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November 29, 2020

Dear SUSD Families,

I am writing to you this evening to reiterate my earlier request that you voluntarily quarantine if you and your students traveled during the Thanksgiving holiday or if you hosted or attended a large gathering beyond your immediate family. I also want to notify you that five of our schools will be closed tomorrow, Monday, November 30.

COVID cases and hospitalizations are increasing rapidly. This is true in Scottsdale, across the state, and around the country. As we navigate the pandemic, I understand that each family must make its own decisions with respect to how much risk it is willing to take; however, as a public school system, it is also our responsibility to take steps necessary to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of our students and staff.

As a district, we have been doing everything in our power to ensure in-person education remains an option for our students. To that end, we have implemented mitigation strategies that include universal mask-wearing requirements, frequent handwashing, physical distancing, and asking students and staff to stay home when sick. Even so, it is likely that many of our students and staff who chose to travel for the holiday have been exposed to COVID and may or may not be symptomatic when we return to school tomorrow. *It is for this reason that I again ask every family that chose to travel during the Thanksgiving holiday or to host, attend or participate in a large gathering where social distancing did not take place, such as a sporting event, to please keep your children home and have them participate in remote learning for the next two weeks.*

Unfortunately, we have learned over the weekend that we do not have an adequate number of teachers or substitutes to cover all teacher absences tomorrow. As a result, the District will close the following schools for one day: **Arcadia High School, Chaparral High School, Desert Mountain High School, Cocopah Middle School and Mountainside Middle School.** We cannot ask our students to come to school for in-person instruction unless we can provide it safely and meaningfully. The lost day of instruction will likely need to be made up at the end of the school year. Please note that although tomorrow's closures are not the result of any known COVID outbreaks in our schools, this decision is consistent with our commitment to individually evaluate each school's ability to remain open. Should further closures be required, the District will strive to provide timely communication to affected families. All other SUSD schools will be open tomorrow, as planned.

These are difficult times. Those who have personally experienced the effects of COVID understand that for some, the symptoms are relatively mild, but for others they are severe and

life-threatening. Although hope is around the corner in the form of vaccines and better therapeutics, the strain on our health care system creates a troubling situation if we are unable to get the spread of COVID under control. As mentioned in a previous letter, closing schools alone is not likely to impact community spread, but unless our families and staff follow our request that they quarantine following travel and remain home when sick, we will experience elevated risk in our schools at a time when community transmission is already substantial. While I am grateful that, to date, there is very little evidence of spread within schools, I am deeply concerned that this could change significantly in the weeks ahead without our taking additional drastic steps.

Sincerely,

Scott A. Menzel, PhD  
Superintendent