

DeMiguel Elementary School, Marshall Magnet Elementary School celebrate "A" rating

January 26, 2024

Congratulations to DeMiguel Elementary School and Marshall Magnet Elementary School for achieving "A" ratings for the 2022-2023 school year.

Ginni Biggs, principal at DeMiguel Elementary School, thanked everyone involved.

"I am grateful for the dedicated team of teachers and staff at DeMiguel for creating a learning environment focused on high expectations for all learners," said Biggs. "Their continual effort, innovative teaching practices, and genuine care for our students are the cornerstone of our success."

"I also want to recognize the support provided by our parents and guardians," added Biggs. "Their partnership in the educational



DeMiguel Elementary School teachers and staff pose with Principal Ginni Biggs, far left, and Superintendent Michael Penca, far right, with their "A" Rated School banner.

*Continued on page 4 /
"A" Rated Schools*

IN THIS ISSUE



Mia Brokaw recognized as
Exceptional Educator... Page 4



CHS student wins Congressional
App Challenge... Page 6



Sinagua student participates in
Rose Bowl Parade... Page 8

A message from our SUPERINTENDENT

Empathy

Throughout this school year, I am highlighting and sharing with our community the ways both students and staff of the Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD) 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.

The ability to relate to others across cultures and backgrounds is more crucial than ever. This is where Flagstaff Unified School District's Profile of Learner skill, Empathy, shines brightly. But why is empathy so important for our students to thrive as global citizens?

First, empathy allows students to step outside their own experiences and understand the perspectives of others. This fosters respect and appreciation for diverse cultures, languages, traditions, and abilities. Empathy enables students to connect with their peers, teachers, and people from diverse backgrounds on a deeper level and better resolve conflicts peacefully and effectively as they can see situations from multiple perspectives and are more likely to find mutually agreeable solutions.

Furthermore, empathy fuels the fire of global responsibility. When we truly understand the challenges faced by people in our communities and across the globe, we are more



likely to take action. Students equipped with empathy become active participants in building a more just and equitable world, not just bystanders.

At FUSD, we believe that nurturing empathy is not just a skill but a foundation for a more compassionate and connected world. Through classroom discussions, service-learning projects, and community partnerships, we encourage students to develop their ability to listen, understand, and act with kindness. By fostering empathy, we are not just educating students, we are preparing them to be agents of positive change in our local community and beyond.

Shauna Lucero, the librarian at Killip Elementary, has participated in the DINÉ Institute at Northern Arizona University and created a



Killip Elementary Librarian Shauna Lucero conducts her weekly lesson to 4th and 5th Graders, "Empathy Through Character Analysis (Putting Yourself in the Character's Shoes)." In this photo, she provides a lesson on January 22, 2024, where students had to analyze and empathize with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

curriculum called "Empathy Through Character Analysis (Putting Yourself in the Character's Shoes)" to guide students to respond to read-aloud stories. In November, while reading and discussing the book "After the Fall," fourth and fifth-grade students put themselves in Humpty Dumpty's shoes by recalling a time they overcame a fear.

For several years, senior students from Coconino High School have participated in a Day of Service prior to graduation to give back to their

community and assist others at the food bank, humane society, and with landscaping, painting, and trash clean-up projects.

So, the next time you see a FUSD student demonstrating empathy, remember you are witnessing the future taking shape. These are the individuals who will bridge divides, build understanding, and create a brighter future for our community. Let's continue to nurture their empathy and watch them soar as global citizens. 🌱

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Christine Fredericks
Board President



Erik Sather
Board Clerk



Dorothy Denetsosie Gishie
Member

Congratulations and Thank You

FEBRUARY 2024

- 2/1: Anti-Racism/Anti-Bias Advisory Committee Meeting
- 2/6: Bond Oversight Committee Meeting
- 2/13: Governing Board Meeting
- 2/19: Presidents' Day - No School
- 2/22: FUSD Wellness Committee Meeting
- 2/27: Governing Board Meeting
- 2/29: Flagstaff Self Insurance Trust
- 2/29: Transportation Ad Hoc Committee Meeting (Zoom)

Governing Board elects new president, clerk

January 19, 2024

Pursuant to the Flagstaff Unified School District Governing Board Policy 1-103, the governing board elected Christine Fredericks as its new board president and Erik Sather as its new board clerk to serve for the calendar year of 2024, during their regular meeting on January 9, 2024. Outgoing 2023 Board President Dorothy Denetsosie Gishie remains a member of the governing board for the remainder of her term. Fredericks and Gishie's terms expire on December 31, 2024, and Sather's term expires on December 31, 2026.

President Fredericks is starting her 12th year with the Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD) Governing Board and said she is honored to be installed as the board president for a third term.

"These past years have certainly presented FUSD with a myriad of

difficulties, and I am humbled to have witnessed the determination and heart each and every team member has displayed and continues to exhibit every day through every challenge," said Fredericks. "Education has certainly changed since my days in the classroom and through my time on the board, and it will only continue to evolve. We've witnessed a tremendous acceleration of technology and continue to learn how best to harness its power. We endured the havoc caused by the COVID pandemic and have come out stronger and more determined to help every student be the best they can be."

