

March 2023

## Flagstaff High School Girls' Basketball Team win state championship

March 2, 2023

The Flagstaff High School Girls' Basketball team won the 4A State Championship defeating Pueblo High School 68-65 at the Arizona Veteran's Memorial Coliseum in Phoenix. The Lady Eagles last won a state championship 31 years ago in 1992.

Head Coach Tyrone Johnson said the championship win was a long time coming for the program, which completed its season with a record of 26 wins and six losses.

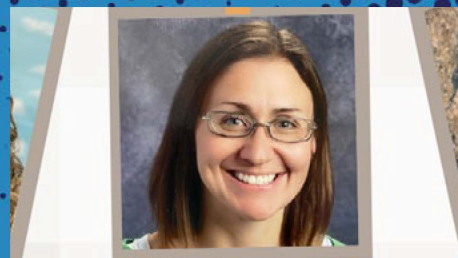
"I've been with the program for 17 seasons, and we've gotten to the Final Four numerous times. Last year, we got to the state championship game and lost. And to get back there this year was an accomplishment," he said. "Then to be able to win it was just special, especially with this



The Flagstaff High School Lady Eagles pose with their 4A State Championship trophy and banner with their coaches, Danny Neal, Jessica Herbel, and Head Coach Tyron Johnson on March 2, 2023, immediately after their state championship win in Phoenix.

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State Championship*

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## A message from our SUPERINTENDENT



With Spring weather, hopefully, on the way and Earth Day approaching in a few weeks, I have been reflecting about the ways, both individually and collectively, those associated with the Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD) can contribute to the goals and framework of The Flagstaff Carbon Neutrality Plan.

FUSD's Climate Action Committee has been meeting quarterly this school year to monitor and guide the district's short-term and long-term climate actions outlined in the FUSD Climate Action Report adopted by the Governing Board in June 2022. Areas of focus for this year include Equitable access for staff and students to environmental education


resources and partnerships, Stakeholder engagement and communications, and Consistent implementation of recycling programs at school sites and events.

Using the 2018 Bond and guaranteed energy cost savings, FUSD has invested in LED indoor and exterior lighting, boiler replacements, and updated controls and building system integrations to improve energy efficiency and comfort, correct building deficiencies, and standardize equipment. This program, in partnership with Veregy, has resulted in \$517,559 in electricity

and natural gas cost savings and an environmental impact of 2,833,109 kilowatt hours (kWh) of energy saved in its first full year.

This year, FUSD is using federal funding to upgrade HVAC systems at Cromer Elementary, DeMiguel Elementary, and Mount Elden Middle School that do not utilize natural gas and will provide air conditioning during warmer months throughout the schools. With the construction of Killip Elementary, FUSD has established efficiency standards to manage energy, water, waste, and stormwater while improving the

student learning experience that will be incorporated into the forthcoming school replacements of both Kinsey Elementary and Marshall Elementary.

I am excited about the opportunities that lie ahead for FUSD, from enhancement of green schoolyards at each campus to adding electric buses and vehicles to our fleet, to REDUCE, LEARN, and ENGAGE as active partners with the City of Flagstaff and other community agencies to respond to the effects of climate change. View the FUSD Climate Action Report at <https://bit.ly/FUSDClimateAction> 

### FUSD Environmental Impact

## 2,833,109 kWh Saved Annually



FUSD Energy Project Measurement & Verification Report by Veregy, February 14, 2023

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## FUSD teachers nominated for Coconino County Teacher, Rookie Teacher of the Year

March 21, 2023

The Coconino County Superintendent of Schools, Cheryl Mango-Paget, announced the 2023 Coconino County Teacher of the Year and Rookie Teacher of the Year finalist on March 21, and all the nominees are from Flagstaff Unified School District.

The Teacher of the Year finalists are Lisa Barnard from Sinagua Middle School, Emily Fisher from Marshall Elementary School, and Kate Haynes from Knoles Elementary School. The Rookie Teacher of the Year finalists are Kellen Brandel from Flagstaff High School, Crystal Busath from

Kinsey Elementary School, and Josie Teegardin from Mount Elden Middle School.

According to the County Superintendent's Office, the winner in each category will be announced at the 10th Annual Coconino County Teacher of the Year Awards event at 5 p.m. on April 20 at Doubletree by Hilton in Flagstaff. The event is a county-wide teacher recognition program that spotlights the contributions of state-accredited teachers in grades pre-Kindergarten to 12th grade.

