



September 3, 2021

Hello, Scottsdale Unified Families,

As we head into the first holiday weekend of the new school year, we are energized by the hard work and accomplishments we see going on in classrooms by both our students and teachers. This week, for example, as part of the progress toward becoming a Primary Years International Baccalaureate school, Anasazi Elementary students completed a month-long school and at-home Kindness Project. At Tonalea K-8, 35 students were inducted into the National Junior Honor Society and more than 2,000 PBIS points were distributed to middle school students for demonstrating AVID college and career strategies. And at Saguaro High School, engineering, fine arts and robotics students began Innovation Center collaborations on a Scottsdale Center for the Arts partnership project that will be featured at the city's annual Canal Convergence event in November. We are so proud of the extraordinary and creative ways in which SUSD students display their learning.

You may have read recently about the results of last spring's state testing. In every category, SUSD students performed at a higher rate than the state average by double-digit margins, with one exception. Our students scored among the top three among neighboring Valley districts (including Chandler, Deer Valley, Paradise Valley, Peoria, Cave Creek, Gilbert, Higley and Queen Creek), with the exception of 6th and 10th grades. Some have pointed out that only 60% of our 3rd grade students were proficient in reading. Upon closer inspection, you will see that the statewide average was 35% and that 60% is tops (tied with Cave Creek) among the districts listed above. While test scores represent a single moment in time, we are not satisfied with where we are. SUSD is committed to constantly improving our delivery of world-class, future-focused learning, as our district vision calls for, and bettering our students' standardized testing performance.

Community Update

We are grateful to be seeing the trend in COVID-19 [community transmission](#) beginning to level off and, in some cases, falling. While cases per 100,000 are still over 200 and in the high transmission range, the % positivity for our 15 zip codes has dropped below 10% over the past week, falling into the substantial transmission category. Even better news is that the number of active cases on SUSD school campuses dropped again this week, from 167 last week to [64 this week](#). This is the lowest number since the end of the first week of school last month.

As a result of the mask requirement and fewer cases, the number of students who were required to quarantine this week dropped by more than 75% from the prior week. This means more of our students have been able to remain in school, learning, and participating in extracurricular activities. While navigating these challenges at the beginning of the year was not what any of us wanted or expected to have to do, it is encouraging to see that deliberate action in partnership with our staff, students and your families is resulting in trend data that is moving in the right direction. We know that masks do not prevent all risk, but when universally and properly worn, they have been shown to slow the spread, and the trends we're seeing in our schools seem to confirm that.

It is unfortunate that we continue to hear reports of students being called out for not wearing a mask and of parents reporting students seen unmasked while outdoors. As a reminder, masks are required only when students and staff are indoors. A student observed indoors not wearing a mask may have received an accommodation and may not be required to wear one. Outside, there is no mask requirement. Let us agree that no student should be shamed for wearing or not wearing a mask, and let us focus instead on supporting all students' learning.

For the Record

We continue to receive reports of inaccurate information circulating in our community and want to set the record straight here. Some of the most recent issues seem to stem from Public Records Requests (PRRs) and people not having the full context or choosing to use only partial information to fit a narrative. Integrity is one of our core values, and we will continue to provide honest and open responses.

- A number of emails came in last week regarding the 489 students who left SUSD between August 4 and August 20 (the information had been requested through a PRR). While the report implied that 489 students had left since school started, in fact, a majority of that number failed to report to school at all.

Historical enrollment patterns for the beginning of the school year reveal a normal pattern of students moving away or selecting a different school over the summer, but not notifying the district. Additionally, under Arizona law, students who have 10 consecutive days of unexcused absences are required to be unenrolled. This year, some of these adjustments did not get reported until after the school year's initial 10 days, explaining the majority of the enrollment changes reflected in the 489 number provided in the PRR response. The chart below illustrates the trends over the past four years.

