

# FLAGSTAFF UNIFIED School District NEWSLETTER

June/July 2024

## FUSD Announces Groundbreaking Ceremony for New Marshall Elementary School

July 16, 2024

The Flagstaff Unified School District is pleased to announce the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Marshall Elementary School. The event will take place from 3:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Aug. 5 at the new Marshall Elementary construction site, located at the lower level by the field.

The ceremony will include speeches by Marshall Elementary School Principal Janelle Reasor and FUSD Superintendent Michael Penca. A barbecue will follow at 4 p.m.

The construction of the new Marshall Elementary School is funded by the community's support. In November 2022, FUSD voters approved Proposition 447 Override and Proposition 448 Bond, which allocated \$100 million to address the district's needs. The \$25 million designated for the replacement, rebuild, and relocation of Marshall Elementary School is part of this funding.

Marshall Elementary School, built in 1952, required extensive repairs and system replacements to meet

next-generation learning needs, especially for its magnet and special education programs. The FUSD Governing Board decided to build the new Marshall Elementary School on the site of the former Flagstaff Middle School property. This decision addresses safety concerns, including student crossings on Bonito Street, the location within the Rio de Flag floodplain, and insufficient parking.

The demolition of the former Flagstaff Middle School began on April 18, 2024, to make way for the new Marshall Elementary School. The middle school, which opened in the early 1970s and closed in 2010, served as a hub of education and community engagement for decades.

FUSD invites parents and community members to join in this momentous occasion and celebrate the beginning of a new era for Marshall Elementary School. 🌲

*Photos: Renderings of the new Marshall Elementary School provided in a Design Update Report presented to the FUSD Governing Board on February 29, 2024.*



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## A message from our **SUPERINTENDENT**

We are thrilled to welcome you back for the 2024-2025 school year! It is an honor to serve our community and partner with you in shaping the bright futures of our students.

The Flagstaff Unified School District is committed to creating a dynamic and supportive learning environment where each student can thrive. Our dedicated educators and staff are eager to inspire curiosity, foster creativity, and cultivate the essential skills needed for success in today's world.

We believe that by focusing on Critical Thinking, Communication, Empathy, Initiative, and Resilience, we are equipping our students with

the tools to navigate challenges, embrace opportunities, and become responsible, engaged citizens.

Your child's safety is our top priority. We are continually enhancing our security measures to provide a secure and nurturing learning space for all. Your involvement in creating a safe school community is invaluable.

We look forward to a year filled with growth, achievement, and collaboration. Let's work together to make this the best school year yet!

Michael Penca,  
*Superintendent* 



## Dr. Aaron Cirzan Appointed to FUSD Governing Board

*June 12, 2024*

Coconino County Superintendent Cheryl Mango-Paget appointed Dr. Aaron Cirzan to the Flagstaff Unified School District Governing Board. Dr. Cirzan fills the vacant seat left by Kristine Pavlik, who resigned on May 23 due to increasing family and professional responsibilities. Dr. Cirzan was sworn in Tuesday, June 11, before the evening board meeting. His term will run through Dec. 31, 2024.

Dr. Cirzan, an Arizona native, moved to Flagstaff 18 years ago to

attend Northern Arizona University (NAU), where he earned a bachelor's degree in history and social studies education, a master's degree in educational leadership, a master's degree in political science, and a Ph.D. in political science. He has served as an 8th- and 10th-grade history teacher in Flagstaff and currently oversees the Academic Success Centers at NAU. He also serves as interim director of the First-

*Continued on page 3 /  
Cirzan*

### ADMINISTRATION

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*Superintendent*

LANCE HUFFMAN  
*Assistant Superintendent of  
Curriculum & Instruction*

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## AUGUST 2024

- 8/6: Bond Oversight Committee Meeting
- 8/7: **First Day of School**  
Kindergarten Early Release
- 8/8: Kindergarten Early Release
- 8/9: Early Release - All Schools
- 8/13: Governing Board Meeting
- 8/16: Early Release - All Schools
- 8/23: Early Release - All Schools
- 8/27: Governing Board Meeting
- 8/30: Early Release - All Schools

**WELCOME**  
back to school

### ...Cirzan / From Page 2

Year Mentoring Program.  
"I am excited to engage with our community, parents, families, teachers, educators, and administrators to enhance and move FUSD to serve the community," said Cirzan. "I genuinely believe that if we can support our teachers in professional development and get the resources that they need, then teachers can support our students. I want to make sure that we're doing everything we can to support our teachers in the classroom. I want to make sure that we're promoting a classroom and an academic dialogue in our schools that is representative of our diverse community."

