



February 5, 2021

Greetings, Scottsdale Unified Families,

It's Phoenix Open week here in the Valley, not to mention Super Bowl Sunday in two days' time. However you choose to observe these annual events this weekend, we encourage you to incorporate the standard public health mitigation efforts of wearing a mask; avoiding crowds, if possible; maintaining a safe social distance of at least six feet when you can't; and washing your hands often.

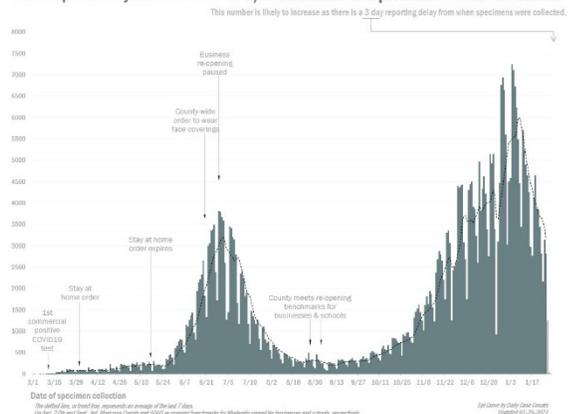
Another annual event took place this week in SUSD: the District's annual Spelling Bee! The pandemic forced our 19 school Bee winners to compete virtually this year. They each spelled the same 24 words, with Cocopah Middle School 8th grader Sruthi Vellanki taking top honors. She will be joined next week at the virtual Region 2 Bee by finalists Ekaterina Anferov, 5th grade, Sequoya Elementary School; Finley Arvizu, 7th grade, Mohave Middle School; Sama Kafa, 4th grade, Desert Canyon Elementary School; and last year's SUSD Bee winner, Emma McGreevy, 8th grade, Copper Ridge School. Congratulations, all, and good luck next week at Region!

Last month, the Governing Board approved the issuance and sale of the final \$74 million worth of school improvement bonds [approved by voters in 2016](#) to rebuild several aging elementary schools, replace high school football fields and tracks, improve school campus security and purchase buses. Current construction projects include Hohokam Elementary, which should be move-in ready in time for next school year, and Cherokee Elementary, which students and teachers are already enjoying and is nearing completion. Catch up on the Chargers' new 56th Street home [here](#).

Weekly COVID-19 Update from Supt. Menzel

The trends in our [15 zip codes](#), as well as those across the county and state, continue to decline while remaining in the substantial community spread category. This chart for Maricopa County illustrates the two periods of time where we saw significant spikes in COVID data and also shows the downward trajectory we've been on since 2 weeks after the holiday break. While this is encouraging news, with community spread remaining substantial we must continue to be diligent in following the recommended mitigation strategies.

Maricopa County has received 471,686 confirmed & probable COVID-19 cases.



Confirmed [active COVID cases](#) in our schools continue to be relatively low overall, with fewer cases this week than last week. We convened Virtual Evaluation Teams (VET) for several buildings this week, including three high schools (Arcadia, Saguaro and Desert Mountain) as a result of positive cases on athletic teams; two middle schools (Cocopah and Mountainside) as a result of active cases reaching the established threshold for convening the team, but not reaching a level that would require an automatic return to virtual learning for 10 days; and one K-8 building (Tonalea). The teams discussed the specifics of each school, considered whether there was evidence of spread on the campus, and, ultimately, made the recommendation to continue providing in-person instruction. As a reminder, the district continues to

consult with Maricopa County Department of Public Health (MCDPH) officials in order to ensure we are taking appropriate measures to mitigate the risk of COVID spread on our campuses.

Experts are expressing some concern regarding the potential for a spike in cases connected with Super Bowl parties that will be held this weekend. While we recognize the yearning for a return to a sense of normalcy, we also encourage our staff and families to take precautionary measures, given the level of community spread of COVID remains high. Maintaining the downward trajectory in the number of cases and positivity rate are *critical* as we plan for a return to full days of instruction for all of our students, likely at the beginning of the 4th quarter.

Mountainside Middle School Pilot Project

Beginning on February 22, Mountainside Middle School students and staff will resume a full-day of instruction. As you know, part of the reason we decided to continue with the 2/3rds day schedule at the beginning of the second semester was to address concerns regarding additional risk of COVID spread during lunch and the increased number of passing periods of a full school day. In discussing this with officials at MCDPH, two important factors were identified:

- 1) The first factor is having our staff vaccinated. Given the Pfizer vaccine is effective seven days following the second dose, we have been able to address this priority through our partnership with HonorHealth.
- 2) The second factor is the ability to plan for 6 feet of separation during lunch. The Mountainside pilot proposal reflects strategies to address lunchtime physical distancing concerns by taking advantage of some excellent opportunities to use the school's outdoor space, in addition to modifications to the lunch schedule. By implementing this pilot project before Spring Break, we can identify what works and what changes are recommended before having all of our secondary schools resume a full-day schedule, as is our goal, on March 15.

Vaccinations

Most of our staff will receive their second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine next weekend, Feb. 12-14. HonorHealth has opened up an opportunity this weekend for those SUSD staff who missed the first round of vaccinations two weeks ago so they can get their first dose. I cannot say enough about our health partners at HonorHealth.

Two items in closing: First, it is National School Counselors Week, and we know you will want to join us in acknowledging the work of our middle and high school counselors. As an integral part of the American education system, school counselors help students identify and explore their interests, abilities, strengths and talents. They focus parents on ways to further the educational, personal and social growth of their children, and they help guide our students along their paths to higher education and careers. Never has that support been as important as it has been over the past year, as students have worried about the impact of the pandemic on their families, their academics and their futures. Please join us in thanking SUSD's tremendous, dedicated team of guidance counselors for their great care of our students.

Lastly, we would also like to note that this month is [Black History Month](#), during which our students and staff will experience extra opportunities to learn about and reflect on the significant contributions of people of color to our nation's history. It is also an opportunity for us, as a district, to take another step toward achieving our core purpose of ensuring every student reaches their full potential. SUSD has a diverse student population, and creating learning environments where students feel a sense of belonging and inclusion, where they are valued for who they are and are

supported in their learning are essential parts of Scottsdale Unified’s continuous journey to become the very best district it can be.

Thank you,

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

Community COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing Information

- [Arizona Department of Health Services](#) –
 - [Vaccinations](#), including a limited number of local Safeway, Albertsons and Fry’s pharmacies
 - [Testing](#)
- Maricopa County Department of Health Services –
 - [Vaccinations](#)
 - [Testing](#)
- [City of Phoenix Mobile Testing Sites](#)
- CVS Pharmacy Testing Sites
 - [Drive-Thru Testing Sites](#)
 - [Vaccination Information](#)
- [Embry Women’s Health Testing Sites](#)
- Walgreens Pharmacy
 - [Drive-Thru Testing Sites](#)
 - [Vaccination Information](#)