



**Southern Ute Indian Montessori Academy**  
**Department of Education**

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August 14, 2020

To: SUIMA Parents/Guardians and Families  
From: SUIT Education Department  
Cc: Executive Office and SUIMA School Board

Dear SUIMA Families,

While the Southern Ute Indian Montessori Academy (SUIMA) Administration and Staff were looking forward to greeting our students next week, the Southern Ute Tribal Council (SUIMA School Board), SUIMA Administration and the Southern Ute Incident Management Team (IMT) have determined it is in the best interest of both students and staff to delay the start of the school year to August 31, 2020 and offer only a remote learning option until the tribal "Stay at Home" Order has been modified and the risk for contracting the coronavirus is dissipated.

The results of the Parent/Guardian survey also contributed to the decision to postpone the start of school by one week and limit school options to remote learning only. 71% of parents responded that remote learning was the best option for their family while 23% responded they would prefer the on-campus model. Tribal leadership would like to acknowledge the wishes of the SUIMA families that responded to the survey.

If the current "Stay at Home" Order is modified or a "Safer at Home" Order is issued, SUIMA may be permitted to offer an on-campus learning option. If the decision is made to offer on-campus learning, SUIMA Administration will communicate changes in learning modalities to Parents/Guardians with adequate time to make a change to a student's learning option. SUIMA will continue comprehensive check-ins with students throughout the remote learning option. Check-ins will include both social-emotional and academic learning and development.

The decision to only offer remote learning was not easy; however, the health and safety of SUIMA students and staff is the greatest concern for Tribal Council, SUIMA Administration and the IMT. As schools across the United States have opened classrooms, positive cases of the coronavirus disease have increased. The effects of COVID-19 are unknown at this time, especially in children. Parents/Guardians should feel comfortable sending their student to a safe classroom setting where precautions are in place to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19.

SUIMA will host in-person classroom orientation the week of August 31 through September 4, 2020. The orientation will provide introductions, explain how remote learning will be conducted, provide a demonstration of online learning tools (including log-in instructions), and answer any questions. Chromebooks will be available to Primary and Lower and Upper Elementary students; Parents/Guardians should request a Chromebook during the orientation. SUIMA will use Google Classroom to deliver Remote Learning lessons. Online academic programs such as Freckle and Lexia will be accessible for K-6 grade.

SUIMA will continue to work on a schedule for households with multiple students who have a limited number of devices available at the same time. As a friendly reminder, enrolled Southern Ute tribal members can access the Computer Purchase Cost Share program. For more information on the program, please contact Mrs. Ellen Baker at 970.563.0235 or via email at [esbaker@southernute-nsn.gov](mailto:esbaker@southernute-nsn.gov). For students who do not checkout a Chromebook or who do not have the means to learn remotely, SUIMA will prepare hard-copy packets on a weekly basis. Please contact SUIMA Administration if your student will require a hard-copy packet and to receive the packet as part of the pick-up process.

Please continue to stay informed with accurate information by going to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> or the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) website at <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/2019-novel-coronavirus>. Please follow the Southern Ute Indian Tribe on social media and regularly view the Tribe's websites to observe the most updated tribal information.

We are in this together, and together we can fight COVID-19. Continue to stay home, wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds, clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, practice social distancing, wear your face covering when leaving your home for essential activities and stay connected with your loved ones.

I hope each and every one of you remain healthy and happy. While this was not the start of the academic year I had hoped for, I would like to wish our students the best wishes for the upcoming school year. I would also like to remind Parents/Guardians to contact your teacher and the SUIMA Administration for resources while you navigate the new role of Parent/Teacher. Thank you for your understanding and patience while we make these necessary changes to protect our students, but most importantly thank you for continuing to see the importance of education and your willingness to step into this uncharted territory.

For questions or concerns, I will be available to assist in every way possible.

Warmest Regards,

*Mari Jo Owens,*

SUIMA Principal

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