

December 5, 2024

Dear CCUSD Families,

I am writing to share an important update regarding the future of the Cave Creek Unified School District.

A special governing board meeting was held December 3rd to present the recommendations from our school facility focus group which was composed of teachers and parents from every elementary campus, as well as administrators and community members. After months of investigation and deliberation, the focus group made the difficult recommendation to close both Desert Sun Academy and Lone Mountain Elementary School. Additionally, they recommended that 6th graders return to Sonoran Trails Middle School. This recommendation was not made lightly, and we want to acknowledge the emotional impact it may have on our students, families, and staff who hold strong connections to these two schools.

We wanted to share the reasons why this recommendation to close schools is necessary:

- **Declining Enrollment:** We have experienced a steady decline in student enrollment over the past several years. The demographer's report continues to predict the declining number of students in our boundaries. With fewer students, our buildings have become significantly underutilized. It is no longer sustainable to maintain facilities that are not operating at full capacity.
- **Financial Constraints:** Like many Arizona school districts, we face increasing financial pressures. Closing underutilized schools allows us to reallocate resources more effectively and stabilize our budget for the future.
- **Improved Efficiency:** By merging schools, we can address a persistent staffing shortage and make better use of our highly qualified educators.

The cost of doing nothing to address this will ultimately lead to having to find alternate cost savings measures that may include but are not limited to: cutting existing academic programs (Arts, Music, PE, etc.), increasing class size which eliminates teaching positions, and reducing services that support teaching and learning. None of these are good options that are best for students and ones I do not support.

Our district website [ccusd93.org](http://ccusd93.org) contains a [resource page](#) that chronicles the work of the focus group as well as the presentation from December 3. We encourage you to be a part of the next steps as our Governing Board makes difficult but necessary decisions, prioritizing better futures for our students moving forward.

The next step in the process will occur at our regularly scheduled business meeting December 10, which will include a call to the public for comments. At that meeting, the Board will be asked to take action on moving forward with the required public forums regarding possible school closures and

changing boundaries. **This is not a final decision on school closures and boundary adjustments.** The Board's action would only allow public forums to take place in order to answer questions and listen to the voices in our community.

**The public forums would be held as follows:**

- Wednesday, January 8 at 6:00 PM at Desert Sun.
- Thursday, January 9 at 6:00 PM at Lone Mountain.
- And Monday, January 13 at 6:00 PM at the Fine Arts Center.

Lastly, on January 28, at the business meeting, the Board will again hear public comments. After considering community feedback - whether shared during forums, via email, through phone calls, or in person - administration will bring a final recommendation asking the Board to take action regarding school closures and boundary adjustments for the 2025-2026 school year.

We have visited elementary campuses to discuss the possible closures with staff members. In those conversations, teachers shared that students are already discussing the possibility of closures. **Even though the Governing Board will not have a final decision until January 28**, staff members requested that we provide our community with strategies and talking points to use in discussions with your children:

- Be honest and reassuring.
- Explain the situation in simple language.
- Emphasize that their new school will still be a place where they'll learn and feel cared for.
- Let children express how they feel and show empathy by validating their emotions.
- Help them create positive memories about school. Then, frame the transition as an adventure by talking about exciting aspects of their new school, like meeting new teachers, making new friends, or joining new activities.
- Reassure children that they can stay connected with their friends, even if they're attending different schools.
- Assure students that they will have multiple opportunities to visit their new school this year so that they know what to expect if they need to change schools.
- **Children take cues from adults, so maintaining a calm and positive tone can help them feel more secure. Share your confidence that they will adapt and thrive, and remind them that change can lead to new opportunities and growth.**

The choices we face are not easy, but I believe as a community we can come together to create better futures for all. We understand the profound impact this decision will have on our community, and we are committed to supporting our students, families, and staff throughout this process. Together, we will navigate these changes and continue to provide our children with the bright futures they deserve.

Moving Forward Together,



Bill Dolezal  
Superintendent