Dr. Cirzan has also filed a Statement of Interest to run for the two-year seat available in the upcoming November election. He is currently gathering signatures to support his candidacy.

## Marshall Elementary School Construction Update

July 18, 2024

Significant progress has been made on the new site for the new Marshall Elementary School.

Justin DiNardi, Director of Operations for Flagstaff Unified School District, explained that efforts on the site continue with site grading and removing older utility infrastructure.

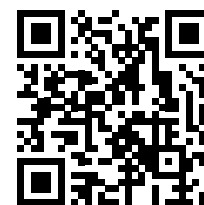
"CORE, our construction partner, intends to begin roughing in new utilities later this month and will

proceed with foundation work into the first months of the Fall semester," DiNardi said.

Rosanna Jumbo-Fitch also emphasizes that site work will be their primary focus over the next few months, particularly on new site utilities and foundation development.

FUSD appreciates the community's continued support and understanding as they work diligently to create a state-of-the-art learning environment for its students. 🌲

## CONSTRUCTION UPDATES







## KinderCamp Program Enhances Kindergarten Readiness for FUSD Students

July 19, 2024

Sara Z. Owen, KinderCamp Coordinator, highlighted the successes of the KinderCamp program, a vital early education initiative. Coordinated by United Way of Northern Arizona in collaboration with Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD), KinderCamp offers a free, targeted intervention for families, preparing children with limited preschool experience for a smooth transition into kindergarten.

Over 100 students from FUSD participated in KinderCamp at Kinsey Inquiry and Discovery School and

Thomas Elementary School. Owen explained they saw remarkable improvements in key areas.

"Students demonstrated a 22% increase in name writing skills and a 19% increase in identifying beginning sounds in words," said Owen. "In addition to learning literacy and math skills, students also had the opportunity to learn from community volunteers."

The program featured unique experiences like a visit from the "tooth fairy" to promote good oral health, and activities with Northern

Arizona University basketball teams to teach teamwork and basic sports skills. Children also sampled healthy foods with guidance from Coconino County Health and Human Services and learned about medical tools from North Country HealthCare professionals.

At the "bridging over" ceremony, KinderCamp graduates were awarded Teal Tickets by Coconino Community College President Eric Heiser. These tickets promise full scholarships to CCC upon high school graduation.

"Many parents noted the changes the month-long experience had made in their children, including their ability to speak more clearly and be more independent at home," added Owen. "They also felt more comfortable sending their child to school, prepared for the academic and social skills needed to transition to kindergarten."

This initiative underscores the community's commitment to supporting early childhood education and ensuring a strong start for our youngest learners. 🌟





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## FACTS Camp IWANNAGO

July 18, 2024

The 3rd-grade summer camp students had a great time on their field trip to Yogaert in downtown Flagstaff. This visit aimed to give the students a behind-the-scenes look at the intricacies of running a small business, with a special focus on frozen yogurt. The kids

enthusiastically participated in creating their own fro-yo masterpieces, enjoyed frozen yogurt, watched a movie, and spent time with their friends. It was a delightful and informative experience that highlighted the importance of supporting local businesses. 🌲





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## Super Summer at Kinsey Elementary

July 18, 2024

The Super Summer program, funded by Title I, is a free annual initiative designed to support Flagstaff Unified School District students who need extra help with reading. This year, approximately 225 students participated in the 18-day program, which is specifically aimed at students entering Grades 1-5 who have been identified as struggling in reading based on their AIMSweb+ benchmark scores. The program offers a unique

opportunity for students to enhance their reading skills and prepare for the upcoming school year through a variety of creative and interactive educational experiences. According to Linda Harbottle, Assistant Director of Educational Enrichment, the Super Summer program provides a valuable chance for students to improve their reading abilities and gain confidence as they head into the new school year. 🌲







## Summer Language Camp at Killip Elementary School: Celebrating Navajo and Hopi Heritage

July 19, 2024

This summer, Killip Elementary School hosted another successful Summer Language Camp for students in grades 2-8. The camp's theme, "Our Language Makes Us Strong," focused on the rich heritage of the Navajo and Hopi languages.

Annabelle Smallcanyon, a Navajo Language Teacher from Leupp Elementary School, facilitated the Navajo portion of the camp. Smallcanyon explained that students explored the history and legacy of the Navajo Code Talkers and learned how they preserved the language during challenging times.

"Students engaged in various activities, including memorizing clans, understanding the significance of the yellow footprint, mastering proper introductions, and practicing

conversational phrases," she said. "They also created arts and crafts projects inspired by the Navajo Code Talkers, such as making a Congressional Gold Medal."

