
Monthly Newsletter January 2022



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Vision

A community of learners who direct our collective actions and resources toward the unique learning needs of every child in order for all students to become college and career ready and successful in a global society.

Motto

Collectively Committed to Every Student, Every Day, Every Minute.



Mission

Our schools are passionate about the learning-for-all mission and understand that every student matters. We are responsible and accountable for the education of every student that walks through our doors every day.



Dec. 8, 2021

Notes from Regular Board Meeting: Dec. 7, 2021

Page Unified School Board members convened for a Public Hearing, and its Regular Board Meeting Dec. 7, 2021. Board President Desiree Fowler, and Board Members, Sandra Kidman, Dee McKerry and Charles Weiss were present.

During the Public Hearing, PUSD Business Manager, Vindya Weerahandi, reported that PUSD has added \$2.7 million to its general budget after it captured the increase of the ADM.

During the Regular Meeting, Board Member, Desiree Fowler, recognized PUSD's Employees of the Month. The Certified Employee of the Month was Carlos Begay. The Classified Employee of the Month was Jennifer Hall.

Board Member, Chuck Weiss, recognized the Students of the Month. The Students of the Month are:

Preschool: Sophia Tsinnijinie

Lake View Elementary: Orliana Yazzie

Desert View Intermediate: Jayce Aguirre

Page Middle School: Haley Day

Page High School: Kayla Naswood

Manson Mesa High School: Savana Dach

Sage & Sand Virtual Academy: Anthony Darko

The Governing Board approved the Executive Search Agreement, and the advertisement document for the Superintendent search, scheduled to begin January 2022.

The Governing Board approved the resignations, terminations, retirements and reassignments of PUSD employees.

The Governing Board approved revision of the job title for the position of Grants-Professional Learning Assistant, to Administrative Assistant, as a means to attract more applicants to the position.

The Governing Board approved to rescind the last board's decision of putting a high school SAT in the classroom.

GOVERNING BOARD

Desiree Fowler
President

Sandra Kidman
Member

Dee McKerry
Member

Charles Weiss
Member

Page Unified School District
500 South Navajo Dr.
Page, AZ 86040

Meet PUSD's Director of Opportunity and Achievement

Dr. Tim Richard



Dr. Tim Richard, was hired by Page Unified School District's Governing Board to be the District's new Director of Opportunity and Achievement. Dr. Richard began his role Dec. 6th.

As a veteran of the US Air Force and an educator for two decades, Dr. Richard has dedicated his adult life to public service. He has ten years of high school principal experience and he worked as a district level administrator to facilitate the first-ever district consolidation in Arizona between the Coolidge and Florence school districts in 2016. He has a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and a Masters in Educational Leadership from Jones International University and a Bachelor of Arts in Secondary Education from Arizona State University.

Dr. Richard began his career as a high school teacher and also coached cross country, girls basketball, and baseball. He was an assistant principal at elementary and secondary levels before serving as Principal in Globe, Mesa, and Florence.

In 2015 Dr. Richard was the Principal of Poston Butte High School in Florence when they became the first 9-12 high school in Pinal County to win the "A Plus School of Excellence Award."

Dr. Richard says he's looking forward to working at the district level and he's ready to step into the new role, and

tackle new challenges.

Dr. Richard's primary duty is overseeing curriculum and instruction for the schools of PUSD.

"My ultimate goal is to see all PUSD students provided with superior learning," said Dr. Richard. "To reach those goals, students need excellent teachers and a safe, supportive learning environment."

Dr. Richard will work with the Superintendent to provide support for the principals, teachers and instructional coaches, so they will have the tools they need.

Dr. Richard sees his role as a liaison between the district office and its vision, and the schools and the implementation of the vision. "I see myself as a servant-leader," Dr. Richard said, "as someone who is here to support our principals and our teachers, helping them get the resources and tools they need to help our kids be successful."

