



January 29, 2021

Hello again, Scottsdale Unified Families,

The soggy and, on the nearby mountains, snowy start to the week closes out with much to report to you. First off, we want to thank you for taking time to respond to the recent Thoughtexchanges on school calendars, proposed revisions to the district's COVID-19 metrics and next year's budget. This digital tool provides SUSD's numerous stakeholder communities with the opportunity to have robust conversations on important district matters, and we appreciate the insightful and instructive observations you share with us through it.

### **Calendars**

The SUSD Governing Board has approved calendars for the next four school years. All four years' calendars will be posted soon at [www.susd.org/Calendar](http://www.susd.org/Calendar) in both English and Spanish. We appreciate your patience while these were being developed.

### **Weekly COVID-19 Update from Supt. Menzel**

At its special meeting on Tuesday, the Governing Board approved [Building-Specific COVID Metrics](#) for the district that further clarify the process and thresholds that lead to additional consideration and, potentially, a mandatory return to virtual learning at an individual school, based on the number of active cases there. I want to thank the committee comprised of SUSD teachers, support staff, building administrators, nurses, central office administrators and our COVID specialist for the thoughtful approach taken in the recommendations to the Board.

The adopted plan enhances the system we have been using since in-person learning began in Sept. 2020, which has been to consider each school's active student and staff [COVID-19 case count](#) individually, monitor case activity in our [15 zip codes](#), and consult closely with the Maricopa County Department of Public Health (MCDPH). All of that will continue.

In addition, the new Board-endorsed plan includes case thresholds for each of our 28 campuses and creates a Virtual Evaluation Team (VET) that complements the normal, daily monitoring of school cases by our building administrators, school nurses and the district's COVID specialist, and convenes when a threshold is reached. If the VET decides virtual learning is necessary as an enhanced mitigation strategy to address a concerning spread of COVID in a school, the recommendation will be considered by the Cabinet within 6 hours. Should we authorize a return to virtual learning, staff and parents will be communicated with immediately. Virtual learning would be in effect for a minimum of 10 school days. Our revised plan has also been reviewed and is supported by our public health partner, MCDPH.

As has been stated many times, SUSD is committed to offering a safe, in-person learning environment to the families that have chosen that instructional model for their students. Our successful first round of vaccinations last weekend is just one example of our commitment to your students' and our employees' health and safety. The importance of in-person instruction to student success has been reinforced through our experiences during this pandemic, which is why establishing this additional mitigation strategy was necessary in order to ensure we avoid a major

COVID outbreak in any of our school facilities.

As you know, the district has also invested in other mitigation strategies and continues researching additional approaches to enhance student and staff safety while at school. We believe these efforts have been and continue to be effective. A recent [report](#) by three CDC researchers also outlines evidence supporting the approach we've taken to date. We also can't say enough about the teachers who have gone the extra mile to embrace new, state-of-the-art technology to bring classroom-like experiences to their distance learners.

At the same time, news continues to circulate about three new mutations in the virus, referred to as the UK, South African, and South American variants. While there are still many unknowns, it appears that all three variants are more transmissible, which is an important reminder for all of us to consistently follow the known mitigation strategies of properly wearing a mask, frequent handwashing, physical distancing, and remaining home when sick or if someone in your house is sick. While vaccinations represent a significant turning point in our battle against COVID-19, it will be some time before enough people are vaccinated to reach herd immunity, which means we cannot afford to let down our guard now and for some time to come. I want to thank you for continuing to model what we need and expect from your students and from our community in order to stay the course.

### **Tax Credit**

You support SUSD in so many ways, both seen and unseen. From making sure your students eat a healthy breakfast to helping them navigate virtual studies in the midst of a pandemic, we deeply appreciate the many contributions you make that result in your students' success. We also recognize that it has been frustrating not to be able to volunteer on school campuses for almost a year now. We look forward to the day when we can safely welcome you back!

One way you can always support your students and schools is through a tax credit contribution. Arizona law allows taxpayers to receive a dollar-for-dollar tax credit of up to \$200 for individual filers and up to \$400 for married filers, and contributions made through April 15, 2021 can still be claimed on your 2020 state tax return or roll over to 2021. Schools depend on tax credit contributions to fund programs and activities that the state and District cannot, such as the arts, athletics, field trips, tutoring, enrichment, and college and career testing. We encourage you to find out more about this win-win-win - for you, your students and their schools – on our website at <https://www.susd.org/Support>.

Thank you for your continued partnership,

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

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***Community COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing Information***

- [Arizona Department of Health Services](#)
- Maricopa County Department of Health Services –
  - [Vaccination program](#)
  - [Testing](#)
- [City of Phoenix Mobile Testing Sites](#)
- [CVS Pharmacy Retail Testing Sites](#)
- [Embry Women's Health Testing Sites](#)
- [Walgreens Pharmacy Drive-Thru Sites](#)