

## How Elii Chapman is Using CommunityShare to Transform Learning

March 21, 2025

At Thomas Elementary, art teacher Elii Chapman is doing more than teaching students how to paint or draw—she’s empowering them to connect with their community, explore sustainability, and see the real-world impact of their creativity.

Through a new initiative called Empower Hour, Chapman engages 4th- and 5th-grade students in hands-on projects that blend art, social awareness, and environmental responsibility. Using CommunityShare, FUSD’s innovative platform that connects educators with local professionals and community members, Chapman brings her ideas to life with powerful partnerships.

“I did one [Empower Hour project] that was to create baskets full of materials created by and found by students to give to community members that could use a little extra help,” Chapman explained. “It started with some sewing machines that I had gotten over the summer.”

To support the project, she contacted Runway Flagstaff, a local clothing consignment store

that donated rejected garments for students to reuse. From there, CommunityShare helped her connect with Sandra Darling from Goodwill Arizona and graduate students and faculty from Northern Arizona University’s Sociology Department, who became involved in the project and joined the platform themselves.

The result? A powerful blend of creativity, sustainability, and service. Students used the donated fabrics to create cloth cases for new dog adopters to store waste bags and attach to a leash; sew baby blankets and cuddly comfort items for foster children; and design landscape and animal-themed textile art pieces—including turtles, skunks, and cats—assembled from salvaged fabric.


“In my art class, the students were taking the fabrics that we got... and then turning them into a landscape sometimes, sometimes animals of different types,” Chapman said.

NAU sociology graduate students joined the sessions as part of a Participatory Research course. Over several weeks, they observed, interviewed students, and


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## A message from our SUPERINTENDENT

Spring is here, and with it comes the chance for our students to shine on state assessments! These tests help us measure progress and fine-tune our educational programs. Please be watching for communications from our schools about the testing schedule for students. We understand that testing can cause some anxiety, so let's help our students see these assessments as opportunities to showcase their hard work, knowledge, and critical thinking skills.

### Here's how you can help:

- **Positive Reinforcement:** Emphasize that these assessments are a chance to show what they know and the growth they have made.
- **Prioritize Sleep:** Ensure your child gets a full night's sleep before testing days for optimal focus.
- **Nourishing Breakfast:** Fuel their brains with a healthy breakfast on testing mornings.
- **Punctual Attendance and Preparedness:** Please ensure your child arrives at school on time, every day, with a fully charged iPad.
- **Unwavering Encouragement:** Express your confidence in their abilities and reassure them you're proud of their efforts.

Remember, these assessments are just one piece of the puzzle. We value our students' unique talents and the joy of learning! Our



dedicated educators have worked hard to prepare students, and we're confident they'll approach these assessments with confidence.

### Addressing Attendance for Success

We also want to address the importance of regular attendance. We recognize that families face numerous challenges, and we want to partner with you to overcome any barriers to getting your child to school every day. Chronic absenteeism (missing 10% or more of school days) can significantly impact a child's academic performance and create learning gaps. The Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD) is committed to providing resources and support to ensure every student has the opportunity to succeed. 🌲

# BE SMART

|   |  |  |   |   |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| <b>Secure</b><br>all guns<br>in your home<br>and vehicles | <b>Model</b><br>responsible<br>behavior<br>around guns | <b>Ask</b><br>about the<br>presence of<br>unsecured guns<br>in other homes | <b>Recognize</b><br>the role<br>of guns<br>in suicide | <b>Tell</b><br>your<br>peers to<br>be SMART |
|---|--|--|---|---|

For more information on what you can do to keep kids safe, visit  
[BeSmartForKids.org](https://BeSmartForKids.org)

## BeSMART for Kids, Firearms Safety

March 26, 2025

The BeSMART campaign promotes responsible gun ownership to help keep children safe. The campaign reminds families to Secure all firearms, Model safe behavior, Ask about unsecured guns in other homes, Recognize the role of guns in suicide, and Tell others to BeSMART. The campaign offers free gun locks and brochures in English and Spanish. Learn more at [BeSmartForKids.org](https://BeSmartForKids.org). 🌲



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## Navajo Nation Vice President Visits Puente de Hózhó Elementary School

March 10, 2025

Puente de Hózhó Elementary School had the distinct honor of welcoming Navajo Nation Vice President Richelle Montoya for a special visit to campus. Her presence offered students and staff a meaningful opportunity to connect with leadership and explore cultural perspectives tied to their learning.

