

October 2023

Malkhassian named Ambassador of Excellence at AEF Teacher of the Year Awards ceremony

October 19, 2023

Flagstaff Unified School District is proud of Kathleen Malkhassian, a fourth-grade teacher at Thomas Elementary School, for representing Flagstaff and northern Arizona at the Arizona Educational Foundation's Teacher of the Year Awards ceremony on October 14, 2023, in Phoenix, Arizona.

Malkhassian did not win the coveted award but was honored to be named a 2024 Ambassador of Excellence, along with finalists Andrea Barallardos of Douglas Unified School District, Marian Johnson of Amphitheater School District, and Rebecca Oravec of Sahuarita Unified School District. Efrain Casillas of Tolleson Elementary School District was named the 2024 Arizona Teacher of the Year.

Casillas is a music teacher at Porfirio H. Gonzales Elementary and Desert Oasis Elementary Schools and has been teaching for 22 years. The Arizona Educational Foundation (AEF) initially had 15 candidates for the award, which was narrowed down to five finalists known as Ambassadors of Excellence. All five finalists were present during the awards ceremony held at the Madison Center for the Arts.

The prize package for Teacher of the Year includes \$15,000 from the AEF and the opportunity to travel to the National Teacher of the Year events, including a trip to the White House to meet the President of the United States and a weeklong trip to the International Space Camp in Alabama. Casillas will also be considered for an honorary doctorate degree from Northern Arizona University.

The Teacher of the Year and the four Ambassadors of Excellence will also receive professional speech and media training to help them deliver hundreds of presentations during their year of recognition. The AEF partners also contribute a prize package for the top 10 teachers, including a free membership to

Continued on page 3 / Malkhassian



Photo, L-R: Superintendent Michael Penca, Principal Katrina Collins-Hernandez, Kathleen Malkhassian, and Jillian Hernandez, a teacher at Puente de Hózhó Elementary School.





A message from our **SUPERINTENDENT**

Critical Thinking

- Collect, assess, and analyze relevant information to make sound judgments and decisions.
- Identify, define, and solve authentic problems and essential questions.
- Elaborate, refine, analyze, and evaluate own ideas in order to improve and maximize creative efforts.

Throughout this school year, I will be highlighting and sharing with our community the ways both FUSD students and staff are cultivating the conditions for our District's Profile of a Learner skills (Critical Thinking, Communication, Empathy, Initiative, and Resilience) to flourish and prepare our students to be global citizens.

Why is *Critical Thinking* an essential skill? In an information-rich world, students need critical thinking skills to evaluate options and make informed decisions that are crucial for their academic choices, career paths, and everyday life choices. Critical thinking helps students discern reliable sources of information which is essential for making well-informed judgments and avoiding manipulation. Critical thinking encourages creativity and innovation by pushing students to explore new ideas, think outside the



box, and approach problems from different angles. Developing critical thinking skills empowers students to become informed,

responsible, and adaptable individuals who can make positive contributions to their school and communities. The world is rapidly evolving, and jobs and challenges of the future may not even exist yet. Critical thinking prepares students to adapt to new situations, learn new skills, and thrive in dynamic environments.

How is Critical Thinking cultivated in FUSD?

At Kinsey, teachers create Project Based Learning units which develop students' critical thinking skills by utilizing the following Project Design Elements: Challenging Question, Sustained Inquiry, Authenticity, Student Voice and Choice, Reflection, Critique and Revision, and Creation of a Public Product. Recent projects that have developed students' Critical Thinking skills are:

- First grade students working collaboratively to design a shade shelter for a panda bear.
- Fourth grade students exploring community water issues at the Water Festival, then conducting water studies at Viet Springs and the Rio de Flag wetlands.
- Fifth grade students collaboratively creating a grade level Constitution to help foster a positive and effective learning environment.
- Fifth grade students collaboratively creating a grade level Constitution to help foster a positive and effective learning environment.
- Second grade students organizing a plant sale to sell the plants they learned to grow. Groups of students presented each type of plant to future customers. Each plant came with a "How to Care For" student written paragraph, and students practiced math skills while operating the cash register at their check out.
- Fourth Grade students developing a podcast that explored the use of sacred places as recreational spaces.
- Fifth grade students designing and building model roller coasters to demonstrate elements of physics.
- Second grade students working in teams to design and present a "New City Park." Students incorporated area, perimeter, and features of accessibility.

