

CocoNuts Celebrate a Historic Season

April 23, 2025

The CocoNuts of Coconino High School have wrapped up an unforgettable 2025 season, earning national recognition at the FIRST World Championship held April 16-19, 2025, in Houston. At a special ceremony, the CocoNuts were officially inducted into the prestigious FIRST Robotics Hall of Fame, honoring their 2024 FIRST Impact Award achievement—the highest honor in the program.

The 2025 season theme, “Going Nuts from Coast to Coast,” reflected the team’s journey across the country as they competed in California, Flagstaff, and Miami. Along the way, the CocoNuts collected multiple awards and made a lasting impact through their outreach efforts.

At the Orange County Regional, the CocoNuts were selected as the second pick of the sixth alliance and had the opportunity to tour NASA JPL with alumnus Zach. At the Arizona North Regional in Flagstaff, they were the first pick of the third alliance and received the Excellence in Engineering Award for their innovative and professional design approach.

During the South Florida Regional

in Miami, the CocoNuts advanced to the Finals after winning three playoff matches alongside alliance partners from Mexico and Turkey. They were also honored with the Regional Engineering Inspiration Award, which recognizes teams that successfully advance respect and appreciation for engineering within their schools and communities.

At the World Championship, the CocoNuts earned the FIRST Championship Engineering Inspiration Award for their division. They were recognized for their ongoing work with “RezBotics,” an initiative that helped establish the Four Corners as an official FIRST Region, ensuring that Indigenous teams will continue to be represented at the World Championship for years to come.

This season highlights both competitive success and a commitment to expanding STEM opportunities, demonstrating the CocoNuts’ leadership and lasting influence beyond the playing field.

Congratulations to the CocoNuts for their achievements and for continuing to inspire students and communities through innovation, outreach, and passion for STEM. 🌲



Photos, top: The CocoNuts pose with their FIRST World Championship trophy in Houston, Texas, on April 19, 2025.



Bottom: CocoNuts pose with their FIRST Robotics Hall of Fame banner.

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A message from our **SUPERINTENDENT**



for information about upcoming celebrations, performances, and showcases.

Of course, May also brings the excitement of graduation! This year, we eagerly anticipate celebrating the Class of 2025 as they embark on the next chapter of their lives. We are incredibly proud of their achievements and the young adults they have become. Graduation ceremonies are a fitting culmination of their years of hard work and dedication, and we look forward to celebrating their success with their families and friends.

The Flagstaff Unified School District will honor the Class of 2025 graduates and award diplomas with ceremonies according to the following schedule:

Summit High School

5 p.m. on Thursday, May 22, at Summit High School

Coconino High School

9 a.m. on Friday, May 23, at the NAU Walkup Skydome

Flagstaff High School

3 p.m. on Friday, May 23, at the NAU Walkup Skydome

Wishing you all a joyful and fulfilling final month of the school year! 🌲

I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to our students for their hard work and perseverance throughout the spring testing period and to our incredible staff for their dedication in supporting our students every step of the way.

With testing behind us, we eagerly anticipate the final month of the school year! May is a time for celebrating the remarkable growth and accomplishments of our students across all grade levels. Classrooms will be buzzing with engaging culminating activities that showcase the knowledge and skills students have acquired throughout the year. Be sure to check your student's school communications



DeMiguel Teacher Honored as Early Elementary Educator of the Year

April 1, 2025

Flagstaff Unified School District proudly celebrates Diane Immethun, a 2nd Grade Teacher at DeMiguel Elementary School's Elementary Preparatory Academy, who has been named the 2025 Early Elementary Educator of the Year by the Champions of Public Education Awards.

The annual awards program honors outstanding educators across Arizona who demonstrate exceptional dedication and impact in their schools and communities. This year's nominations showcased the incredible efforts of educators statewide, making the selection

process highly competitive.

Immethun was recognized for her unwavering commitment to student success, innovative classroom practices, and compassionate approach to early childhood education. Her work at DeMiguel Elementary continues to inspire both students and colleagues alike.

"We admire Diane's hard work and tireless dedication to the students at DeMiguel Elementary," stated the Champions of Public Education team in their announcement.