Vice President Montoya joined students in a thoughtful discussion centered around their current International Baccalaureate (IB) unit, *Where We Are in Place and Time*. Together, they reflected on how the past, present, and future shape our

shared journey, deepening students' understanding of identity, history, and belonging.

During her visit, Vice President Montoya also toured the school, gaining insight into PdH's commitment to bilingual and multicultural education. Her visit highlighted the power of language, culture, and community in shaping lifelong learners and leaders.

FUSD extends a heartfelt thank you to Vice President Montoya for taking the time to engage with our school community. Her visit was a memorable day of learning, inspiration, and connection. 🌲





## Students Experience Navajo Tradition Through Késhjéé at Cromer Elementary

March 1, 2025

Students at Cromer Elementary School recently had a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in Navajo culture by learning and playing Késhjéé, the Navajo Shoe Game, led by Talibah Begay.

Késhjéé is a traditional guessing game deeply rooted in Navajo storytelling. According to legend, the game originated from a time when day animals and night animals argued over how long daylight and nighttime should last. To resolve the dispute, they played the Shoe

Game—an activity that emphasizes the values of balance, honesty, patience, and teamwork.

Through play, song, and storytelling, students engaged with this rich cultural tradition in an interactive and meaningful way. This hands-on experience brought the story to life and offered valuable lessons about Navajo beliefs and customs.

FUSD extends a heartfelt thank you to Talibah Begay for sharing this beautiful tradition and helping students connect with the culture and wisdom of the Navajo. 🌲

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(Photos by Jake Bacon Photography)

## FHS Girls Basketball Team Wins 2025 State Championship

March 7, 2025

Congratulations to the Flagstaff High School Lady Eagles, the 2025 4A Girls Basketball State Champions!

In a commanding performance at the Arizona Veterans Memorial Coliseum in Phoenix, the Flagstaff girls' basketball team defeated Eastmark 44-30 to secure their second state title under head coach Tyrone Johnson. The win capped off an impressive season for the No. 3-seeded Eagles, who went undefeated in region play and finished the season with a 20-4 record.

This championship marks Coach

Johnson's third trip to the state finals in four years, highlighting the strength and consistency of the program. What made this year's victory especially meaningful was the youth of the team—many of the players were competing in their first varsity season.

Freshman Sunshine Begood and senior Teagan Martin led the Eagles in scoring, each contributing 14 points in the title game. Begood came off the bench with confidence, sinking three three-pointers and energizing her teammates on the court. Junior Lexi Neal, Kyleigh Walker, and Nidaya Nez also made key contributions throughout the

game, showcasing the team's depth and determination.

Known for their defensive intensity, the Eagles set the tone early, holding Eastmark to just five points in the first half. A strong third-quarter surge widened the lead, and despite a late push from Eastmark, Flagstaff maintained control to the final buzzer.

The moment was emotional for the team, especially the seniors, as they celebrated their hard-fought victory.

Way to go, Lady Eagles! Your hard work, teamwork, and heart have made Flagstaff proud. 🌲

### Chapman / From Page 1

documented their learning journeys. The experience led to a 21-page research paper and inspired new donations and awareness efforts through NAU's Sociology and Social Work volunteer programs.

"CommunityShare is linking people who are making the world a better place so that students can see the power of it," Chapman said. "It allows teachers to connect with people in other endeavors—not just in Flagstaff, but across the country."

What began as a creative elective became a cross-generational, interdisciplinary learning experience, sparking student interest and lowering Friday absenteeism. Chapman says Empower Hour is not just about enrichment—it is about connection, relevance, and purpose.



### Share Your Skills, Inspire Students with CommunityShare

Make a lasting impact on FUSD students by joining CommunityShare. This innovative platform connects educators with local professionals, artists, and community members to create real-world learning experiences. Whether you are a scientist, entrepreneur, or hobbyist, your knowledge can inspire curiosity and critical thinking in students.

It is easy to get involved—create a profile, highlight your expertise, and connect with educators looking for guest speakers, project collaborators, or mentors. Even one hour of your time can make a difference.

Scan the QR code below to register today. For assistance, contact Joshua Butler at [jbutler@fUSD1.org](mailto:jbutler@fUSD1.org). Join us in empowering the next generation. 🌲

SCAN ME!





