



Superintendent's Report to the Governing Board

February 23, 2021



From Our Schools



Our District Spelling Bee looked a little different this year, but our students still did an amazing job. The top five finishers were: First place: Athena McElvaine, Amphi Academy Online; Second place: Ethan Arvizu; Harelson Elementary School; Third place: Svea Neilson, Copper Creek Elementary School; Fourth place: Leslie Moreno, Donaldson Elementary School; Fifth place: Alexander Owens, Wilson K-8 School. These students will go on to compete in the Pima County Regional Spelling Bee.



From Our Schools

Congratulations to Amphi High School's partner stunt cheer team -- Hector, Vanessa, and Gissel -- for winning their competition and qualifying for AIA State in March!

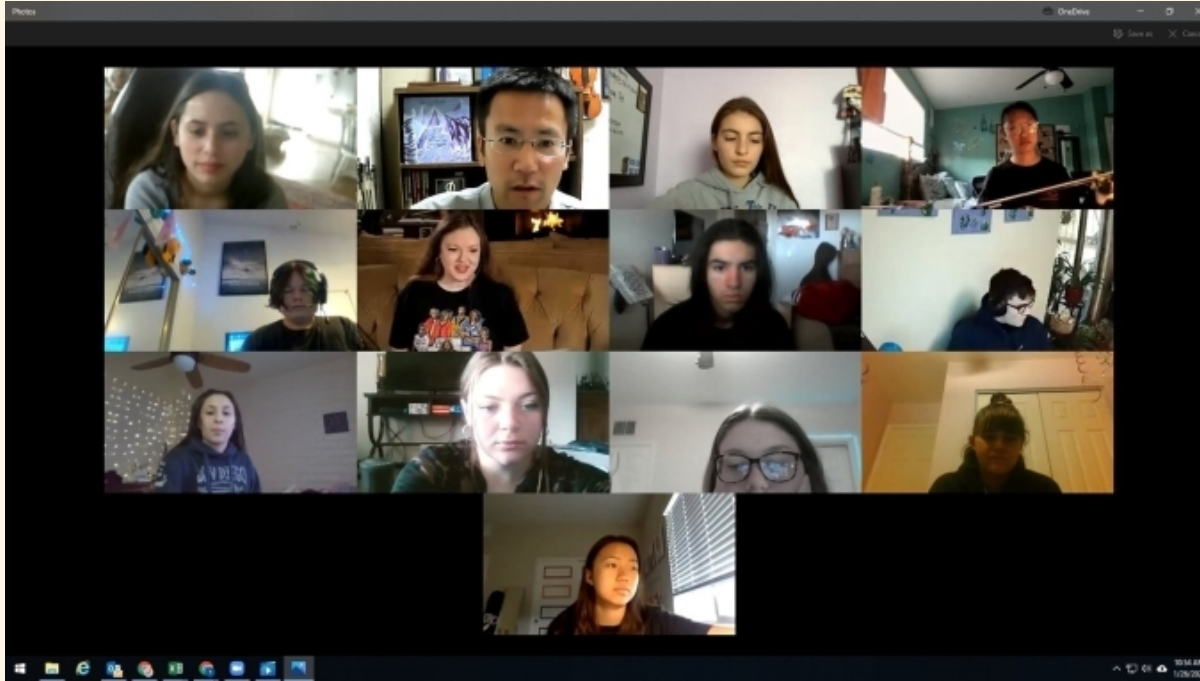


For Love of Reading Week, staff from school libraries across the District, including Stephanie Quimby-Greene from Rio Vista Elementary, shared some of their favorite books. Find their recommendations on our Facebook page.