With a background in teaching, and as an assistant principal, and principal, Dr. Richard brings a lot of knowledge and experience to his position. And empathy.

"Teachers need time to collaborate, and they need the resources, the tools, and the support to do what we're asking them to do, as well as a clearly defined expectations of what it is they're being asked to do," said Dr. Richard.

"We just have to work together to do what we can to attract quality people into the profession and once they're here, we need to do a really good job supporting them, so they'll want to remain with us and remain in the profession," said Dr. Richard.

Dr. Richard's career in education began as a little league coach. "I was reluctantly assigned to coach a little league team when I was 19-years-old," Dr. Richard recalls. "I really didn't know what I wanted to do with my life, but I ended up coaching that team and had a great time doing it, and enjoyed working with young people and that led me to the journey of becoming an educator."

"I was in the military at the time, and coaching children of other military members. A lot of the parents were deployed overseas at the time and so a lot of the kids didn't have a mom or dad at home. As their coach, the kids came

Kaya Dickson

Flinn Scholar Finalist

Page High School senior, Kaya Dickson, learned in December that she was one of 39 finalists for the Flinn Scholarship.

Dickson was one of nearly 1,100 Arizona students who applied for the prestigious scholarship last autumn. The Flinn Foundation will award 20 scholarships this year. The Flinn Scholarship, which includes funding for tuition, housing, meals and study abroad, is valued at more than \$120,000.

In March, Dickson – along with the other 38 candidates – will meet with a five-person interview committee. The extensive interview process will take place over two days. The Flinn Foundation will announce the 20 scholarship recipients in April.

“All of the 39 Flinn Finalists are very deserving of the Flinn Scholarship. We are impressed with this diverse group of extremely bright and talented students who are working to better their schools, local communities, and the state of Arizona,” said Anne Lassen, Flinn Foundation vice president of scholarship and education initiatives. “A difficult choice lies ahead for our Selection Committee.” Dickson is the daughter of Orlando and Juanita Yazzie. She plans to attend Northern Arizona University and get a double-major in Music Education and Performance with the goal of becoming a music teacher.

“I’d like to open my own studio and give private lessons to kids,” she said.

One of Dickson’s greatest passions is music. She particularly loves playing her violin. You have probably seen her playing it in the high school’s recent Fall and Christmas concerts. She is the orchestra’s Concertmaster (1st chair violin). Dickson is also a member of the Navajo Language Club, the high school’s E-sports Club, and a photographer for the Yearbook Club. In her free time, she can be found practicing her violin, reading, and watching anime.

It will come as no surprise, given that Dickson is a finalist for one of the most-prestigious academic scholarships, that she is also passionate about learning and her education. She has taken numerous AP classes, as well as online classes with Arizona State University.

Two teachers at Page High School have had a positive influence on Dickson’s development as a student: Mary



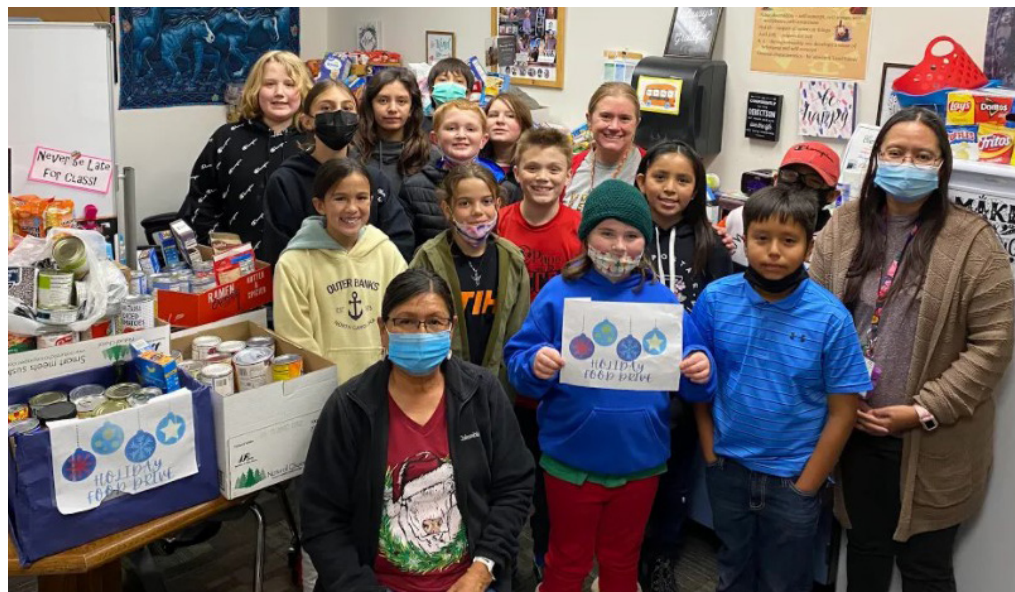
Hesse and Ben Dalton.