"I'm proud to be part of a Governing Board that will see two new schools built, an updated curriculum that will meet the changing needs of our diverse learners, and a school district poised to face, head-on, whatever

opportunities may lie ahead," added Fredericks. "And finally, I thank everyone who has supported our schools, our students, our teachers, and our staff — I say 'our' because we are more than a team — we are a community, a village, and we could not do what we do without each and every one of you."

Sather said he was honored and grateful to be named the next board clerk.

"I very much look forward to serving in this role and continuing to work with all constituents and partners of FUSD to support and empower our students, faculty, and staff to be our very best," he said.

Gishie expressed her gratitude to her board colleagues for the invaluable mentorship they offered her while she served as board president in 2023.

"The guidance and support I received were instrumental in making

the transition smoother. I particularly appreciate Superintendent Michael Penca and Dr. Carole Gilmore, who were by my side, helping me navigate through our board agendas and processes," said Gishie. "A special acknowledgment goes to our Board Secretary, Mr. Kurt Steele, an unsung hero whose attention to detail and commitment to effective board communication have been exceptional. His behind-the-scenes efforts have contributed significantly to the smooth running of our meetings. I also thank our entire FUSD family for their patience and cooperation during each meeting. It has been a year of tremendous learning for me, and I am grateful for the experiences that have enriched my understanding and capabilities. Ahé'hee', thank you to everyone involved." 🌲

...“A” Rated Schools / From Page 1

journey of our students is invaluable, and we appreciate their ongoing involvement and commitment to academic success. Congratulations! Together, we have maintained an ‘A’ School Designation once again.”

Janelle Reasor, principal at Marshall Magnet Elementary, is also incredibly proud of her students, staff, and families for their dedication to student achievement and collaborative commitment to meeting the diverse needs of all their students.

“This ‘A’ school achievement validates our unwavering commitment to high-quality instruction, strategically organized multi-tiered systems of student supports, and our culture of inclusive art and science-based opportunities for our Mustangs,” said Reasor. “Together, we strive to pave the way for excellence, fostering a safe environment where all students can succeed. I hope we can all take a moment to celebrate where we are as we continue to push our collective growth. We are going for a three-peat! Together, we rise!”

Flagstaff Unified School District Superintendent Michael Penca also expressed his appreciation.

“I am grateful and proud of the daily efforts of the teachers and staff at DeMiguel Elementary and Marshall Magnet Elementary to address the needs of each student at their schools,” said Penca. “It takes a commitment to quality instruction, staff collaboration, and using achievement data to provide targeted intervention to have both schools repeat these A ratings for consecutive years.”

Photo: Marshall Magnet Elementary School teachers and staff pose with Principal Janelle Reasor, far left, and Superintendent Michael Penca, far right, with their “A” Rated School banner.



Mia Brokaw recognized as Exceptional Educator by Exceptional Student Services Department

January 23, 2024

Mia Brokaw, an ESS para professional at Knoles Elementary School, was recognized as an Exceptional Educator by Flagstaff Unified School District’s Exceptional Student Services (ESS) Department. Brokaw is the first awardee of this recognition.

Brokaw was presented with a plaque, a certificate, and the opportunity to be showcased at Knoles for the next couple of months.

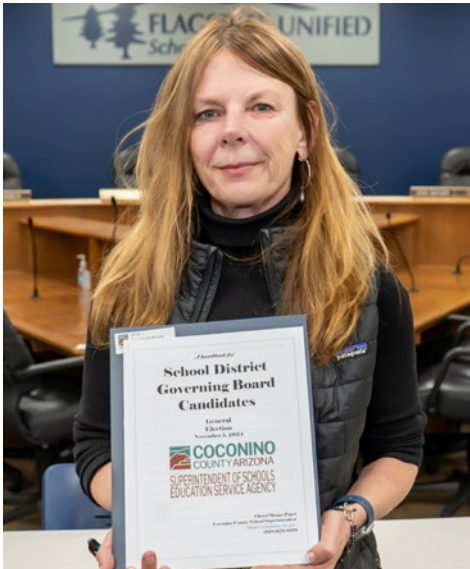
An Exceptional Educator demonstrates the ESS vision every day in every way.



Mia Brokaw (left) receives her plaque and certificate from Susan Smith (right), director of equity, inclusion, and support.



Three Governing Board seats are up for election



County Superintendent Cheryl Mango-Paget met with potential governing board members on January 24, 2024, at FUSD.

January 10, 2024

Coconino County Superintendent of Schools Cheryl Mango-Paget is actively seeking dedicated individuals to step forward and play a pivotal role in the future of education within the Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD). With three crucial governing board seats up for election, this is a unique chance for community members to make a lasting impact on their local schools.