The winners and runner-ups will be recognized and announced at

the awards event. Each finalist will receive cash prizes and automatic nominations for the Arizona Teacher of the Year award and other prizes. The Coconino County Teacher of the Year also wins a one-year leased vehicle from Flagstaff Findlay Toyota. A total of 19 teachers were nominated this year for Teacher of the Year, and eight teachers were nominated for Rookie Teacher of the Year.

For event information, contact the County Superintendent's Office at 928-679-8075 or email [mmohler@coconino.az.gov](mailto:mmohler@coconino.az.gov).



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## STEM Celebration scheduled on April 29 at Fort Tuthill Fairgrounds

The 10th Annual Community STEM Celebration is scheduled at the Fort Tuthill Fairgrounds from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, April 29, 2023.

The celebration is an opportunity for Flagstaff to engage with the STEM community. This year, the STEM Celebration will return to the Fort Tuthill Fairgrounds with both indoor and outdoor exhibits. Hands-on activities, demonstrations, and conversations will excite all participants and expose the community to STEM educational and career opportunities in Flagstaff. This event is a time to celebrate Flagstaff's

designation as "America's First STEM Community."

Save the date for this year's STEM Celebration and plan now to participate! More information regarding the event will be shared with families in the coming weeks. Contact Sylvia A. Johnson, STEM City Coordinator, at [coordinator@flagstaffstemcity.com](mailto:coordinator@flagstaffstemcity.com), for questions or access the event website at [www.flagstaffstemcity.com](http://www.flagstaffstemcity.com).



*Matthew Minister poses with his STEM Teacher of the Year award. Left to right: Trisha Eberlein, assistant principal at Flagstaff High School; Matthew Minister; and Tom Safranek, director of College and Career Development at Flagstaff Unified School District.*

## FUSD well-represented at STEMMY Awards

**March 4, 2023**

The Flagstaff Unified School District was well-represented at the 2023 STEMMY Awards held on March 2 at the Museum of Northern Arizona in Flagstaff.

Matthew Minister, a Flagstaff High School (FHS) teacher, won STEM Teacher of the Year; the Coconino High School CocoNuts Robotics Team was a finalist for the Community/Business Leader of the Year; and Abram Pierce, a 12th Grader at Coconino High School, was a finalist for the STEM Student of the Year.

According to STEMMY, Minister developed the Computer Science, Software & App Design into a full-day program from scratch at FHS. He also worked with Girls Who Code and the Native American Code Writers programs to reach these populations.

"[Minister] cultivated outreach to other teachers and middle school students through visitations, email blasts, invitations to program events, and helped incorporate computer

science into core curricular classes," according to STEMMY.

Dr. Anita Antoninka of Northern Arizona University and Elijah Rentschler of Flagstaff Christian School were also finalists for the STEM Teacher of the Year award, with Minister winning the category.

The CocoNuts Robotics Team, finalists of the Community/Business Leader of the Year award, were also highlighted at the event. The team recently attended the National Advocacy Conference in Washington, D.C., and met with elected congressional representatives. The team also conducted STEM fairs for other schools. The Flagstaff Festival of Science and Kinney Construction Services, Inc. were also finalists, with Kinney Construction winning the award.

Abram Pierce, a senior at Coconino High School, was a finalist for STEM Student of the Year. According to

***Continued on page 5 / STEMMY Awards***



## Thank you FUSD Maintenance Team

The FUSD Maintenance team worked tirelessly this winter to clear a tremendous amount of snow at each of our schools and sites. We sincerely appreciate their hard work and dedication to get our students and staff to school safely. Thank you, FUSD Maintenance! 🌲

## Oscar Jimenez, MEMS custodian, receives ABM Employee of the Year

March 10, 2023

Congratulations to Oscar Jimenez for receiving **ABM Employee of the Year**. Oscar is a custodian assigned to Mount Elden Middle School.

Machell Wilson, project manager at ABM, commended Oscar for his dedication.

"Oscar takes complaints in a creative way that helps his coworkers with problem-solving in new ways," said Wilson. "His work ethic is a great example for others around him. You can always count on Oscar to have a great attitude at work and [he is] always willing to help. Oscar has been outsourced with the [school] district for eight years now, and he never fails to always have a 'willing



to do' attitude. Overall, [he is] a dedicated hard worker."