To view the full list of 2025 Champions of Public Education honorees, visit bit.ly/CapsAwards25.

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FUSD Middle School Musicians Shine at NABCOF Festival

April 8, 2025

Flagstaff Unified School District is proud to recognize the outstanding achievements of its young musicians who performed in the Northern Arizona Band, Choir, and Orchestra Festival (NABCOF), held on Saturday, April 26, at Sinagua Middle School. The regional event brought together top-performing middle school musicians from across northern Arizona.

Among the many talented students, Rowyn Chase, a 6th-grade violinist from Mount Elden Middle School (MEMS), earned the prestigious role of concertmaster—the top-scoring violinist in the entire regional orchestra.

“Rowyn is a non-traditional student who spent her elementary years in a mix of school settings—Knoles, Mountain School, and homeschool,” said MEMS Orchestra Director Tammy Rauschenbach. “She had never performed in public before this year, and yet, in her first year of public performance, she not only made the regional honor orchestra, but earned the highest score of all violinists. Her private teacher and I were completely blown away at this achievement.”

Rauschenbach shared that MEMS had five students selected for the honor orchestra, with additional students earning spots in the band and choir ensembles.

Sinagua Middle School was also well represented, with 11 students participating in the regional orchestra—making it the second-largest school delegation, just behind Northland Preparatory Academy.

“The Northern Arizona Band, Choir, and Orchestra Festival is a region-wide competition,” explained Sinagua music teacher Stephen Strohmeyer. “Although the practicing started much earlier, students auditioned via audio

recordings in late February. If they scored high enough, they were invited to join the honor ensemble. With 42 students total, Sinagua made up the second largest chunk of the group.”

Mount Elden Middle School students selected for the Regional Orchestra,

Violin: Rowyn Chase – Violin 1, Akira Costa – Violin 1, Jahyen Chau – Violin 1, and Mikaela Shepherd – Violin 2.
Cello: Adinidiin Salt.

Sinagua Middle School students selected for the Regional Orchestra,

Violin: Cameron Dyas – Violin 1, Weston White – Violin 2, JiHozho Chief-Walker – Violin 2, Cora Gray – Violin 2, Cedella Calnimpewa – Violin 3, Kasaiie Stevens – Violin 3, and Alexandra Schneider – Alternate.
Cello: Claire Cardon and Hannah Cooper. Viola: Madeline Goodman and Eli Straub. Bass: Laurel Jackson.

FUSD extends congratulations to all the students who represented their schools with excellence and dedication. Their success reflects the strength of music education in the district and the powerful role the arts play in shaping student growth and achievement. 🌲



Rowyn Chase, Violinist at Mount Elden Middle School



Flagstaff High School Students Shine at 2025 Arizona All-State Honors Festival

April 21, 2025

Three talented Flagstaff High School Performing Arts students proudly represented their school at the 2025 Arizona All-State Honors Festival, held April 10–12, 2025, at Northern Arizona University's Ardrey Auditorium.

Congratulations to Gabbie Nichols (Band), Ella Gregory (Band), and Kate Gregory (Orchestra) for earning this prestigious honor. Their performances showcased the hard work, talent, and dedication that define Flagstaff High School's outstanding music program.

Richard A. McEnaney, performing

arts teacher at Flagstaff High School, explained that All-State students are selected through a highly competitive audition process each March.

"These auditions are state-wide and there are several steps to be eligible to even audition for the ensembles," he said. "Approximately one in 10 of the students who audition are

actually selected. Ella and Gabby were selected to participate in the band, and Kate was selected to participate in the orchestra."

The district congratulates these students on their remarkable achievement and thanks them for representing Flagstaff High School with pride and excellence. 🌲



Ellen Anderson Recognized with ESS Exceptional Educator Award

April 1, 2025

The Exceptional Student Services (ESS) Department recently honored Ellen Anderson with the ESS Exceptional Educator Award, part of an ongoing program that celebrates staff who embody the department's mission and vision.

