

Diamond Children's Opens Hospital School Program

TUCSON, Ariz. – It's a brand new school year for thousands of Tucson students, including pediatric patients in [Diamond Children's](#) new Hospital School Program launching this fall with help from the University of Arizona College of Education.

Diamond Children's at [Banner - University Medical Center Tucson](#) has hired longtime Tucson teacher Ashley Brock as a full-time education specialist to help K-12 patients keep up with schoolwork while they are in the hospital.

Diamond Children's treats approximately 4,000 inpatients a year, including dozens of children with cancers or serious conditions requiring many weeks of hospitalization or outpatient therapy. In one recent two-week period, Diamond Children's patients missed 200 school days, said Kara Snyder, RN, director of pediatric nursing.

Brock's support will vary depending on each child's unique health and educational needs. For patients hospitalized for only a few days, this may mean conferencing with the patient's regular school teacher or reviewing homework assignments.

Long-term patients face special educational challenges. State law provides that children out of school for three or more months receive homebound instruction of four hours a week, and many patients receive tutoring from their homebound teachers while they are at Diamond Children's. But fitting lessons into a demanding schedule of therapy and procedures is not always possible.

In those cases, Brock will work as needed with homebound instructors to help keep patients on track academically. She may provide additional bedside instruction or assessments and coordinate the child's re-entry into the regular schoolroom.

With 17 years of experience teaching in Amphitheater, Tanque Verde and Tucson Unified school districts and a master's degree in special education, Brock is up for the challenge. She considers this hospital assignment a dream come true. "Just in the short time I've been here, I see such a tremendous need and opportunity," she said. "I am looking forward to serving as a liaison to patients' regular teachers and as a resource for families."

Banner Health operates hospital school programs at two of its Phoenix hospitals, [Cardon Children's Medical Center](#) and [Banner Thunderbird Medical Center](#), but it was UA College of Education graduate student Jackie Picton and faculty member Michelle Perfect who got the Hospital School Program "jump started" this school year at Diamond Children's.

"We know that many children with extensive or repeated hospitalizations fall behind in their studies or do not perform at grade level," said Perfect, an associate professor in disability and psychoeducational studies, a licensed psychologist and a certified school psychologist. "We saw such a gap, and knew that the college could help."

They met with Diamond Children's leaders and child life specialists and came up with a proposal for more formal, coordinated approach to keep hospitalized students from falling behind in their studies.

"This hospital school program is an innovative effort that will help children remain connected with their school community while they are hospitalized," said developmental specialist Sydney Rice, MD, of the UA Department of Pediatrics, who consulted on the project. "Our educational specialist will facilitate communication between the family and school to manage school worries for the child and family. The program will also help school staff support children when they return to school after their hospital stay."

The first step was the hiring of a full-time, in-hospital educational expert, and they served on the hiring committee that selected Brock. The next step is to extend Brock's reach by instituting internships of College of Education graduate students to provide extra teaching, counseling, evaluation and psycho-social support. They hope to introduce science, technology, engineering, arts and math events at the hospital school and use technology to enhance instruction and link Diamond Children's patients to their regular schoolroom.

"We see many avenues for collaboration," Perfect added. "It's part of the UA's mission as a research institution to link best practices with practical solutions to improve the lives of Arizonans. This partnership is going to make a difference for thousands of Arizona children."

Both the UA College of Education and the Banner Health Foundation are accepting donations to support the new Hospital School Program at Diamond Children's. To make a donation to the college's research, support services and graduate education program at the hospital school, please contact the College of Education Development

Office at coe-gifts@email.arizona.edu or (520) 621-3413. Donations to the Banner Health Foundation support day-to-day operations of the hospital school and may be made by emailing supportkids@bannerhealth.com or calling (520) 694-6196.

About Banner Children's – Diamond Children's Medical Center

Banner Children's – Diamond Children's Medical Center provides pediatric care for children, from newborns to teens. Services include emergency care, heart disorders, traumatic brain injury, autism and developmental disorders, cancer, diabetes and endocrinology, gastrointestinal and nutritional disorders, neurological problems, orthopedics, intensive care needs and more. It is the only pediatric medical facility in Arizona connected to an academic research facility – the [University of Arizona Steele Children's Research Center](#) – where physician-scientists conduct groundbreaking basic science and translational research to advance children's health. For more information, visit www.BannerChildrens.com/DiamondChildrens.

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