Being a Thinker

Being a thinker means that you can confidently and creatively plan, carry out, and reflect on action. Currently, at Puente de Hózhó Elementary School, we have "studentpreneurs" who are planning a business for the craft show. They are investigating the costs associated with their business, establishing pricing, and deciding what to do with their profits.

Students are meeting with a local business owner, Kim Robinson, to learn about what it takes to launch a sustainable business. Students are critically thinking about what their business needs to be successful and how this impacts the greater community.

At Sinagua Middle School, sixth and seventh graders are planning their community projects. The students think about and develop a plan through research. They are transitioning from brainstorming to a planning session in order to put their ideas into action.

At Coconino High School, juniors in the International Baccalaureate Program take a Theory of Knowledge class. Students think critically about what knowledge is, how we gain and construct knowledge, and what we do with knowledge. Coconino High School is thinking about how to integrate the philosophy of the Theory of Knowledge into all classes in order to make connections and think critically about learning.

Thinker Attribute Puente de Hózhó



SCAN ME!

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FUSD Governing Board extends employment contract for Superintendent Penca to 2027

October 5, 2023

The Flagstaff Unified School District Governing Board voted to approve the new employment agreement for Superintendent Michael Penca on September 26, 2023. The employment agreement or contract will be for the duration of three years, beginning July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2027.

Governing Board President Dorothy Denetsosie Gishie commended Superintendent Penca.

"Superintendent Penca is in his seventh year as our district's superintendent. He has been a strong and innovative leader, and I'm very appreciative of his excellent work on behalf of our students, school, and the Flagstaff community," said Gishie. "I look forward to having Superintendent Penca continue as our district superintendent for the years to come."

Board Member Kristine Pavlik agreed with Gishie.

"I really appreciate you, Superintendent Penca, and I'm excited to see what we're going to tackle in the next three to four years," said Pavlik. "Thank you for being present and for all that you've done for our students and our district. I know that our concerns are your concerns, we're all here for the same thing... for the success of our students."

Superintendent Penca thanked the governing board for their approval of the employment agreement.

"I am honored to serve as the



superintendent of the Flagstaff Unified School District, I am really grateful for this opportunity to continue leading along with the governing board and the many dedicated staff of our district," said Penca. "As I reflect on my time here as superintendent, I'm quite proud of the progress FUSD has made in many areas and the support that our schools receive from our partners and our community. Yet, I understand there's more work to do, to better cultivate learning conditions that support each of our students so that they can flourish. I'm very appreciative of this contract extension to continue these efforts and help us all to realize our district's mission. Thank you." 🐗

SUPERINTENDENT MICHAEL PENCA'S EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT





...Malkhassian / From Page 2

Treasures4Teachers, scholarships from the Arizona K12 Center to pursue National Board Certification, the opportunity to ride on the APS fire engine during the Fiesta Bowl Parade, and a Fiesta Bowl Experience package including tickets and on-field recognition provided by Fiesta Bowl Charities. Desert Financial Credit Union will also provide each teacher with an iPad and keyboard case.

"The AEF is a wonderful organization that supports public education across Arizona," said Malkhassian. "The 2024 AEF Teacher of the Year Awards ceremony was a fantastic night that celebrated public educators and the work of AEF. It was an honor to be part of that night alongside so many incredible educators."

"I am honored to be a 2024 Ambassador of Excellence. I am excited to spend the next year sharing all of the ways public education positively impacts students by fostering relationships, igniting passions, and building our future leaders," added Malkhassian. "I look forward to being part of the Arizona Educational Foundation and supporting the various initiatives they offer for all educators."

Learn more about the AEF at www. azedfoundation.org. &











Photos, left: Chris Biello poses with his certificate from the State of Arizona for his completion of his apprenticeship. Pictured from left to right are Jill Smith, Arizona program director of C-CAP; Chris Biello; Little America Executive Sous Chef Andreas Garcia; and Patti Pastor. Right: Deacon Wilson poses with his certificate. Pictured left to right are Robert Moreno, Deacon Wilson, Casino Arizona Head Chef Andrew Helmandollar, and Patti Pastor. (Submitted photos)

C-CAP apprenticeship program successfully completes first round

October 19, 2023

Two Flagstaff Unified School District alumni, Chris Biello and Deacon Wilson, are doing great things thanks to the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Program.

