PUSD PAGE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



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On the Cover

Christopher Pontevedra, Jolesha Johnson and Jomesh Johnson at the Desert View BookFair.

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.

Florisa Peshlakai Develops Curriculum Around Holistic Learning and Indigenous Knowledge

Riorisa Peshlakai's preschool classroom has a comfortable, welcoming energy. Everything from the colorful art on the walls, to the playful rugs on the floor creates an inviting, warm, nurturing space. Peshlakai shares her classroom with two para-pros, Natalie Kawano and Marlina Benallie. Throughout the day you may find the students sitting on a rug listening to a story, working together at a craft table, or numerous other activities.

Peshlakai is preschool teacher at Page Preschool and an Indigenous Early Childhood Educators Fellow at Northern Arizona University. She started with PUSD in 2015 as a para-pro, and the next year moved into a long-term sub position. In 2017, she finished her Master's Degree with NAU with a Masters in Education with an emphasis in <image>

Florisa Peshlakai with a student in her classroom.

preschool teaching. Peshlakai also has Bachelors degree from NAU in psychological sciences, with a minor in family studies, and she's currently working on her PHD, pursuing a Doctor of Education degree.

As part of that work, Peshlakai, an IECT Teacher Fellow, created a Curriculum Unit for the Indigenous Early Childhood Educators Program. The Unit is titled: Indigenizing Early Childhood: Engaging Young Native Minds with a Holistic Approach to Learning. The curriculum incorporates Native American culture with mainstream curriculum, by taking strands of indigenous wisdom and weaving them with strands of Western education.

Peshlakai's curriculum program centers on indigenous knowledge through place-based stories, circle learning, language acquisition, and traditional teachings that connect Native communities with their traditional spaces and homelands. The Curriculum Unit developed by Peshlakai focuses on the environment, the five senses, and engaging young minds by employing a holistic approach to learning. Peshlakai calls it Nizhònìgo 'Ajiil'o, or Beautiful Weaving.

Part of the paper explains why using Indigenous learning methods as a way to help Native students better engage with their education is important for young learners.

"What are the benefits of learning this way for young learners?" Peshlakai asked. "A holistic approach to learning engages the whole child. It includes using all five of their senses, and it also means incorporating all of the child's communities: their family, their teachers, their fellow students.

Including indigenous teachings, culture and language into a Native child's curriculum has other benefits as well, said Peshlakai

"Emphasizing to Native students that their culture, worldview and traditional language is relevant and valued, adds to their confidence and desire to learn," said Peshlakai.

The idea to create the unit, and the idea's inside the unit, came from Peshlakai's own educational and family backgrounds.

"I was primarily raised by my grandmother. When I was preschool aged I was with my grandmother the majority of the time," Peshlakai said. "My grandmother and my aunt

Awarded Flinn Scholarship



Page High School Senior, Kaya Dickson, was awarded the prestigious Flinn Scholarship last week.

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

This marks the second time in two years that a student from Page High School has received the Flinn Scholarship. Parris Adams, a PHS 2021 graduate, was award the Flinn scholarship last year.

Dickson applied for the scholarship last autumn. The Selection Committee narrowed the field down to 85 semifinalists. The 85 semi-finalists interviewed with the Flinn Foundation's Search Committee in January after which the field was narrowed down to 39 finalists. Each time Dickson passed to the next round, she was informed of her advancement via email.

In recent weeks, Dickson and the remaining 38 scholarship candidates, met with the five-person selection committee for a final, extensive interview that spanned two days. After the interview, the selection committee told Dickson that it would make its final decision before the end of March. Dickson was in her eSports club Wednesday when she looked at her phone and saw she had an email from the

Photo by Brennon Goatson

Flinn Foundation. She was almost too scared to open the email that had the potential to change her life.

"I opened it and saw that I'd been accepted," she said. "I started shaking and kept saying, `No way! No way!"

She immediately called her mom and shared the good news. Dickson is the daughter of Orlando and Juanita Yazzie.

Dickson will attend Northern Arizona University in the fall, where she plans to study Music Education and Performance. She wants to be an Orchestra Teacher after graduation, or open her own studio and give private lessons to kids.

Receiving the lucrative scholarship will make her college journey a lot easier, Dickson said. "It gives me a great feeling of reassurance about my future," she said. "This puts me on a really good path for my future."

Dickson is still processing the news, but said, "I feel like I made a lot of people proud."

That she did. Dickson had a lot of teachers, friends and family rooting for her.

