January 16, 2013

Dear SCUSD Families:

In an effort to “right-size” our district, which has struggled with steadily declining student enrollment for a decade, we have slated our most under-enrolled schools for closure in 2013-14. This letter is to inform you that your school is on the closure list.

SCUSD is committed to ensuring that your child and your family are cared for and have the supports needed during this transition.

Please know that the decision to close a school is extremely difficult to make and, of course, we would prefer not to make it. But over the past decade, the Sacramento City Unified School District has been hit hard by economic forces beyond our control. State budget cuts necessary to address California’s deficit have greatly impacted SCUSD. In the last five years alone, SCUSD has been forced to cut $146 million from our budget due to state cuts, declining enrollment and a loss of one-time federal funds. Balancing our books has meant raising class sizes and eliminating or reducing librarians, nurses, teachers, counselors, custodians and assistant principals. These cuts have damaged our ability to continue to provide a high-quality education to every student on every campus. Next year, we are predicting another drop in enrollment, which will lead to fewer state dollars yet again. Still, our costs continue to rise.

As we move forward, we must look at long-term solutions to our financial struggles. We must “right-size” our district. Currently, SCUSD operates 56 elementary schools. By comparison, neighboring Elk Grove Unified School District – which has 14,000 more students – operates 39 elementary schools. San Juan Unified, with a population nearly identical to our own, has 43 elementary schools. Because we have so many campuses, SCUSD elementary schools serve only 56 percent of their enrollment capacity.

Under-enrollment forces the creation of split-grade teaching assignments because there are not enough students to fill seats. Fewer elementary schools will mean fewer split-grade classrooms. Fewer elementary schools will mean more learning supports for every student at every school. Fewer elementary schools will also improve the district’s ability to maintain our campuses, classrooms, playgrounds and fields, which will help keep kids safer and healthier. Fewer campuses will allow the district to concentrate our resources for the benefit of students and families and lower our utility costs.

The Board of Education will discuss school closures at its meeting on January 17 at the Serna Center, 5735 47th Ave. A community meeting at your school will be scheduled by January 18. A final Board vote on this issue is scheduled for February 21.

I understand that this news may be upsetting. I assure you that we are committed to making this transition as easy as possible for your family and that we will mitigate any challenges that closures create. Our staff is already working on a comprehensive transition plan and we will be sure to keep you updated.

Thank you,

Jonathan P. Raymond
Superintendent