



August 21, 2020

Dear Families,

As many of you know, Governor Ducey's executive order from July 23 tasked the Arizona Department of Health Services (DHS) with developing public health benchmarks for the safe return to in-person learning. DHS demarcated three benchmarks to meet before opening a school:

1. **Cases:** a two-week decline in the number of cases or two-weeks with a case rate of less than 100 cases per 100,000 population within the county,
2. **Percent Positivity:** two weeks of percent positivity less than 7% within the county, and
3. **COVID-Like Illness:** two weeks with hospital visits due to COVID-like illness below 10% within the region.

For Maricopa County, the first benchmark was met after the week of July 19, which was the second week in a row that showed a decrease in cases. The number of cases in the county has continued to decline since then. The third benchmark was met with the release of the July 26 data, which showed the second week in a row with less than 10% of hospital visits exhibiting COVID-like illnesses and has stayed under 10% ever since.

We have been watching the second benchmark, positivity rate, closely since first released by DHS. While the [School Benchmark site](#) has data posted for the week of August 2, the [DHS Data Dashboard](#) has more up-to-date data. You can find the most recent data by clicking on the "Laboratory" icon, then on Maricopa County in the map, and then scroll down to the table and hover over a specific date on the PCR graph.

The PCR positivity rate for August 9 was 6.2% with updated numbers for August 16 showing a 5.4% positivity rate, marking two consecutive weeks with rates below 7%. While this data will not be posted to the School Benchmark site for another week, it is *the* data that will ultimately be posted. No significant recalculations have been made to the numbers from the DHS Data Dashboard in any of the weeks past. In other words, the numbers shown by the current DHS Data Dashboard are a trustworthy reflection of what will be shown, at the end of next week, on the School Benchmark site.

With Maricopa County in a position to start school safely, all our academies are now free to open on their scheduled date. Schools have a three-day transition window to allow for training as well as some grade levels (and/or new students) to return before others. Your headmaster will provide details of the specifics for your campus.

As students return to campus, please remember that there is a mandatory mask order still in effect for Maricopa County. Students should plan to bring their own, though we will provide masks for those who do not have them. Additionally, all students will be screened for a fever before coming into the building. Please see the [Great Hearts Safe Return plan](#) for all of the details on what we are doing to ensure that our campuses are as healthy as possible.

For students who have signed up for Great Hearts Distance Learning, your school will be in touch with next steps.

Families at Arete, Chandler, Cicero, Glendale, Lincoln, North Phoenix, Scottsdale, Trivium and Veritas campuses, please don't forget to [pre-register](#) for COVID-19 testing by 9:00 PM tonight. The pre-registration form will close at 9:00 PM.

We truly appreciate the patience and fortitude you have shown since March, and we look forward to welcoming students back to our campuses soon.

All my Best,

Erik