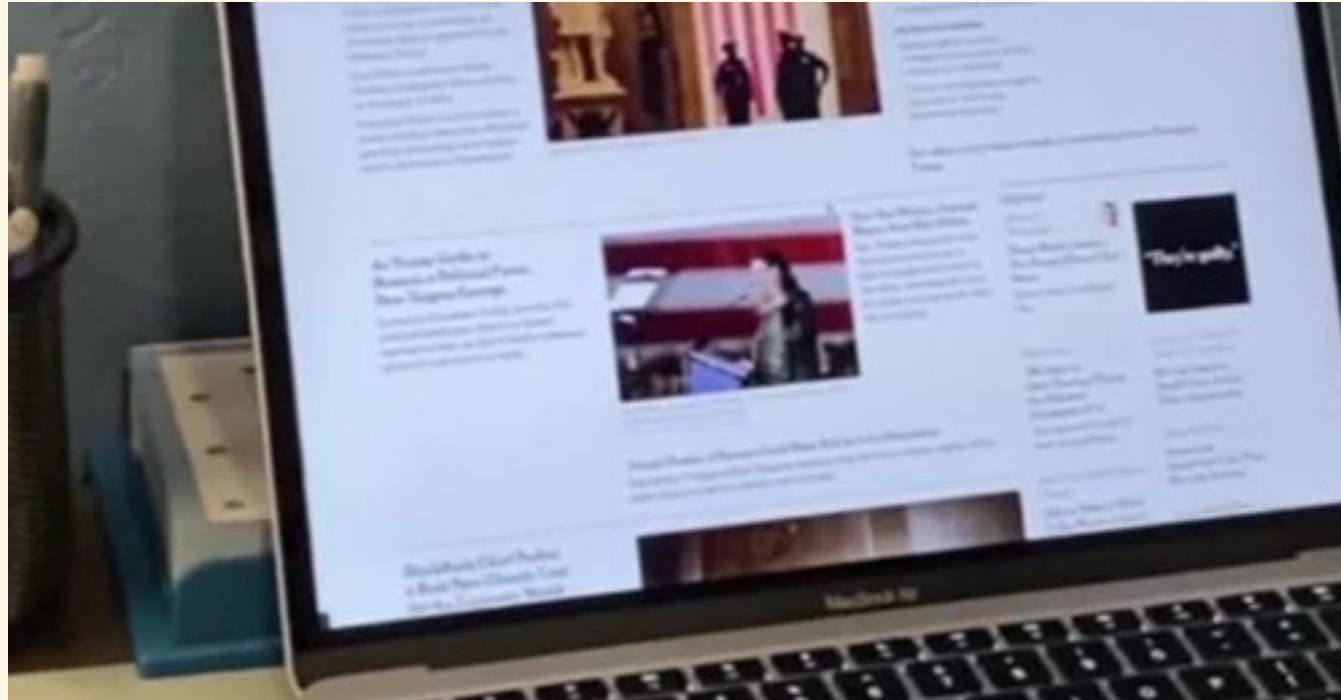
From Our Schools



Canyon del Oro High School Symphony Orchestra students had an amazing guest visit them on January 29. Rachel Barton Pine, a world-famous violinist, shared her story. Including, how she started the Music by Black Composers Project. She performed Deep River and Louisiana Blues by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, an Afro-British composer.



From Our Schools



Mr. Luke Howell's Journalism class at Ironwood Ridge High School teamed up with KGUN-9 to publish a story for National News Literacy Week in late January. The story focused on misinformation on social media, a most important topic in these times.



Thank you



We are grateful to the volunteers from Casas Adobes Congregational Church. They packaged up food from the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona for the Keeling Elementary School community.



We also want to thank the Food Bank for making a huge delivery to Prince Elementary and Amphi Middle School. The schools held a mobile food pantry event to distribute the food to families.



From Our Schools

It's Rodeo Week, and like many of our schools, Innovation Academy is finding ways to celebrate, even though the rodeo was canceled! These photos are from the kindergarten hoedown.





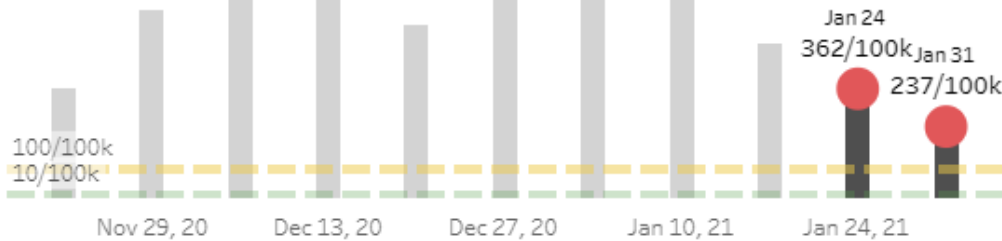
A friend of Painted Sky Elementary took this picture of the sunrise over the school on February 1. There's no question that the school's name is fitting!

