



Dear Families,

I want to take some time to better explain why we are asking a very difficult thing of families in choosing either in-person or distance-learning for the second semester by Friday, November 20.

Two of the key things we are solving for is the sustainability and quality of both in-person and online options. Our teachers cannot continue to carry both responsibilities. While I believe we were justified in offering an academy-centered, incredibly high-touch synchronous online model this semester, it has been at the great expense of teacher work-life balance. Were we to continue with the status quo, we would fatigue our faculty to the extent that both in-person and online instruction would greatly suffer.

Removing this responsibility does create some real and daunting logistical hurdles. It is one thing when a school can spread online students across sections as is the case in our current structure. It would also be easy if we had an exact number of online students across grades that allowed one teacher to take those students while the in-person students were spread evenly among the other sections. However, it never works out neatly like that.

One option would be to build a stand-alone online academy with enough faculty to care for each grade and subject. Unsurprisingly, this is not affordable.

At the Archway level, we must determine where we have concentrations of 30 or more distance-learning students at one academy in a grade level so that we can designate one teacher as fully online. That is already happening at a few of our academies and, if the demand remains high, will continue to happen. Where the demand is not as high, though, we will need to combine students from several academies into a section of 30-45 students and assign a Great Hearts teacher from one of our academies to teach them online. Our goal is to allow the online teacher to meet with their students for 1-2 hours daily, with Monday through Thursday for math and ELA instruction and Fridays for history and science instruction. We also want to offer the students one asynchronous art, music, and P.E. lesson per week.

Additionally, we will need to hire substitutes to take their place in the brick-and-mortar classroom. This will lead to changes for some students in terms of who their teacher is for the rest of the semester. As we know that relationship and familiarity with the teacher is important, once these sections are in place, we do not want to disrupt them again with section changes.

Similarly, in some cases our Prep schools have been able to offer courses that are fully online or fully in person. However, depending on the number of students, many courses have had to run as "hybrid" courses – both online and in-person at the same time. Because of the unsustainability of high numbers of hybrid courses, we are working to reduce the number of such courses.

We cannot eliminate them entirely; therefore, we are working to identify solutions to support teachers and academies in delivering high-quality education to our in-person and distance learners. What we are unable to sustain are changes and/or uncertainties in the numbers of students in each grade level/section. Such changes inhibit a school's ability to reliably divide students into fully online and fully distance learning courses.

So, until we know what the exact grade and subject distribution will be for the second semester across the network, we are unable to fully design the online program. Our commitment is to prioritize high-touch, synchronous learning in that design, but we need to know the distribution of students in order to determine which teachers we must designate for either in-person or online learning.

I know many parents have asked for an exact description of what to expect with online learning starting in January. I understand parents want to know who their child's teachers will be, their schedule, and what the exact format will entail. If we could provide those details to you right now, we would. We do commit to sharing that important information with you as soon as we have it.

There are also families who want the flexibility to choose distance learning at any time next semester as they can now. Unfortunately, with the changes noted above, we cannot guarantee that we will have the ability to plug students in throughout the second semester into either grade-level cohorts or, in the case of the upper schools, subject level options at any given time.

It is entirely reasonable for parents to want this flexibility, especially given concerns about community spread. We know there are certain risks to sending your child to school. I can assure you that we will continue to work hand-in-hand with the county health department in determining if any campus is seeing a concerning rise in cases. Should a campus show multiple cases across grades and/or faculty, we will quickly quarantine the campus and put all students in distance learning.

I know this asks our families to trust the effectiveness of our protocols and the expertise of the county health department as we move forward. For those families that feel the risk is too great, they will have a quality distance learning program available to them starting in January. I know that asking parents to determine this now is hard. For what it's worth, my wife and I are also Great Hearts parents and are currently working through the same difficult situation as each of you.

With all of these elements under consideration, we ask for your partnership by completing the second semester learning survey. Again, we acknowledge that this is a big decision for you and your family to make. Your response will help ensure that we can work to provide the best in-person and online learning to you for the rest of the school year without continuing to place undue burden on our faculty.

To make your selection, please follow the steps below:

1. Please log into the [Great Hearts Enrollment system](#) using your username and password. If you do not remember your log-in information, please click on the "Forgot Password" and follow the instructions. If you continue to experience issues, please reach out to gherollment@greatheartsaz.org.
2. Once you are in the enrollment system, click on the Second Semester Learning Survey Button to access the form.
3. Complete the Second Semester Learning Survey for all currently registered students in your household.
4. To submit, click the "Finish" button.
5. Once you submit the form, you will receive an email confirmation to the email registered in the enrollment system.

****If you experience any technical difficulties with the form, please reach out to gherollment@greatheartsaz.org.*

I am sorry that we are in the situation. We have agonized over these decisions. As always, I appreciate the patience, fortitude, and goodwill of our families as we navigate these difficult times.

Yours,

Erik