Wilson explained that ABM Employee of the Year was established to make sure that employees feel valued and recognized for their hard work and dedication. ABM also provides recognition for employees of the month as well. 🌲



## ...STEMMY Awards/ From Page 4

STEMMY, Pierce worked with Python and Java software programs to do basic programming. He automated many processes and created a program synthesizer that allowed him to teach his robot. He also volunteered many hours working

with the AZ School for the Deaf and Blind, with low-income and underrepresented students. Isabelle Shin of BASIS Flagstaff and Kusuma Teluguntla, also of BASIS Flagstaff, were also finalists for STEM Student of the Year, with Teluguntla winning the category. 🌲



## Poetry Out Loud winner, Roxann Tonawi

Congratulations to Roxann Tonawi for winning the Northern Arizona Regional Poetry Out loud Championships.

Roxann competed against students from several other high schools in northern Arizona and won first-place. She will represent Coconino High School at the Arizona Poetry Out Loud State Competition in Tucson on March 11, 2023. 🌲



## James Janik finishes in third place in Coconino County Spelling Bee

March 5, 2023

James Janik, an 8th Grader at Mount Elden Middle School (MEMS), finished in third place in the 2023 Coconino County Spelling Bee. The winner was Calliope Hill from the Montessori School of Flagstaff, and Ember Evans of Flagstaff Christian School was the runner-up.

According to Tammy Rauschenbach, SEI teacher at MEMS, Janik spelled the following words: beginning, tiara, ordained, ballast, masa, Andromeda, and Leander.

James previously won the spelling bee at MEMS to advance to the county spelling bee competition. 🌲

## Changes at Mount Elden Middle School for the 2023-2024 School Year

March 21, 2023

Mount Elden Middle School has made some changes for its 2023-2024 school year. Below is information provided by Principal Tammy Nelson.

### Mount Elden Middle School 2023-2024 School Year Information

#### Background Information:

After an extensive review and analysis of our current programs, we have determined that our current format is limiting capacity and growth in our honors (APEX) program. Additionally, we are unable to sustain our current format in our outdoor programming due to changes that have resulted from the pandemic and staffing issues with our transportation department and outside community partners. Considering the factors above, we are revising our outdoor expedition opportunities in order to continue to provide these types of unique learning opportunities for all students. Through this evaluation process, we identified that our families, students and staff valued these types of programs and we need to look at a different format to meet the needs of our students.

#### Grade Level Teams:

MEMS will be moving to grade level teams in the 2023-24 school year. Each grade level will have 2 teams, a Blue Team and a Red Team; these are the signature school colors at Mount Elden Middle School. Each team will consist of four core teachers who share the same students. Core teachers are defined as math, English, social studies and science.

Students will share these teachers for the school year. Students will rotate off teams for their elective options that provide students with a variety of fine arts, physical education, career, and technology-focused courses.

Within the team, the teachers will be able to collaborate on interdisciplinary units, implement universal design for learning framework to meet individual student needs and address intervention and enrichment needs during our T-Bird Time. During off-team time, core teachers are able to meet and discuss student needs, data, curriculum, and strategies for helping students and special populations succeed through the PLC model.

#### Better-Connected Learning Community:

By teaming, we create a "school within a school" model, and therefore create a "smaller" school environment for all students and teachers. Students and teachers on a team become well acquainted and develop strong, respectful, and supportive relationships with teachers and peers. They become a community of people who develop a deep sense of connection and camaraderie. We value family partnerships in supporting your child through these important formative years; the partnership between home and school cannot be understated. The team structure provides a "one-stop" contact for families to communicate with school and their team teachers. This framework fosters a smooth transition from the elementary setting to a high school setting.

#### Place-Based Learning Opportunities:

One of our objectives through these changes is to enhance our school-wide implementation of place-based learning. Place-based learning focused on the community around us and will be provided on each team to continue the Alpine philosophy. Students who would like to participate on expeditions that are offered will be able to sign up based on their individual interests. All 6th graders will still go to Camp Colton no matter what team they are on.

#### Honors/APEX Classes:

Honors opportunities will be provided based on student interests. Current APEX sixth grade cohort will loop with their APEX teachers next year. Current seventh grade APEX cohort students will loop to an eighth grade team that will collaborate with the current APEX teachers to continue their programming and learning.

