



December 3, 2021

Hello again, SUSD Parents and Guardians,

We hope your Thanksgiving holidays were joyfully celebrated with family and friends. The final two weeks of the semester that we embark upon next week are crunch time for our high school students, with final exams set for December 15-17 (these are early release days for them). We especially want to wish our seniors well, as it is their seventh semester grades that post-secondary institutions will especially be looking at in making admission decisions.

'Tis also the season for school spelling bees, as well as fine arts productions, with school and learning community band, orchestra and choral concerts, and middle school theater productions taking place. We look forward to seeing and hearing the culmination of our talented students' commitment to their craft! We want to remind you that masks are still required through the end of the semester for indoor SUSD events such as these. As always, pandemic or not, if your student or you are not feeling well, we request that you please not attend. There will many other opportunities in the future.

### ***For the Record***

The Scottsdale Police Department (SPD) issued a [press release](#) yesterday regarding the findings of its investigation regarding a Google drive. The SPD concluded that there were no criminal infractions and has closed the investigation. At this time, we are not aware of any other law enforcement investigations. The district's independent forensic audit into the possible misuse of district resources to create, maintain or modify the drive in question is underway. That investigation is being overseen by the district's general counsel to ensure its independence.

Some of you who reside in the district may have recently received a "Know the Facts" flyer at your home. Many of the statements in that flyer are factually incorrect. Should you have any specific questions about its content, please direct them to us through [Let's Talk](#).

### ***Thought Exchange for 7<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grade families***

SUSD launched a [Thought Exchange](#) recently for 7<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grade students, families and staff to revisit the conversation about Class Rank and the Latin Honor System of Academic Recognition. Thank you to the 1,199 participants so far and the 1,063 comments and 15,865 ratings they have provided. A formal presentation of the themes and trends that emerge will be given to the Governing Board in January. Initial thoughts include questions surrounding college admissions and trends in moving away from the class ranking system to the Latin Honor System. [Research on the topic](#) is part of the Thought Exchange, but anyone is welcome to review it. The Thought Exchange closes next week, on December 7, so if you are the parent or guardian of a 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade student, [we encourage you to weigh in](#). Your voice is important, and your contributions are valued.

### ***Encore presentation: Not Alone***

In case you missed October's presentation of this important film about youth mental health and suicide awareness, a special screening is set for this Sunday, December 5, at Harkins Shea 14 Theatres, 7354 E. Shea Blvd., Scottsdale, at 12:15 p.m. As we head into the stressful season of finals and holidays, this special screening for middle school and high school students and parents will be followed with a youth panel discussing mental health, stress and resources. Mental

health professionals will be on site for anyone needing support. The showing is hosted by Kid in the Corner and Mental Health America of Arizona. Register for the event [here](#).

### ***SUSD Celebrations***

Congratulations to two members of SUSD's Class of 2022! Zachary Astrowsky from Chaparral High School and Yeju Srivastava from Desert Mountain High School are among the 80 high-achieving Arizona seniors to be named Semifinalists in the annual Flinn Scholarship Program. The Flinn Scholarship is the state's most prestigious scholarship program, offering a no-cost, Honors College education at an Arizona public university, as well as study abroad and unparalleled mentorship opportunities. We wish Zachary and Yeju the best of luck as they take the next steps to become Flinn Finalists.

If you're a fan of competitive robotics, you are going to want to stop by the Mohave Middle School gym tomorrow for its annual FIRST LEGO League regional qualifier since 2020. We are excited to be back in person to see students "have the hardest fun they will ever have." This true, student-led community event is organized by the Saguaro Sabercats Robotics team, with volunteers from other SUSD high schools and SUSD alumni. The opening ceremony is at 8 a.m., followed by intense robot action at 9 a.m. Teams from around the Valley, including several SUSD elementary and middle school teams, will be competing for spots in the State finals in January at Arizona State University.

### ***SUSD in the Community***

This week, Cocopah Middle School wrapped up a wonderful, community-minded event, turning over more than 9,000 packages and cans of food and non-perishable items to the city of Scottsdale's Vista del Camino food bank. The effort was headed up by the school's Student Council. Great job, Mustangs!

Up the road at Cheyenne Traditional School, a recent drive spearheaded by its STUGO (student government) organization netted more than 1,400 pairs of socks and underwear for students at their sister SUSD school, Hohokam Elementary. Thank you, Roadrunners!

By now, you probably have heard of the Scottsdale Police Department's lovable Golden Retriever crisis response dog, Rocket, who is based with his "dad," School Resource Officer Devon Lines, at Chaparral High School. This week, SPD's crisis canine program received a city of Scottsdale "Thoughtful Innovation" award. Initial funding for Rocket was provided by Chaparral's Association of Parents and Teachers and the SUSD Foundation. Plans are in the works to add canine 'units,' as they are called (we just call them 'warm and fuzzy') to more SUSD schools. Rocket and the canine crisis response program were nominated by Chase, SPD's English Labrador Retriever. Watch his too-cute nomination video [here](#)!

### ***Athletics***

To wrap up the week, there are big doings on high school football fields around the state. #2 Chaparral hosts #3 Williams Field in the 6A semifinals tonight, while in the 5A conference, #4 Desert Mountain heads down the hill to take on #1 Horizon. Tomorrow, the Open Division semis see #5 Saguaro visit #1 Hamilton. Go, SUSD!

And on Monday, SUSD hosts the All-District athletic banquet for our outstanding fall sports athletes in badminton, cross country, football, golf, swim and dive, and volleyball. Thank you to the Scottsdale Charros, the SUSD Foundation and AZ Sports Medicine for their support of our high school student athletes!

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