Mango-Paget explained the upcoming election offers a distinctive opportunity for civic-minded individuals to become integral members of Flagstaff's educational leadership. Each open seat represents a four-year position, set to commence on January 1, 2025, and extend through December 31, 2028, with the election day scheduled for November 5, 2024.

An informational session was held on January 24, 2024, at the FUSD Governing Board Room. The County Superintendent's Office coordinated the session to foster meaningful engagement and dialogue with

potential governing board candidates. Mango-Paget provided valuable insights and distributed governing board election packets. She was also available to answer questions and facilitate the signing and filing Statements of Interest for interested candidates.

Eligibility for School District Governing Board candidates includes the following qualifications.

- Be a Citizen of the United States.
- Be a registered voter of Arizona.
- Be a resident of the school district for at least one year immediately preceding the day of the election.
- Neither employees of the district nor their spouses may hold membership on the governing board or be employed by a third-party vendor.
- Immediate family members who have shared a residence within the previous four years are not eligible to serve simultaneously on a five-member board governing board pursuant to A. R. S. § 15-421.
- A candidate may not serve on two School District Governing Boards concurrently.

On November 5, 2024, qualified electors within each school and college district in Coconino County will have the opportunity to elect governing board members committed to the Oath of Office. It is important to note that any documents filed by candidates are subject to the Arizona Public Records Law.

Interested candidates are encouraged to visit <https://coconino.az.gov/2855/Governing-Boards> or contact the Coconino County Superintendent's Office at (928) 679-8070. Candidates can also send an email to Superintendent Mango-Paget at cmango-paget@coconino.az.gov. ❄️



Zero the Hero visits schools on the 100th Day

January 22, 2024

Zero the Hero made a special appearance at kindergarten classes at Knoles Elementary School and DeMiguel Elementary School on

January 22, 2024, to help celebrate the 100th Day of School. Zero congratulated kindergartners on 100 days of learning, and together, they counted to 100 by 10s.. ❄️



Spring Break FACTS

The Flagstaff Unified School District's FACTS Program is hosting Spring Break FACTS this year at Kinsey Elementary School. The program will be held from 6:45 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Monday, March 11, 2024, through Wednesday, March 13, 2024.

Interested families can sign up

at <https://bit.ly/SpringBreakFACTS> under Spring Break FACTS starting at 12:00 a.m. on January 15, 2024. There will be morning, afternoon, and full-day options available.

For additional questions, please email the FUSD FACTS Department at kchristian@fUSD1.org. ❄️

Coconino High School student wins 2023 Congressional App Challenge

January 19, 2024

Skanda "Jai" McCabe, a 9th grader at Coconino High School, won the 2023 Congressional App Challenge for Arizona's 2nd Congressional District. U.S. Congressman Eli Crane made the announcement on December 22, 2023.

The app is called Notes2, and it is an application for Windows and Linux operating systems, according to Skanda, who prefers to be called Jai.

"[The] app is an integrated development environment. It's for coders and programmers to use coding languages efficiently," Jai said. "It has many innovative [and] useful features like, for example, your auto-completion on your phone. [For example,] when you type 'H' and it comes up with 'hey,' 'hello,' and 'hi.' In my app, I have auto-completion, and instead of language, it's for coding language. And there's over a hundred coding languages supported for syntax highlighting and auto-completion."

Jai also explained software developers will mainly use his app.

"Companies might use it to give away to their software developers... and they would use it to write code quickly," he said.

The development of the app was not sudden. Jai had been working on the actual text component for some time and adding different languages just for fun for at least two months before he heard of the competition from his engineering teacher, Robert Woodruff II. Once he decided to enter the competition, he began tweaking the app.

"I boosted up the speed and was like, 'Oh well, it would be a lot more useful if I made an app for it,'" he said. "The actual text editor is based on JavaScript and HTML, so when I built it and integrated HTML

document into the app, and then tweaking it a little bit, I was able to get a smooth app, and then I added many features."

Creating applications, coding, and programming is nothing new for Jai. He has always been interested in technology, more so for the last four years.

"It started when I used to build keyboards, and then one day, I was just kind of bored, and it was over the summer, so I was just thinking, 'What should I do?'" he said. "And I was building keyboards and having fun doing it and working on some PCB designs, and then I figured I might want to make websites to sell them. So, I was just having fun making a website. I would spend all night up just coding. It was really fun and intriguing."

Jai feels great about winning the Congressional App Challenge.

"I'm glad that I've overcome this challenge, and I'm happy I won. It really took a lot of determination, and I think that it really was just coming because I worked effortlessly on my apps, and they are very high in production value," he said. "I try to incorporate very fast components into my app so that it runs a lot faster. Just streamlining the RAM usage and memory accessibility so that it runs efficiently. It can be run on a Raspberry Pi [for] how efficient it is, that's one of the world's smallest computers."

According to Jai's mother, Sriyanthie McCabe, he has always been interested in technology, coding, computers, programming, and just building stuff. She said he has aspirations to become a computer engineer one day.

