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March 2019

Greetings, Scottsdale Unified School District Families and Friends,

Spring has sprung, and I hope you and your students are re-energized for the last quarter of the 2019-20 school year. For those of you who will celebrate a high school graduate this year, graduation ceremonies for all five of our high schools will take place the evening of Thursday, May 30. That is also the last day of school for all other grades.

This is a big week for students in grades 4, 8, 9 and 10, with state Science testing taking place. Annual AzMERIT tests in Reading, Writing and Mathematics will follow in the month of April for grades 3 - 11. These standardized tests allow us to assess the effectiveness of the instruction that has taken place this school year and, in conjunction with benchmark testing throughout the year, to see how your student is progressing toward meeting Arizona standards. While these tests provide us with important information on student, school and District performance, the results are not the only measure by which we determine student progress. How can you help? Please continue to do the things that you do at home to ensure your children's success: make sure assignments are completed on time, that your students get a good night's rest and eat a good, healthy breakfast, and that they arrive on time on test days, just like every other school day.

Before we left for spring break, we were able to share with employees that our Governing Board had voted unanimously to include a *5% pay raise for all employees* in the District's proposed 2019-2020 fiscal year budget. Further, the Board agreed that the district will absorb a projected 6% increase in medical insurance premiums next year, which would have reduced the impact of the salary increases if the District passed them along to employees. We know that we operate in a competitive environment for talent, and these decisions by the Board to invest in our employees allows us to compete for the best and brightest talent available. It also sends a message to current employees that we appreciate what they do, day in and day out.

More recently, the Governing Board approved the purchase of 7,500 Lenovo Yoga Chromebooks for middle and high school science students. With the state's new science standards requiring students to do more investigating and data gathering, it is imperative that our students be equipped with updated technology. The purchase, made possible with 2016 capital override funds, moves our district closer to the goal of having a 1:1 ratio between students and computers.

Also at its monthly meeting last week, the Governing Board selected CORE Construction of Phoenix to provide pre-construction services for the Cherokee Elementary School redevelopment project. CORE will work with the District and the architects from Orcutt Winslow to create a feasibility study that will compare the cost between renovating Cherokee's existing buildings and building new ones. The Board expects to receive the study, as well as a recommendation on which path to pursue, at its April 11 study session and make a decision on that recommendation at its April 16 regular monthly meeting.

I have been very pleased with the collaborative nature this project has taken, and want to thank the Cherokee community of neighbors, parents and students that has worked closely with school staff to outline specific goals for a redeveloped campus. Keep up with the Cherokee project at susd.org/CherokeeProject and all Governing Board meetings at susd.org/Board.

Lastly, we are so proud that Desert Canyon Middle School sixth grader Omkar Bharath will represent the state of Arizona in the 92nd Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C., in late May. The four-time, SUSD Bee champ won the Arizona Spelling Bee this past weekend. Congratulations, Omkar, and good luck in the national competition!

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Kriekard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Dr. John Kriekard
Superintendent