



April 1, 2021

Greetings, SUSD Families,

Here's your reminder that despite today being April Fool's Day, there really is no school tomorrow! All SUSD schools and offices will be closed on Friday for the final three-day weekend of the 2020-2021 school year.

Weekly Report from Supt. Menzel

COVID-19

[COVID numbers](#) have increased slightly in our 15 zip codes this week, still keeping us just above the threshold separating Moderate and Substantial transmission. Cases in our schools remain relatively low, which is always good news to report.

As you know, the health, safety, and well-being of our students and staff has been, and will continue to be, a top priority for SUSD. The mitigation strategies we have implemented during this challenging school year have allowed us to provide in-person learning opportunities without seeing a significant spike in cases on our campuses. Provided our COVID metrics remain in the Moderate or Low transmission range, we will take an incremental and monitored approach to carefully resuming some practices that had to change or were paused when case counts and the positivity rate were higher.

The first of these changes is to the requirement that elementary and middle school students wear masks while they are outside at recess and engaged in active play and other outdoor aerobic activities. The Governor's Executive Order 2020-51, which calls for school districts to have a face-covering policy, allows "exceptions for instances when students can socially distance or are outside in playground settings with distancing, and shall allow breaks for students to take their face covering off in a safe environment."

Here in the Valley, where high temperatures are already starting to occur, the wearing of cloth masks outside while exercising or engaging in active play may make breathing difficult for some students. With the use of outdoor spaces as a public health-recommended, COVID virus mitigation strategy, and recognizing the potential negative impact of mask-wearing in excessive heat, starting next week, students will be allowed to remove their masks during recess. Please note, however, the ongoing county health recommendation is that physical distancing takes place on the playground, as well as our expectation that other successful mitigation strategies, such as hand-washing and requiring sick students to stay home, remain in place. While some would also like to see us eliminate the classroom mask-wearing requirement, the Governor's Executive Order does not create a framework where that is possible.

The availability of COVID vaccines to older teenagers also allows us to alter some of our quarantine practices. Beginning next week, vaccinated SUSD students who are close contacts of positive cases will not be required to quarantine unless they are exhibiting symptoms themselves.

Even as more people are being vaccinated, public health officials continue to call on us to be vigilant in order to avoid a *fourth surge* in cases. We will continue to proceed cautiously so that we do not find ourselves in a situation where a return to virtual learning is required at a school because we ignored the guidance of public health professionals and relaxed our mitigation strategies prematurely.

Focus on the Future Town Halls

In the next few weeks, I will conduct Town Hall meetings in each of SUSD’s five learning communities. The purpose of these events is for me to have an opportunity to hear directly from you and other stakeholders. I want to learn what makes you proud about your schools and what opportunities you see for the district’s growth. Under normal circumstances, these sessions would have been held last fall, but there was a pandemic to deal with.

The first two sessions are next week - at Arcadia High School on April 7 and at Coronado High School on April 8. The meetings will begin at 6 p.m. The following week, I will be at Saguaro High School (April 12) and Desert Mountain High School (April 14). The final town hall will be at Chaparral High School on April 23. The events will take place in the auditoriums. We also plan to create a virtual option so that those who are unable to attend in person can log in and still participate. The information gathered will be used to help inform our ongoing strategic planning effort as we work to finalize our vision, mission, and core values, and establish ambitious goals designed to ensure Scottsdale Unified School District students are prepared to succeed in whatever they choose to pursue following their time with us.

- - - -

Wishing you a safe and relaxing long weekend.

Best regards,

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