School Year	Day 1	Day 10	Difference
2018-2019	23821	23089	-732
2019-2020	23442	23135	-307
2020-2021	22670	22423	-247
2021-2022	22602	22260	-342

We did, however, lose 118 students from August 16-27, with 103 of their families indicating they were departing to attend another school. We are concerned when students choose to leave, particularly when it is for reasons other than having moved away from the district. Last year, we instituted a formal exit survey process to identify the reasons why families leave SUSD, and we are currently collecting that information for this school year. Our district is proud of the educational programs we are able to offer to our SUSD families and disappointed when those choices do not meet the needs of some of our families.

- A video surfaced recently that suggests that information regarding the results of the recent pooled testing parent interest survey that Superintendent Scott Menzel shared at the Governing Board meeting on August 24 was inaccurate. In his remarks to the Board, he noted that the district had received more than 6,500 responses. The claim in the video, based on information obtained through a PRR, is that only 660 parents responded. What was not shared in the video is that there were actually two surveys, the results of which

were both provided in the PRR response. The first survey had 6,000 respondents; the second had 660. The second survey – the one that garnered 660 responses - was launched an hour after the first one when we learned that that one of our elementary schools had been inadvertently left off the menu of school selections. The questions on each survey were the same, and the combined results number 6,660. Overall, the data indicated that roughly 46% of our parent respondents did not support pooled testing, 10-11% were undecided, and between 43 and 44% were supportive of this additional mitigation strategy.

Education should be a place where the community comes together to share jointly in the responsibilities of preparing our students to strive, thrive and succeed, where we work together to achieve common goals on their behalf. To let this shared mission devolve into divisive, polarized positions does nothing to advance students or our community. Let us be clear: there is absolutely nothing wrong with asking questions about decisions that have been reached, recommendations that are being made or approaches the district is taking to not only address current circumstances, but to also foresee outcomes down the road. We appreciate and encourage those conversations and look forward to engaging in them with you. We request that same respect in return.

Athletics

A week from tomorrow, our middle school athletes take over the gymnasiums at Arcadia, Coronado and Saguaro High schools and the baseball fields at Coronado and Chaparral Park for the annual Middle School Fall Sports Festival. Girls teams will take to indoor volleyball courts for some serious setting and spiking, while boys teams take to the diamonds for exciting baseball action. It makes for a fun morning, and you're invited! See the festival schedule [here](#).

We wish you a safe, extended holiday weekend and look forward to seeing your students again on Wednesday, Sept. 8.

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

Community COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Resources

SUSD continues to partner with [Embry Health](#), which operates three, convenient COVID testing sites in the SUSD community:

- Oak Learning Academy campus, 7501 E. Oak St., Scottsdale - open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday
- Chaparral Business Center, 8840 E. Chaparral Rd., Scottsdale – open from 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., 7 days a week
- Phoenix Camelback Seventh-day Adventist Church, 5902 E. Camelback Rd., Phoenix – open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday thru Friday

COVID-19 vaccinations are widely available throughout our community at both stand-alone pharmacies, such as Walgreen's and CVS, and at pharmacies located inside major grocery stores. They also do COVID testing on-site.

Albertsons: <https://www.albertsons.com/pharmacy/covid-19.html>

Costco: <https://www.costco.com/covid-vaccine.html>

CVS: <https://www.cvs.com/immunizations/covid-19-vaccine?icid=cv-home-hero1-link1-coronavirus-vaccine>

Fry's: <https://www.frysfood.com/rx/covid-eligibility>

Ranch Pharmacy: 10769 N. Frank Lloyd Wright Blvd., Scottsdale

Safeway: <https://www.safeway.com/pharmacy/covid-19.html>

Walgreens: <https://www.walgreens.com/topic/promotion/covid-vaccine.jsp>

Other community vaccination resources:

NOAH - Neighborhood Outreach Access to Health: <https://noahhelps.org/covid-vaccine/>

Maricopa County Department of Public Health COVID-19 Vaccine

Locations: <https://www.maricopa.gov/5659/COVID-19-Vaccine-Locations>

Arizona Department of Health Services COVID-19 Vaccine

Locations: <https://www.azdhs.gov/covid19/vaccines/index.php#find-vaccines>