

# GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY

*Executive Office of the Governor & Lieutenant Governor*

"Gila River Strong"

*Stephen Roe Lewis*  
Governor



*Monica Lynn Antone*  
Lieutenant Governor

Dear School Board Members and School Administrators,

Thank you all for your participation in our meeting last Wednesday and for providing the updates related to the virtual operations for each of your schools. Please know that I appreciate all the work each of you along with your staff have done throughout this most difficult period of time. No one has escaped untouched and all have been impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

As you are all aware, from the beginning of the pandemic, our overriding goal has been to take actions that protect the health and wellbeing of the Community and to prevent our Community from becoming a hotspot like so many other tribal nations.

With that goal in mind, it was decided that virtual learning was the best course of action after we saw an alarming increase in cases among our youth – especially those in the 0-11 and 12 -19 age ranges. I want to assure you that it is the goal of the Executive Office and Community Council to return to in-person classes as soon as possible because we recognize that in-person education is the preference for students, parent and guardians, teachers and school officials. The current data, while improving, still remains a cause of concern in the Community, especially among our children who are not yet of an age to be vaccinated. There is encouraging news on that front, and a decision on vaccinations for youth aged 5 to 11 is expected in the coming weeks. For the time being however, our Tribal Health Department, Gila River Health Care, the Chair of the Education Standing Committee and the Executive all agree that the best course of action is to extend virtual learning for all schools in our Community through October 29th in accordance with Clause 16 of Revised Executive Order No. 12.

This will allow us to examine the trends in cases for several more weeks and will allow schools to prepare for the ultimate return to in-person learning which is what we are all working toward.

I want to thank each of you for your commitment to our students during this pandemic and for creating the best learning environment possible in a very difficult situation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "SRL", written over a faint circular watermark.

Governor, Stephen Lewis  
Gila River Indian Community