## Flagstaff High School Cheer Shines at Competition Tournament

March 1, 2025

A huge congratulations to the Flagstaff High School Cheer Team for their outstanding performances at their recent competition! The Varsity team brought home 2nd place, the

All-Girl Stunt group earned 3rd, and the JV team proudly placed 4th.

Way to go, Eagles, for your dedication, teamwork, and spirit on and off the mat! 🌲



## Coconino High School Color Guard Wins Big in Their First Competition

March 27, 2025

On Saturday, February 22, the Coconino High School Winter Guard made history by competing for the first time at the state level in the WGAZ (Winter Guard Arizona) competition at Eastmark High School. Facing off against 16 other teams in their division (SRAA), the team delivered an impressive performance, earning first place with a score of 63.08 points.

This achievement is even more remarkable as it marks the first year that Color Guard is offered as a class at Coconino High School. Under the guidance of Karen Vanora, Band and Orchestra Director, the team's dedication and hard work paid off in an unforgettable debut season. Congratulations to the Coconino High School Winter Guard on this outstanding accomplishment. 🌲



## CHS Wrestlers Shine at State

March 1, 2025

Congratulations to our Coconino High School wrestlers on an impressive showing at the state tournament! Nolan Wilson brought home 1st place in his weight class, and Logan Zebrowski earned a strong 4th place finish.

We're proud of your hard work, grit, and determination. Way to represent the Coconino Panthers with pride on the mat! 🌲



## Stephanie Washington Recognized as Athena Award Nominee

February 24, 2025

Flagstaff Unified School District proudly celebrates Stephanie Washington, who was honored as a 2025 Athena Award nominee in the public/nonprofit sector by the Greater Flagstaff Chamber of Commerce. Stephanie serves as FUSD's NADL Coordinator & Recruitment Coordinator, and her nomination highlights her exceptional leadership, service, and dedication to uplifting others through education and community engagement.

The 37th Annual Athena Awards ceremony, held at the High Country Conference Center on February 21, 2025, brought together community

leaders and changemakers to recognize women making a difference in both the private and public sectors. Stephanie's nomination placed her among an inspiring group of professionals who lead with strength and compassion.

The event featured keynote remarks from Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs and a presentation by NAU Career Development Director John Gartin on integrating artificial intelligence into daily business practices.

Congratulations, Stephanie, on this well-deserved recognition. Your work continues to inspire the FUSD community and beyond. 🌟





School administrators gathered in Washington, D.C., to attend the National School Leader Advocacy Conference during Spring Break, March 9-12, 2025. Left photo, left to right: Andy Frazier, Andy Gutierrez, Brian Minarcik, Tammy Nelson, Chris Jackson, and Shelly Hummond. Right photo: The delegation also met with U.S. Senator Mark Kelly from Arizona.

## Mount Elden Middle School Principal Represents Arizona, FUSD at National School Leader Advocacy Conference in D.C.

March 26, 2025

Mount Elden Middle School Principal Tammy Nelson traveled to Washington, D.C., to participate in the National School Leader Advocacy Conference during Spring Break, March 9-12, 2025. The annual event brought together school leaders nationwide to strengthen their voices in education policy and connect directly with federal lawmakers.

"Over spring break, I had the privilege of attending [this conference] as the state coordinator for the Arizona School Administrators Association," said Nelson. "This gathering brought together over 400 school leaders from across the United States, united in a common mission to advocate for

public education. The conference was designed to empower us with the tools and strategies needed to effectively communicate with policymakers on Capitol Hill, emphasizing the importance of personalizing our stories to make a lasting impact."

Nelson described the experience as "one of the most powerful" of her 31-year career. As part of a six-member delegation from Arizona, she met with U.S. Senator Mark Kelly and his education advisor, along with a representative from U.S. Congressman Ruben Gallego's office. The group discussed the challenges facing Arizona's public schools, including the impact of recent executive orders and persistent funding issues.

"It was an honor to represent our students, families, colleagues, and the broader public education system in our state," she said. "As a school leader, I believe it is my duty to be a voice for the students and staff I serve. Our teachers and staff work tirelessly every day to provide the best possible education for our students, often in the face of significant challenges. Advocating for them at the national level reinforced my commitment to ensuring that their needs—and the needs of the 46.9 million students who attend public schools in America—are heard and addressed."

Nelson emphasized that advocacy does not end with the conference.

"While the conference lasted three days, our advocacy does not

stop there. We were encouraged to continue providing our senators' offices with specific stories, data, and insights into the direct impact of policy decisions on our schools," she said. "I will continue to send emails and letters to our elected officials, and I urge others to do the same. Every child deserves access to quality education, and it is up to us to champion that cause."