Update on Pandemic Conditions and February 15 Hybrid Reopening

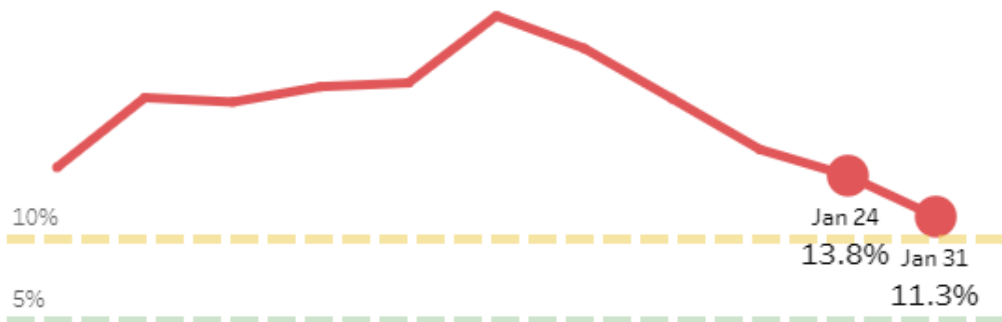




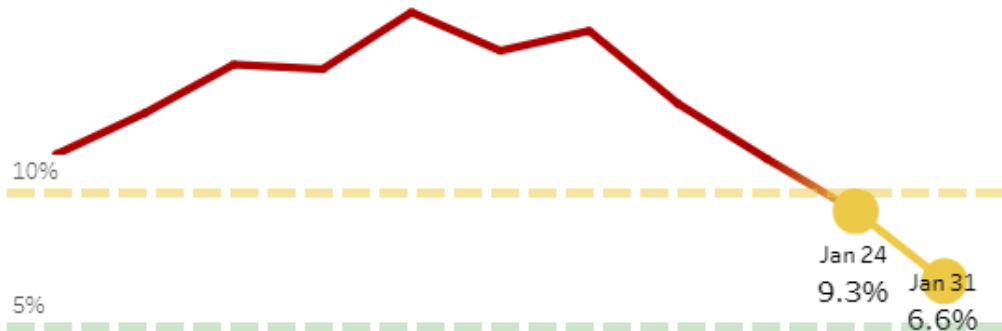
1) Cases per 100,000 individuals



2) Percent positivity



3) Hospital visits for COVID-like illnesses in the region



Cases per 100,000 of Pima County Population:

- January 3: 835
- January 10: 679
- January 17: 506
- January 24: 361
- January 31: 237
- Nov 22: 361
- Nov 29: 622
- Dec 6: 720
- Dec 13: 796
- Dec 20: 570

Percent Positivity

- January 3: 21.7%
- January 10: 18.6%
- January 17: 15.5%
- January 24: 13.8%
- January 31: 11.3%
- Nov 22: 14.3%
- Nov 29: 18.5%
- Dec 6: 18.2%
- Dec 13: 19.2%
- Dec 20: 19.4%

Hospital Visits for COVID Symptoms

- January 3: 14.8%
- January 10: 13.0%
- January 17: 10.6%
- January 24: 9.0%
- January 31: 6.6%
- Nov 22: 11.4%
- Nov 29: 12.9%
- Dec 6: 14.7%
- Dec 13: 14.6%
- Dec 20: 16.7%

Data released by PCHD as of 2-18-2021





Cases over two consecutive weeks (with complete reporting of cases)

Percent Positivity

COVID-19 like illness

Criteria not met

Progress

Criteria met

Lab Testing Availability and Utilization

Adequate hospital bed capacity to care for 2X the current COVID cases (+ surge) – Statewide

Sufficient Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Emergency Responders

Criteria not met

Progress

Criteria met

Timely case investigation

Testing of symptomatic contacts within 48 hours

Facilities/support for patients who can't be discharged home – Statewide

Criteria not met

Progress

Criteria met



Why We Reopened in Hybrid

- We have worked very closely with the Pima County Health Department.
- While county and state dashboards currently indicate that districts should remain in a remote setting, PCHD supports our move back to hybrid because of:
 1. our continuing work and consultation with them;
 2. our mitigation strategies and efforts;
 3. the low transmission rates within our schools and, generally, within all schools in Pima County;
 4. lower transmission rates within our general populations (zip codes); and
 5. the effectiveness of our case investigation and responses.
- Everyone agrees: children should be in school *to the extent possible*.
- More and more research: the “extent possible” is expanding.



Research is Supporting Reopening

- The metrics alone now only tell part of the story
- We know so much more now – constant evolution
- Last Time:
 - Shared CDC report regarding reopening's across the country.
 - Several studies reviewed – all showing that spread in schools is rare and is to be distinguished from community widespread.
 - Majority of school spread, nationally, is attributable to social gatherings and events outside of school settings, and school athletics.





More Research is Supporting Reopening

Ohio Study by several universities and medical research organizations:

Looked at the question:

If a child in a supervised setting was in close contact (defined as within six feet for 15 minutes by CDC) to another child with COVID-19 and both children were wearing masks properly, did the close contact child need to stay at home to quarantine?

In other words: Does spread occur in known exposure situations when masking is implemented with fidelity in schools?





