



December 10, 2021

Dear SUSD Families,

As we wind down this first semester of the 2021-2022 school year and celebrate our students and their outstanding achievements of the past 18 weeks, we must take a moment to acknowledge a recent news event that is concerning to all of us.

School Safety

This past week has been a traumatic one for the Michigan families directly impacted by the Oxford school shooting. It is an unfortunate reminder to all of us of the complexities associated with school safety, as well as our need to always be vigilant in the implementation of our district safety and security protocols. SUSD takes a comprehensive approach to student safety, and in this age of social media and its ability to spread information – and disinformation – like wildfire, you need to know that the district, school leadership teams, teachers and staff, School Resource officers, guidance counselors, social workers and community specialists take any and all potential threats against our students and our schools with the utmost seriousness.

Although school safety is not their responsibility, students are often the first to become aware of such threats, and that is why we encourage them to report anything out of the ordinary or suspicious to a trusted, on-campus adult. We call it the “see something, say something” rule. Your students should be well aware of this practice. We encourage you to have a conversation with them about the necessity of immediately reporting to a school administrator or teacher the possession of any weapon, drugs or vaping devices on campus. Bringing a weapon onto a school campus is a violation of state law, city ordinances and the school district's Code of Conduct. Please take this opportunity to remind your students of the law and that violations of it are serious matters with serious consequences. Witnessed incidents of bullying, harassment, and intimidation should be reported as soon as possible, as well. Working together will help ensure that our school campuses remain safe and nurturing places for students to learn and for our staff to work.

SUSD Celebrations

Students in Bill Williams’ Pre-AP Algebra I class at Tonalea K-8 are the first students in the state and among the first in the nation to pilot the Prisms of Reality VR (virtual reality) program. The Prisms program places students in tactile, real-world, problem-solving scenarios. Students begin with concrete situations and examples that build into a deeper understanding of abstract math concepts. After completing their first learning module last week, students asked thoughtful questions and provided valuable feedback. We are looking forward to their using the devices again next month and to the upcoming training of Algebra I students at Coronado High School. We are excited to see the increased growth and engagement that results from students’ use of this amazing, new technology.

As you have often heard us remark, our SUSD community is one of this district’s great strengths, and the willingness of our former students to share what they’ve learned in their professional lives is welcomed and appreciated. This week, Coronado High School hosted alum Bob Burns, who spoke to students about career and educational opportunities at his local

employer, General Dynamics. Mr. Burns was a member of the school's award-winning JAG (Jobs for Arizona Graduates) program when he was a Coronado student. As Principal Amy Palatucci says, "Once a Don, always a Don!"

And speaking of former students, a band of Saguaro High School graduates and current Sabercats robotics students were the backbone this past weekend of the First Lego League Challenge qualifier tournament held at Mohave Middle School. Fourteen robotics clubs from around the Valley, including six SUSD school and school-community teams, took part in the competition.

The rookie RoboBUFFS team from Navajo Elementary was the only elementary school to qualify at the Mohave event for next month's state championship. Coached by teachers Brandy Wilson and Julia Maisel, this team of 4th and 5th graders' solution to cargo ship blockages won them the tournament's Innovation Project. The ElectroBotz, a group of 8th grade Cocopah Middle School students, grabbed the Champions Award and are also headed to Tempe in January. Other SUSD teams performed admirably: the Cocopah Brick Builders were named the tournament's Rising Stars, Tonalea K-8's Tiborgs received the award for Engineering Excellence and the Desert Canyon Middle School Jigawatts won the Motivate award. Sabercat senior Cydney Lowrie was named the event's Outstanding Volunteer. Putting on such an event is a massive undertaking, and we are so appreciative of our past and present students' continued commitment to robotics programs in SUSD! Take a peek at some tournament photos [here](#).

SUSD in the Community

Next Saturday, December 18, you'll want to tune in to Arizona's Family, Channel 3, for the annual Fiesta Bowl Parade. The Desert Canyon Middle School marching band and Spiritline is the only middle school invited to participate in this year's parade and will be part of the pageantry down Central Avenue in Phoenix. Go Mountain Lions! Also of SUSD note, the Grand Marshall of the parade is none other than local rock star Alice Cooper who, if you didn't know, is a former SUSD parent!

Athletics

State football championships are on the line tomorrow at Sun Devil Stadium as the Chaparral Firebirds look to defend their 6A title over the Highland High School team they vanquished a year ago. Game time: 12 p.m. At 5 p.m., the Saguaro Sabercats take on their 2019 Open Division championship opponents, Chandler High School. Find event and ticket information [here](#). Go Birds! Go Cats!

As we reported last week, the first All-District athletics banquet since March 2020 was held this week. It was wonderful to honor our outstanding high school student athletes who led their teams in our fall sports of badminton, cross country, football, golf, swim and dive, and volleyball. Based on our [photo album](#), they looked pretty happy to be there, too!

Have a wonderful weekend,

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