



# SOUTHGATE ACADEMY

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August 11, 2020

**Re: Important Update on Return to School; Due to COVID-19**

Dear Southgate Families,

Southgate Academy started remote learning on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020. It is great to see students logged in to their on-line curriculum and using the Google-Classroom platform to have face-to face video chats with their teachers and classmates. It is a new experience for all of us! The staff is here to assist if you are experiencing any technology or curriculum issues.

Recently, the Pima County Health Department (PCHD) published guidelines for safe return to in-person learning. As a district, we discussed the data released to us in detail and based on this information, Southgate Academy will delay the on-campus learning until it is deemed safe for us to return.

**Safely Returning to In-Person Instruction**

**ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES**

Cases	Percent Positivity	COVID-Like Illness
New cases per 100,000 population	Percent of positive COVID-19 tests	COVID-19 ER visits & hospitalizations
Minimal: less than 10	Minimal: less than 5%	Minimal: less than 5%
Moderate: 10 - 100	Moderate: 5 - 10 %	Moderate: 5 - 10%
Substantial: greater than 100	Substantial: greater than 10%	Substantial: greater than 10%

**Initial Opening**  
ADHS recommends schools or school districts meet all 3 benchmarks at the county level in moderate or minimal transmission category for two weeks in order to begin hybrid learning.

Are new cases in minimal or moderate transmission category for two weeks?  
or  
Is there a two-week decline in the number of new cases?  
↓ YES

Is the percent of positive COVID-19 tests less than 7% for two weeks?  
↓ YES

Are ER visits and hospitalizations for COVID-19 in minimal or moderate transmission for two weeks?  
↓ YES

**Opening benchmarks met Consider Hybrid learning model**

**Monitoring Benchmarks**  
ADHS recommends schools work with their local health departments. After transitioning to a hybrid model, schools should consider resuming virtual learning when one or more benchmark categories are in substantial transmission.

From the County Administrator's Office: County public health agencies with real time information and data regarding the pandemic are in the best position to offer public health advice regarding school activities related to managing the spread of COVID-19. These agencies have been working with local area school superintendents including Southgate, to develop specific guidance consistent with public health standards and how to incorporate the guidance that was recently issued by the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

**Public health data does not support the reopening of schools on August 17, 2020 for traditional face-to-face, in-person learning. The explanation lies in the facts. They are:**

- The local County COVID-19 infections are near the highest daily amounts since the pandemic began.
- Pima County's total monthly infections in March were 153, in April 1,024, in May 1,101, in June 5,622 and so far for July through the 27th, they are 6,722.
- Countywide transmission rates remain above 11 percent, with a World Health Organization (WHO) recommendation that rates be below 5 percent prior to opening.

- Masks were only recently mandated at the County level on June 19, 2020 and it will take six weeks to see if this mitigation strategy is working.
- Hospitalizations for COVID-19 are at record levels and it was only last week the ICU bed capacity was nearly exceeded and critical patients were transferred to other hospitals within the State.
- Widespread testing is now only becoming available throughout the community.

For all the above reasons, schools **should not open on August 17, 2020** for traditional face-to-face, in-person instruction.

The table below is Southgate Academy’s projections for partial/full re-opening:

SGA Return to In-Person Learning, as Recommended by Arizona Department of Health Services for Pima County			
SGA Benchmarks	Minimal	Moderate	Substantial
8/12/20	Not Recommended	Not recommended	Recommended for the next 6-8 weeks.
10/12/20 Returning for Options (Hybrid Model)	Not Recommended	Estimation to be in this zone between 9/21/20 -10/5/20	Projection that the majority of Pima County not at high risk.
1/4/21	SGA Projection Full return to school (Exception: Students who choose to remain online may do so).	Projection that the majority of Pima County not at moderate risk.	Projection that the majority of Pima County not at high risk.

We at Southgate Academy remain committed to the health and safety of our all of students, families and staff. Therefore, on-campus classes will not be resuming on Monday, August 17<sup>th</sup>. The benefits of supporting the Pima County Health Departments guidelines far outweigh the risks of returning to on-site learning. We will continue to provide long distance learning through the virtual setting to the students until it is deemed safe to return to in person learning. We are in constant communication with the Pima County Health Department and State Officials to determine when the best date to return will be.

Best Regards,

*Michele Felix*

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