"When he was a little boy, he would play with Legos and he made a Skittles vending machine out of Legos. He just watched a



Skanda "Jai" McCabe

YouTube video... it was amazing," said Sriyanthie. "When he was 11, he made his first gaming computer... he just always had that engineering mind. My father was an engineer, too, and he was involved in the design of the chip inductor that revolutionized electronics. My father would be very proud of him, and my father always encouraged him."

Sriyanthie is very proud of her son.

"It was super exciting to see his interests being rewarded in this way. I'm just so excited all of his hard work was recognized and will be on display in the Capitol Building for a year. I'm just so proud of him because he does it because he loves it," Sriyanthie said. "I feel very blessed that he has such a wonderful engineering teacher, Mr. Woodruff, who encouraged him to apply."

Congressman Crane said it is inspiring to know young individuals like McCabe have a passion for coding, programming, and hardware

development.

"His skills and talent will surely help our nation in the future as we endeavor to preserve America's security and prosperity by advancing transformative science and technology," Crane said.

The app challenge is a prestigious prize in student computer science. Participation in the challenge has grown exponentially since the program's inception. Most students who win the challenge are just learning how to code a fully functioning app from start to finish.

As the winner, McCabe will be recognized by Congressman Crane with a certificate of achievement. The app will be displayed in the U.S. Capitol Building for one year, featured on the website House.gov for one year, and featured on

*Continued on page 13 /
Congressional App*



FIRST Encourages STEM Opportunities for Students in Rural Arizona



why she is helping to spread the excitement of technology and opportunities. She said STEM and STEAM encouragement is minimal on the Navajo Nation, possibly due to a lack of internet, water, resources, and funding.

On January 20, 2024, the CocoNuts, in partnership with the Navajo Transitional Energy Company, hosted the first-ever, all-indigenous "RezBotics" robotics tournament for Navajo Nation teams at Diné College in Tsaile, Arizona.

Klopfenstein said visits to the Navajo Nation in Window Rock and Tsaile were great, and she said the student participants were excited and engaging.

"It's just awesome to see how much confidence they [gained] in their skills and [to see] how much they want to keep doing it," she said.

As she thinks about STEAM encouragement down the road and into the future, she is hoping to see such events get bigger and gain more participants and teams. The FIRST program expansion to rural areas is a pilot program this year, and Klopfenstein will continue to help expand it.

"There's a team from Navajo Mountain that's going to be able to go to the World Championship this year... there's two others that were able to advance to state championships, which means they also have the chance to go to the World [Championships]," she explained. "Most of them were crying, and it was just awe-inspiring to see their excitement and work."

Klopfenstein thanks all the mentors and teachers involved in CocoNuts and the volunteers for making this effort possible. She especially thanked the Navajo Transitional Energy Company for their sponsorship in many areas. 🌲

CocoNuts helping to expand FIRST Robotics Competitions, STEAM opportunities to rural Arizona communities

January 24, 2024

Two Coconino High School students were recently featured in a professional video centering on what they are doing to expand access to STEM, STEAM, and the FIRST program in rural communities in northern Arizona. The video debuted at the FIRST Inspire Gala in Miami, Florida, in December. Junior Elena Klopfenstein and Senior Alicia Clouser, both Navajo Nation tribal members and CocoNuts FIRST Robotics Team members, visited several schools on the Navajo Nation over the last year, spreading the benefits of STEAM and building robots.

STEM and STEAM appear to be the same, but there are slight differences, the latter including arts. STEM stands for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, while STEAM

includes all those subjects plus arts. The difference also includes the way scientific concepts are approached. STEM focuses on a hard scientific approach, while STEAM includes an approach that uses hard and soft skills.

According to FIRST, they are the world's leading youth-serving nonprofit helping young people discover a passion for STEM and develop both self-confidence and valuable, real-world skills that can open pathways to all types of career choices and outcomes. The program provides a progressive series of mentor-guided, team-based robotics challenges for students ages 4-18, designed to ignite curiosity and encourage exploration. A diverse community of adult coaches, mentors, educators, volunteers, sponsors, and alumni help guide, inspire, and support students as they

learn.

The FIRST program believes STEM is for everyone everywhere, but sometimes, a lack of access to vital resources in communities creates barriers to participation. For this reason, CocoNuts stepped up to help expose more opportunities to schools in rural areas.

Christine Sapio, science and CIT teacher at Coconino High School, said she cried like a baby when the video was shown at the event. The video highlights the importance of community, heritage, and access, and it highlights CocoNuts' dedication and passion for STEAM.

"It's an amazing spotlight on our CocoNuts and our community," she said.

Klopfenstein said there is not enough excitement or passion for STEAM in rural communities, and that is one of the main reasons

To watch the video, scan the QR Code above

Sinagua Middle Schooler participates in Rose Bowl Parade in Pasadena

January 22, 2024

Sinagua Middle School 7th Grader Susie Poneoma had the opportunity to participate in the 135th Rose Bowl Parade in Pasadena, California, on New Year's Day with other Hopi youth who performed the traditional Hopi Butterfly Dance alongside the float "Woven Together: The Dance of Life."