“Mary has been there since day one, supporting me and giving me many opportunities to grow as a student,” said Dickson. “She recently moved over the summer, but she still gives me private lessons over zoom. She has given me confidence in my performing abilities and realized how much potential I have. Another teacher would be Benjamin Dalton. He’s always rooting for me in everything I do. If I have any questions, worries, or need anything, he’s right there to give me some insight. He’s very encouraging and helped me become more motivated to reach my goals.”

No one is more deserving of the Flinn Scholarship than is Dickson, says Mr. Dalton.

“Kaya is the model student, that all students at Page High School should strive to be like,” Dalton said. “She has a good balance of being sociable and friendly while striving for academic excellence. She’s taken all the most rigorous classes we have here at the high school while doing so with grace and poise.”

Desert View Students Deliver Non-Perishable Food Items for Christmas



Desert View Student Council and Advisor, Fran Tucker, deliver boxes of non-perishable food items to PUSD's Student Support Services on Thursday.



Derek William dances in the hall during Desert View's Holiday Hallway Dance Party.

Led by its student council, Desert View students gathered more than 1,700 items of non-perishable food which will be given to families of PUSD students with food-security concerns.

Desert View students conducted the food drive in the weeks following Thanksgiving. The Student Council, and its advisor, Fran Tucker, delivered the food items to PUSD's Student Support Services Thursday, Dec. 16.

All Desert View classrooms were involved in the holiday food drive. The school set a goal to raise 1,500 non-perishable food items and, as an extra incentive, the students were promised they could have a holiday dance party on the last day of the semester if they met the goal. Desert View students gathered canned meat and vegetables, macaroni and cheese, ramen, peanut butter, cereal and other goods. They met the goal and Friday morning the students were invited into the hallway, music was played over the school's PA system and the students boogied-down.

The Holiday Food Drive is a long-held tradition at Desert View going back several years. Desert View wasn't able to do its food drive last year, because of Covid-related concerns. The Holiday Food Drive is often the first time many Desert View students hear about food insecurity, says Tucker.

"Most of our students come from families where food insecurity isn't an issue, and they're often shocked to hear that some of their fellow students may not have enough to eat at times," said Tucker. "But, this is also a great way to show them that they also get to be part of the solution to the problem. And after last year's interruptions, we are re-learning empathy and how to be a productive part of society."

Virgie Whitehorse, Parent Liaison for Student Support Services, says the food items will help 40 to 50 families get through the last half of December and January. After receiving the food Thursday, Student Support Services members, Virgie Whitehorse and Geraldine Clark, along with Student and Family Restoration Specialist, Sharon Watson, arranged the food into boxes that include vegetables, beans, meat, starches and treats. In the coming days they'll deliver the food boxes to families in need. The delivery process is a large undertaking. Whitehorse and Clark will personally deliver the food boxes to families living in Kai-beto, Shonto, Inscription House, Bitter Springs and other far-flung communities in the school district boundaries.