#### Incoming fifth graders:

Incoming fifth graders can complete the interest form found on our website under Academy Applications. Middle school counselors will come to elementary schools in January and students will pick the classes they are interested in taking for sixth grade. At this time students can choose the classes they would like based on their interests. This includes honors. Students will be placed on a team and share common core teachers (see above). All sixth graders will have the opportunity to attend Camp Colton as well as other outdoors learning experiences based on their interests.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to call the front office and ask for an administrator, 928-773-8250. 🌲

### ...State Championship/ From Page 1

group of girls that just believed... and worked hard... [and] believed in one another. And so, to play a team like Pueblo who had a lot of fight, who pushed and who never gave up, I mean it was special at the end to be on the winning side."

Johnson is super proud of the team and said their success was a team effort. He commended some standouts.

"We had our senior, Sage Begay, who led us as far as experience, this was her fourth year on varsity. She's been starting for the last couple of years, and last year in the state championship game, she didn't have a great one, but this year, she really set the pace for us in the championship game, starting off getting 10 points in the first quarter," said Johnson. "Morningrain Honani, she's our point guard, she really sets the pace, and she's played solid on both ends offensively and defensively."

"We have the Dugi sisters [Jaydean Dugi and Jazmine Dugi] that shoot the ball well and lock in on the defensive end," added Johnson. "We have our freshman, Bella Burcar, who came in and just really established herself as a solid player and also wasn't shy about leading, and so that was big for her to be able to lead."

"Jasmyynn Tsosie, she's one of our captains, and she didn't get to play in the championship game because she got hurt, but she was an integral part of us getting there. I would be remiss if I didn't name everybody, but we had a deep bench, and we had people that came in and contributed," said Johnson. "In the championship game, I really think Unique Begishie played a key role. I think if you had a player of the game, she had a rebound put back that really was the play of the game. She really helped us lock in the victory. Teagan Martin had some great minutes... she's a sophomore.

Just the whole group... especially when you talk about practice and everything... iron sharpens iron, and these girls really get after to make each other better."

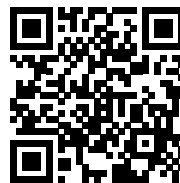
Johnson appreciates all the support.

"[A] shoutout to everybody that came out and supported [the team]... [it] was awesome to have the [FHS] band [as well], and they came out during the playoffs. Of course, the cheerleaders, and our administration is awesome. Everybody coming through and supporting [us]," he said. "We thank the parents for their support throughout the year. [I thank] my coaching staff, my assistant coach [Jessica Herbel]... she's huge in this process, and without her, I don't think we're as good as we are... and [thank you] to all my coaches throughout the program, [I] just appreciate everything everybody is doing."

Johnson explained that his main assistant coach is Jessica Herbel, the JV Head Coach is Danny Neal, and the freshman coach is Janie Neal.

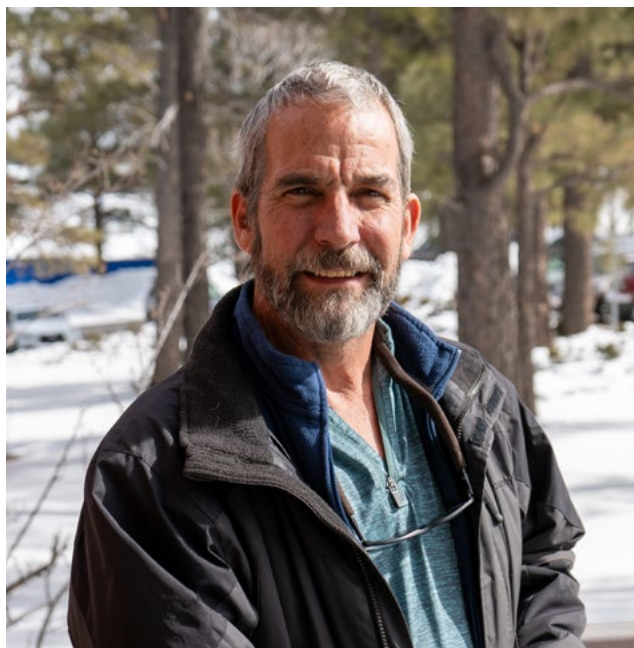
"Both of those programs [JV and freshman teams] went through the year undefeated. [Coach Janie Neal] and her team have been undefeated for the last three years. [Coach Danny Neal and his team] have been undefeated the last two years," he said. "They do a great job with getting these girls prepared and getting them ready, and so they come up into the varsity program, they're ready to step in and continue to take us to another level." 🌲