According to Patti Pastor, the Career Exploration Coordinator at Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD), Biello successfully completed an apprenticeship program in June 2023 and is now an employee at Little America Hotel in Flagstaff, Arizona.

Pastor explained that in 2022, Biello, a former student of hers at Flagstaff High School, was an exceptional student, and he loved culinary arts but lacked the confidence to compete in C-CAP, which stands for Careers through Culinary Arts Program.

"[Chris Biello] decided to participate in the C-CAP Dairy Council Program," she said. "He did well in this program, and in the spring of his senior year, he committed to Little America as the first apprentice in the program."

Wilson, the other apprentice, is a 2021 graduate of Coconino High School. He competed in the C-CAP competition and earned a \$5,000 scholarship to attend Scottsdale Community College while simultaneously working as an apprentice at Casino Arizona, which he completed in July 2023. He has since received an Associate of Arts degree in Culinary Arts from Scottsdale Community College and is now pursuing his Bachelor's degree in Hotel and Restaurant Management.

Pastor said both apprentices were honored at a ceremony at Casino Arizona on September 21, 2023, and are the first to complete apprenticeships.

The idea of apprenticeships started

in 2012, according to Pastor.

"I was introduced to Willie Higgins, who was the Arizona Apprenticeship State Director. We chatted about how students could benefit from apprenticeships," she said. "Over the next several years, our paths crossed at C-CAP banquets, and we would talk about how to bring apprenticeships to the Flagstaff area."

"As culinary schools started to dry up in Arizona, Jill Smith, the director of C-CAPAZ began to explore additional ways to serve students who did not want to attend school post-secondary, but wanted to stay in the culinary field," she added. "She had the vision to bring back apprenticeships to fill Arizona's many vacant culinary positions."

C-CAP is a national registered apprenticeship intermediary with the U.S. Department of Labor.

"We source, train, and mentor students for one-year paid

apprenticeships with hospitality and culinary employers across the country," said Pastor. "In 2019, Jill Smith approached me about helping her find businesses and students who might want to participate in the apprenticeship program in Flagstaff. We approached Colleen Snyder at Little America, and after several meetings, she agreed to sponsor apprenticeships."

Moving forward, Pastor said her plan is to try and find more businesses that will take the apprentices in the community. Little America expressed interest in continuing as a worksite and Pastor continues to market the program at several events and organizations. At the moment, she said there are three Flagstaff High School students interested in the program and she will hopefully have more by the second semester.







Camp Colton's anticipated Phase 1 construction scheduled for June 2024

October 11, 2023

Camp Colton has served the Flagstaff and northern Arizona community for 52 years and has served nearly 50,000 youth. If you attended any Flagstaff Unified School District schools, it is highly likely you attended camp there, or you know of someone who attended camp there.

Ari Wilder, executive director of Friends of Camp Colton, explained that kids connect with nature, learn about their local environment, and make new friends at the camp.

"For many, this is their first time camping, sleeping away from home, and practicing self-reliance," she said.

Students gain a lot from their camp experience. Wilder explained that students gain self-confidence, independence, hands-on and place-

based experiential learning, social connections, and a break from technology and screen time and make lifelong memories.

The camp is serving its purpose, but current facilities cannot meet program demand.

"Overall, they are inadequate and lack capacity," said Wilder. "New facilities and infrastructure will create campfire memories at Camp Colton for the next 50 years."

Jackson Carranco, director of Camp Colton, explained that Friends of Camp Colton and FUSD are committed to revitalizing Camp Colton facilities to ensure that future generations can live, learn, and play at the camp.

The goal is to continue existing programs, grow new programs, extend into the shoulder season, and

reach more kids. In addition, camp staff want to increase accessibility, safety, and support for all students.

Carranco explained Camp Colton's master plan is a phased process. Phase 1, with an anticipated construction start date of June 2024, includes a new lodge, site systems, and entry and drop-off area.

"The total cost of this phase is \$6 million, and the goal is that \$3 million will come from the recently passed FUSD School Bond and \$3 million will come through Friends of Camp Colton's fundraising efforts," he said. "Friends has secured a \$2 million lead gift and a \$500,000 Challenge Grant."