"The intention of having a summer program is to use our language daily so that students can understand us," added Smallcanyon. "Students learned phonetic skills, decoded sounds, and developed their ability to read and write in Navajo. The camp also featured six songs, which the students enjoyed singing."

"Overall, the students were excited

to come every day," she said. "Thank you to the Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD) for supporting this initiative and ensuring that our students connect with their cultural heritage in meaningful ways."

Debbie Onsae provided the Hopi Language portion, enriching the camp experience with cultural knowledge and language skills.

"We had 17 students complete the four-week program," said Onsae. "During the camp, students participated in activities such as creating a family tree to learn about kinship, exploring

community roles, and engaging in agricultural practices like planting corn, beans, squash, and chili."

Onsae highlighted the program's success, noting that students significantly expanded their Hopi vocabulary.

"Some students started with just two to five words and ended with 30 words or phrases, while one student learned around 90 words and phrases," she added. "The program demonstrated that this program is really, really working. This camp is important because it helps to continue language education to preserve our cultural heritage."

The camp concluded with pre- and post-tests to measure students' growth and a celebratory movie screening, which added to the fun and educational experience. 🌱

**This camp is important because it helps to continue language education to preserve our cultural heritage.**

— Debbie Onsae





## Kayla Gonzales Shines in National STAR Event at FCCLA Conference

July 22, 2024

Kayla Gonzales, an incoming junior at Flagstaff High School, showcased her talents on a national stage after qualifying for the 2024 Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) National Leadership Conference held in Seattle, WA. This prestigious event, which ran from June 29 to July 3, brought together over 8,000 students, educators, and guests and emphasized leadership development and career exploration.

Central to the conference were the Students Taking Action with Recognition (STAR) events, which drew over 4,300 participants. These events are designed to recognize students' proficiency and achievements in various projects, leadership skills, and career preparation. STAR events are integral in enhancing students' classroom

experiences and guiding them toward successful career pathways, allowing them to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on critical issues affecting families, careers, and communities.

Kayla earned a first-place gold medal at the FCCLA AZ State Leadership Conference, securing her spot in the national competition. At the national level, she won a silver medal, placing her 41st in the nation. Her project, which focused on the necessity of trauma-informed care in early childhood, highlights her dedication to promoting mental health awareness and understanding, especially for young children. Kayla's creativity, poise, and passion for her work continue to positively impact the Flagstaff community. 🌲



## FACTS Camp IWANNAGO Students Meet Flagstaff Mayor

July 24, 2024

In July, FACTS Camp IWANNAGO students had an incredible opportunity to meet Flagstaff Mayor Becky Daggett and tour City Hall.

The students enjoyed learning about their local government,

pretending to be city council members, and even getting a glimpse into the Mayor's office.

Thank you, Mayor Daggett, for your warm welcome and for taking the time to inspire our young minds. 🌲





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## Camp Indi-Genius: Empowering Indigenous Youth Through Culture and Education

July 29, 2024

Flagstaff Unified School District recently hosted the second annual Camp Indi-Genius from July 15-19, 2024, at Mount Elden Middle School. This unique summer camp, aimed at Indigenous youth entering grades 2-8, was organized in collaboration with the Native American Education Support Program (NAESP), Northern Arizona University's Preparing Indigenous Teachers for Arizona Schools (PITAS) program, and the non-profit Flagstaff Youth Riders (FLYRS) program.

The camp was led by nine qualified Indigenous instructors, many of whom are Arizona certified teachers with extensive experience in tribal

K-8 schools and communities. Dr. Sigmund A. Boloz, an associate teaching professor at Northern Arizona University's College of Education, and Hanna Sandoval, the Administrative Assistant for the NAESP, played pivotal roles in organizing and leading the camp.

"We were excited to continue the second annual Camp Indi-Genius through a partnership between FUSD's Native American Education Support Program, NAU's Preparing Indigenous Teachers for Arizona Schools program, and the non-profit Flagstaff Youth Riders program," said Dr. Boloz. "Camp Indi-Genius is a one-week, fun-filled, culturally enriched camp serving Indigenous youth entering grades two through

eight from around the Flagstaff community."

The camp's name, "Indi-Genius," is a thoughtful play on the word "Indigenous," emphasizing that all Indigenous children carry a unique spark of genius within them. Dr. Boloz explained that the camp's primary goals were to help each child develop a strong sense of identity and cultural awareness through activities imbued with cultural relevance. By exposing students to teachers who share their heritage and experiences, the camp aims to strengthen the students' understanding and pride in their cultural identity.