"Kaya is an incredibly gifted student," said David Johnson, Page High School music teacher. "I have had the opportunity to work with her in different capacities through my time at Page High School and I am incredibly proud of the hard work and dedication she has put into her craft as a musician. She has represented PHS at the Northwest regional honors Orchestra for all four of her high school years which in and of itself is a major achievement as violin is one of the most competitive instruments in Arizona for high school. I cannot wait to see where her college career takes her. As far as I can see, the stars are the limit. I could not be prouder of her and her accomplishments."

"Kaya's perseverance and her commitment to excel-

Concerts Mark Music In Our Schools Month









arch was National Music in Our Schools Month, and PUSD noted the occasion with band, choir and orchestra concerts from its middle school and high school students. It was also the first time PUSD students used their brand-new instruments in concert.

PUSD received more than 50 new instruments in February, ranging from flutes, horns up to large percussion instruments. The instruments cost \$350,000 came from Covid-19-related Esser monies. It was the first time PUSD has received new instruments in more than 15 years.

Page High School Band Director, David Johnson, said the new instruments has made huge difference for the music program.

"All of our students having functional instruments to grow their skills on has been so great," he said. "Our ensembles sound a lot better. It's made a big difference."

The only thing that shined brighter than the new instruments was the performances of the musicians, who had improved a great deal since their performances in December.

Alex Moore, Band and Strings teacher at Page Middle

2 PHS Students Chosen for All-State Choir



Jordan Robertson and James Nolan

In mid-March, two Page High School students, James Nolan and Jordan Robertson, learned they had been selected to the All-State Honors Choir. Nolan is a freshman and Robertson is a junior at Page High School. Both boys sing tenor.

"This is like taking state for a sports team," said Page High School choir teacher, Mikayla Forbes.

Nolan and Robertson had to go through a rigorous audition process starting with regional auditions in January. The students gave great performances at regionals, which earned them the right to perform for all-state. The state audition included a solo and increasingly difficult sight reading challenges.

The state auditions were held last Saturday at Mountain Point High School, in Phoenix. Dawnell Robertson – Jordan's mother – was the accompanist for both students.

The All-State auditions have been on Nolan's and Robert-

son's calendars all year, and the two students have been preparing since November. Nolan and Robertson are cousins, and would practice some parts together.

As part of the auditions, Nolan and Robertson performed a piece of music in a foreign language.

Nolan performed Vitoria Mio Core, an Italian-language song, and Robertson performed Ich Liebe Dich, a German-language piece. Both of them took private voice lessons from Lynda Nolan, who helped them learn their language pieces.

All students selected for the All-State Choir will perform at the All-State Festival April 7-9, which will be held at Northern Arizona University. The festival will send them the music they'll perform in the coming days, which the two young men will begin rehearsing.

During the first two days of the festival all students in the All-State Choir will rehearse together and give a performance on Saturday, April 9. The full All-State Choir will have 200 students from Arizona.

Forbes said the honor is well-deserved. "They have been working super-hard since November," said Forbes. "They certainly earned those places. I'm really proud of them."

"It was the best wake-up call I've ever gotten, said Robertson. "My mom burst into my room and told me that I got it. I was very surprised I got it."

The All-State Choir will have 50 tenors from around the state. Robertson is 37th chair, and Nolan is 25th chair.

Robertson says he's looking forward to going to the All-State Choir Festival and having a chance to learn new music, different songs and perform with very talented singers from across the state.

Nolan was also surprised to learn he'd made All-State. "I didn't think there was any way I was going to make it." He is also looking forward to attending and performing with the All-State Choir. "I think it's going to be so much fun," he said. I had a lot of fun at regionals. The songs were a lot of fun to do and our conductor was amazing."

Robertson and Nolan are very involved in the art at Page High School and the Page community. Both of them were in the fall musical of "Beauty and the Beast", in which Robertson played Gaston, and Nolan played The Beast.

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7th Grade World War II Unit Resonates with Students



Mr. Prather's 7th grade World Studies class.



Jonathon Prather instructs his class.

Starting in March and going into April, Jonathon Prather's 7th Grade World Studies class is studying World War II and the Holocaust. Part of that unit is dedicated to the Navajo Code Talkers.

Prather's World Studies Class – an honors class – has 17 students, 12 of which are Navajo. "Discussing the part about the Navajo Code Talkers and the important role they played in the war, fills them with a great amount of pride," said Prather.

Because of the crucial role they played in America's victory against Japan, Code Talkers are one of the most highly-respected and revered segments of the Navajo population.

For Prather's students, it's a tangible piece of history. Nearly all his Navajo students have relatives or other ties to Code Talkers. It presents a golden opportunity for Prather to connect with his students, and he goes above and beyond to make the unit stand out.

