



December 17, 2021

Hello, SUSD Parents and Guardians,

Thank you for your steadfast commitment to your students this semester. Working in close partnership with you to support the teaching and learning needs of Scottsdale Unified's 22,000 pre-kindergarten through 12th grade students is our privilege. We know that there have been times during the past four months that this school year has seemed more difficult than all of last school year, but through working together, we are ending on a high note! Your students have been able to resume most of their 'regular,' first semester activities, such as fine arts concerts, middle school sports, marching band competitions and robotics tournaments, and have fared spectacularly well – and that has been rewarding for everyone.

As we head into a well-deserved, two-week break, we want to take this opportunity to refresh you on what the district's approach to masking will be when we see your students next on January 4, 2022: SUSD will not require, but will ***strongly recommend*** that face masks be worn while indoors on our campuses. Please note that in accordance with federal law, masks will be still be required on all school buses.

Our goal has always been to keep schools open and have our students learning in their classrooms. Your cooperation with our mask mandate has helped us achieve just that – *thank you*. Upon our return from winter break, we expect to transition from a district-wide approach to a building-specific approach to address the impact of COVID-19. Individual sites may deploy enhanced mitigation strategies on a case-by-case basis. The parents of close contacts will be informed and as long as their student remains asymptomatic, the student may continue to attend school. Symptomatic close contacts will be expected to recover at home and follow the return-to-school process, in consultation with the school nurse.

To further support the district's mitigation strategies, students and staff are requested to stay home if they are exhibiting any COVID-like illness symptoms, even if it only seems like allergies. Students will continue to be sent home if ill and submission of a negative test will be required to return to school.

SUSD Celebrations

We want to congratulate our new and renewed **National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT)**. Certification is a massive undertaking on top of teachers' regular duties, and we are proud that SUSD is the teaching home of more than 80 NBCTs, who have taken it upon themselves to bring the very best teaching practices into their classrooms - and to your students.

Desert Canyon Middle School Social Studies and Gifted teacher **Shannon Stapley** is SUSD's newest NBCT. Congratulations, also, to the 11 SUSD educators who have successfully completed the re-certification process:

Kelly Acridge, 4th grade Comprehensive Gifted, Redfield Elementary School; **Abbey Bobbett**, Reading Specialist, Laguna Elementary School; **Karen Brisbane**, 6th grade Math, Cocopah Middle School; **Jennifer Dukelow**, Math, Arcadia High School; **Erin Hansen**, 2nd/3rd grade, Scottsdale Online; **Danette Imafidon**, S.H.I.N.E., Cocopah Middle School; **Curt Robinson**, 2nd

grade, Desert Canyon Elementary School; **Stephanie Shamy**, Gifted Specialist, Laguna Elementary School; **Julie Sparks**, P.E., Desert Canyon Elementary School; **Bert te Velde**, Science, Mohave Middle School; and **Karen Wiebel**, Kindergarten, Sequoya Elementary School.

These last few weeks have seen students engaged in all sorts of fun, seasonal activities. Along with students around the globe, Cherokee Elementary students spent an hour online and ‘unplugged,’ taking part in various coding activities, with the assistance of 3rd – 5th grade Coding Ambassadors. Copper Ridge 5th graders spent weeks preparing for mock municipal roles during their big visit to Junior Achievement’s BizTown in Tempe. PANDA and SCA students at Navajo designed and built gingerbread houses with their 5th grade ‘Village Buddies,’ while kindergarteners designed and constructed hedgehog hibernation habitats. At Pima Elementary, gingerbread recipes were put to the test as kindergarteners used the yummy holiday bread to count, create characters and read. At Tonalea K-8, 7th grade Honors students wrapped up their Social Studies unit on industrialization and imperialism with an inventive board game of their own creation. School Spelling Bees were conducted at our elementary and middle schools. Winners head to the District Bee at Saguaro High School on January 28.

Sprinkle in Spirit Weeks, Pajama Days and Jingle Jogs, and SUSD students are ready to spend some time with their families!

SUSD in the Community

SUSD students are integral parts of their greater school communities and many of them create meaningful opportunities to give back to them. One such student is Desert Mountain High School’s Zack Okun, who was named Scottsdale Leadership’s Jenkins Youth Leadership Award winner at the organization’s annual awards banquet last week. [This video](#) about Zack’s work is inspiring and such a great testament to him, his family (his mother, Michelle, is a guidance counselor at Desert Mountain and founded the school’s Robotics Club) and the opportunities he has run with at Desert Mountain. And he’s only a junior!