End-of-camp evaluations revealed overwhelmingly positive feedback

from parents, campers, and teachers.

One parent shared, "To be honest with you, what I loved the most was that all of the staff accepted my son and nurtured him. It was amazing how much care our child felt." Such sentiments underscore the camp's success in creating a nurturing and inclusive environment for Indigenous children.

Camp Indi-Genius continues to be offered free of charge to Indigenous children across the Flagstaff community, reflecting a commitment to supporting and empowering the next generation of Indigenous leaders through education and cultural enrichment. 🌲



## STAFF HIGHLIGHTS



*Jessica Reeder*

### **Jessica Reeder, New Principal at Cromer Elementary School**

Jessica Reeder is the new principal of Cromer Elementary School, bringing with her 13 years of experience in the Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD). During her time in the district, she has worked at various schools, including Puente de Hózhó, Leupp, Thomas, DeMiguel, and Knoles, where she taught different grades and served as an instructional specialist and teacher on assignment. Her career began as a second-grade teacher at Salida Del Sol in the Crane School District in Yuma.

In her new role, Jessica is committed to leading Cromer Elementary School with a focus on high academic expectations, providing social and emotional support for students, and fostering a strong community spirit among staff, students, families, and community members. She aims to ensure

*Continued on page 11 /  
Reeder*



*Dr. Claudia Fletcher-Lambert*

### **Claudia Fletcher-Lambert, Assistant Principal at MEMS**

Claudia Fletcher-Lambert is the new Assistant Principal at Mount Elden Middle School. Originally from Jamaica, Claudia migrated to the United States 15 years ago and has been an active member of the educational community. She is married to Dr. Clement Lambert, the Chair of the Department of Teaching & Learning in the College of Education at Northern Arizona University. Together, they have three wonderful children: Deaja, Taylor, and Karim.

Claudia's impressive academic credentials include a Doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of South Carolina, a Master's degree in Teaching from Wake Forest University, and a Bachelor's Degree in Education with First Class Honors from the University of

*Continued on page 11 /  
Fletcher-Lambert*



*Heather Overton*

### **Heather Overton, New Principal at Sechrist**

Heather Overton has joined Sechrist Elementary School as the new principal, bringing with her two decades of experience within the Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD). A lifelong resident of Flagstaff, Heather is an alumna of Knoles Elementary School, Mount Elden Middle School, and Sinagua High School. She holds both a Bachelor's and a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from Northern Arizona University.

Heather's 20-year education career has been entirely within FUSD. She started her teaching career at Christensen, where she taught for six years before moving to Marshall Elementary School. Throughout her career, Heather has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to educational excellence and student development.

*Continued on page 11 /  
Overton*



*Michele Calnimptewa*

### **Michele Calnimptewa, Coordinator of NAESP**

Michele Calnimptewa, a dedicated educator and member of the Navajo Nation, has recently assumed the role of Coordinator of the Native American Education Support Program at Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD). With 20 years of experience in education, Michele brings extensive knowledge and a deep commitment to supporting the educational and cultural needs of Native American students.

Originally from Bittersprings, Arizona, Michele has called Flagstaff home for the past five years. She is inspired by the daily sight of the Sacred Peaks, which provide a sense of connection and humility. Michele's teaching career includes roles in various schools within the Tuba City and Page Unified School Districts, where she taught elementary to middle school.

*Continued on page 11 /  
Calnimptewa*



### ...Reeder / From Page 10

that all students receive a rich and empowering learning experience, support staff in their professional growth, and engage with the community to create memorable educational experiences.

Jessica holds an Early Childhood Certification, a K-12 Mild/Moderate Special Education Degree, a Dyslexia Designee certification, and a K-12 Administrative Certificate. She earned these credentials from Kennesaw State University, Pima Community College, and Western Governors University.

Outside of her professional life, Jessica enjoys reading mystery books, hiking with her new puppy, learning to can food, and renovating her home. She recently participated in the Doney Park Fourth of July parade and looks forward to continued involvement in community activities.

Originally from Murray County, Georgia, Jessica moved to Kennesaw for college and later to Yuma for her first teaching job. Now, she enjoys life in the Doney Park area of Flagstaff with her husband, three dogs, a cat, six hens, and three baby chicks. Her passion for lifelong learning motivates her to continually seek new knowledge for both personal and professional growth.

Jessica Reeder is eager to continue the excellent work at Cromer Elementary and enhance the school's presence in the local community. Her leadership aims to create an environment where staff, students, and families thrive, making Cromer a place where everyone is excited to be part of the educational journey.