Wilder said once the \$500,000 Challenge Grant is reached by raising an additional \$500,000, funding for Phase 1 will be complete.

Superintendent Michael Penca

visited Camp Colton overnight on September 27, 2023, and he experienced camp with the last group of FUSD 6th-graders before the season ended.

Penca said he had an amazing time learning alongside the students.

"We had the opportunity to core a tree to understand how conditions in the past had impacted its growth. I improved my aim in archery and tried to make the right moves when line dancing. I enjoyed roasting marshmallows at the campfire and learning about ecosystems in an Aspen grove," said Penca. "I was so impressed with the guidance and care the Camp Colton staff provided students while also growing their



STAFF HIGHLIGHTS



Joshua Mize

Joshua Mize, new biology, physics teacher at Coconino High School

Joshua Mize, a biology and physics teacher at Coconino High School, is a new Flagstaff Unified School District teacher in his first year teaching. He was born in Washington and raised in Prescott, Arizona.

He holds a Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education in Physics from Northern Arizona University.

"I finished my student teaching last semester at Coconino High School to complete my degree," he said. "I'm excited to continue being a part of the Coconino High community and build meaningful relationships with my coworkers and students."

His goals are to instill an excitement for curiosity and learning while sharing his passion for science. Outside work, he enjoys drawing, painting, camping, mountain biking, and rock climbing.



Lucy Soto

Lucy Soto, new fifth-grade teacher at Killip

Lucy Soto, a fifth-grade teacher at Killip Elementary School, is new to Flagstaff Unified School District.

Soto holds a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Northern Arizona University and is a certified teacher. She explained her function as a teacher is to help young scholars with their education, enhance their social-emotional skills, and help prepare them for the real world.

"I am responsible for providing the best possible education to each of my students," she said. "My goal is to provide a safe space for all my students to learn and enhance their skills. Another goal is to improve each day with my teaching, reflecting, and adjusting in order to provide the best education possible for my students."

"Growing up, my mom was a teacher. So, I grew up in the classroom, and it definitely had an



Kylee Deal

impact on [me] wanting to become a teacher," Soto added.

She also enjoys dancing.

"I grew up dancing in a dance company, and in high school, I joined the color guard, pursued it into college, and competed up until last year," she said.

When Soto is not working, she enjoys going out into nature, listening to live music, and watching movies. She also loves thrifting, spending time with friends, playing board games, doing puzzles, and hanging out with her cat, Grace.

She is super excited to start her teaching career and see where it takes her.

She is from Prescott, Arizona.

Kylee Deal, new kindergarten teacher at Leupp Elementary

Kylee Deal is a new kindergarten teacher at Leupp Elementary School and is in her first year teaching.



Tisha Sandoval

She holds a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Northern Arizona University and plans to return to school to obtain her master's degree.

She is originally from Kayenta, Arizona, on the Navajo Nation, and has lived in Flagstaff since 2019. Her clans are 'Áshįįhi (Salt People clan), she is born to Naakai dine'é (The Mexican clan), her maternal grandfather's clan is Bit'ahnii (The Folded Arms/Within his Cover People), and her paternal grandfather's clan is Kin Łichíi'nii (The Red House People clan).

She said she is so fortunate to teach on the Navajo Nation for Flagstaff Unified School District.

"In my new role, I have the responsibility of fostering the intellectual and social development of children in the first phase of their elementary school experience by

Continued on page 7 / Staff Highlights





FUSD donates socks, beanies to Flagstaff Shelter Services, FUSD's Family Resource Center

September 21, 2023

The Flagstaff Unified School District's administrative building held a sock and beanie drive for two weeks from September 27, 2023, to October 11, 2023. They gathered nearly 1,500 pairs of socks and beanies donated to the Flagstaff Shelter Services and FUSD's Family Resource Center.

Steve Rhode, administrative assistant with Operations, explained that the items were donated to help people as the colder months are approaching. He initially aimed to raise 500 items, but he said that goal was smashed.

"To have almost 1,500 items

donated was both exciting and rewarding, knowing that we are able to help part of the Flagstaff community stay warmer in the upcoming winter," he said.

Rhode now plans on riding the wave of good charity, as he said, and start a food drive from October 16, 2023, to November 17, 2023, to assist with the upcoming holidays.