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Jeremy Williams



Doug Hall



Theresa Ruiz

## Meet some of our great FUSD staff members

March 20, 2023

**Jeremy Williams** is the dean of students at Summit High School and he has been with Flagstaff Unified School District for seven years. He is a Navajo Nation tribal member, and he was born and raised in Window Rock, Arizona. His clans are Tsi'naajinii (Black Streak Wood People clan), born to Bilagáana, and his maternal grandfather's clan is Tséńjikiní (Honey Combed Rock People clan), and his paternal grandfather is Bilagáana.

As we complete the second half of the school year, Jeremy is looking forward to the spring weather and to some consistency for students considering the winter weather caused a lot of disruption to students and to the community.

He said he is honored to work at Summit High School.

"Working at Summit High School, I am privileged to work with such a resilient group of students," he said. "Seeing our students overcome

obstacles is a constant reminder for me not to let anything get in the way of my goals."

He explained as a team at Summit, they are really proud of how far their school has come.

"We owe a lot to the [school] district and our leadership for providing the meaningful vision that we have at Summit," said Jeremy. "It is challenging but so rewarding to work at Summit and for FUSD."

He and his wife, Jill, have three wonderful children. The two oldest are FUSD students, and his "precious princess" is in daycare.

"We are a basketball family, [and] I enjoy training and coaching my sons," he said. "We spend a lot of time driving back and forth to Phoenix for their club teams."

**Doug Hall** is a new bus driver for Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD) and is now in training for his CDL license and is enjoying his job.

Previous to FUSD, he worked in town as a production sewer sewing

airplane seats for crop duster airplanes and he produced the complete seat. He has worked in several industries during the span of his career.

"I have done a million things. I was a student when I first got to Flagstaff, [worked as a] bicycle shop guy, [and] managed bicycle shops," he said. "[I] left retail for medical billing... then was involved for a short time in the Colorado River Industry... we rented gear to private permit holders to boat [the] Grand Canyon."

He said he took this job because his wife is a school teacher at Northland Preparatory Academy and time is more precious to him now, and he likes the flexibility of the position.

"I'm not working as many hours, it's a nine-month position and so I am able to spend time with my wife and travel and see Arizona and do things like that," he said. "I love the flexibility... the hours."

In his free time, Doug said he likes to boat.

"I like boating on little rivers, big rivers, and I also have a sailboat," he said. "I'm a cyclist and we love to go out in the woods and just do nothing. Flagstaff is a perfect place for us in that way."

He explained he moved to Flagstaff in 1983 and he was born in New York State.

**Theresa Ruiz** is a payroll clerk in the Finance and Business Services Department at Flagstaff Unified School District.

Theresa, well known as "T," was born and raised in Flagstaff, Arizona. She has been with FUSD for 18 years come August 5, 2023, and she jokingly said that she is "everyone's best friend when it comes to getting paid."

As we complete the second half of the school year, she said she is looking forward to a vacation. Her

*Continued on page 10 /  
Great FUSD staff members*



## Band, orchestra, and choir concerts at FUSD

*March 20, 2023*

Several FUSD schools conducted concerts this month.

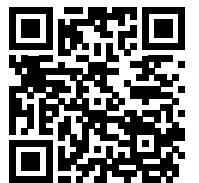
The Coconino High School Spring Orchestra and Band Concert was held March 7, 2023, the Mount Elden

Middle School held their Symphonic Band concert with the Flagstaff High School Band on March 8, 2023.

The FUSD "Springing into Song" Choir Concert with Flagstaff High School, Mount Elden Middle School,

Sinagua Middle School, Marshall Magnet Elementary School, and Puente de Hózhó Elementary School was held on March 22, 2023. 🌲

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## ...Great FUSD staff members/ From Page 8

motivation is her family and co-workers.

"My co-workers are like family. [They] are always there for the good and bad times. Teamwork is amazing in the business office," she said. "In all the years that I have worked here, I have met so many people that I got to know professionally and personally. Many have become some very dear friends of mine."

She explained her entire family attended FUSD.

