March 27, 2020

Dear Apache Junction Unified School District Parents and Families,

I want to be sure that you are taking care of yourself and your families. Make sure you are following the CDC’s current guidance and you are getting the most current information on COVID-19.

As you have been made aware, all Arizona schools will be closed through April 10, 2020. Since the time that we were made aware of this closure, both our district leadership team as well as our certified instructional staff have been working to create educational learning opportunities for your children.

The planning, collaboration, and creating that took place this past week was done under careful understanding of the guidance that has been given to school districts from Governor Ducey and Superintendent Hoffman. The educational services team with each school principal has worked alongside all of the planning teams throughout the district to be sure that the activities and resources we are sharing with your children are in line with state guidelines. We are humbled by the incredible work our teachers, administrators, and staff have done over the last few days. They have found ways to provide food to families, they have found solutions to complex problems, and they have collaborated together endlessly to make sure we are able to reach out to all our families. I appreciate all that they have done.

In our planning, teachers have decided the best way for them to reach students and their families. All teachers will be communicating with students and their parents weekly through email or virtual platforms. Students will have an updated list of activities and resources each Friday by 5 p.m. that will be set for the upcoming school week. Teachers have planned unique opportunities for the students from their classes and shared these out. We have asked our teachers not to grade these activities but to give specific feedback to students who do the activities. Students should receive feedback within a 48 hour period from receiving students’ work. We encourage our families to help their students fully engage in their learning. We plan to use these assignments to help all students that complete the work improve their current grades as they continue their own learning. These activities and resources are not meant to replace classroom instruction but they are intended to allow for all students in grades PreK-12 to continue to stay educationally engaged during these times. Again, we encourage everyone’s participation and plan to use the efforts and work as data to support the improvement of their current grades.

What you can expect:

From your child’s teacher(s) you can expect that there will be learning opportunities that are shared either through email or a virtual platform weekly by Friday at 5pm. Those activities and resources will be for the upcoming week. We encourage the work to be completed during the typical school week and sent back to the teacher to receive feedback when things have been finished. Your child’s teacher will give feedback within 2 business days of receiving the work from the student. Parents may reach out individually to their teachers to request username/password. We can share this with the parent either by phone, text, or email once requested. Your child’s teacher will be available via phone, email, or virtual platforms during their office hours of Monday from 2-5pm and Tuesday through Friday from 12-3pm. During those times your child’s teachers are available to assist with the work your child is completing or answer any questions either you or your child may have. Our goal is to have open communication with parents and students during this closure. Please pay close attention to the communication from your child’s teacher to see about class meetings, tutoring time, or open chat sessions that may be planned.
For our special education students you can expect support from your child’s case manager to ensure that your child is able to complete the opportunities shared by the classroom teacher. Special education teachers will be contacting their students and families to figure out together the best way to offer support from your child’s special education team. For students who had annual IEP meetings that needed to be scheduled, your child’s case manager will be reaching out to set those up. Your case manager will be working together with you to find the best way to host the meeting either via phone or virtual platforms. Special education teachers will hold office hours daily from 9am-3pm and will be available in a variety of ways that work best to support you and your child.

The site principal and administration team will be available to support students, teachers, and families as these new ways of supporting student engagement can be challenging for many. We want to be sure that if you have questions; principals and their teams are available to help. Each building principal will be available Monday from 2-5 p.m. and then Tuesday-Friday from 12-3 p.m. Please watch for further communication from your school principal on how to best contact them while school is closed.

The district leadership team will continue to support the AJUSD staff, students and families. We will work closely with each building principal and department directors to monitor the needs of our community. We are all continuing to work together to provide a safe, successful learning environment for each of your children even in this challenging time.

You may find that you and your children are on your devices and using more technology these days. We want to remind you that internet safety is a priority when we encourage the use of technology with students. Be cautious of “phishing” emails These are emails that look like they are coming from a legitimate business or source asking you to enter some important information. They are typically trying to get you to provide sensitive information and we remind you to be careful. Never click on suspicious attachments, don’t open mail from sources you are unaware of, and never fill out forms that ask you to include your name or password.

Our Food Services Department will continue to provide food next week, but their process is changing to make things easier for families. Rather than having to come to pick up food daily, food boxes will be handed out on Monday per child that will provide food for 6 days. Boxes will be handed out in the parking log of Apache Junction High School from 10:00-11:30 and in the Four Peaks Elementary School Parking lot from 10:30-noon on Mondays. It is important to note that we still need each child that is receiving food to be available at the pick up as we have strict paperwork that needs to be kept to provide this service through the funding that we receive.

A reminder that at this time AIA has suspended all practices and games for high school sports; as a district we have cancelled sports for Cactus Canyon Junior High School as well. We have also cancelled all fine arts performances and field trips through April 30. We chose the date of April 30 with concern that we might not return to school until April 13. As we are given updates and know more about our return to school we will continue to update our sponsors, students, and parents with information about performances or events.

As for prom and graduation events, we are continuing to monitor what we will be able to provide and will keep you updated about what is decided about hosting these events. We understand how important these events are to both you and your children, and will continue to work tirelessly to minimize the impact the closure has and to retain as much of a sense of normalcy as we can.

As a district we stay committed to the health and safety of our students, families, staff and community. This is a time for all of us to learn and grow together. We are committed to keeping our parents up to date with information that we have. Our goal is to send weekly updates each Sunday, unless there is something that we have to share sooner. Your support and understanding at this time is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Dr. Krista Anderson, Superintendent

Apache Junction Unified School District