We also want to note the contributions of other SUSD students who recently helped make our community better. The **Kiva Elementary** Student Council recently organized a coat and warm clothing items drive for Makenna’s Coats for a Cause, collecting 1,100 warm items!

At **Coronado High School**, JAG (Jobs for Arizona Graduates), the National Honor Society and Cheer team delivered holiday gifts to students at David Crockett Elementary School in neighboring Balsz Elementary School District in Phoenix. The Dons student body really gets into this annual event! At **Sequoya Elementary**, the kindergarten classes rounded up socks of all colors and sizes for homeless families. And **Chaparral High School**’s Art Club revived a 25-year tradition founded by retired art teacher Marcy Warner. Called “Breakfast with Santa,” more than 40 underprivileged students gathered at Phoenix’s Harmon Library last week for a grab-and-go breakfast and photos with the jolly old elf and received donated toys, as well as a special coloring book designed for them by Art Club students.

We are very proud that our students choose community service as a worthwhile endeavor and appreciate their overwhelming kindness to children and families in the Valley in need.

Athletics

We can now proudly say that Saguaro High School is the best high school football team in Arizona! In a nail-biting, back-and-forth tussle Saturday night at Sun Devil Stadium, our [Sabercats emerged triumphant](#) with a 20-15 win over the defending state champion Chandler Wolves in the Open Division title game. Congratulations, Sabercats, Coach Jason Mohns and

his outstanding coaching team. Saguaro finished the 2021 campaign with a 12-1 record and is ranked #13 in the nation by MaxPreps. Take a glimpse of some great game photos [here](#).

Earlier in the day, our Chaparral Firebirds did not fare quite as well in the 6A championship game, falling to Gilbert Highland by a score of 31-10. The two teams matched up in last year's title game, as well, but the Firebirds were the winners that day. Coach Brent Barnes' team finished the season with a 9-5 record. We know the Firebirds will be back next year with their sights set on another state crown! The game photo album can be found [here](#).

It may be winter break, but tomorrow, our Spiritline teams from Arcadia, Chaparral and Desert Mountain will compete in the annual AIA Game Day state competition at Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 1826 W. McDowell Rd., Phoenix. Arcadia's qualifying round is set for 10:25 a.m., Desert Mountain's at 11:55 a.m. and Chaparral's at 1:20 p.m. Find the complete schedule [here](#). Ticket sales for all AIA state championship events are conducted digitally through the [GoFan website](#). The qualifying rounds and finals can also be viewed by subscribing to the [NFHS Network](#).

If you follow high school athletics, you know that the first of two National Letter of Intent days was conducted last month. It is the official process through which high school student athletes commit to attend and play their chosen sport at the college level. Once again, SUSD athletes are headed for the next level of competition. It is in this light that we recall the athletic careers of two notable alums, Lauren Stivrins, Class of 2016, Chaparral High School, and Christian Kirk, Class of 2015, Saguaro High School.

Lauren can still be found roaming the nets of volleyball courts. A senior now, she is the middle blocker for the University of Nebraska. Her #10 Cornhuskers play for the NCAA women's volleyball national championship tomorrow against Wisconsin. Last night's semifinal matchup against Pitt was a four-set thriller, with Lauren teaming up for the [final, winning block](#). Tomorrow's game will be shown live on ESPN. Her younger sister Amber, also a Lady Firebirds volleyball standout, plays for the University of Georgia.

If you are an Arizona Cardinals fan, you are probably well aware of wide receiver Christian Kirk's pedigree, to date. Local TV station ABC 15 recently stopped by Saguaro to chat with Coach Mohns and some of Christian's former teachers, who remember him as a good student and an even better person. Take a look at the story that aired earlier this week [here](#).

We know how hard our student athletes work in the classroom, as well as before and after school, during summers and vacations, to hone their skills. It doesn't get any easier in college or in the pros, so to see two SUSD grads such as Lauren and Christian succeed in their post-high school careers speaks highly to the teachers, coaches, classmates and schools that supported them along the way.

In closing, we hope that you are able to take time to reflect and rejoice with family and friends this holiday season. We look forward to seeing your students again in the new year, refreshed and ready to learn!

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