Her participation highlights the critical role of school leaders in shaping education policy and ensuring the needs of students, educators, and communities are brought to the forefront.

"Together, we can make a difference—one conversation, one story, and one step at a time," she said. 🌟



## FUSD Schools Earn High Marks in 2023–2024 State Report Cards

February 4, 2025

We're proud to celebrate DeMiguel Elementary School, Cromer Elementary School, and Flagstaff High School for earning an "A" rating from the Arizona State Board of Education for the 2023–2024 school year!

This recognition highlights the hard work, collaboration, and commitment of students, educators, staff, and families in creating strong, supportive learning environments where students thrive. Achieving an "A" rating is a clear reflection of sustained effort and shared success.

The Arizona State Board of Education assigns annual school letter grades based on multiple performance indicators, including student achievement, growth, and readiness.

Here are the 2023–2024 letter grades for all FUSD schools:

- Coconino High School – B
- Cromer Elementary School – A
- DeMiguel Elementary School – A
- Flagstaff High School – A
- Killip Elementary School – C
- Kinsey Inquiry & Discovery – B
- Knoles Elementary School – C
- Leupp Elementary School – B
- Marshall Elementary School – B
- Mount Elden Middle School – C
- Puente de Hózhó Elementary – B
- Sechrist Elementary School – B
- Sinagua Middle School – D
- Summit High School – B
- Thomas Elementary School – D

As a district, FUSD earned an overall letter grade of "B," with a GPA equivalent of 2.73. 🌲





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## Celebrating Black History Month Through Art at Marshall Elementary

March 10, 2025

Each February, Black History Month offers an opportunity to reflect on Black Americans' contributions, struggles, and triumphs that have shaped the nation's history. At Marshall Magnet Elementary School, 2nd-grade students honored this tradition through a powerful and creative art project led by teacher Tanya Skelton.

In alignment with classroom lessons focused on the theme of "making an impact," Skelton designed an interdisciplinary art unit centered

around the work of two influential Black artists: Jacob Lawrence and Faith Ringgold.

"Our learning goal was: How did Jacob Lawrence and Faith Ringgold use their artwork to make an impact through storytelling, and how can I make my own artwork that tells a story?" Skelton explained.

Lawrence, known for his bold colors and vivid depictions of Black life and history, and Ringgold, celebrated for her vibrant narrative quilts and books like *Tar Beach*, served as both inspiration and artistic mentors. Students explored

how these artists communicated powerful messages about inequality and resilience through visual storytelling.

After studying their work, the second graders set out to tell their own stories. They created original narrative artworks, first sketching and outlining their designs on muslin fabric, then painting them with tempera to create the fronts of their quilt squares.

"Students are now hand-sewing a fabric back onto them," Skelton shared. "We should have the sewing completed toward the end of next

week. This has been a very engaging and rewarding lesson for our second graders."

The project will culminate in a vibrant display of story quilt squares, celebrating student voices and honoring Black History Month through the arts.

"I have been working to build lessons in our art room that collaborate with what our students are learning in the classroom to strengthen their learning," Skelton added. "This project has been a wonderful way to do that." 🌟



## Sinagua Middle School Girls Basketball Team Claims Back-to-Back Championship Titles

February 21, 2025

The Sinagua Middle School girls' basketball team has done it again! Led by Coach Brady Garrett, the team capped off another incredible season by securing back-to-back championship titles with an undefeated record.

This year's squad was made up of eight eighth graders and three seventh graders, five of whom were returning players from last year's championship team. Their hard work and dedication throughout the season paid off, as they dominated the competition and showcased their impressive skills on the court.

"I am so proud of all the girls for working together to accomplish our goal of another undefeated championship season," said Coach Garrett. "I couldn't have asked for

more from them."

As the eighth graders move on to high school, Coach Garrett expressed his excitement about their future, saying, "I wish the 8th graders the best of luck in high school, and I can't wait to watch them continue their progress of becoming great basketball players and even better people."

Congratulations to the Sinagua Middle School girls' basketball team for another outstanding season and a well-deserved championship victory. 🌲

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## Skacy Takes 4th at State Bus Roadeo

March 20, 2025

Bus driver Francis Skacy, Jr. represented the Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD) with pride at the 2025 School Bus Safety Roadeo, held on Saturday, March 8, at the Arizona State Fairgrounds in Phoenix. Hosted by the Arizona Association for Pupil Transportation (AAPT), the annual event tests school bus drivers from across the state on their precision, safety, and knowledge of transportation law.