More Research is Supporting Reopening

Ohio Study: Why look at the question at all?

- The need to quarantine some students is clear.
- The appropriate definition of a “close contact”, which determines who needs to be in quarantine, is less clear.
- In early 2020, the CDC established the close contact definition as a person that is within 6 feet of a person with diagnoses of COVID-19 for at least 15 minutes, regardless of mask usage by the case and contact.
- Since the close contact definition was established, mask usage has been widely recommended, implemented, and supported as effective in epidemiological studies.
- So, experiential data begged the question: *In settings where mask usage is high, and the masks are worn appropriately, can the definition of close contact be modified to account for appropriate mask usage by both the positive case and the contact?*



More Research is Supporting Reopening

Ohio Study:

- Nine (9) Ohio school districts throughout the state broadly participated in the study, and seven (7) participated in COVID-19 testing.
- Those schools were permitted to choose whether to have close contact children quarantine at home or be allowed to remain in school with regular testing.
- Two comparison groups were also included:
 - For all grade levels: comparison children were selected from the same grades as the close contacts (other class group).
 - And for elementary schools: *additional* comparison children were selected from children in the same class who were not close contacts (same class group).
- Close contact children were scheduled to be tested four times over two weeks (14 days). Comparison children were scheduled to be tested twice over two weeks. The test used was the Abbot Binax Now Ag test.
- The Binax Now test has published rates of sensitivity and specificity of 97.1% and 98.5%, respectively.



More Research is Supporting Reopening

Ohio Study Findings:

- 1,494 tests were performed on 727 children. Overall, 21 children had a positive test for COVID-19.
 - In the close contact children: 2.9% (15/524) had a positive test for COVID-19.
 - In the other class group 3.5% (6/172) children had a positive test.
 - In the same class group 0% (0/31) had a positive test.
 - The rate of COVID-19 in high schools was similar to the rate in elementary schools.
- In teacher surveys, about half of the teachers expressed concerns about changes in policies related to quarantining of children who were close contacts but wore a mask appropriately.
- Parent and student surveys identified considerable exposure of children outside of the home, such as extracurricular activities and friend groups. These exposures often occurred without mask usage.
- Qualitative interview data from school superintendents indicated an overriding theme of balancing education, student safety, and concerns relating to the pandemic's impact for equity issues, poverty, food insecurity, digital access, and neighborhood and parental dynamics.



More Research is Supporting Reopening

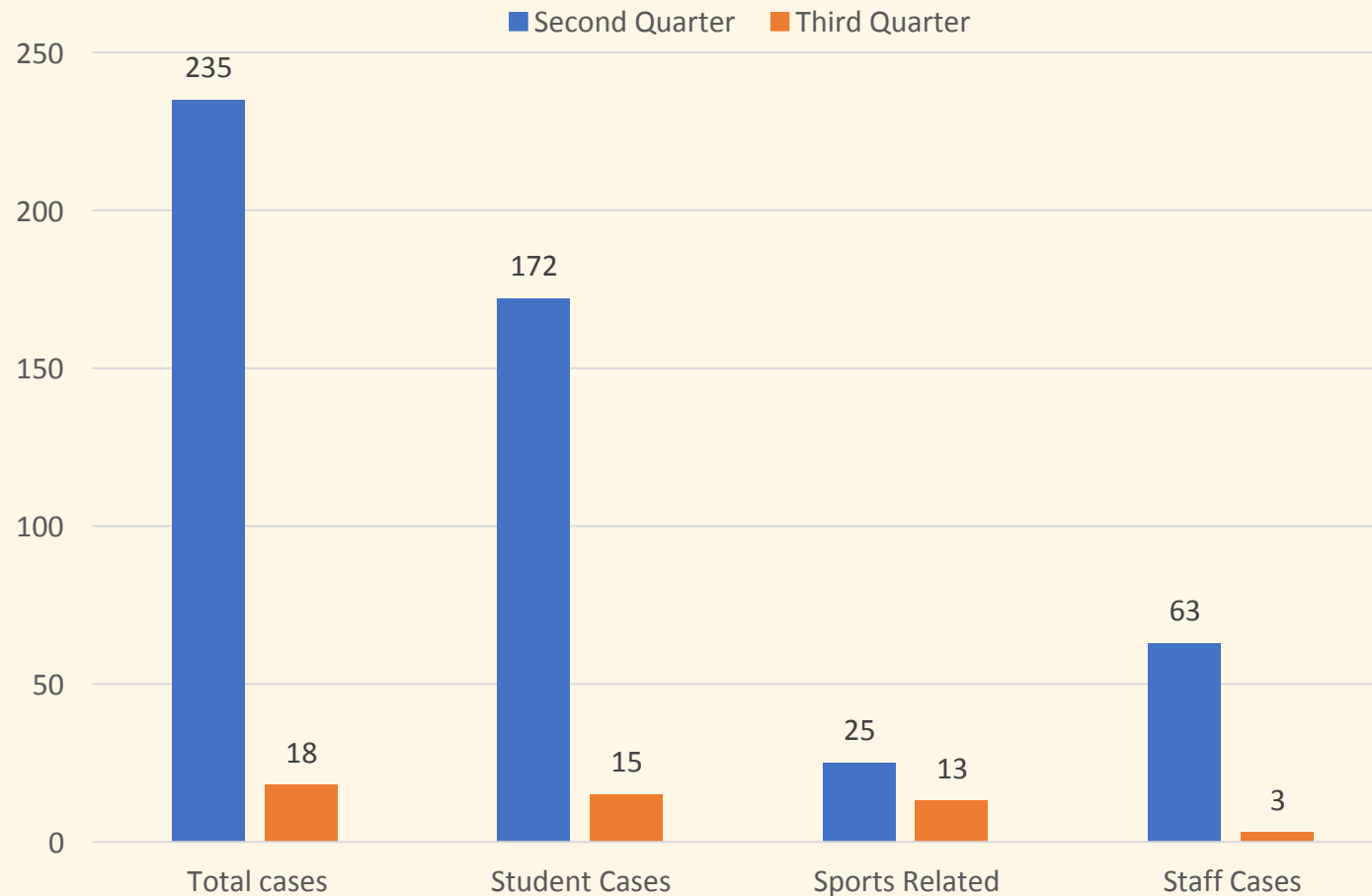
Ohio Study Implications:

- Children who were close contacts and appropriately masked had rates of COVID-19 positivity that were similar to children with no known COVID-19 exposure in school.
- The COVID-19 rate in the comparison group suggests exposure came from community transmission outside the school setting. The rate was consistent with the findings in the parent survey, which identified considerable exposure of children outside the home.
- The permitted alternative to quarantining could be done safely because of the mask and distancing protocols in the schools, combined with the testing program for close contact children.



Our Experience: Amphi COVID-19 Stats

Below is the data showing Amphitheater COVID-19 cases when the District was open in hybrid for the second quarter and the data thus far in the third quarter. **NONE** of these cases originated in our classrooms.



Our experience:

- Time and time again, students who have been close contacts only by virtue of being within six (6) feet of a positive case individual at school, and who have subsequently been quarantined, eventually returned to school from quarantine without ever becoming positive.
- Only three (3) cases of classroom spread have occurred in all of Pima County.
- Athletic events and social activities outside of school (among students *and* adults) remain significant factors in community spread, but no more than general community spread itself.
- There have been no confirmed cases of student to staff spread.



Next Steps: New Testing Opportunities

- We have obtained CLIA Waiver to become an independent COVID-19 testing site.
- We are one of a handful of Arizona school districts provided the opportunity to implement Binax testing of staff and students in our schools.
- We are going to be exploring this option as an additional strategy to keep our students and staff safe while perhaps also expanding our capacity to expand our current learning model(s).



Next Steps: Can We Reopen Further?

We remain committed to being guided by scientific and medical guidance, while also remaining determined to provide greater educational access and outcomes for our students to every extent possible.

Our Common Goal should therefore be to reopen in full in-person learning mode as soon as possible.

Our common question is how soon can we do that? Can we, for example, do so after Spring Break, on March 22, 2021?



Next Steps: Factors in Reopening in Full Mode

- We are examining two different approaches: phased-in or all-student implementation of full reopening.
- If we do reopen more fully, we must continue to provide choices for families. But with limited resources, choices too must be limited. So, we will seek and consider input from our families and we will examine whether additional choices can be offered. Another survey will be sent to our families next week. Once families make a choice, we will need them to remain committed to their choice(s).
- Input from our staff: how to reopen more fully in a safe and effective manner. We will also be issuing a staff survey next week, as well as seeking other input from employee representative groups through focused and consultative processes.
- Any reopening will be contingent upon continuing fidelity in the implementation of our successful mitigation and contact tracing efforts.
- Continuing vaccination program progress for our staff.
- Consideration of relevant and crucial data: we need to see continued low rates of transmission in our schools, partnered with continuing declines in community wide metrics.
- Continuing support from the Pima County Health Department of our mitigation plan and its implementation.
- Compliance from our families, staff and students with our mitigation protocols.





Questions and Comments?

