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Dear Scottsdale Unified School District (SUSD) Parents and Guardians,

In this season of thankfulness, I would be remiss if I did not thank you for participating in the District's recent Maintenance and Operation budget override election. We are grateful that you took time to understand the issue and that you voted, regardless of which box you checked off, in this first-ever, all-mail election. The support we received from our vast community of parents, alumni, SUSD residents and employees, and city and business leaders, including the Scottsdale Charros, was outstanding. We owe a special debt of gratitude to the Yes to Children organization for spearheading this great effort on our behalf. Thank you, one and all!

School letter grades for the 2018-2019 school year were issued at the beginning of the month by the Arizona State Board of Education. I am proud to report that:

- 27 of our 29 schools, or 93%, received either an A or B from the state
- 16 schools maintained their A rating, while 3 schools improved their ratings by a letter grade. Included in the letter-grade growth is Coronado High School, which raised its grade from a C in 2018 to a B in 2019.
- Desert Canyon and Ingleside Middle schools improved their letter grades from B's to A's this year.

We know we have some work to do to support Yavapai Elementary and Tonalea K-8, and we have committed extra resources to doing just that. Already we are seeing success with that: Tonalea students improved in 10 of the 14 tests they took last year, with the school narrowly missing a B grade.

We know Yavapai and Tonalea students, teachers and administrators are working hard, but this daily, ongoing work is not just to be more successful on annual AzMERIT and AIMS tests: it is to enhance a strong culture of learning in their communities that will continue to grow as these students progress through their K-12 careers and into their adult lives. This kind of work takes time, and I know we will get there.

Lastly, I want to let you know that SUSD students are making their mark across the District, state and nation:

Three SUSD seniors – Riley Glick from Chaparral High School, and Jessica Keane and Tara Namie from Desert Mountain High School – have been named semifinalists in the competition to receive a \$20,000 college scholarship from the Coca-Cola Scholars Program. This prestigious scholarship recognizes high school seniors for their capacity to lead and serve, and for having demonstrated their commitment to making a significant

impact on their schools and communities. Our students will find out in a few months whether they move on to regional finalist status, but have already achieved much by being selected from among 93,000 applicants nationwide! Congratulations!

We know that SUSD teachers are outstanding, and the Arizona Health and Physical Education organization agrees again this year! Cochise and Pueblo Elementary's Adapted P.E. teacher Angela Caruso, Desert Canyon Elementary's Julie Sparks and Anasazi Elementary's Kyle Bragg received statewide awards last week from AHPE for their fine work with our students. The Governing Board will recognize all three at its Dec. 17 meeting.

Desert Canyon Middle School has received an accolade from Scottsdale Mayor Jim Lane, who has named it his "School of the Year" for having submitted the most entries to his office's annual Constitution Day essay, art and video contest. Desert Canyon submitted nearly one-third of the 450 entries received this year! We want to thank teachers Jonna Wallis, Angela Bogsinske and Heather Robinson for inspiring their students to take part!

Turning to performing arts, our high school theater students brought home many awards from the recent Arizona Thespian Festival. The awards, both group and individual, ranged from performance and behind-the-scenes technical tasks to playwriting and community service activities. Among the many awards bestowed, Chaparral senior Cannon Cook won the Ovation Scholarship, Desert Mountain received Gold Troupe status and won the improv tournament, and Saguaro freshman Spencer Wareing's original, 10-minute play was one of three selected to be workshopped at the festival. The next time you have the opportunity to attend an SUSD high school theater production, I heartily encourage you to do so.

State athletic championships by SUSD teams this fall are being celebrated. Congratulations to the Chaparral girls swim and dive team and the Saguaro boys swim and dive team, which, respectively, won their sixth consecutive and first-ever state titles. On the links, Arcadia junior Gavin Aurelia shot 6-under to take home the AIA Division 2 state golf title last month and on the gridiron, the Saguaro Sabercats won a nail-biter last weekend in the semifinals of the new, Open Division state football tournament and will face Chandler in the Dec. 7 championship game at Sun Devil Stadium. Go Cats!

And where would any high school football team be without the musical support it receives from its marching band? On consecutive weekends earlier this month, The Spirit of Arcadia proved itself again, capturing first place in both the AZMBA and ABODA state championship competitions. Moreover, Band Director Jan Gardiner is one of *School Band and Orchestra* magazine's "50 Directors Who Make a Difference."

We are so proud of the many ways SUSD students and teachers represent our District, not only in our own community, but also in the many landscapes they travel. We are most grateful to you, parents, for the many ways in which you support your students and their teachers throughout the school year. *Thank you.*

Wishing all of you a very happy Thanksgiving with your families and friends this holiday weekend,



John Kriekard, Ed.D.
Superintendent