Francis, who drives the Sinagua and DeMiguel route, placed 4th out of 70 drivers at the competition—a remarkable achievement in only his second year with FUSD. He was one of just two drivers representing the district this year.

"There's a written test on state laws, then you drive a full-size 40-foot bus through a 12-part obstacle course," Francis explained. "Some courses leave only an inch of space between the bus and the barriers on either side. It's very intense."

The event includes parallel parking, alley docking, railroad crossing, curb line stops, offset alley turns, and even a surprise obstacle, all judged by Arizona DPS officers. Competitors are scored on accuracy, timing, and pre-

and post-trip inspections. A perfect score is 1,000 points—Francis earned 798, securing 4th place overall and bringing home a trophy and certificate.

"Last year was my first time competing with FUSD—I placed 10th and got a plaque," he shared. "This year, I moved up to 4th and brought home a trophy."

Francis wasn't alone. Fellow FUSD driver Victoria Secody also competed and completed the course successfully. Both drivers emphasized how challenging and rewarding the competition was.

"The obstacle courses were intense," Victoria said. "You really have to know how to maneuver the bus with precision."

The Roadeo is more than just a contest—it is a valuable training experience that helps improve safety for students and strengthens the professional skills of Arizona's school bus drivers. And thanks to Francis and Victoria, FUSD was well represented among the best in the state.

Congratulations, Francis and Victoria! Thank you for your dedication and for keeping our students safe every day. 🌲

## FUSD Foundation Grants Enhance Learning Across the District

March 27, 2025

Last semester, the Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD) Foundation awarded grants to educators, supporting innovative projects that have already made a positive impact on student learning. These grants funded a variety of initiatives aimed at enhancing classroom experiences, providing hands-on learning opportunities, and addressing the diverse needs of FUSD students.

Bianca Martich, a speech-language pathologist at the Preschool Evaluation Office received \$500 to establish a designated changing station in her office. Families visiting for evaluations now have a clean and accessible space to change their young children, helping to create a positive first experience with the district.

Kristine Penca, a 5th-grade teacher at Kinsey Elementary School, was awarded \$421 to establish an electric lamp lab. Jennifer Parker, librarian at Coconino High School, used her \$340 grant to fund the "Panther Doing Puzzles" initiative, which encourages critical thinking and problem-solving through engaging puzzles.

Amy Dries, a woods teacher at Sinagua Middle School, received \$500 to purchase materials for her classes. In these classes, students learned valuable hands-on skills by creating wooden bowls.

Pam Lowie from Summit High School was awarded \$500 to upgrade small appliances and purchase culturally relevant materials for her nutrition, health, and culinary arts courses. These enhancements have allowed her to focus on sustainability and cultural traditions while boosting student motivation and engagement.

Alisha Mihoda, ESS Coordinator, received \$500 to purchase sensory support tools that assist students

with diverse learning needs, creating a more inclusive classroom environment. Heidi Huggard, a speech-language pathologist at Kinsey Elementary School, used her \$500 grant to expand her collection of interactive storybooks. These sensory-rich books have helped young learners build vocabulary, strengthen sentence structure, and improve problem-solving skills. The books have also encouraged social interaction among students, leading to noticeable growth in their communication abilities.

Valerie Angello, a resource teacher at Coconino High School, used her \$231.20 grant to provide a class set of Chester Nez's memoir Code Talker. This memoir highlights the role of Navajo Code Talkers in World War II and offers students a powerful perspective on Native American contributions to U.S. history.

Lisa Foss, a speech pathologist at Cromer Elementary School and Thomas Elementary School, used her \$57.96 grant for her project, "It's an 'Appy' Day!" which integrates technology into speech therapy to engage students and improve learning outcomes.

Thanks to the support of the FUSD Foundation, these grants have already made a meaningful impact in classrooms across the district. By funding innovative projects that meet student needs and foster engagement, the Foundation continues to empower educators and inspire student success.