An Exceptional Educator demonstrates the ESS vision every day in every way. The vision: "We are united in a commitment to raising achievement and having high expectations for each student with exceptional needs. They will develop self-confidence, independence,

social connectedness, and self-advocacy skills in order to lead a self-determined, fulfilled life."

On December 16, 2024, Ellen was surprised in her classroom by ESS team members and colleagues, where she was presented with a personalized plaque and certificate of recognition. She was nominated for her outstanding dedication to students, her positive impact on school culture, and her unwavering commitment to inclusive education.

Congratulations, Ellen, and thank you for living the ESS vision every day. 🌲



Coconino High School Teacher Christine Sapio receives a bag of gifts and a certificate honoring her with an Educator of Distinction Award from Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation. Photo, L-R: Sapio, Elena Klopfenstein, and CHS Principal Tadd Ragan.



Klopfenstein Named Coca-Cola Scholar, Honors Teacher Christine Sapio

April 24, 2025

Coconino High School senior Elena Klopfenstein has been named a 2025 Coca-Cola Scholar, joining an elite group of 150 high school seniors nationwide recognized for their leadership, service, and academic excellence. Each Coca-Cola Scholar receives a \$20,000 college scholarship, becoming part of a network of over 7,000 visionary leaders supported by the Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation.

A social justice advocate and STEM champion from the Navajo (Diné) Nation, Elena has already made a powerful impact. She founded Rezbotics, which brought robotics to Indigenous youth by forming over 20 teams and creating the first all-Indigenous robotics region. Her efforts have reached more than 150 students, with three teams advancing to the World Championships. Her

own team earned the FIRST Impact Award, and she received the Allaire Medal, the organization's highest individual honor.

Beyond STEM, Elena is a policy advocate, contributing to the passage of the CHIPS Act, advancing ESSA funding, organizing the Arizona Advocacy Conference, and promoting STEM opportunities at the Pentagon. A lover of the outdoors, she also leads youth river trips as a cultural specialist, addressing environmental and cultural issues impacting the Colorado Plateau.

As part of the Coca-Cola Scholars experience, recipients may nominate one teacher who has profoundly influenced their academic journey. Elena chose Christine Sapio, her CHS physics teacher and robotics coach, to receive the Educator of Distinction Award from the Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation.

"Many have left a print on my life, but [Christine Sapio] has shaped it substantially by giving me the skills and assurance to do anything I set my mind to," she said.

"When I met Christine Sapio, I was amazed by her purity of will and austerity toward herself," Elena wrote in her nomination. "She has objectivity and incorruptible integrity that you can't help but aspire to. She found her calling in community work and providing opportunities for kids. If anything, our robotics team are her kids."

Sapio, a past recipient of the Woodie Flowers Award—an international honor presented annually to one outstanding robotics mentor—was deeply moved by the recognition.

"This is an unexpected honor, and all the more meaningful because it comes from an amazing student,"

said Sapio. "Elena is truly on track to make the world a better place. It's been my honor to be her teacher and coach."

CHS Principal Tadd Ragan noted the rarity of Elena's recognition.

"To my knowledge, out of the 150 recipients, she is the only public school student selected from our area. Her impact speaks volumes," he said.

The Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation celebrates students who are "refreshing the world" through leadership and service. Elena Klopfenstein and Christine Sapio exemplify the excellence and inspiration that define Flagstaff Unified School District.

To learn more about the Coca-Cola Scholars Program and future eligibility, visit: www.cocacolascholarsfoundation.org/apply.



DeMiguel Fifth Graders Bring Civil War History to Life Through Student-Produced Newscasts

April 10, 2025

Fifth-grade students at DeMiguel Elementary School recently combined historical inquiry with creative media production in a dynamic learning experience centered on the Civil War. As part of their social studies unit, students were tasked with producing their own newscasts—complete with scripts, visuals, and special effects—to report on pivotal events from the era.

Working in small groups, students chose major Civil War moments to investigate and present. With the

guidance of their teachers, they crafted scripts using a structured template and divided responsibilities among team members. Each student took on a meaningful role, whether as an anchor, researcher, scriptwriter, or videographer.

