



Mohave District Annex
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Dear SUSD Community,

As cases of COVID continue to rise in our community, county, state, and nation, many people have expressed questions and concerns related to why Scottsdale Unified School District has not made the decision to return to online learning at this time. As noted in prior communications, we are monitoring a number of factors with respect to when it is advisable to take this action, recognizing that any decision to return to remote learning is accompanied by other issues and challenges as well.

This week the **case counts** for our 15 zip codes **exceeded 100/100,000** for the 2nd consecutive week, putting that benchmark back in the red category. The **positivity rate** for our zip codes is at **5.86** (weighted average), which remains in the yellow category. These are the two primary benchmarks reflecting community spread. However, we are also reviewing data in each of our buildings, including the number of positive COVID cases in students and staff, and whether there is evidence of in-school transmission. Our current data still reflects relatively low numbers of positive cases in [each building](#). In fact, for the period ending 11/12, we had **9 buildings with 0 active cases reported** (Anasazi, Copper Ridge, Desert Canyon Elementary, Hohokam-Yavapai, Hopi, Ingleside, Kiva, Pima, and Pueblo). Another **11 buildings only reported 1 new active case this week** (Cheyenne, Cocopah, Coronado, Desert Canyon Middle School, Desert Mountain High School, Laguna, Mohave, Mountainside, Navajo, Sequoia, and Tonalea). At the high school level, Chaparral, which experienced a high number of cases a month ago, reported only 5 new cases this week, which is evidence that behavioral changes can result in reduced transmission. The highest number of active cases in any building was 5. **In total, we have 39 positive cases representing .21% of the total number of students and staff on our campuses.** Additionally, the fact that we are not seeing significant transmission of COVID within buildings signals our mitigation strategies at school are working. According to the health department, schools returning to virtual learning without other community-wide prevention measures are unlikely to prevent community spread. Given the importance of education and the relative effectiveness of our current mitigation strategies within our schools, we are taking a measured approach to managing our response in consultation with the Maricopa County Department of Public Health.

However, I am concerned about the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday and the increased exposure resulting from travel and large gatherings. While holiday traditions are important, the increased risk has been noted by public health officials. CDC has provided guidance with respect to mitigation strategies for [Thanksgiving](#). An article published in the [Washington Post](#) this summer illustrates how widespread and impactful COVID transmission can be following interstate travel.

In order to support our commitment to keeping our schools open as long as we can do so safely, Scottsdale Unified School District is requesting that families who choose to travel for Thanksgiving or host large gatherings (ten or more non-family members) to voluntarily quarantine for fourteen days after returning home, in order to ensure the incubation period has passed before returning to in-person learning. We recognize this is an unusual request, but the alternative course of action would be to implement a two-week shift to virtual learning for all buildings in order to reduce the potential risk associated with holiday travel.

These are trying times for our students, families, and staff. This past week, we learned encouraging news about increasingly effective therapeutics and a possible vaccine. While there is still much we do not know, it is clear that we can only slow the spread of the virus by taking action collectively as a community. Wearing masks, frequent handwashing, maintaining physical distance, and staying home when sick, are all important to reducing the transmission of COVID. I know many families have already made difficult choices and sacrifices, and I am hopeful we will all pull together for the next month as we wrap up the first semester of what has been an extraordinarily challenging school year.

Thank you for your partnership and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Scott A. Menzel, PhD
Superintendent