As these projects continue to unfold, FUSD students will benefit from enriched learning environments that promote creativity, critical thinking, and a deeper connection to their education. 🌲



*FUSD Foundation grant recipients pose with the big check. Photos, top: Bianca Martich with FUSD Preschool Evaluation Services; Middle: Kristine Penca and her students at Kinsey Elementary School; Bottom, left to right: Cheryl Kirkland and Jennifer Parker at Coconino High School.*



Photos, top row, left: Amy Dries with some of her wood shop students and Sinagua Middle School Principal Chris Koenker; Right: Pam Lowie with Summit High School Principal Rochelle Bronson; Middle row, left: Susan Smith and Alisha Mihoda; Right: Heidi Huggard and her students at Kinsey Elementary School; Bottom row, left: Coconino High School Assistant Principal Jonathan Corbus and Valerie Angello; Right: Thomas Elementary School Principal Katrina Collins-Hernandez and Lisa Foss.



## Support FUSD Teachers and Students

The FUSD Foundation funds innovative grant programs and maintains a supply closet to ensure teachers have the resources they need. Help make a difference today! Visit <https://fusdfoundation.org> to learn more and donate to support these important initiatives. Every contribution empowers our educators and students. 🌲





## Kinsey 5th Graders Experience Arizona Snowbowl Adventure

March 28, 2025

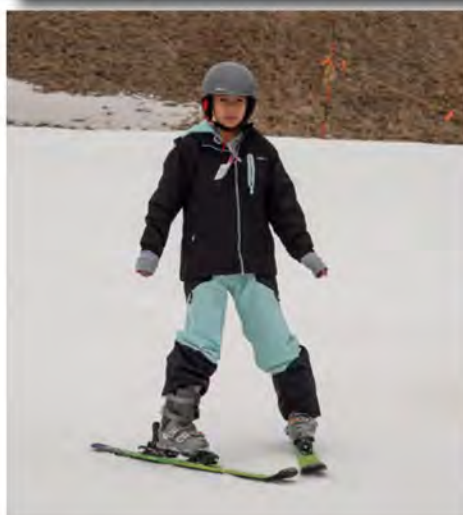
Fifth-grade students from Kinsey Inquiry and Discovery School recently had the exciting opportunity to visit Arizona Snowbowl for a day of skiing and exploration. Each year, Kinsey's 5th graders participate in this unique experience, which includes a ski lesson followed by an afternoon of skiing with their teachers and classmates. This year, 55 students attended the trip, many of whom had never visited Snowbowl or skied before.

"The purpose of this trip is to give our students a new experience," said Joe Caslin, Integration Specialist at Kinsey. "For many, it's their first time at Snowbowl and on skis. It's also an opportunity for them to visit a local business and place of recreation."

The trip also offers an opportunity for cultural reflection, as some Native students choose to perform small personal ceremonies to pay respect

to the mountain. This meaningful experience allows students to engage with their local environment in a fun and educational way.

In addition to the Snowbowl adventure, Kinsey 5th graders will participate in a place-based and project-based learning unit later this year. After completing their state testing, students will embark on a one-day kayak trip on the Verde River in early May. Guided by Grand Canyon Youth, the experience will include lessons on safety, archaeology, wildlife, and plant life. These hands-on learning opportunities continue to enrich the educational journey of Kinsey students. 🌲





## Celebrating Love of Reading Week at Thomas Elementary

March 5, 2025

In March, FUSD celebrated Love of Reading Week by inviting guest readers to Thomas Elementary School to share their favorite stories

with students. This annual event promotes a lifelong love of reading and encourages imagination and creativity. Thank you to all the wonderful readers who made this week so special. 🌲

*Photos, top left: Flagstaff Mayor Becky Dagget reads to students at Thomas Elementary School; Right: Kyle Christian, FACTS Coordinator, reads to students. Bottom, left: FUSD Governing Board President Erik Sather reads to students; Right: Coconino County Superintendent of Schools Cheryl Mango-Paget reads to students.*



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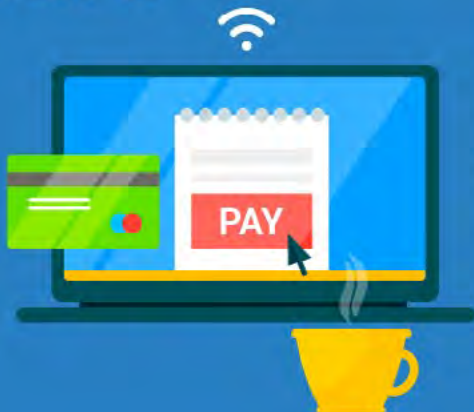
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# APRIL 2025

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4/8: Governing Board Meeting

4/21: Snow Make-Up Day #1

4/22: Governing Board Meeting

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