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Tucson Youth Development LEA
Response to Roadmap to Reopening Schools

State Taskforce Guidance

Released June 15, 2020

Revised June 18, 2020

The Arizona State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Kathy Hoffman, released *Arizona's Roadmap to Reopening Schools* (Roadmap) to the public and all schools on June 1, 2020. Each school district and charter Local Education Agency (LEA) is tasked with interpreting this guidance on the local level and determining steps that will be taken to reopen schools in the Fall semester of the 2020-2021 school year. As Superintendent Hoffman stated in her *Message from State Superintendent of Schools* letter that accompanied the release of the Roadmap for Reopening Schools, with input from health experts and education leaders across our state, they have developed a series of recommendations for how schools can approach the 2020-2021 school year. Ms. Hoffman further stated that, "Given the fluidity of the public health situation, this will be a living document that will be updated based on the most current information."

Importantly, the Arizona Department of Education has given each district and charter LEA local authority in interpreting the guidance provided by the Reopening Taskforce. The state will continue to provide schools with as much clear and timely guidance as possible. The Roadmap specifically states that LEAs should coordinate with local authorities, such as state and local health departments, health centers, consulting physicians, and health-care providers, and apply the guidance in accordance with the guidance they receive from these stakeholders. LEAs should always adhere to the most recent recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The Tucson Youth Development (TYD) LEA has taken steps to become familiar with this guidance by virtually attending a Private and Charter Education Meeting conducted by the Emergency Operations Center of the Pima County Health Department on June 9, 2020 and the Roadmap to Reopening: Health Protocols and Considerations for Reopening conducted virtually by the Arizona Department of Education on June 10, 2020. The TYD LEA

and school administrators will continue to participate in these meetings provided by Pima County and the State of Arizona.

Current Reopening Considerations

- **Health and Safety Considerations:** The health considerations described above are the primary, most important considerations for the TYD LEA in determining how to reopen ACE and Youth Works Charter High Schools. The process of developing guidelines from the County, State and Federal level is a fluid situation. Local contingency plans are only effective through a collaborative effort by all community stakeholders, as school communities move forward together to embrace the new normal of conducting school operations during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Guidelines provided by the Reopening Taskforce are not designed to be prescriptive but seek to provide LEAs with parameters and options as we develop our own contingency plans using local health trends and statewide data. This guidance from the County, State, and Federal health officials will be revised and updated regularly. The LEA and school site administration will be continuously aware of and involved in the application of this guidance as part of a continuum of LEA decision making.
- **Scheduling Considerations:** The Roadmap to Reopening document described scenarios from the *National Institute for Excellence in Teaching*. These are not comprehensive but capture key points of consideration as well as guiding questions for four different scenarios anticipated to be possible in the fall:
 1. All students start the school year attending school in person.
 2. Some students start the school year attending in person while some are using distance learning.
 3. All students are using distance learning from the start of the year, with the option of returning to physical buildings when appropriate.
 4. Students are intermittently in person and using distance learning based on guidance from local and state health departments.
- **School Financing Considerations (Current):** In Arizona, budget calculations for public schools are based on student enrollment counts over the first 100 days of instruction. Full funding, or additional requirements to receive funding for student enrollment, is then based on the number of instructional days and hours a student spends in an academic course of study, in person, with attendance being taken in specific periods by classroom teachers. In preparation for the next school year, there have

been growing concerns regarding public school budget stability due to potential shifts in student enrollment and attendance. However, state statute currently does not fully accommodate the need to implement new and multiple types of instructional models, including distance learning. In order to continue education services to students in an uncertain and fluid environment caused by COVID-19, the following school finance issues must be addressed by state leaders for schools to remain operating:

1. A budget floor to cover costs.
 2. A flexible and adaptable way to provide distance learning that is tied to brick and mortar school.
- **School Financing Considerations (During Closure):** The question may arise, why were schools able to provide remote learning opportunities with teachers and staff working from home during the state mandated school closures that began on March 16, 2020 and continued through the end of the scheduled school year. The simple answer is that the Arizona legislature was in session at that time and in extremely short time passed House Bill 2910. On Friday, March 27, 2020, the Governor signed HB2910, an emergency measure that outlined the steps to be taken in testing, scheduling, and other process requirements as school remained closed. Several provisions in the bill required adoption of emergency rules including the continued payment of Arizona State Equalization payments to schools while they were closed and students were attending virtually. This emergency legislation expired at the scheduled end of the school year for each LEA. In the case of TYD, this ability to receive State Equalization payments while students were not physically present in the classroom ended on May 22, 2020.
 - **School Financing Considerations (Moving Forward):** At the present time, the Registrar for each LEA must upload into the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) School Finance database, *AZEDS*, the current statistical analysis of number of students pre-enrolled in brick and mortar, regular attendance courses. Currently, if students are not enrolled in these courses and scheduled to attend 1200 minutes per week, the LEA receives reduced equalization payments based on Average Daily Membership (ADM). All current budget considerations for Fiscal Year 2021 are based on receiving 1.0 Full Time Equivalency (FTE) for each student enrolled at ACE and Youth Works. If brick and mortar enrollments declines below 100 FTE ADM combined for ACE and Youth Works, the projected ADM revenue would not be realized and significant cuts would need to be made in expenses at each school.

Current TYD LEA Decision Regarding Scheduling: Taking into consideration the guidance and recommendations made by the Roadmap to Reopening Taskforce and the local, state, and federal health authorities, the Tucson Youth Development LEA has made the decision to reopen for the 2020-2021 school year with a school calendar and bell schedule based on Scenario One: *All students start the school year attending school in person*. Currently, this is the only scenario that will meet the Arizona budget calculations for public schools based on student enrollment counts over the first 100 days of instruction. If this course is not followed, given the current situation, there could be major shifts in student enrollment as a result of COVID-19 and family employment and health situations leading to dips in ADM that would make it unsustainable for schools to remain open and available to provide academic services. This situation could be exacerbated for rural and small schools. During SY2020-2021, there will be a need to accommodate health and social distance guidelines from local, state, and federal health experts.

The TYD LEA will continue to monitor the situation on a daily basis. The Roadmap to Reopening Taskforce recommends that to support school planning for SY2020-2021, the Arizona State Board of Education and the Arizona State lawmakers evaluate and consider adjustments to statutory rules and requirements regarding reporting attendance, timelines for determining average daily membership (ADM), and other related issues tied to student enrollment and school financing. As the Arizona State Board of Education and State lawmakers evaluate and make these adjustments, the TYD LEA will remain aware of the changing situation and make appropriate modifications to provide the highest quality education while protecting the health and safety of students, families, and staff.

Revised Response to Roadmap to Reopening Schools (Revision Added June 18, 2020)

The following sentence in the paragraph entitled **Current TYD LEA Decision Regarding Scheduling** above is retracted. The Tucson Youth Development LEA has not made the decision to reopen for the 2020-2021 school year with a calendar and bell schedule based on Scenario One: *All students start the year attending school in person*. The decision to implement one of the following scenarios is not yet determined:

1. All students start the school year attending school in person.
2. Some students start the school year attending in person while some are using distance learning.

3. All students are using distance learning from the start of the year, with the option of returning to physical buildings when appropriate.
4. Students are intermittently in person and using distance learning based on guidance from local and state health departments.

The decision as to which scenario will be implemented is a decision that will be made by the ACE and Youth Works Charter High School Governing Board. It will be based on any revision or addition to current state statute regarding the payment of state equalization revenues to schools as a function of the current COVID-19 pandemic. The ACE and Youth Works Governing Board will be asked to vote on this decision at either the June 30, 2020 Board meeting or the July 13, 2020 Board meeting, depending on when additional guidance is available from the Arizona Department of Education; the Roadmap to Reopening Taskforce; Arizona state health officials; Pima County health officials the Arizona State Superintendent of Public Instruction; or the Governor of the State of Arizona.

As of June 18, 2020 the ACE and Youth Works Charter High School Governing Board has not made a final determination as to whether Scenario One, Scenario Two, Scenario Three, or Scenario Four will be implemented to reopen the schools at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year.