"What these students have done is amazing, and will help out a lot of families" said Whitehorse. "They did a great job."

Navajo Students Present Diné Winter Stories



Students from Page public school grades 9 through 12 presented the Page High School Diné Winter Stories Conference to a large audience on Dec. 1 at the high school's Cultural Arts Building.

The culturally diverse audience was treated to an unforgettable evening, the culmination of the students' work during the fall semester. Page High School and Middle School have a strong Navajo Language and Culture program. Dressed in traditional attire, students presented the program with the help of a large monitor screen. The students started by presenting the cultural time-scale that spans several "worlds": The First World, Nihodilhil (Black World); the Second World, Nihodootlizh (Blue



Photo by Phil Clark, Lake Powell Chronicle

See STORIES pg. 15

Photos from December's Ukulele Concert



Photos from December's Band & Guitar Concert



Photos from December's Orchestra Concert



Photos from December's Choir Concert



Photos from Lake View's Christmas Pageant



5 PHS Grads Receive Chief Manuelito Scholarships

Five Page High School students from the class of 2021 were among 133 Dinè students who received Chief Manuelito Scholarships. They are Jonah Holiday, Neve Redhair, Gavin Nockideneh, Ikaika Uejo and Rex Martin.

Receiving the Chief Manuelito Scholarship is considered one of the Navajo Nation's highest educational honors. Because of Covid-19 safety protocols, this year's ceremony was held virtually on Nov. 26.

The challenges caused by Covid-19 restrictions – and finding solutions to deal with it – was an ongoing topic during the scholarship ceremony. Nearly every student from the class of 2021 spent at least part of their junior and senior years in remote learning. For many Dinè students, remote learning was often problematic as many of them lived in locations of the Navajo Reservation where internet connectivity was unpredictable or spotty.

"The Covid-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges to education," said Patricia Gonnie, interim superintendent of schools with the Dept. of Dinè Education.

"This year's scholars should be commended for adapting to new ways of learning and continuing to achieve."

Gonnie encouraged the students to maintain their language and cultural values while they continue their education at college and university campuses.

"These should remain a central part of your life," she told the students. "Keep the spiritual values of your ancestors and keep their spirit of perseverance."

Jonah Holiday, a 2021 Page High School graduate and Chief Manuelito Scholarship recipient, is attending Arizona State University at part of the Barrett Honors College. Holiday told the Navajo Times that he plans to stay at ASU until he finishes his bachelor's degree.

"It's (the scholarship) definitely going to help me because I want to become a pediatrician and work back on the reservation when I get a doctoral degree," he said.

The scholarship is named after Chief Manuelito, a Navajo leader who encouraged the Dinè to get good educations, and advocated for better educational opportunities on the Navajo Reservation.

Page High School Recognized as School of Resilience

Page High School was one of six schools the Arizona State Board of Education (ASBE) recognized last December as a School of Resilience for the positive ways it navigated the challenges caused by Covid-19 during the 2020-21 school year.

The recognition occurred during ASBE's Board Meeting on Dec 13th.

According to Alicia Williams, ASBE's Executive Director, December's recognition wasn't official as it was part of a report that hadn't yet been finalized. She said the recognition may become official when the report is finalized.

The ASBE has spent the last few months analyzing data to determine where schools stand since the Covid-19 pandemic caused shutdowns, school closures and a shift to remote and/or hybrid learning in March 2020. The report delivered Dec. 13th found that the impacts on learning were deep and widespread across Arizona. But the data

also showed six outliers – schools that showed little or no loss in learning, and in some cases, showed modest growth on standardized tests during the pandemic. Those six schools were Page High School, Centennial Elementary in Gilbert, Countryside Elementary in Surprise, Ehrenberg Elementary in Ehrenberg, Masada Charter School near Colorado City, and Winslow High School in Winslow. One thing the six schools had in common was that each school had a long-term principal at the helm. For Page High School, that was Principal, Anne Martin, who became principal of Page High School in February 2018. She'd also served as the high school's Assistant Principal prior to becoming its principal.

