



January 28, 2022

Greetings again, SUSD Parents and Guardians,

We hope your students have had another great week of learning! We topped off the week today celebrating SUSD's top elementary and middle school spellers at the annual SUSD Spelling Bee at Saguaro High School. Mohave Middle School 7<sup>th</sup> grader Arrow McGinty correctly spelled the word *tomtate*, the name of a family of fish found in the waters off Florida and the West Indies, to take the Bee title. Arrow will be joined at the Region 2 Spelling Bee next month by Echo Canyon 7<sup>th</sup> grader Leah Bailey, Cocopah Middle School 8<sup>th</sup> grade student Isabel Helgemoe, Pueblo Elementary 5<sup>th</sup> grade student Pete Krist and Desert Canyon Middle School 8<sup>th</sup> grader Tate Meyer. Congratulations, spellers, and good luck on February 11!

This week also marked the 100<sup>th</sup> day of the 2021-2022 school year, which always finds our elementary students, especially, engaged in all kinds of fun mathematics and counting exercises. The 100<sup>th</sup> day of each school year is an important one for school districts, as the enrollment on that day determines future state funding levels, but it is current school year funding that is front-and-center now - please read on.

### ***Aggregate Expenditure Limit***

At Tuesday's Governing Board meeting, Superintendent Scott Menzel reviewed a provision in the Arizona Constitution known as the [Aggregate Expenditure Limit](#), or AEL. [This document](#) outlines what the AEL is, why it is a significant issue at the moment and what is on the horizon. More specifically, the State Board of Education annually reviews aggregate expenditures, using a prescribed formula, for all traditional public schools (charter schools are not included since they did not exist when the Constitutional provision was adopted by voters in 1980). If the limit is exceeded, school districts across the state are required to reduce their budgets by an equal percentage *unless the legislature acts to override the AEL*. This has happened two other times in state history, and both times the legislature overrode the limit.

The current legislature is required to act by March 1 if it is going to override the limit this year. If it fails to do so, every school district in Arizona must revise their expenditure budget by roughly 16% by April 1. *For SUSD, 16% amounts to just over \$27 million dollars.* That amount of money is equal to what it costs us to provide 52 days of instruction. Only the legislature has the power to intervene.

It is important to note that this is not a revenue problem: the money is available and has been appropriated by the legislature. Rather, it is a product of an archaic constitutional provision, coupled with the convergence of two other shifts impacting the formula's calculation — the significant loss of enrollment during the first full year of the pandemic and the inclusion of Prop. 301 funding in the overall calculation. We encourage you to take the time to read the briefing so that you understand just how serious this situation is. If we are required to cut \$27 million dollars in the final months of the school year, it will impact not only this year, but also future years.

### ***COVID Mitigation***

We are thankful to see the continuing downward trend in COVID cases this week, both at our schools and in the community. Take a look for yourself on the District's [COVID dashboard](#). Given this decrease, starting Monday, January 31, we will allow volunteers to begin returning to classrooms. Volunteers provide important support for many of our classroom teachers and students, so we will be happy to welcome them back! While a COVID vaccination is not required to volunteer, we require our volunteers to wear masks while indoors, just as our staff does. To become an SUSD volunteer, please follow the application process outlined [here](#). Please remember that volunteers are on campus at the principals' discretion.

As we continue to evaluate case counts against our mitigation strategies every day, we hope that the positivity rate continues to fall and that soon we will be able to make our current mask requirement for staff a strong recommendation, as it is for students. In the meantime, we are allowing elementary school students to resume eating lunch without the COVID restrictions and social distancing that has been required of them since we returned to in-person learning. These requirements were previously lifted for middle and high school students when they became eligible to be vaccinated. Since that change, we have not been able to attribute any COVID spread to cafeteria lunch periods. Nonetheless, for the time being, visitors to our campuses remain limited to instructional purposes.

### ***Celebrations***

We are excited to announce next week's launch of the **Coronado Promise**. For the past two-plus years, we have been working to identify how best to support the Coronado Learning Community and position students for post-secondary success. The Coronado Promise is a remarkable community collaboration between many of our greatest supporters and partners, including the Coronado Foundation for the Future, Scottsdale Charros, Scottsdale Community College, the City of Scottsdale and other committed community members. The Promise is this: "Together, we promise to promote early aspirations of higher education, provide funding for tuition and support achievement in higher education for the Coronado Learning Community." The community goal is to fund the first two years of higher education for eligible Coronado High School graduates and, over time, build on this across the district for our other high schools.

At this week's Governing Board meeting, we were pleased to celebrate the National Board certification and recertifications of 13 top SUSD educators. National Board certification is the most respected professional certification available in K-12 education. The certification process is designed to develop, retain, and recognize accomplished teachers, and generate school improvement nation-wide. Please help us congratulate:

- Kelly Acridge, 4<sup>th</sup> grade, Comprehensive Gifted program, Redfield Elementary School
- Jennifer Antrim, high school classes, Scottsdale Online Learning
- Abbey Bobbett, Reading Specialist, Laguna Elementary School
- Karen Brisbane, 6<sup>th</sup> grade Math, Cocopah Middle School
- Jennifer Dukelow, Math, Arcadia High School
- Erin Hansen, elementary grades, Scottsdale Online Learning
- Danette Imafidon, S.H.I.N.E. program, Cocopah Middle School
- Curt Robinson, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, Desert Canyon Elementary School
- Stephanie Shamy, K-5 Gifted Specialist, Laguna Elementary School
- Julie Sparks, Physical Education, Desert Canyon Elementary School
- Shannon Stapley, Social Studies, Desert Canyon Middle School – *NEW!*
- Bert te Velde, 7<sup>th</sup> grade Science, Mohave Middle School
- Karen Wiebel, Kindergarten, Sequoya Elementary School

To see a full list of SUSD's more than 80 National Board certified teachers and read more about this rigorous program, go to [www.susd.org/NBCT](http://www.susd.org/NBCT).

### ***National School Choice Week***

This week is National School Choice Week, and we'd like to take this moment to thank all of you who choose Scottsdale Unified for your children's education. Parents have many choices when it comes to meeting their child's educational needs, and we pride ourselves on being the premiere destination for public education and have a 125-year legacy of student success stories to prove it.

To help us celebrate our proud 125 years, we are actively looking for distinguished alumni. Please take moment to fill out this [form](#) to nominate yourself or another whom you know has gone on to distinguish themselves in their career or community, post-SUSD.

### ***School Board Recognition Month***

January is School Board Recognition Month, and we want to thank our Governing Board members for their extraordinary service to our students and community. Complex and demanding challenges come with the role, and we appreciate our Board's dedication to our district. These are extraordinary times, and while our community will not always agree on all matters, we appreciate our Board's commitment to civil discourse and its common goal of providing a world-class, future-focused education for SUSD's 22,000 students.

### ***Athletics***

Next Saturday, February 5, is the Middle School Sports Festival for flag football and girls basketball. Find the complete game schedule [here](#). Simultaneously, the first middle school cross country meet of the season will take place in and around Mountainside Middle School. Girls will start the 2.3 mile course at 10 a.m.; boys will start 30 minutes later, at 10:30 a.m.

### ***Parada del Sol***

A signature event of "The West's Most Western Town," the Scottsdale Parada del Sol, returns to the streets of Old Town next Saturday. This year's 68<sup>th</sup> edition will feature all five of our high school marching bands, several middle school marching bands, school floats and the state championship Saguaro High School football team. The parade gets underway at 10 a.m., so grab a lawn chair or a blanket, mosey on down to Old Town and find your curbside seat! The parade route is online [here](#). See you there, pardners!

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