



December 30, 2020

Dear SUSD Community Members,

It is our hope that you and your family have enjoyed a safe and healthy holiday break. We are writing today to provide an update with respect to our phased-in return to in-person learning for the second semester that begins on Monday, January 4. We also want to reiterate our request to those who have traveled recently or participated in group gatherings outside the home where exposure to COVID was a possibility to quarantine before returning to our school campuses.

The disruptive impact of COVID has been profound and continues to require the District to prepare for multiple contingencies. While there is some hope for improvement as vaccinations commence, it is also clear that it will take some time to see case numbers and the positivity rate decline. As a district, we have relied on the guidance of Maricopa County public health officials as we work to provide educational opportunities for all of our Scottsdale families. For some, we know the risk of in-person instruction is too great, and so the District has provided both Scottsdale Online Learning as well as Enhanced Distance Learning as options for the coming semester. However, there are many other students for whom on-line learning does not work, and the educational consequences of their not being in school are significant. For those students, we have prioritized in-person instruction with enhanced safety measures to mitigate the risk of COVID transmission while students and staff are on campus.

The current, phased-in return to in-person learning schedule is as follows:

January 4: Pre-K, Elementary (K-5) and self-contained Special Education programs will resume in-person instruction (all others will start the semester online)

January 11: Middle School students will resume in-person instruction

January 19: High School students will return for in-person instruction

Please note that *all grade levels* at Cheyenne Traditional and Echo Canyon schools will resume in-person instruction on January 4. Families can expect a communication from those schools tomorrow.

Also resuming January 4 will be Learning Labs for 6th - 12th grade students in need of a safe place to complete their online work when in-person opportunities are not available during regular school hours. Families need to sign up for this service with their school site.

The three-week, phased-in return plan was adopted by the Governing Board on December 15, 2020, with the understanding that the superintendent would have a follow-up conversation with Dr. Sunenshine to determine whether the MCDPH guidance has changed during the holiday break. Earlier today, Superintendent Menzel spoke with Dr. Sunenshine, who indicated she recommends proceeding with bringing back the first phase of learners *while holding open the possibility of modifications for middle school and high school students as we monitor COVID spread in the community after the New Year's holiday.*

Given this advice, the District will proceed with the planned phased-in return to learning on January 4 for our youngest learners and self-contained Special Education students, with a heightened focus on adherence to **all of the safety precautions** that have been put in place to ensure that our schools do not become a place where COVID is transmitted. In order to do this successfully, we need our parents and community to partner with the District. If you have traveled or engaged in group activity for the New Year holiday within the last seven days, please keep your children at home for the first week of school. Revised CDC quarantine parameters now permit a 10-day quarantine, meaning that exposed or potentially exposed preschool and elementary students should learn remotely next week and, if they have not become ill, return to their classrooms on January 11.

We know that many people are concerned about returning to school so quickly after the holiday. At the same time, the District is required to provide on-site support for students who need it, and our youngest learners struggle significantly with online learning. The research continues to show that our youngest students are not super-spreaders of COVID, and that with proper mitigation strategies, we can resume in-person instruction. This has been and will continue to be a delicate balancing act to ensure our students receive the education they need and our school staff are supported with appropriate mitigation strategies. We will continue to closely monitor school data and make any adjustments that are necessary.

Final reminders: if you, your student or any member of your household is sick, ***it is imperative that you remain at home***. If sick students are sent to school, they will be sent home. Our ability to provide in-person instruction is dependent on **all of us** doing our part. If your student has tested positive for COVID during winter break, please let your school nurse know. Individuals who have received a positive PCR or antigen test within the last three months are not subject to quarantine requirements for close contacts; having this information on file will allow us to only quarantine close contacts who have not had COVID.

The beginning of 2021 will be a challenge. Our goal is to ensure we can safely reopen our schools in order to meet the educational needs of our students. By working together, we will get through the next few months and, hopefully, to a place where we can end the school year on a strong and positive note.

Sincerely,

Scottsdale Unified School District [Leadership Team](#)