The float was sponsored by OneLegacy, an organization focused on organ, eye, and tissue recovery, and they connect donors to patients, according to their website.

The once-in-a-lifetime opportunity came as a complete surprise to Susie and her family.

Susie's mom, Michelle Joshongeva, said she was unsure how the students were selected, but she received an unexpected telephone call from the Hopi Chairman's Office one afternoon and they asked if Susie was interested in participating.

"I was shocked because I was like, 'The Rose Bowl?!' I really had to think about it, and I talked to Susie about the opportunity, and she was like, 'What?!'" said Joshongeva. "I really thought about it because it was so far away, and having Susie travel alone was rough, but in the end, it was a once-in-a-lifetime chance for her. Who gets an opportunity to participate in that parade?"

Joshongeva accompanied her daughter to Pasadena on the all-expenses-paid trip, which Susie said was very fun.

"We danced for five and a half miles on the parade route," said Susie. "The weather was good, it wasn't hot."

Joshongeva explained the trip was fun, but it happened so quickly. Their arrival at their hotel was memorable.

"When we arrived at the hotel, everybody was waiting outside for us to arrive... then they all started clapping and cheering for us, and everyone was speechless," said



Joshongeva. "We all wondered, 'Who's here? We thought maybe it was a celebrity, but that was how they planned to welcome us. The kids were all in shock and saying, 'They're clapping for us.'"

The students were provided red carpet treatment, and Joshongeva said they were treated like celebrities there.

"They were well taken care of by the hotel and the company [OneLegacy]," she said.

"We saw the float, and it was touching to see it decorated with potteries and the faces of those that donated organs to people in need," said Joshongeva. "They represented them by putting their faces on the little potteries on the float. The people who sat on the float with purple coats were the recipients of organs through OneLegacy. It was really something to be part of."

Joshongeva said she was glad she went to accompany her daughter. She was not an official chaperone, but many of the dancers were glad she was there to help them get ready in their traditional Hopi regalia.

Susie appreciates the opportunity to have been selected to participate.

"I had lots of fun," she said.

Susie is the Snake Clan and Sand Clan, and her father is Roadrunner Clan and Bamboo. The family is originally from the Village of Mishongnovi on Second Mesa on the Hopi Reservation, but they reside in Flagstaff.

Joshongeva thanked the Hopi Chairman's Office for the consideration and said she is very proud of her daughter.

"I was very proud of her. I was amazed at the get-go because this little quiet girl... how did she get chosen to participate in this big

event?" she said. "Like I said, it's a once-in-a-lifetime thing because who randomly just picks somebody to go? She was selected. I'm very proud of her because she did a really good job and that was her first time participating in that particular dance. She did really well."

Susie had never danced the Butterfly Dance before, but she did well in the rendition of the dance, which is usually a ceremonial dance performed in the summer months.

Susie's dance regalia was specially made for her.

"The headdress was made by my boyfriend, he wanted her to have her own, so he made all that for her," said Joshongeva. "Everything she wore was hers."

Susie said she now plans to learn more about the Butterfly Dance and will plan to dance in future ceremonies. 🌵

FUSD FOOD SERVICE

What's Eating You? Mindful Eating

January 25, 2024

Mindfulness

The simplest definition of mindfulness is being present in the moment. This includes being intentional and aware of your surroundings and actions and allowing individuals to be fully engaged in their current task or activity.

The three components of mindfulness include:

- **Intention:** Focusing on awareness
- **Attention:** Observing the present moment through sensation and thoughts
- **Attitude:** Being non-judgemental and kind

When these components are all met, individual experiences can be transformed into new experiences.

Mindful Eating

As you set intentions for the New Year, consider incorporating the art of mindful eating into your wellness journey. By embracing this practice, you not only nourish your body with wholesome foods but also develop more appreciation for eating. Make 2024 a year of mindful nourishment, where every bite is an opportunity to savor the present moment and nourish your body, mind, and soul.

Mindful eating embodies the same practices as listed before but when eating. When an individual chooses to eat mindfully, they are paying attention to their physical and emotional senses related to eating and enjoying the eating experience. Along with improving the overall eating experience, it can make you feel grateful for the food you are consuming.

Mindful eating has been shown to have several positive effects, espe-

cially for families. A few of those benefits are:

- **Weight Management:** Mindful eating has been linked to healthier weight management by promoting a balanced relationship with food. By paying attention to hunger and fullness, individuals may be more inclined to make choices based on genuine physical needs rather than emotional triggers.
- **Reduced Stress and Anxiety:** The practice of mindful eating can contribute to reduced stress levels. By focusing on the present moment and enjoying your meals without guilt or judgment, you may find that your overall stress and anxiety diminish.
- **Improved Digestion:** Mindful eating encourages slower, more deliberate chewing and digestion. This can lead to better nutrient absorption and reduced common digestive issues like bloating or indigestion.

