

May 1, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

As professors of education at the University of Arizona, we would like to lend our strong support for the proposed *RESTART S.M.A.R.T.* plan. What is important about this plan is that too often, people in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are uttering the refrain that they “cannot wait to get back to business as usual.” The problem with this is twofold:

1. For many of our low-income and racial minority students in the state, the COVID-19 pandemic is a source of incredible trauma and stress. While everyone is feeling the effects, the negative impacts are disproportionately concentrated on underserved communities.
2. To go back to “business as usual” is to ignore the lived realities of these students.

Therefore, any plan to reopen the schools needs to explicitly engage and support students who are being traumatized by this pandemic, while offering targeted support to those most adversely affected. We understand this need intuitively. For example, in the wake of the Columbine shooting, there were multiple supports offered (e.g., grief counselors) to the survivors of this horrific tragedy. In this instance, it would have been asinine to think that these students could go back to “business as usual” without taking account of this acute event. What is remarkable about this proposal is that it takes a similar approach to post-COVID-19 school reopenings.

This plan uses a research-informed approach to intelligently and specifically concentrate resources on the students who are in the most need during the time of this pandemic. It does not negate the needs of others, but rather, it is an acknowledgement of the disproportionate amount of trauma and suffering that is occurring within these specific communities.

In short, *RESTART S.M.A.R.T.* correctly begins with the point that our low-income schools with high concentrations of racial minority students are going to be overwhelmed by the non-academic needs of those returning. From this acknowledgement, it creates a comprehensive strategy to support students, staff, and teachers, in a proactive manner in what is inevitably going to be a difficult transition back to school. Our schools, in particular Title 1 schools, were already under-resourced before the pandemic, and this unprecedented pandemic will likely overwhelm those supporting our students if we do not offer them additional resources and support. Additionally, the absence of this type of targeted resource allocation will only serve to exacerbate existing inequalities in education throughout the state.

If education is our purpose, we have to tend to the specific needs of students. This plan accomplishes that and we, the undersigned, strongly encourage you to consider and adopt it moving forward.



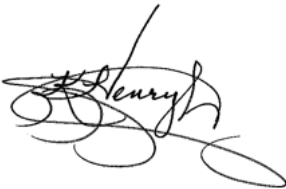
Sincerely,



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