As part of the unit, Prather has his students create their own code. During the exercise, the students write a sentence of their choosing, then transpose it into Navajo code. They then swap their code with another student, and the students then translate the code back into English.

During the six weeks Mr. Prather teaches the unit about WWII and the Holocaust, he covers the walls of his classroom with posters, newspaper clippings, advertisements and other memorabilia from the World War II era.

The Code Talkers were part of the United States Marine Corps fighting in the Pacific Theater.

The code used by the Code Talkers allowed the Marines to coordinate large-scale operations, such as the attack on Iwo Jima. The majority of the Code tTalker communications traveled over radio frequencies across broad swathes of the Pacific and its islands, areas that were occupied by



Navajo student, Kaley Begay, says studeying the rolde Codetalkers played in World War II gives her strength and pride.

enemy forces who could easily listen in on the radio conversations.

"America needed to come up with an unbreakable code," Prather told his class.

Part of what made the code unbreakable is that the Code Talkers spoke the code using Navajo, a language that very few non-Navajos could speak fluently.

Mr. Prather explained to his class that the idea to form the Code Talkers came from a similar successful operation

Sand Devils Football Moves to Newly-Created Region

S and Devils football will no longer compete in the 3A North. At least for the next two years. In recent months, the Arizona Interscholastic Association (AIA) created a new region for high school football that will affect football programs in northern and eastern Arizona.

The new conference will combine some teams from the 3A North with some teams from the 3A East. The newly-created region – which will be known as the Northeast Conference – will include Page, Monument Valley, Window Rock, Ganado, Round Valley, Winslow, Blue Ridge and Show Low.

Three 3A North teams – Tuba City, Chinle and Alchesay – will belong to different regions.

Some of them may even drop down to a 2A conference, or drop their football programs altogether, said Seth Polansky, AIA Sports Information Coordinator.

The decision to rearrange the northern conferences was made by the Conference Leadership, with little or no input from football coaches and athletic directors from the north conferences, which has riled the feathers of many coaches and athletic directors across northern Arizona.

The new Northeast Conference will take effect in fall 2022 and will only involve football teams. All other athletic programs, such as basketball, tennis or baseball will remain in the 3A North.

Page High School head football coach Leland "Bubba" Billie, petitioned the AIA to keep Page football in the 3A North, or let it move down to the 2A level. His petition was denied.

Being a member of the 3A Northeast Conference will make it considerably more difficult for the Sand Devils – and the other smaller schools of Monument Valley, Window Rock and Ganado – to make the playoffs, as they will now compete with schools that traditionally have stronger football programs, such as Blue Ridge, Show Low, and Round Valley.

Playing in the same region as schools with stronger football programs will greatly diminish the chances of teams from the old 3A North from earning a spot in the playoffs, said Coach Billie.



"This really throws a wrench in our plans," said Coach Billie. "The biggest issue I have with this is that takes away the 3A North's guaranteed place in the playoffs. We always had a shot of winning the 3A North and going on to represent the north in the playoffs. But now a loss to one of these bigger teams will also mean losing our chances of going to the playoffs."

In the course of a normal season, the Sand Devils typically play against the bigger football programs of Blue Ridge, Winslow and Show Low, but in previous years a loss against one of these teams didn't count as a region loss. Now it will.

Coach Billie says he and his team will prepare as usual. "In the pre-season, we always practice hard and train hard, and we'll keep doing that, of course. We're going to get the guys going and hopefully have a great year."

Not only did the Conference Leadership shake up athletic regions in the north, they also moved around start and end dates for football, basketball, baseball and other sports, which also has Several northern conference coaches and athletic directors upset.

"A lot of our schools in northern Arizona have small student populations, and because of that, a lot of their athletes play multiple sports," said Polansky. "After the changes, some of these sports now overlap. A student who plays football and basketball might miss the opening of basketball season because he's still finishing the football season."

PHOTOS FROM AROUND THE DISTRICT













7

Photos from Winterguard Performance













Photos from Sand Devils Baseball vs. Monument Valley











Photos from Sand Devils Softball vs. Monument Valley















DVI Admins, Teachers "Slimed" for a Good Cause





Kevin Anderson, Mary Stahl, Grant Bergstrom, Fran Tucker, Rachael West and Joshua Brink, were all sprayed with silly string by their students, and Gjermundsen Stoney and Chuck Serventi had slime poured on them, as part of this year's Kids Heart Challenge.

As an added incentive of this year's Kids Heart Challenge, Desert View students were allowed to spray silly string on their principal, assistant Principal and the Specials Teachers, as well as pour slime on the two teachers whose classes raised the most money for the cause, if the school met its fundraising goals. The school blew by that goal, and ended up raising \$9,668 for the Kids Heart Challenge.