Here are the seven practices of mindful eating

1. **Honor the food:** Acknowledge where the food was grown and who prepared the meal. Eat without distractions to help deepen the eating experience (Harvard T.H. Chan - School of Public Health, 2020).
2. **Engage all senses:** Notice the sounds, colors, smells, tastes, and textures of the food and how you feel when eating. Pause periodically to engage these senses.
3. **Serve in modest portions:** This can help avoid overeating and food waste.
4. **Savor small bites and chew thoroughly:** These practices



can help slow the meal and fully experience the food's flavors.

5. **Eat slowly to avoid overeating:** If you eat slowly, you are more likely to recognize when you are feeling satisfied or when you are about 80% full and can stop eating.
6. **Do not skip meals:** Going too long without eating increases the risk of strong hunger, which may lead to the quickest and easiest food choice, which may not always be healthy. Setting meals at around the same time each day and planning for enough time to enjoy a meal or snack reduces these risks.
7. **Eat a plant-rich diet:** Consider the long-term effects of eating certain foods. Processed foods and saturated fat are associated with an increased risk of colon cancer and heart disease. 🌿

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This article was submitted by Taryn Kunkel-Lykins with FUSD Food Service.

FUSD Foundation issues second round of grant awards to FUSD teachers

December 15, 2023

The FUSD Foundation recently issued a second round of grants totaling \$12,780.47 from the Debbi Grogan Memorial Fund and the Mini-Grant.

The Debbi Grogan Memorial Fund recipients included Karen Whitaker of Coconino High School (CHS), Linda Stamer of Marshall Elementary School, and John Mistler of Coconino High School. The recipients of the Micro-Grant included Francy Solarte and Nicole Taylor of Coconino High School, Julie Bouck of FUSD's physical therapy services, Katie Krause of Marshall Elementary School, Scott Godwin of Mount Elden Middle School, Tamra Ayala of Marshall Elementary School, and Vanessa Billegos of Flagstaff High School, Coconino High School, and Summit High School.

Karen Whitaker, the band, orchestra, and choir director at Coconino High School (CHS), received \$2,057.47 in Debbi Grogan Memorial Funds on behalf of CHS. She explained that the money will be used to support the CHS Music Department, and they plan to buy instrument supplies like reeds, strings, percussion sticks, drum pads, and many other needs they have.

Linda Stamer, music teacher, received \$523 of Debbi Grogan Memorial Funds on behalf of Marshall Magnet Elementary School.

"This round of funding... we will buy a Yamaha Trumpet to replace our aging instruments for the beginner band," Stamer said.

John Mistler — math teacher and guitar teacher — received \$7,000 of Debbi Grogan Memorial Funds on behalf of Coconino High School to purchase electric guitars.

Francy Solarte and Nicole Taylor received \$500 on behalf of their project. They are collaborating on a garden project in a cross-campus

collaboration between the Spanish for Spanish Speakers class at Coconino High School and the English for Speakers of Other Languages class at Flagstaff High School.

They explained that the grant will be used to purchase seeds, garden tools, and an indoor starter kit to extend their collaboration around "sustainability requires accessibility."

Julie Bouck received two separate Micro-Grants totaling \$800 to be used for her physical therapy services. The first project is for her "Recess Explorers."

"The students I work with sometimes have a hard time playing with peers on the playground and often get left out or don't know how to interact on the playground due to their different physical abilities. This project would make them explorers and leaders by allowing them to be in charge of activities that PT would bring once a week, such as giant bubbles, corn hole, toss games, giant Jenga, spike ball, giant bowling, etc.," said Bouck. "These would be games that would interest peers and encourage them to interact with the kids that I work with who would be in charge of the games. This would allow children to learn social skills and develop friendships with peers in a natural setting. This would hopefully carry on into the classroom setting as the year progresses."

The second project Bouck will use the grant money for is the "Friend to Friend" project.

"The Beacon Program at Knoles Elementary School will do two different movement and musical performances. The students will be learning dance movement to learn to improvise movement and incorporate all of these learning

Continued on page 11 / Grant Awards



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Teachers across FUSD received grant funds from the FUSD Foundation. Photos, top: Marshall Magnet Elementary School Teacher Tamra Ayala poses with her students. Ayala received funds to purchase technology for her project. Bottom: School Social Worker Vanessa Billegos with administrators of Flagstaff High School. Left to right: Teacher on Assignment Frank Alvillar, Assistant Principal Matthew Barquin, Vanessa Billegos, Athletic Director Jeannine Brandel, and FUSD Superintendent Michael Penca.



Marshall Magnet Elementary School Teacher Katie Krause received a \$500 Micro Grant from the FUSD Foundation to support an oral history project called the "Hero Project." Photos, top: Krause, far left, poses with her fifth-grade class and Principal Janelle Reasor, far right. Bottom: Some books written, produced, and published by Krause and her students.

...Grant Awards / From Page 10

skills to perform in a winter and spring recital," she said. "The grant will help [purchase] a small speaker, costumes, props, and musical instruments to enrich and allow these students to have full experience of being involved in music and dance."