...Staff Highlights / From Page 6

providing the necessary tools and creating a safe environment for kindergarten scholars to develop into responsible adults," she said. "My goals as a new teacher are to provide a calm and effective learning environment that allows my kindergarten scholars to succeed, help my students develop social skills and strategies for resolving conflicts, develop good teacher-student and parent relationships with my families, and learn alongside my students as a new teacher."

When Deal is not working, she enjoys hobbies such as playing volleyball, baking, painting, and spending time outdoors with her parents and siblings.

Tisha Sandoval, 2nd-grade teacher at Puente de Hózhó

Tisha Sandoval is a 2nd-grade English teacher at Puente de Hózhó Elementary School, and she has been with Flagstaff Unified School District for 10 years in various job positions. She took a year off from work and is now returning.

Sandoval is originally from Pinon, Arizona, on the Navajo Nation,

and she was raised in Flagstaff, Arizona. She is a Navajo Nation tribal member, and her clans are Ta'neesząhnii (The Tangle People), she is born to Tábąąhí (The Water's Edge People), and her maternal and paternal grandfather's clan is Tódích'íi'nii (The Bitter Water People).

She holds an associate degree in Elementary Education from Diné College, a Bachelor's degree, and a Master's degree in Elementary Education from Northern Arizona University.

In her new role at Puente de Hózho, she said she works with her co-partner, Vanessa Darius, and she referred to her as her other half this school year. "Mrs. Darius and I maintain two classes and switch half the day with one another," she said. "As I am the English teacher and she is the Spanish teacher, the students learn

> in two languages and are surrounded by rich cultural diversity in our school."

Sandoval said the teachers, staff, and students are great.

"Since I have been there for a while, I have grown to watch children in kindergarten leave Puente and are now 8th graders at Sinagua or MEMS," she added. "It

really is a great sight to see when you run into the children, and they still remember you and all the fun things you brought into the classroom for them."

She said her goal is to make sure the students are learning but also having fun while learning. She knows learning two languages is a struggle at the beginning, but she said it pays off in the future, and she knows this firsthand.

"I have four children who went through the program. One is in high school, a sophomore excelling in academics, and is now on student council. My son is at Sinagua, and he's also starting to blossom in his academics. I have two more little ones at Puente, and they are doing just fine where they are at," she said. "They will continue this [program] to high school. That is the plan, all following one another. My goal for my children is to preserve the language and their culture, as we will not always have our parents or elders to guide us in the future."

Sandoval said she has been married for 16 years to her husband, Cleveland Sandoval, and they have four children attending FUSD schools from elementary to high school.

When she is not working, she enjoys her hobbies which include hands-on crafts, such as scrapbooking and Cricut projects, and the beach is their family calling.

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HOPI R2 visits Thomas Elementary School

September 26, 2023

HOPI R2 visited Thomas Elementary School on September 22, 2023, to the surprise of many excited students and Star Wars fans. Duane Koyawena, the artist who painted R2, conducted several presentations to students. Koyawena painted R2 with Hopi cultural symbols and designs, and Joe Mastroianni built the droid.

Koyawena explained he was invited to show HOPI R2 to display the artwork and talk a little about its construction and engineering. He also talked about his identity as a Hopi tribal member, who he is as an artist and his interest in Star Wars.

So, what inspired the building of HOPI R2?

The idea came about when

Koyawena attended an exhibit at the Museum of Northern Arizona curated by Tony Thibodeau, director of research and collection at the museum. They were displaying Star Wars art, many of the artists were Native Americans who had interests in such artwork.

"They wanted an R2 unit but couldn't afford to bring one," said Koyawena. "And so, they asked one of the local gentlemen, who is the marketing director's husband from the Museum of Northern Arizona, if he could possibly build one. He was able to and so he asked me, since it was an exhibit for indigenous art, if I'd be interested in painting it for him. So, I did, and painted him with Hopi pottery-style designs."

The HOPI R2 was completed in

2019 and has since made several appearances. The students at Thomas Elementary were excited to see it.

"[The students] were attracted to it. They were supper happy... I think the idea of meeting a droid for the first time, an actual robot that moves around... a lot of the kids were really excited and impressed by it," Koyawena said.