"My children are all grown up. [My children, my spouse, and I] all attended Christensen Elementary School, Weitzel [Elementary, which is] now Puente de Hózhó, MEMS, formerly East [Flagstaff] Junior High, and Coconino High School," said

Theresa. "In fact, my husband and I met junior year in high school, went to prom, fell in love, and married at 18 years old, and [I] am still married to him almost 44 years later."

In her free time, Theresa enjoys "crafting, crafting, and more crafting."

"I love it when people like my homemade items and want to buy them," she said. 🌲

## APRIL 2023

4/11: Governing Board Meeting

4/25: Governing Board Meeting

No Early Release for secondary schools on Wednesdays and No Early Release for elementary schools on Fridays this month



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# Addressing chronic absenteeism at FUSD

March 20, 2023

The state of Arizona defines Chronic Absenteeism as missing 10% or more of enrolled days at school. In a school year with 180 days of teaching and learning, a student who misses 18 or more days, no matter the reason and even if the absences are excused, is chronically absent. By 6th Grade, chronic absenteeism becomes a leading indicator that a student will drop out of high school. It also impacts early education, as poor attendance may lead to below-level reading skills. Missing two days a month is enough to measurably impact a student's learning, and absences prevent intervention. Students who live in poverty are four times more likely to be chronically absent for reasons beyond their control.

The Flagstaff Unified School District understands that relationships between school staff, students, and their families matter, and positive conditions for learning lead to students being engaged and attending regularly. This can be done by promoting physical and emotional health and safety; creating an environment of belonging, connection, and support; providing academic challenges and engagement; paying attention to adult and student well-being and emotional competence; and understanding relationships are essential to positive conditions for learning.

Michael Vogler, Director of Research and Assessment at Flagstaff Unified School District, explained absences at FUSD.

"Most of our schools have really good attendance rates. We have 85... 90% plus percent attendance on any given day. That's really good," he said. "The other way of looking at attendance though is individually. When you look at an individual child

and their days of enrollment... If a student misses 15 days of school by the 100th day, they have missed 15% of the school year to date."

Vogler explained that FUSD is having a lot more kids chronically absent as more kids are missing school for both excused and unexcused reasons. He said that at FUSD, most of the absences are excused absences. Students are missing school for various reasons: illness, family vacation, or trouble getting to school in the morning.

"All kinds of different things contribute to [absences]. At the end of the day, it's a growing concern since COVID-19," said Vogler. "We know that's a problem. Families that have a lot of mobility, this is between schools, they change schools a lot. That is really impacting us."

Vogler also mentioned that homelessness is on the rise, and challenges associated with that also contribute to chronic absenteeism. In addition, communication barriers also present challenges because school officials deal with language barriers to communicate with parents about their child's absences and the importance of getting their children to school.

"The biggest areas we're seeing chronic absenteeism is in elementary," he said. "We see it a lot earlier in kindergarten through [grade] five."

Vogler explained most people think that chronic absenteeism occurs more at the high school secondary level, but it is at the elementary level. Many fall behind and struggle with reading, among other challenges, when they miss school.

"When they're absent, it prevents intervention," Vogler said. "We want to intervene and provide the support students need for success. Our intervention structure in all [our] schools is based on kids being there.



If they're not there, we can't really do anything."

Vogler said families deal with many things that can cause absences, and he understands. Many families deal with problems beyond their control. Perhaps their car broke down, and they do not have money to fix it, or perhaps they do not have food on the table.

"We know that it really negatively impacts their learning. It also negatively impacts their ability to get resources," he said. "Our schools provide a lot of resources... just starting with meals. If a child shows up, we feed [them]. Schools can also provide access to clothes [and] access to other social services."

"Please call the school, call the principal," said Vogler for parents needing help or facing challenges.

Vogler also explained FUSD has a

flexible transportation department that will help a child get to school even if they live outside of the attendance boundary of a school.

"If a family finds themselves homeless, we will get transportation to the school of attendance," he said. "The student doesn't have to change schools [or] they don't have to leave their friends behind."

"We have community partnerships that we can [use to] help families get the services they need," said Vogler. "FUSD offers the Family Resource Center, which provides referrals for housing and food vouchers and assistance to navigate this whole process. It starts with reaching out to the school. It goes beyond test scores and everything else because we just want to take care of kids. That's what our school district believes in."



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