To prepare for filming, classes worked together to define success criteria, giving students a clear picture of what a polished final product should look like. They rehearsed their scripts, then used the Pages app on their iPads to finalize their writing—leveraging the built-in teleprompter feature to deliver their

lines with confidence.

The project also introduced students to video production tools, with support from the FUSD Learning and Technology Integration (LTI) team. Using iMovie and green screen technology, students added period-appropriate visuals and immersive backgrounds to enhance their presentations. Teams also incorporated relevant imagery and sound effects, creating engaging and informative broadcasts that showcased both their research and creativity.

This hands-on project was

more than just a history lesson—it integrated multiple academic standards across content areas, including reading, speaking, listening, technology, and social studies, while also building essential skills in teamwork, collaboration, and digital literacy.

Teachers praised the effort and engagement of the students throughout the process, and the final videos reflect a high level of student ownership and pride. 🌲



Ellen Fishel, art teacher at Cromer Elementary School, and Tom Safranek, Director of College and Career Development.



Coconino High School Principal Tadd Ragan, CHS Student Elena Klopfenstein, and CHS Teacher Christine Sapio.



David Tessmer and Tom Safranek



Noah Alejandro, center, with his parents, Leonel and Elisa Alejandro.

FUSD Honorees Shine at the 2025 STEMMY Awards

April 1, 2025

Flagstaff Unified School District proudly congratulates Ellen Fishel of Cromer Elementary School and Elena Klopfenstein of Coconino High School for being named STEM Teacher of the Year and STEM Student of the Year, respectively, at the 2025 STEMMY Awards. Hosted by Flagstaff STEM City, the event took place on March 19 at the Coconino Center for the Arts, celebrating excellence in science, technology, engineering, and math education across the region.

Ellen Fishel, a longtime art teacher at Cromer Elementary, was honored for her innovative integration of STEM principles into her visual arts curriculum. Described as a “trailblazer,” she brings light, sound, and engineering design into the

art room to cultivate inquiry and creativity. Her work helps students see connections between disciplines and fosters curiosity in ways that spark deeper learning.

Elena Klopfenstein, a senior at Coconino High School, was selected as STEM Student of the Year for her remarkable leadership in STEM equity. As the founder of Rezbotics, Elena has created more than 20 robotics teams on the Navajo Nation and organized the first all-Indigenous robotics tournament. Her team has competed at the FIRST World Championships, winning the Impact Award, and she was awarded the Allaire Medal for individual excellence. She has also contributed to national STEM policy efforts, including advocacy on Capitol Hill and at the Pentagon.

FUSD is also proud to recognize additional STEMMY finalists: David Tessmer of Coconino High School – STEM Teacher of the Year Finalist, and Noah Alejandro of Flagstaff High School – STEM Student of the Year Finalist.

The evening also celebrated outstanding organizations, with Block-Lite named Business of the Year and Sparking Curiosity in Quantum Science (SparCQS) honored as Community Partner of the Year.

The STEMMY Awards are a flagship celebration of Flagstaff’s national reputation as a STEM City. FUSD extends congratulations to all awardees and finalists for their continued dedication to advancing STEM learning and opportunities for students. 🌲



Dawn Quamahongnewa



Lesley Littlefield



Leupp Elementary School Principal Ryan Chee, Quamahongnewa, and Superintendent Michael Penca

Quamahongnewa Named Coconino County Teacher of the Year, Littlefield Honored as Rookie Teacher of the Year

April 25, 2025

Leupp Elementary School is proud to announce that Dawn Quamahongnewa has been named the 2025 Coconino County Teacher of the Year. The award was presented during a ceremony hosted by County Superintendent of Schools Cheryl Mango-Paget on April 17 at the High Country Conference Center.

A fourth-grade teacher at Leupp Elementary, Quamahongnewa was recognized for her outstanding leadership, dedication to student success, and commitment to fostering a positive, culturally grounded learning environment.

Principal Ryan Chee praised her accomplishment.

