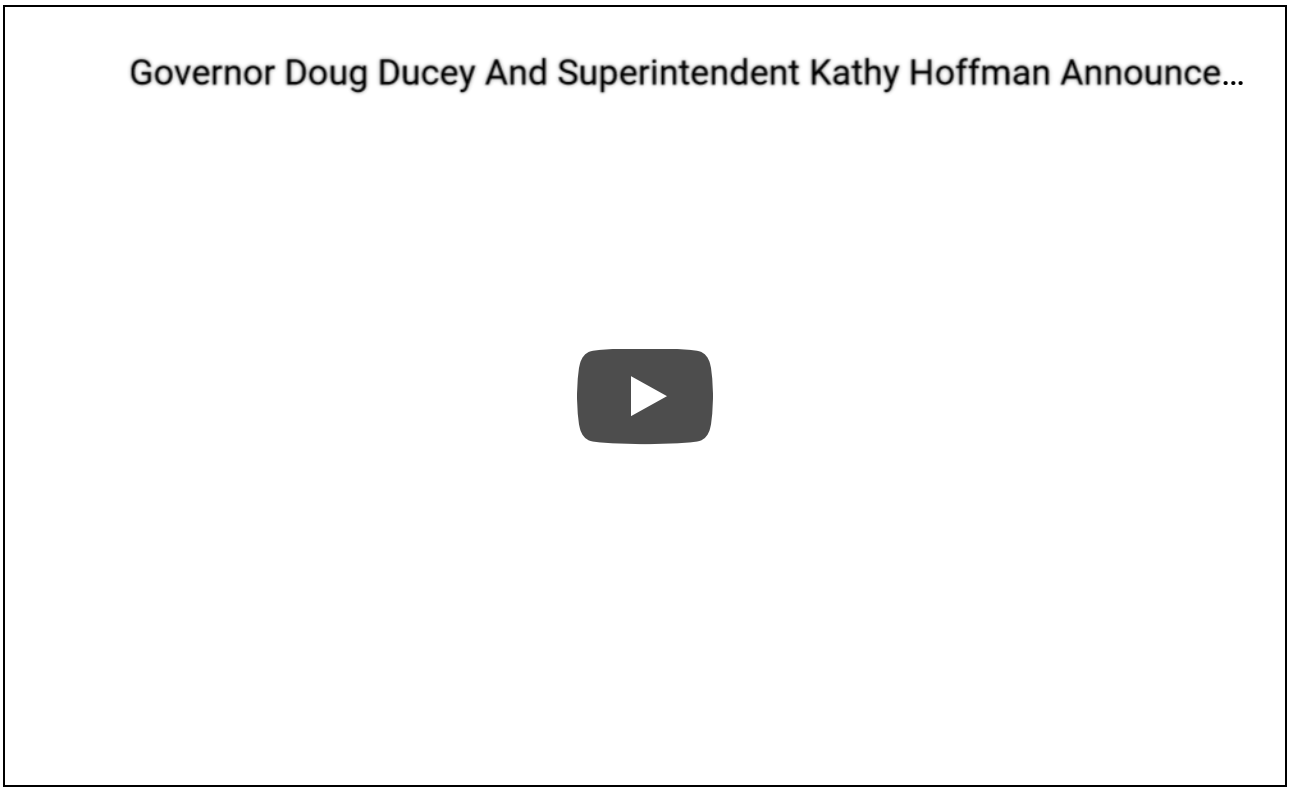
Open Letter To Arizona Families, Educators, School Leaders, And Education Community Members

Governor's Office

March 15, 2020

Dear Arizona families, educators, school leaders, and education community members,

In our roles as Governor and Superintendent of Public Instruction, we stand united in working with you to keep Arizona's kids, families, and school communities safe and healthy.



Over the past few weeks and in coordination with public health officials, we have been in close communication with school administrators to provide guidance and be a resource as it relates to the recent outbreak of COVID-19. The health and safety of all our students is our top priority, and we've worked hard to keep our school doors open — these are important assets in people's lives and many families rely on them for nutrition and access to health care.

Both of our staffs have been working together in partnership through the weekend, and we've been in touch with educational leaders on the frontlines. Currently, staffing and potential absences are a concern in many districts. Many schools and school districts have announced closures.

Today, we are jointly announcing the closure of all schools from Monday, March 16, 2020 through Friday, March 27, 2020. We will continue to work together and assess this situation on a 24/7 basis.

It's important for families and parents to know that while this will address operational issues, doing this will not stop the spread of COVID-19.

The safest place for children during this time is at home. They should not be cared for by elderly adults or those with underlying health conditions, including grandparents and other family members.

Additionally, we are committed to working together to minimize the impact of these closures. To that end, we are assembling resources and forming community partnerships that will reduce the impact of these closures on families, teachers, and school communities.

Efforts are underway to ensure that any child has access to meals while schools are closed. We have also worked with USDA to allow schools to begin summer food service operations and provide boxed meals as needed. Your local school will have more information about how and where to access meals.

We understand many parents have questions about childcare options. It is the recommendation of public health officials that kids who are not at school remain at home to the greatest extent possible. For families for whom that's not an option, we are coordinating with partners in the non-profit, faith-based and education communities to make available childcare options to families who need it.

For our dedicated school employees, we're working together to make sure you don't see any disruption to your pay. We'll also be consulting with our district and legislative partners to determine the extent of any potential makeup days.

Many parents, teachers, and administrators may have questions about statewide testing. We're currently engaging with our federal partners in the event that we need to secure a waiver.

The Department of Education will provide additional guidance to schools that will be posted to azed.gov. For the latest information about COVID-19, please visit **azhealth.gov (http://azhealth.gov/)**. This website is updated daily with new information.

We will continue to remain in close contact with state and public health officials to provide the most up-to-date information and ensure that the State of Arizona is doing everything we can to keep every member of our community healthy and safe.

We are asking schools to please adhere to the following measures during this period of closure:

- School administrators should make every effort to provide continued education learning opportunities through online resources or materials that can be sent home.

- School administrators should develop a plan to continue breakfast and lunch services for Arizona students.

- As demand rises on healthcare professionals and first responders, schools should expand child care programs currently available to ensure minimal disruption to these critical jobs as a result of the school closure.

- When school resumes, school administrators should develop and implement precautions to ensure schools are a safe learning environment, including social distancing measures, regular intervals for administrators to wash and sanitize their hands, and guidance on how to properly and frequently sanitize election equipment and common surfaces.

Sincerely,

Governor Doug Ducey and Superintendent Kathy Hoffman

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