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About 50 days ago, I proudly stepped into my new role as Superintendent of the Scottsdale Unified School District (SUSD). The community forums I attended during the candidate selection process had demonstrated that I would be working with a well-informed and involved community and an experienced and dedicated administration. I also knew that Arizona's budget was in turmoil and presented severe economic challenges to SUSD.

As I entered the District, I found a community and staff ready to roll up their sleeves, have their voices heard at the legislature and help SUSD get through this incredibly difficult time with understanding, support and dignity. This spirit of cooperation and collaboration makes SUSD a great school community.

During my first 50 days, I have accomplished a great deal.

- I have limited time spent in my office in favor of "office hours" in schools and other facilities. These visits have allowed informative conversations with students, parents, teachers and each principal.
- I have enjoyed productive meetings with Scottsdale Mayor Lane, Senator Leff, area Chiefs of Police, the Scottsdale Area Chamber of Commerce and two REALTOR organizations.
- I was honored to participate in the SUSD Foundation's annual fundraising event that helps fund many of the District's important programs and activities.
- I have gratefully accepted invitations to speak before several community organizations.
- The Governing Board approved the renewal of the K-3 Override for placement on the November ballot. This override is merely an extension of one approved by Scottsdale voters in 2005. Renewing the override will not increase taxes.
- I have arranged for District leaders to rotate meeting at schools, visit classrooms and listen to student and teachers to discover new tools to improve service to our students

In the upcoming school year, we will focus our energies on two major initiatives. We will conduct a review of our strategic plan by creating focus groups at each school site. While our District is making great progress in its continuous improvement efforts, we believe more direction from stakeholders will help us achieve enduring greatness. The result will be the development of new vision and mission statements based on the beliefs and values of our entire community. We will also form a committee comprised of a broad base of stakeholders to examine the "Use of Time." They will consider daily school schedules, the school calendar and other issues to determine how we can operate more efficiently within the constraints of a challenging budget.

I have found SUSD to be an outstanding school district with an outstanding group of teachers and administrators. The level of parent and community volunteers in our schools is extraordinary. The District is receiving immeasurable support from a growing list of partnerships with local businesses and community organizations. These are among the things that led my wife, Sharon, and me to accept this position and move to this wonderful community. You have my commitment that I will do all I can to continue to improve student achievement, District operations, communications with our stakeholders and service to all our citizens.

Sincerely,

Dr. Gary T. Catalani
Superintendent
Scottsdale Unified School District