



April 23, 2021

Dear Scottsdale Unified Parents and Guardians,

We hope you and your students have had another good week. It has been wonderful to be able to attend spring concerts, art shows and sporting events together again and to witness your students' considerable talents!

Verizon Ellipsis Jetpack Mobile Hotspot Recall

Verizon recently informed us that in cooperation with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, it has issued a recall of the Ellipsis Jetpack mobile hotspot devices used by some of our Enhanced Distance Learning students. During the last several weeks, Verizon has learned that the lithium-ion battery in the hotspots can overheat, posing a fire and burn hazard.

SUSD is working with Verizon to exchange hotspot devices as quickly and efficiently as possible. If you would like to exchange your hotspot now, you may do so at your child's school. Please note that we will be collecting all mobile hotspots at the end of the school year.

To promote the safe operation of your hotspot device until you either exchange it or return it, please follow these steps:

If your device is currently turned off, please turn it on so that the Ellipsis Jetpack can receive two (2) over-the-air, automatic software updates that will (a) enable the device's identifying number to be viewed on its scrolling screen to help facilitate its exchange and (b) prevent the device from charging while the device is plugged in and powered on. You will know the software update has been applied when you see the device's identifying number scrolling across its screen. After the software update is applied, users should leave the device powered on while it is plugged in. When not in use, the device should be turned off and unplugged from its power source.

Please follow these best practices to further promote the safe operation of your device:

- When not in use, turn the device off and unplug it.
- Place your device on a flat, solid and sturdy surface, such as a floor or table.
- For proper ventilation, do not use the device on a bed, sofa, chair or other soft surface, and ensure your device is not covered by a pillow, blanket or other item.
- Keep devices near room temperature when in use.
- Use only approved charging cables, including the cable provided.
- Do not expose the units to extreme temperatures for extended periods of time.
- Do not expose the unit or its battery to water or other liquids.
- Do not drop the units and do not insert foreign objects into the battery or unit.

If you have any questions or concerns about the technology issued to your student, please contact the SUSD IT Help Desk at (480) 484-4357.

Weekly Report from Supt. Menzel

COVID Update

Each week, I provide an update on the metrics for our [15 zip codes](#). A month ago, I was hopeful that

we were going to reach a level of Moderate transmission (case counts below 50 per 100,000 people and a positivity rate of less than 8%). While we have seen the positivity rate hover between the Low and Moderate transmission levels, our case counts have continued to slowly climb and in several of our zip codes, they are now over the 100 cases per 100,000 level, which reflects high community transmission. Overall, SUSD remains in the Substantial community transmission level, but this is a reminder that we must not let down our guard. Although the current number of confirmed, [active cases](#) on our campuses remains relatively low, continuing to implement the mitigation strategies that have been in place since we returned to in-person learning is critical to our ability to finish the year with in-person learning that is uninterrupted by a potential COVID spike.

With the decision by Governor Ducey earlier this week to eliminate the face covering requirement, local school districts around the state have had to weigh whether to follow the clear recommendations from the CDC with respect to layered mitigation strategies that include universal and proper wearing of face coverings. While most districts in the Valley have chosen to continue requiring masks while students/staff are indoors, there are some that have chosen to make them optional. We have received a significant number of Let's Talk comments on this topic and, not surprisingly, our community is split. As noted previously, SUSD's decision to continue with the mask requirement is based on guidance from county, state and federal public health officials. The finish line is in sight, and I am hopeful we can come together while also acknowledging that many of us are ready to return to normal. I look forward to being able to see the smiles on the faces of our students and staff, but I also do not want to act in a way that could potentially result in a disruption as we close out the year.

Governing Board Meeting Highlights

If you were unable to attend or watch this week's Governing Board meeting, the following items are worth noting:

- The Board took action to approve the curriculum adoption for English Language Arts (grades 6-8, 9-12, AP Literature, AP Language Arts and AP Psychology). Some concerns were expressed during the public comment portion of the meeting about the process we use to review new materials and the opportunities we make available for parents to comment on proposed curriculum changes. Dr. Guerin provided information outlining the [review process](#) that began in September 2020 for this particular set of materials.

As a result of the questions, however, we will take additional steps to ensure that all parents are informed of the review process for future curriculum materials that are under consideration for adoption and also provide parents with the opportunity to inspect the textbooks themselves ahead of Board action. With regard to this week's ELA adoptions, the vendors will make the materials available for viewing so parents who did not participate in the 60-day review period that took place between January and March can take a look at them. We corrected some inaccurate information that was circulating regarding what is included in the newly adopted ELA materials and also described the formal process the district uses to review novels that may be considered controversial for possible addition to student reading lists.

- The Board approved an IT recommendation for replacement laptops for teachers, as well as the installation of interactive flat panel monitors to replace aging smart boards over the next 18 months.
- The Board approved the purchase of five additional school buses as part of a planned vehicle replacement program made possible by 2016 voter-approved bond funds.

- A conversation regarding the approval of the preliminary capital budget for next year included discussion of next steps in the bond projects, computer and technology upgrades, curriculum purchases and other important facility renovations.
- Finally, the Board approved four policies, including a new policy, Policy HA, which establishes a formal meet-and-confer process and officially recognizes the Scottsdale Education Association, Scottsdale Administrators Association and Scottsdale Support Professionals Association as the organizations representing SUSD's certified, administrative and classified staff. As noted at the Governing Board meeting, we envision a collaborative process that is designed to ensure that SUSD is able to attract and retain top talent at all employee levels in order to ensure that each and every student receives an exceptional education and is prepared to succeed as they move through our system.

School Social Workers

We were pleased to learn this week that SUSD will receive grant money through the state's School Safety Program to place social workers in 22 of our schools. This latest allocation, supported by the federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund, means that every SUSD elementary, middle and high school will now have a social worker on campus to help support your students and families. We know this has been a most difficult year in so many different ways for everyone, and we look forward to adding these highly skilled professionals to our school-based social and emotional learning resources.

School Bus Drivers

To close, we would like to suggest that you take time next week to say a kind word to your student's school bus driver. Tuesday, April 27, is School Bus Driver Appreciation Day, and we will pay tribute that day to SUSD's 89 bus drivers who, so far this school year, have provided 367,525 safe rides over 509,290 miles on 53 general education routes and 28 special needs routes, not to mention transportation to away games, meets and matches of our middle and high school athletes! Behind the scenes supporting them are 20 assistants, 11 mechanics and 10 operations staff, so the way we see it, April 27 is cause to celebrate all SUSD Transportation Department employees. They will truly appreciate your taking a moment to acknowledge their work!

Best regards,

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