Koyawena said the reception at Thomas Elementary was great and he enjoyed his time there. He enjoys taking the droid around for presentations and he plans to attend other exhibits in the future. He has conducted presentations on the droid at Coconino High School, the Children's Museum in Phoenix, the Heard Museum, schools in Kayenta

and Tuba City, Hopi fairs and events, and many conferences.

Aside from painting HOPI R2, Koyawena's artwork also includes custom-designed shoes, paintings, murals, drawings, and hand-painted custom skateboards. His work can be viewed at www.dkoyawenaarts.com.

Koyawena is a Hopi tribal member, his clan is Taawawungwa (Sun Clan) and he is from the Village of Sipaulovi on Second Mesa on the Hopi Reservation.









FUSD honors its 2023 Legendary Teachers

September 21, 2023

The Governing Board and Administration of Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD) honored five Legendary Teachers during their regular board meeting on September 26, 2023. The educators include Stacie Zanzucchi, retired principal of Coconino High School; Richard McEnaney, music teacher for band, orchestra, guitar, and color guard at Flagstaff High School; Michele Craig, TAPP teacher at Summit High School; Victoria Tomas, teacher at Puente de Hózhó Elementary School; and Sheryl Wells, STEM coordinator and teacher at Killip Elementary School.

The Legendary Teachers were presented with an award letter from

Assistant Superintendent Lance
Huffman and presented plaques
from Nicholas Clement of Northern
Arizona University and FUSD
Superintendent Michael Penca.
Huffman explained that FUSD
believes we all have special teachers
who have made a significant
difference in our lives.

"FUSD recognizes that those teachers demonstrated unique skills allowing them to transform their deep content knowledge into life-changing student learning," said Huffman. "[FUSD] values the caring family culture created by those teachers and understands that we often do not fully understand and recognize the profound influence teachers have on our future until we

have lived our future and realize the importance of taking time to fully recognize the legendary teachers in our lives."

"FUSD affirms its support for Legendary Teachers and encourages our entire community to take time and contact the Legendary Teacher in your life to express your gratitude for the difference they have made," Huffman added.

The three tenets that describe a Legendary Teacher are building relationships, engaging deeply with students, and creating high expectations. Current or retired teachers may be recognized as a Legendary Teacher.



...Camp Colton / From Page 5

responsibility and independence."

"FUSD is so fortunate to have offered this outdoor and environmental learning experience as a key component of our students' educational experience for the last 50 years," added Penca. "I am so grateful for the public-private partnership we have with the non-profit, Friends of Camp Colton, as we work together to enhance the camp programs and facilities so students can enjoy a Camp Colton experience for the next 50 years."

Wilder said Superintendent Penca experienced the old Wilson Lodge and seen how crowded the multipurpose dining and activity hall was. He also saw the wood platform tents that were falling into despair.

"We are looking forward to updating these facilities to give kids safe and enriching outdoor experiences," Wilder said.

Learn more about Camp Colton's fundraising efforts, scan the QR code below.

LEARN MORE SCAN CODE





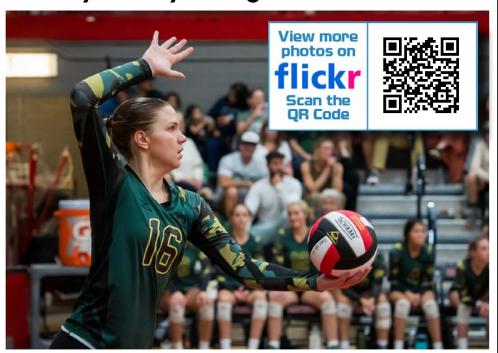
MIDDLE SCHOOL SPORTS PHOTOS





HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

Rivalry volleyball game





Rivarly Volleyball game between Coconino High School and Flagstaff High School on October 3, 2023. The game was played at Coconino High School.





Sechrist Elementary School's Fall Festival

October 20, 2023

Sechrist Elementary School hosted their Fall Festival on September 22, 2023, in their school field. Students and families enjoyed various outdoor games, food, and tons of fun.

John Albert, principal at Sechrist Elementary, said the Fall Festival is held to bring the Sechrist community together and form relationships.

"Students experience games and food, all at no cost!" said Albert. "For the past several years, this event has been quite successful... parking has become the only issue. We even have past students attend to rekindle their past memories of Sechrist."



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