourteen superintendents in the Phoenix Union footprint have met weekly with the belief that we are stronger, smarter, and more strategic together than we are apart. We are now a united team committed to tackling some of the toughest issues that our city has ever faced – a global healthcare pandemic, social unrest and a demand for racial equality, families in crisis, and a pending recession.

Recently, we met – very safely – in person for the first time since 2019. The ultimate goal of this meeting was to identify what common commitments, common practices, and common models we could adopt as we consider returning to in-person learning. We discussed what it means to put the health, safety, and wellness of our communities first. We reviewed best practices, shared our current models, and studied examples from across the country. By the end of our meeting, we came to two realizations.

First, aside from sharing vision and values, we also share many common strategies and approaches to navigating the current healthcare

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Isaac Elementary School District  
Dr. Mario Ventura

Laveen Elementary School District  
Dr. Jeffrey Sprout

Madison Elementary School District  
Dr. Kenneth Baca

Murphy Elementary School District  
Dr. Dennis Goodwin

Osborn Elementary School District  
Dr. Michael Robert

Phoenix Elementary School District  
Dr. Larry Weeks

Phoenix Union High School District  
Dr. Chad E. Gestson

Riverside Elementary School District  
Dr. Jaime Rivera

Roosevelt Elementary School District  
Dr. Quintin Boyce

Wilson Elementary School District  
Mr. Antonio Sanchez

pandemic. We are data and metric-driven. We follow county, state, and national safety guidelines. We value students, staff, and community input. We also value their lives. We want to be back in person as soon as possible but will always put the health, safety, and wellness of our staff and students first. While we are distance learning, we are committed to providing the best virtual learning opportunities possible. We also recognize that our students and families need our systems to be flexible and to provide multiple options for learning, both virtually and on site.

Second, although we desire to be fully aligned with our return to school and return to work procedures and timelines, it is simply not possible. Spread of COVID-19 has impacted our zip codes in different ways. The size and grade configurations of our schools and districts vary greatly. The number of staff employed by each district is also dramatically different. The science, the research, and the recommendations for return are so vast that each district must reflect upon its own local context when determining how and when to return. In short, as we strive to identify our similarities and align our practices, we fully respect and honor our differences.

Despite these many challenges and complexities, we remain steadfast in our dedication to our city. We will continue to meet weekly to ensure consistent communication and messaging to our respective districts and communities. We will continue to advocate for equity and excellence during and after the pandemic. Our advocacy will also extend beyond just academics – we will always be a voice for our students, our families, our community, and our city. We will not waver in our commitment to the health, safety, and wellness of our staff, students, and families. And, as we show each other grace and patience and support during these challenging times, we ask our community to do the same.