"Students that participate in dance and music have been shown to make more eye contact with others, learn how to take direction from others, learn how to respect the personal space of others, increase physical self-confidence, sometimes become more verbal, and learn that physical activity and movement is a way to play and have fun," she added. "Through dance and music, these students can learn how to be inventive, resourceful, and imaginative and develop an appreciation for their peers. They also map new pathways for old muscle memory and find new spatial directions for limbs and the whole body. It is important for everyone to be able to participate in singing and dancing regardless of their physical ability. This program is developed for students to prepare better to meet challenges by learning the demands of organizing movement and improving confidence."

Katie Krause, a fifth-grade teacher, received a \$500 Micro-Grant on behalf of Marshall Magnet Elementary School to support an oral history project called the "Hero Project."

"Over the years, the fifth-graders have interviewed five WWII veterans and wrote biographies about their experiences," said Krause. "They then illustrated the book, and we presented [the books] to the WWII veterans and their families. It's our way of recording history, so these veteran's stories are recorded."

Scott Godwin, a sixth-grade science teacher, received a \$400 Micro-Grant on behalf of Mount Elden Middle School to create the Indigenous

Astronomy Unit for his sixth-grade science class.

"The grant monies are providing electronic technology—a planetarium projector and a class set of 'Sharing the Skies' for all students to explore how the Diné (Navajo) study the universe," he said.

Tamra Ayala, a fifth-grade teacher, received a \$500 Micro-Grant on behalf of Marshall Magnet Elementary School for a project titled "Human Impact on the Environment: Digital Media to Tell Youth Stories of Land Relations."

"I plan on using the funds to purchase technology, including drones, tripods, and microphones for iPads, to help students create innovative projects telling stories of their relationship with the land," said Ayala. "In fifth grade, one of our standards is human impact on the environment, so this will be a great way to enhance that concept for them."

Vanessa Billegos, a social worker, received a \$500 Micro-Grant on behalf of all three FUSD high schools to ramp up the tranquility rooms in their counseling offices.

"We recently created a tranquility space for students to work through their emotions and get regulated before [returning] to class. We will be improving this room to make the environment more welcoming and full of resources for the students to ensure that they have the skills needed to practice mindfulness to encourage their focus and resilience," said Billegos. "Sometimes, a student needs a quick 10-minute break to help regulate themselves before heading back to class. The hope is that the room can supply them with an atmosphere of resources, i.e., coping skill posters, mindfulness activities, etc., and culturally relevant coping skills to help them feel ready to conquer the classroom." 🌲

STAFF HIGHLIGHTS



Susan Harpin

Susan Harpin, FUSD bus driver

Susan Harpin has been a bus driver for Flagstaff Unified School District since May 2023. She drives Route 801, which is the route that provides transportation to students in the Doney Park area.

She has no children in the school district, but her daughter graduated in 2022 from Coconino High School. Her husband is also a FUSD bus driver and has been driving for 10 years.

She enjoys driving the bus, and she likes the schedule.

"I used to work retail, but I just couldn't be on my feet for eight miles a day anymore," she said. "I like the schedule and the people I work with... they're topnotch... I love them all... they're great! I can't say enough about them."

"[I] came here via San Diego. I had moved from the east coast to San Diego... spent 20 years [there]," she said. "I was in restaurant management in hotels for 22 years



Danielle Adams

in San Diego, and after we had our daughter, we moved to Flagstaff when she was just about 13 months old. Our daughter went through FUSD from Cromer to Sinagua [Middle School], [then] to Coconino High School, [and she] graduated in 2022, and she is now at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida."

Harpin is originally from New Jersey.

Danielle Adams, accounts specialist, FUSD Finance and Business Services

Danielle Adams is the new accounts specialist in the Finance and Business Services Department at Flagstaff Unified School District, and her duties are split between accounting and payroll. She has been working at the school district for four months since mid-September.

Before coming to Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD), she worked at CertaPro Painters doing administrative work.



Diego Becerra

"I've been back to Flagstaff for about two years now... I lived here many years ago," she said. "[I] moved back home, which home for me is California... then I just moved about two years ago with my youngest daughter. I'm very happy to be back and very blessed that I was able to acquire this job."

Adams chose to work for FUSD because of its stability.

"I've always wanted to work for either a college or a school district. This job just happened to come along, and I thought it was a perfect fit, so I applied," she said. "I'm very happy to be here."

Adams attended California State University, Sacramento, and obtained her business degree, a B.S. in Business Administration, majoring in accounting. She also attended Coconino Community College years ago.

All in all, she said she is happy to be back in Flagstaff.

She explained that her youngest daughter is in high school and has integrated into the school system



Aaron Wells

well.

"I really missed the people here because people in Flagstaff... they're just very friendly and helpful," she said. "I'm just glad to be back."

When not working, Adams loves to cook.

"I do a lot of cooking. My two older daughters live in the Phoenix area, so I go down there all the time, and they're always asking me to cook for them," she added. "That's pretty much my hobby. I [also] love to read... those are the two things I do in my spare time... when I have spare time."

