



August 18, 2021

Hello, Scottsdale Unified School District Families,

We write today to advise you of an important update to the district's COVID-19 mitigation plan that will go into effect later this week.

Beginning this Friday, August 20, 2021, face masks will once again be required for all SUSD students, teachers and staff when they are indoors on district property. In light of the now more than 2,100 SUSD K-12 students either in quarantine or at home with COVID-like symptoms, the Governing Board voted yesterday to go back to a mitigation strategy that helped maintain in-person instruction last school year.

The data that we have collected in the first 10 days of school led to this recommendation. Although we have families with views on both sides of the issue, we believe that requiring masks has the potential to slow the spread we are currently experiencing. Our priority is to keep each campus open for in-person learning. The rapid increase in cases, evidence of spread on our campuses and the Maricopa County Department of Public Health (MCDPH) [quarantine requirements](#) have disrupted in-person learning for too many students, and at this rate could jeopardize the ability to continue offering in-person instruction in some classes or grade levels. During the last school year, we saw very little evidence of on-campus spread of COVID when all of our students and staff were masked.

The new mask mandate is scheduled to end on September 29, 2021, the date that the new state law prohibiting school districts from issuing such rules becomes official. Should the new state law be determined by a court of law to be unenforceable or unconstitutional, the Governing Board has authorized Dr. Scott Menzel, SUSD Superintendent, to maintain or extend the mask policy until such time that it, in consultation with MCDPH, is found to be no longer necessary to protect in-person instruction. SUSD is in compliance with all current state and federal laws, and is committed to continuing to be so.

In conjunction with this decision, the Governing Board also authorized the Superintendent to work with the MCDPH on a plan to modify the quarantine requirements. More specifically, the proposal is to allow fully masked students who are deemed a close contact, per MCDPH definition, to continue attending school, provided they are **not symptomatic**. Close contact notification will continue to be provided so that the student and family can monitor for the emergence of COVID-like symptoms.

Medical and other reasonable accommodations to the mask requirement will be considered. A formal, online process for submitting such requests is being created and will be available before the end of the week. Decisions on those requests will be considered as soon as possible, but may not be able to be reviewed in time for Friday, the first day masks will be required at schools again.

Some concern has been raised regarding Governor Ducey's new COVID-19 Educational Recovery Benefit program and whether SUSD will be negatively impacted by its requirements because of the Board's decision. SUSD's share of federal funds through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) is separate from the Governor's discretionary federal funding, and SUSD will not be impacted by the governor's new program.

As we hope you can appreciate, all school districts nationwide are in a difficult position with this new school year: the delta COVID-19 variant continues to circulate broadly, vaccination eligibility for students is still restricted to those age 12 and above, and the enactment of mask mandates intended to protect students and teachers is seen by some to be a restriction on personal freedoms.

We are charged with balancing all of those factors to provide safe and healthy environments for your children so that they may continue learning in person. It is a difficult balancing act and one that we hope you understand and support.

Thank you.

Scottsdale Unified School District [Cabinet](#) and [Leadership Team](#)