Way to go everyone!

CODETALKERS from pg. 5 -

in World War I that utilized a code based on the Choctaw and Cherokee languages.

Following World War I, Germany and Japan sent students to study Native American languages. Because of this, many members of the U.S. military were uneasy about continuing to use Code Talkers again in World War II. It was a civilian, a man named Philip Johnstone, who convinced the U.S. Military to try Navajo-language speakers as Code Talkers. Johnstone, a white man, grew up on the Navajo Reservation as a child with his parents who were missionaries. Even though German and Japanese students had studied many Native American languages, Johnstone was convinced that the Navajo Nation had been too remote and difficult to get to and it was therefore, very unlikely that any German or Japanese student had visited the nation.

Johnstone was even allowed to enlist in Marines and take part in the Code Talker program.

One of the students in Mr. Prather's class is Kaley Begay, a Dinè student from Page. For Begay, talking about the brave Navajo soldiers, who played a very crucial role in America's victory against Japan, fills her with a great amount of pride. "Thinking about what they went through gives me a lot of strength," she said. "What they went through was great for all native cultures, and that gives us all strength to be a better person and be more aware of our feelings.

"I think we should all look up to them. Not only did they fight through the war, they fought through racism while they were doing it. What they did was a very kind thing to do for this country. What they did, did a lot to shape how Navajos and all Native Americans were viewed by American society."



MUSIC from pg. 3

School, was pleased to see the improvement his students have made since the beginning of the school year.

"The performances we see over the course of the year are but a glimpse of what students learn throughout our K-12 music programs experience on a daily basis," said Moore. "In essence, Music In Our Schools Month is about our students and ensuring they have access to this vital part of their childhood and school experience."

Kayle Fieldsted, is a sixth-grade trombone player in the Middle School band, and she's happy with how she's improving. This is her first year playing trombone in the band.

"It's getting a lot easier now," she said. "It's now a lot easier playing the higher and lower notes. At the first of the year I had to think about the movements, but now a lot of that is muscle memory."

Moore said Music In Our Schools Month is a great way to emphasize the importance of music in a student's academic development.

"Music in Our Schools Month is all about advocating and representing the music programs across the country, state, and our district and schools so that we enshrine this experience for all students," Moore added. "Our music programs in our district, from the first day they set foot in Kindergarten to their last step across the stage at graduation, help our students to not only learn music skills but life skills that are necessary in both their careers and personal lives. Music helps the brain develop and grow, provides structure for students to learn hard work and focus, presents an outlet to express themselves, offers students opportunities to be challenged, problem solve, and overcome adversity, and hosts other benefits that help them grow into independent young adults and musicians."

Joshua Brink, Music Teacher at Desert View, kicked off Music In Our Schools Month with a speech before PUSD's Governing Board that emphasized the value that music plays in the development of those students who participate in the music programs.

"Ya'at'eeh President Fowler, members of the School board, and Superintendent Anderson.

Page Unified School District is immensely blessed to be able to say that every school in our district offers their students a music education," Brink said in his address. "This is not the case everywhere. Unfortunately, districts cutting access to music education has become an all too common chorus 2



that keeps music educators like myself crossing our fingers, toes, and drumsticks to continue the work we do in our classrooms.

"Thirty-three years ago, the National Association for Music Education recognized this and began an annual celebration in March to advocate for keeping access to music in our schools. Initiatives and other work like this are clearly working, because in 2015, the United States signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act which, for the 1st time ever, listed music as essential for a well-rounded education.

But Page already knew this...we've known this for a long time! And if anyone is wondering what our students are doing in their music classrooms, let me share just a few highlights:

• Just today, over 160 students at Desert View traveled to Flagstaff to attend Carnegie Hall's Link Up! Concert with the Flagstaff Symphony Orchestra.

• This week, every choir, band, and orchestra at the middle and high school will perform in their Spring concerts.

• On Friday, Lake View is presenting their SECOND musical of the year.

• The Chamber Orchestra has been invited to perform at the Navajo Nation spring council session. • The Lake Powell Chronicle recently published 3 PUSD Music stories on the same front page.

• 8 high school students recently participated in the Northwest Regional Music Festival

• Both the HS and MS Concert Bands and Chamber Orchestras will be attending their large group festival this month.

• A High School Violinist is a finalist for the prestigious Flenn Scholarship

• 27 middle school students have been selected to participate in the Middle School Honors Festival in April.

• Students at every level have been enjoying a plethora of new instruments funded by ESSER and JOM grants.