Diego Becerra, teacher at Leupp Elementary School

Diego Becerra is in his first year teaching at Leupp Elementary School and is in his second year teaching overall.

Becerra graduated last spring from Northern Arizona University

*Continued on page 13 /
Staff Highlights*



FLAGSTAFF UNIFIED School District

2024-2025 Academic Calendar

Board Approved: January 9, 2024

July 24 - June 25

July 24: 1st Day of School

August 24: 1st Day of School

September 24: 1st Day of School

October 24: 1st Day of School

November 24: 1st Day of School

December 24: 1st Day of School

January 24: 1st Day of School

February 24: 1st Day of School

March 24: 1st Day of School

April 24: 1st Day of School

May 24: 1st Day of School

June 24: 1st Day of School

QR Code

2024-2025 Academic Calendar

The Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD) 2024-2025 school year academic calendar was formally adopted at the January 9, 2024, Governing Board meeting. Additionally, the FUSD Governing Board voted to approve all FUSD school sites (elementary, middle, and high school) to have early releases on Fridays next school year.

The 2024-2025 calendar is now available on the FUSD website in English and Spanish at www.fusd1.org or by scanning the QR Codes below.

The 2024-2025 Calendar is similar to the current 2023-2024 calendar, except the early releases of the Fall and Spring Parent-Teacher Conferences have been reduced from three (3) days to two (2) days. The school year begins on August 7, 2024, and ends on May 22, 2025. The calendar includes two (2) make-

up days for weather or other school cancellations.

Early Releases

FUSD values and incorporates early releases for students into its weekly schedules to provide opportunities for staff preparation time, collaboration, and professional learning. Currently, FUSD releases early on Wednesdays (middle and high school, PdH) and Fridays (elementary). The feedback from FUSD staff and families was overwhelmingly in support of transitioning the district to a single and consistent early release day, **Fridays**, beginning in the 2024-2025 school year.

Thank you to all of our staff and families who provided feedback for the 2024-2025 calendar. We value your time and input.

...Staff Highlights / From Page 12

(NAU) with a double major in early childhood education and early special education. He explained he has some disabilities, an auditory processing disorder that causes him to hear an echo with every sound. Still, he overcame it, eventually graduating high school and college, and is now working.

"I'm here, teaching preschool, and I love it!" he said. "I'm having a lot of fun with it."

Becerra is from Phoenix, and he was born in San Diego, California. Although it is his first year teaching at Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD), he worked in the school district while doing his practicum and teaching at NAU.

He aims to become a better teacher, educate young minds, prepare them for studying, help them understand how the world works, and help [students] learn counting, shapes, and alphabets.

"And also, just being there for them. One of my teaching philosophies is that being there for the student is the most important thing," he added. "Even if they don't remember many [lessons], the fact that you were there for them is important."

When not at work, Becerra enjoys playing his guitar.

"I love music. I write music reviews for websites, and I also use to host the college radio station at NAU," he said. "I like to go outdoors... I love the snow... I love doing arts and crafts, and I like to read."

Aaron Wells, school nurse at Cromer Elementary School

Aaron Wells just completed his first year as a school nurse at Cromer Elementary School, and he has been with Flagstaff Unified School District since January 2023.

Wells said he has been a nurse for 16 years, and this is his first job as a school nurse. As a school nurse, he cares for kids who may be sick or injured at school.

"One of the focuses I have is to make sure kids are able to be in class as much as possible and to identify any barriers that might be keeping them out of class, and trying to help parents overcome those barriers," he said. "This job really fits well with my family's needs, so I don't have any intentions of leaving anytime soon."

"I'm happy to be here," he added. "This has been a nice change in my nursing career."

He holds a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Mt. Hood Community College in Portland, Oregon. He has a 7-year-old who goes to the Montessori school system. When he is not working, he enjoys disc golfing, rock climbing, and riding his bicycle.

Wells was born in southern California, but he moved up to Portland, Oregon, with his family when he was nine years old and lived there for 30 years. He recently moved to Flagstaff. 🌲

...Congressional App / From Page 6

CongressionalAppChallenge.us. In addition, McCabe will be invited to attend #HouseofCode at the U.S. Capitol Building in April, and his app is entitled to have registration fees waived if McCabe decides to have it copyrighted.

Jai plans to travel to D.C., and he

is looking forward to attending the House of Code and meeting other like-minded and passionate young programmers like him. He is also looking forward to visiting the U.S. Capitol Building in April. This will be his first-ever trip to D.C. 🌲

Rivalry Varsity
Girls Basketball
Game at Flagstaff
High School on
January 16, 2024



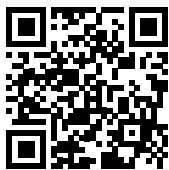
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Rivalry Varsity
Boys Basketball
Game at Flagstaff
High School on
January 16, 2024



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*Opens Wednesday,
February 7, 2024,
for 2024-2025*



www.fusd1.org/kindergarten



Winter Weather Information



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