As the ASBE prepares its final report, it plans to take a deeper look at the role long-term principals may have played in the success their schools experienced during the pandemic.

Student Support Services Delivers Christmas Joy



Amangiri employees deliver Christmas presents to PUSD's Student Support Services in the days ahead of Christmas. The presents were given to three area families in need.

In the days leading up to Christmas, PUSD's Student Support Services was busier than ever delivering food boxes, sleeping bags and gifts to the District's families in need.

Student Support Services provided 35 families of PUSD students with a holiday food box containing a large ham, pancake mix, syrup, spam, stuffing, marshmallows, potatoes, dried onions, apples, oranges and nuts, and other items for a festive Christmas meal.

In addition to providing food boxes for Christmas day, Student Support Services also acted as a liaison between families in need and Page businesses and organizations that wanted to do their part to make the holiday merrier for community families. Amangiri provided Christmas presents for three area families, St. Mary's Food Bank provided bags of food, Desert View students provided non-perishable food items, and Aramark donated 200 sleeping bags, something the company has done for several years now.

Amangiri reached out to Lynne Hoffman, PUSD's Direc-

tor of Talent Management, a few weeks before Christmas. Hoffman was able to provide them with the names of three families and a gift suggestion list for the members of each family. Amangiri representatives purchased the gifts and wrapped them in colorful Christmas paper. Student Support Services arranged for the families to meet the Amangiri representatives at the district office on the last day of school to pick up the gifts.

"It was wonderful," said Geraldine Clark, PUSD's Parent Liaison. "It was a very wonderful day for the families. The kids were especially excited."

St. Mary's provides food items to Student Support Services once a month. The food is delivered from the church's main warehouse in Phoenix. After the food arrives in Page, Student Support Services organizes the food into food groups and gives the boxes out weekly to families of PUSD students.

The non-perishable food items brought in by Desert View Students will become food boxes that will be given out in January and February (see the full story on pg. 4).

EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH

Certified Employee of the Month
November 2021



Carlos Begay, Jr.

Classified Employee of the Month
November 2021



Jennifer Hall

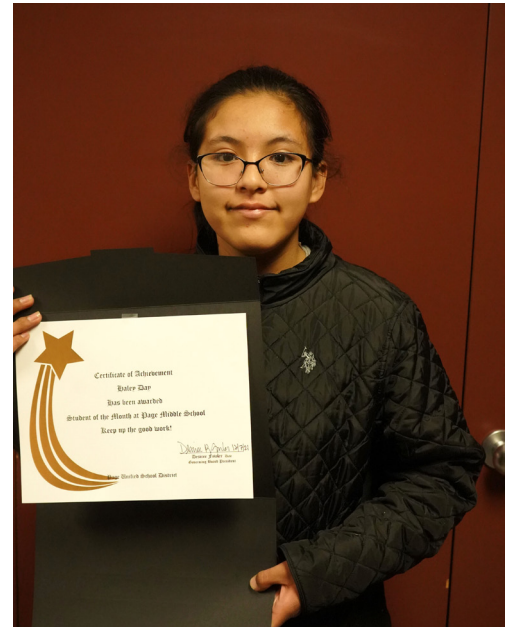
STUDENTS OF THE MONTH



Orliana Yazzie
Lake View Primary



Jayce Aguirre
Desert View Intermediate



Haley Day
Page Middle School



Kayla Nasswood
Page High School



Savana Dach
Manson Mesa High School



Anthony Darko
Sage & Sand Virtual Academy

World); and the Third World, Nihaltsoh (Yellow World). We are currently in the Fourth World, Nihalgai, the Glittering or White world.

Audience members learned that the Navajo Reservation is marked by four major mountain peaks: Blanca in Colorado, Taylor in New Mexico, San Francisco in Arizona and Hesperus in Colorado. Navajo Mountain joins other landmarks in defining the Navajo Nation.

