



An Open Letter to School Governing Boards in Arizona

To whom it may concern:

We are reaching out to you on behalf of the Arizona Chapter of the American Choral Directors Association and the Arizona Choral Educators (a constituent organization of the National Association for Music Education). ACDA represents over 30,000 choral directors from across the nation, and NAFME represents over 130,000 music educators. Within our Arizona organizations, members represent public and private K-12 schools/districts and colleges.

AzACDA and ACE strongly advocate for School Performing Arts Ensembles, particularly choirs, to be preserved and supported in the reopening of our state and our schools. The health and safety of our students and teachers should always be paramount and the unique environment of the choral community should be both retained and reimaged.

On behalf of our constituents we advocate for these needs:

- The necessary skills that choral directors teach can and should be taught in a remote or hybrid environment. Students in our ensembles learn *required state standards* and foster a sense of community that is critical to their development in this time of uncertainty.
- Performing arts ensembles, particularly choirs, need to preserve their enrollment and retain their autonomy to design rehearsal instruction and performances around the recommendations of medical professionals and scientific research.
- Schools may need to provide the opportunity for choirs to rehearse remotely or to include remote learners in their live classroom instruction.
- Choral directors require the autonomy to implement preventative health policy guided by research and scientific study if and when their choirs return to in-person rehearsal. These policies may go above and beyond what local officials recommend or other classes on campus require.
- The rehearsal space used for in-person instruction may require creative rethinking of space, fans, ventilation and filtration systems as research indicates.
- Personal protective equipment for singers and choral directors may need to be provided as research indicates.

ACDA and NAFME are both currently sponsoring and supporting research studies on the safety of choral singing with potential exposure to Covid-19. We strongly encourage Arizona schools to use this information in guiding their policies for choral rehearsals and performance and advise that we wait for conclusive results to structure our in-person learning.

We implore you to include performing arts teachers and coordinators in the decision making process and the implementation of policy regarding the return to school. Choral directors and performing arts teachers are critical stakeholders in the education community and fundamental to the culture of our schools. There is now a wealth of new resources, training, aids, and support that have come about in the last few months to assist choral directors in continuing their programs under any circumstances. The AzACDA and ACE executive boards have published online and print resources for all of our constituents and any choral directors who are not members of our organizations.

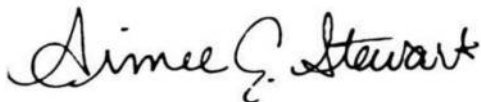
We recognize that, while some of the typical functions of the choral performing ensemble may experience disruptions this year (i.e. field trips, after-school performances) it is critical to the educational environment to allow the students in these ensembles a means, either digitally or in person, to pursue musical and social-emotional development. As per the Arizona Department of Education's recent publication [*Roadmap for Reopening Schools*](#), performing arts instruction meets several of the criteria for identifying essential functions of a local educational agency (pg. 10.) Namely, performing arts instruction "is essential for teaching and maintaining the educational environment" and "cannot suffer a significant interruption."

As we look ahead and move forward to the reopening of our schools, we recognize that the arts will require special attention, navigation and innovation. The Executive Boards of AzACDA and ACE, and our members, desire to contribute, advocate, problem-solve and think creatively with schools, governing boards, the ADE's Round Table Advisory Committee for Arts Education, our fellow performing arts educators, and the government officials of our state.

We look forward to our Arizona schools and districts taking a leadership position in considering the importance of the arts and humanities in all of our lives; always, but more importantly, in times of grief and uncertainty. We would welcome and appreciate the opportunity to lend our expertise, resources, and voices to collaborate and work together for the good of our constituents, students and artist-citizens.

Most Sincerely,

Aimee Stewart



President - ACDA - Arizona Chapter
Artistic Director - Chandler Children's Choir

Matthew Flora



President - Arizona Choral Educators
Director of Choirs - Campo Verde HS - Gilbert

Ted Gibson



President-Elect - ACDA - Arizona Chapter
Director of Choirs - Gilbert Classical Academy

Kirk Douglas



President-Elect - Arizona Choral Educators
Director of Choirs - Boulder Creek HS - Anthem