• Specialized music programs are being developed at Manson Mesa High School and Sage and Sand Virtual academy to best serve their students.

"Our music teachers are doing amazing work, but our music students' work is far more amazing," Brink continued. "To support the work being done in our music classrooms, I humbly ask that you resolve to designate the month of March as Music in Our Schools Month in Page Unified School District. Ahehee'...thank you for your consideration."

PESHLAKAI from pg. I

are both weavers. When I think about weaving, I think about the loom and the echo it makes in the room. I used to be in her living room and she'd be in her room weaving. It was so quiet that I could hear the loom noise.

"When I was in the room with her, she'd be so busy counting I couldn't talk to her or she'd lose her place. So, I used to just sit next to her while she counted and did her work. It was a comforting feeling. When I thought about weaving, I wanted the kids to also feel connected to the environment and knowing the feeling of it. There's more to weaving than just the end-product, the beautiful artpiece displayed on a wall. There's a lot of background stuff involved too. I discuss all that in the curriculum."

During Peshlakai's time as an Education student at NAU, she continuously studied ways to engage the whole child, and she thought back to her own childhood. The theory her teachers were talking about in their classes had a lot in common with the ways Peshlakai had learned as a child, which had been very engaged, hands-on, community- and family-centric.

A large portion of her unit examines what it could look like if more Native American knowledge and teaching methods were woven in with current teaching methods.

"I talk about what culture revitalization could look like if we really wanted to bring back the culture and teachings together, and what that would look like in a school setting," Peshlakai said.

The unit also includes a component of how to incorporate classroom learning with home learning and how parents and grandparents can take part in it too, teaching numbers, colors, shapes and songs.

Earlier this year, Peshlakai began incorporating the ideas set out in her unit into her classroom. In keeping with the heart of the curriculum, the lessons centered around the Navajo practice of weaving a blanket. The students watched some short YouTube videos of the weaver doing different parts of the weaving. As part of the lesson plan, the students drew the shapes they saw the rug designer making, such as diamonds and lightning zig-zags. Students also did paper weaving in Navajo blanket patterns, and mock sheep shearing by shaving whip cream off of paper. Another lesson included the students mimicking the sound patterns the working loom makes. "That one was really cool" Peshlakai said. "That was my favorite one."

Another day, Peshlakai invited a Navajo weaver to demonstrate the process of preparing the wool, which included how to wash the wool in yucca soap, how to card it, and how to weave on the rug. She also had examples of finished rugs for them to see.

As Peshlakai's Indigenous-based curriculum matures, she hopes to have her older students do the process themselves, rather than just watch it being done.

"We are so lucky to have Florisa as one of our teachers," said Penni Case, Page Preschool Director. "She is do dedicated to early childhood development, and having culturally-relevant lessons for our students. She has an innate ability to see thing from the kids' point of view."

FLINN from pg. 2

lence is inspirational," said Page High School Principal, Brian Henderson. "Out of any students that have passed through Page High School, she has as much potential to do amazing things with her life as anyone I've met."

Dickson is a very active and accomplished student. She is passionate about learning and her education. She has taken numerous AP classes, as well as online classes with Arizona State University. Dickson is a member of the Navajo Language Club, the high school's eSports Club, and a photographer for the Yearbook Club. 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). In her free time, she can be found practicing her violin, reading, and watching anime.





Certified Employee of the Month February 2022

Classified Employee of the Month February 2022



Monica Gaylor



Michelle Pugh

STUDENTS OF THE MONTH



Jayce Malnack Preschool



McKenzie Seschillie Lake View Primary



Penny Haskie Desert View Intermediate



Andrew Hawker Page Middle School

STUDENTS OF THE MONTH



Ciauna Jones Page High School



Suetta Blake Manson Mesa High School



Jackson Kanaswood Sage & Sand Virtual Academy



PUSD SUMMER PROGRAMMING 2022

ENROLL NOW



To learn more about our fun, engaging summer programming classes, and to enroll, go to . . .

PAGEUD.ORG/SUMMERPROGRAMMING

Ties and Tiaras Daddy-Daughter Dance

Fathers come and join in making this day with your princess, a memorable occassion to celebrate an unforgettable moment with your daughter, stepdaughter, granddaughter, goddaughter, sister, neice, or related extended family. Be a father figure in the life of that special one.





Page Middle School Gym

*Girls from grades k-12 are invited to attend. Must be escorted by an adult father figure.

*Dress to impress!

*Donation of non-perishable foods or hygiene products encouraged upon entrance .

*Moms can attend as volunteers to help at the event

PMS Parent Engagement Event For more information contact Sharon D. Watson- Family & Student Support Specialist at shwatson@pageud.org

