

Just a reminder you're receiving this email because you have a student enrolled at one or more of our Desert Heights Charter Schools campuses. Don't forget to add noreply@desertheightsschools.org to your address book so we'll be sure to land in your inbox!

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DESERT HEIGHTS CHARTER SCHOOLS

From the Desk of Mr. Jiles



Reopening during the COVID Pandemic

Dear Desert Heights Family,

I hope that all of you have managed to stay safe and healthy as our state experiences an increase in COVID-19 cases. Three weeks ago, I assembled a COVID-19 Task Force Team for the Desert Heights community as we prepare to develop and implement a plan that maximizes student and staff safety for the upcoming school year. I would personally like to thank all of you who took the time to respond to our School Reopening Survey. Your responses and comments provided us with invaluable insight as we work diligently to develop the best plan for our schools to reopen in August. Our areas of focus will continue to be defined by CDC Guidelines, state leadership and the Arizona Department of Health Services.

Rest assured that we are developing plans to promote the highest standard of cleaning and disinfecting measures for our campuses, while also focusing on Social Distancing Guidelines. We are revisiting vendor relationships to ensure that their cleaning protocols and other services align with recommended guidelines for safety. We are purchasing classroom thermostats with the intent of checking student temperatures daily. Additionally, we will be modifying our student management processes and common practices to minimize the possible spread of or exposure to the virus as we focus on student distancing and containment. All classrooms will be equipped with hand sanitizing stations and students and staff will be expected to sanitize multiple times throughout the day. Students will be required to consume their lunches in their respective classrooms, and we will develop safe and appropriate opportunities for small groups of students to have recess opportunities given the importance of their health and wellness during this unusual school experience. Additionally, you can expect more information soon regarding measures we will be taking to promote maximum safety on our busses

and what can be expected from a transportation standpoint. Finally, we are working with Mental Health personnel to develop strategies to identify and subsequently support students who may be experiencing adverse effects of attending school under such uncommon circumstances.

To date, we do not intend to require students to wear masks, but they will be welcome and encouraged to do so. However, it is important to keep in mind that the state's position on recommended guidelines could change between now and the start of school, especially given the recent increase in cases we are said to be experiencing statewide. You can expect to hear more information specific to each campus from Mrs. Miller and our Deans very soon. And as always, thank you in advance for your continued support and belief in our Desert Heights Family. Together, we can weather any storm!

Social Awareness and Responsibility

Desert Heights has long been defined by our Three Pillars: Academic Excellence, Integrity of Character and Social Awareness. Over the years, our students have exemplified a strong inclination to stand for and support causes they are passionate about; so much so that our third pillar, Social Awareness, should actually include the word Responsibility. Albert Einstein stated that "the world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It CANNOT be changed without changing our thinking". On May 25th, 2020, our country was forced to change its thinking after the senseless killing of George Floyd. As a result of this horrific act, we have witnessed the highest level of Social Awareness and Responsibility in the form of worldwide peaceful, and sometimes unruly, protests. The cry for equality and equal justice has reached a pinnacle never before seen in our country's history, a history that has been plagued with divisiveness, indifference and hatred. How does a country heal from within? Is America truly the country it purports itself to be? These are questions that we all should be asking ourselves in the present climate and culture.

I believe that America has the potential to be the greatest country on earth. And it is this potential that will galvanize our collective desire to see a country that acknowledges that yes, in fact, all lives do matter, but not one more than the other. I am saddened to see our country so divided and pained by a commitment by some to prejudice and ignorance. I am inspired to see the eclectic mix of black, white and brown faces that are marching to change the world. I am worried that as a black father, my son and my nephews may not be deemed worthy of life. I am hopeful, however...because I have a family who has always stood for righteousness and togetherness when faced with adversity. A family that loves and protects and inspires the purest form of Social Awareness and Responsibility, and an accountability to one another despite our differences. That family is Desert Heights. Let us be the change we want to see in the world.