### ...Fletcher-Lambert / From Page 10

the West Indies, Mona (Jamaica). She holds an administrative/principal's certification, K-8 teaching certification, and a Literacy/Reading Specialist certification from both

the Arizona and South Carolina Departments of Education. Before joining FUSD, Claudia served in various roles, including Assistant Principal at Academies of Math and Science Desert Sky, an instructor and practicum supervisor at Northern Arizona University, and a Literacy and Math educator in South Carolina. She also coordinated the Jamaican Broadcasting Commission's Children's Media Literacy Project, emphasizing her dedication to educational development and literacy.

As the new Assistant Principal, Claudia is responsible for assisting in administering academic programs, managing student behavior and support services, and promoting a safe and inclusive environment at Mount Elden Middle School. Her role includes fostering strong relationships between the school and the wider community, supporting the principal with student discipline, teacher and student scheduling, curriculum and instruction, and enhancing instructional practices. Claudia is committed to enhancing student achievement, supporting high-quality instruction, and cultivating a school culture where every student feels valued and empowered to succeed. She believes in continuous improvement and innovation in education and looks forward to collaborating with teachers, students, and parents to achieve these goals.

Outside of her professional life, Claudia enjoys spending time with her family, shopping online, exploring the internet for innovative ideas and DIY projects, watching television, and reading informational texts. These activities help her stay relaxed and energized for the challenges ahead.

"I am excited to be a part of FUSD and look forward to working with all of you," she said. "Together, we can achieve great things and ensure our students are prepared for future success."

### ...Overton / From Page 10

As the new principal of Sechrist Elementary School, Heather is dedicated to creating a safe and positive environment for all students, families, and staff. She is excited to lead Sechrist with a vision centered on inclusivity and collaboration.

"I look forward to serving as an educational leader and helping the students, teachers, staff, and families feel safe, supported, and valued as members of the Sechrist community," she said. "It is also my honor to work and collaborate with the other leaders in FUSD to strengthen our beliefs and initiatives for the district."

Outside of her professional responsibilities, Heather enjoys spending time with her family, which includes three children—two graduates of FUSD schools and one currently a senior at Flagstaff High School. Her hobbies include walking her dogs, traveling, and tending to her flowers during the summer.

Please join us in welcoming Heather Overton to Sechrist Elementary School. We are confident that her leadership and experience will greatly benefit our school community.

### ...Calnimptewa / From Page 10

"I began my teaching path at Tsinaabaas Habitiin Elementary School in Gap, Arizona, with the Tuba City Unified School District. Later, I worked at Lake View Elementary School in Page, Arizona, with the Page Unified School District," she explained. "Due to a landslide on Echo Cliffs several years ago, I moved to Tuba City Boarding School, where I taught 8th-grade Reading. After the Echo Cliff road reopened, I returned to Desert View Elementary School. Eventually, my husband's business brought us to Flagstaff, which led me to join FUSD."

In her new position, Michele

manages the Native American Education Support Program's budget, work plan, and staff. Her primary focus is developing programs that address the unique educational and cultural needs of American Indian/Alaska Native students within FUSD. She aims to enhance student achievement and ensure equal opportunities for all Native American students in the district.

Michele holds a B.A. in Computer Science from Fort Lewis College and two M.A. degrees—one in Elementary Education K-8 and another in Educational Leadership PreK-12. She is also endorsed in Early Childhood, Gifted, Structured English Immersion, and Computer Science, and she is an alumna of Flagstaff High School.

"With my experience and credentials, I look forward to continuing to support the Native American community by balancing and preserving their heritage and culture while meeting the demands of modern American education," Michele added.

Michele's passion for education extends to her personal life, where she actively supports her children's educational journeys within FUSD. Her hobbies include sewing, beading, traveling, and camping—activities that rejuvenate her and spark creativity.

"I am also an in-law to the Hopi Tribe from the Lower Moenkopi Village, where I got my last name," she said. "My husband and children are from the Bamboo/Reed clan and Corn clan and participate in cultural events at the village. Although I am not Hopi, I help fulfill my mewii (in-law) role at the village."

"I look forward to assisting students and families and working with FUSD department leaders to support our Native American community here at FUSD," Michele added. "Everyone has been welcoming and willing to assist me in my new role." 🌲

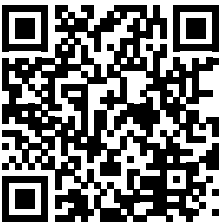




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