The students presented a variety of constellations that were originally thrown in the sky. As the story goes, Coyote, who took a buckskin that held objects representing the night sky, and wanting more stars in the sky, sent the contents into the sky, resulting in the sky we know today. Some of the constellations are different than the ones non-Navajos know and look different. Others – like the Milky Way (Yikáisdáhi, or that which waits the dawn), the sun (Jóhonaa éí) and moon (Ooljéé) – are celestial bodies our cultures have in common.

The students talked about the Shoe Game, a series of games that originated in a previous world, representing the conflict between such things as day and night, life and death, old age, good and evil. In each case, neither side won, and that's why we have all of these to this day. In the story of Changing Woman and her sons the Twin Warriors, the students explained how the Twin Warriors slayed the monsters that were preying on the Navajo and eventually learned that their father was the sun.

The students then offered a variety of traditional song and dance performances (Iich'oshi sin), each sounding different and some quite mesmerizing. Since it is not allowed to record traditional songs, the audience was asked to listen and enjoy the music. Some of the songs were the memorial, veteran, shoe game and earth/children songs. Winter songs are only allowed to be sung in the winter.

Carlos Begay, who developed the curriculum for the students at Page High School, participated from time to time in the program with his own singing voice. His students mostly led the presentation with his help, as needed.

Begay has been teaching at Page High School for several years, and this is the third year that his students have presented the Winter Stories Conference. He has around 170 students in 9th through 12th grades. He is working with the school district to expand the Navajo language education to Page's two elementary schools.

Currently, he and one other teacher handle Navajo

language classes at the middle school and high schools. His long-term vision for the Navajo language program is to create an immersion program so students can learn the language better.

Begay said he realizes that languages are easiest learned as children and would like to see elementary school children be part of the program. For that, he will need more teachers.

For people interested in teaching Navajo, one has to start by becoming certified as a teacher by the state of Arizona. Then, one must pass the Language Proficiency Exam administered by the Navajo Nation. Navajo language classes are offered to any student with a desire to learn the language. Begay has students from the Hopi and Havasupai tribes in his classes, as well as some "billaganna," or non-native students. He also teaches Navajo at Coconino Community College. Classes teach not only the language, but also the culture and history.

Some of Begay's students continue past high school with college-level classes in Navajo and minors in Navajo.

There is a Navajo Language Club at Page High School. The students are planning a trip to Window Rock next year to open the Fall Council meetings. The students are also working on a trip to visit the State Capitol in Phoenix, and the Navajo National Office in Washington, D.C., to see the original copy of the Treaty of 1868. Begay's said his goal with his program is to respect and maintain the integrity of the Navajo language, culture and traditions by teaching future generations.

Readers who would like to help the Navajo Language Program, as well as students, are welcome to contact the Page High School Navajo Language Club by calling Page High School. The club and students welcome those who can help both financially and non-financially with their planned educational trips.

People can also help by supporting and understanding the culture and by being advocates for the Navajo people. Begay said he sees a lot more being accomplished when cultures understand and accept each other.

This story was written by Phil Clark, reporter for the Lake Powell Chronicle, and republished here with permission from the Lake Powell Chronicle.

to me for guidance on some things. I was able to see how I was having a positive impact on their lives. After that experience, I knew I wanted to have a career where I could work with kids.”

A short time after that, Dr. Richard enrolled in classes to get his degree in education. His first job in education was as a social studies teacher. He also coached cross country, girls basketball and baseball.

Whether he’s a teacher, a principal or the Director of Opportunity and Achievement, Dr. Richard says building a successful school, or school district is always about developing strong relationships built on mutual trust.

“I’m coming from a place where I want our kids to be successful, and in order for our kids to be successful we need successful teachers and principals,” said Dr. Richard. “That’s what motivates me.”



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You can designate which school, club or organization receives your donation.

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