January 13, 2021

Dear Sunnyside Families —

I want to wish you all a Happy New Year. Personally, I have started 2021 with high hopes for resolve after the year we all just endured. The purpose of this communication is to inform you about recent changes to our reopening plans and COVID testing for our community.

**Reopening**
As you may already know, Arizona continues to have one of the highest COVID-19 infection rates in the country. Further, the Sunnyside District zip code (85706) has the highest case counts in the state. Our zip code has remained a “hot spot” since November 2020, according to UArizona researchers.

Our partnership with the Pima County Health Department (PCHD) continues to guide our decision-making so that public health and safety remains at the forefront. *Last Friday, the PCHD issued guidance that schools should continue virtual instruction for an additional two weeks given the impact that they are seeing from the Holiday Season. For this reason, our Governing Board has decided to delay in-person hybrid learning until we receive a recommendation from the PCHD that it is safe to do so. This means we will remain in remote learning for the month of January.* We will continue to work with the PCHD over the next two weeks as they analyze the full impact of New Years Eve and provide us with a date range for us to begin in-person hybrid learning. Our Governing Board will be presented with the most current COVID-19 data at our next meeting scheduled for January 26th to inform and set our in-person hybrid opening date.

**Testing**
In an effort to continue the mitigation of this virus, we have formed a partnership with a company who will help to administer COVID-19 testing starting next week. The ongoing testing events will be offered at no cost to students, staff and the SUSD community. Details will be shared on susd12.org and our social media pages very soon. Please check those sites frequently for up to date information.

Please know that we are working with Pima County to ensure that all staff have the information needed in order to be vaccinated if they choose to do so.

A year ago, we could have never imagined the events that would unfold before us. In almost cinematic fashion, our lives have changed quickly and drastically. Despite the bleakness we may feel, I’m fueled by the aspiration that the new vaccine will bring us. While the year 2020 will live in infamy, I begin everyday with the certainty that the Sunnyside community will not lose sight of our commitment to providing the best educational opportunities for all students. We are #SunnysideUnified, and because of that—we will emerge stronger and better.

Steve Holmes, Superintendent