"Dawn Quamahongnewa, winning the Coconino County Teacher of the

Year award, is a tremendous honor and a reflection of the dedication, heart, and talent that define our teachers at Leupp Elementary," said Chee. "This year has been filled with incredible achievements — from earning a B+ school letter grade, receiving the Legendary Teacher Award, UNESCO global recognition, the AmeriCorps Senior Foster Grandparent Award, and the Navajo Nation Council's Leupp Leadership recognition, and now celebrating Ms. Q's outstanding accomplishment. Each of these honors speaks to the collective spirit, resilience, and excellence of our school community."

Following the ceremony, Quamahongnewa expressed her gratitude.

"I'm extremely humbled and honored to receive this award on

behalf of our children and Leupp Elementary School," she said. "Thank you to our Leupp Community and Leupp Elementary Staff, and all my family and friends that have always supported and believed in me. I truly appreciate everyone. This award is for our Leupp Tigers!"

Quamahongnewa explained that being named Coconino County Teacher of the Year is an immense honor.

"It's a reflection of not only my dedication but also the incredible students and community I have the privilege of serving," she said.

She emphasized the importance of integrating strategies like Kagan cooperative learning structures and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to create inclusive and engaging classrooms.

"Ultimately, I want my students to grow up to become the eyes, ears, and voice of their people," she added.

This year's Rookie Teacher of the Year honor was awarded to Lesley Littlefield of Knoles Elementary School. Littlefield shared her excitement.

"It has truly been a humbling experience to be recognized alongside so many incredible educators. I am grateful for the mentorship and support I have received at Knoles Elementary and from the Flagstaff Unified School District," said Littlefield. "This recognition motivates me to continue learning, growing, and striving to make a difference for every student I have the privilege to teach."





Leupp Elementary School Principal Ryan Chee poses with his certificate of recognition from the Navajo Nation Council on April 23, 2025. Pictured L-R: Navajo Nation Council Delegate Casey Allen Johnson, Chee, and Navajo Nation Speaker Crystalyne Curley.

Leupp Elementary Principal Ryan Chee Honored by Navajo Nation Council for Outstanding Leadership

April 25, 2025

The 25th Navajo Nation Council recently recognized Leupp Elementary School Principal Ryan Chee for his outstanding leadership and dedication to student success. During a special presentation, Chee was honored by Council Delegate Casey Allen Johnson, Madam Speaker Crystalyne Curley, and members of the Navajo Nation Council for his role in the turnaround of Leupp Elementary, part of the Flagstaff Unified School District.

The Certificate of Recognition, presented to Chee, commends him

for representing the Navajo Nation at the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) Research-Practice Conference in London, UK. Leupp Elementary was one of only five schools worldwide selected for a UNESCO Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report Case Study. The award also celebrates his efforts in encouraging Navajo students to pursue higher education, providing quality education for all, and fostering cultural and language preservation and leadership development.

"It was a true privilege to accept

this recognition on behalf of our students, families, community, and most especially, our incredible teachers and staff," said Chee. "This school turnaround journey has been both humbling and inspiring, and I am deeply proud to be part of such a phenomenal team."

Chee also expressed gratitude to his family for their support, acknowledging his wife, Cree, his mother Lorie Noline, and his father Tom Chee for inspiring him throughout his journey.

Carrying a deep commitment to the students and community of

Leupp, Chee emphasized his hope for all students to grow confident in their skills, language, and culture while pursuing any path they choose—whether in college, the military, or beyond.

"This role has taken me across the world to share the story of Leupp Elementary and the opportunities that exist within Indian Education," he added. "I am humbled, I am blessed, God is so good! Yéego Tigers!" 🌲



FUSD's Aimee Stone Named Arizona School Nurse of the Year

April 28, 2025

Flagstaff Unified School District is proud to announce that Aimee Stone has been named the 2025 School Nurse of the Year by the School Nurses Organization of Arizona.

Aimee Stone will be recognized this summer at the annual state nurse conference in Phoenix and nationally at the 2025 National Association of School Nurses (NASN) Conference in Austin, Texas. She will be honored during the Lily Awards event on June 26 and celebrated in the fall issue of NASN's official publication, NASN School Nurse.

McKenzie Bevert, Health Services Coordinator at FUSD, shared, "She is amazing and is so deserving of this recognition!"

The National Association of School Nurses (NASN), founded in 1968 and representing nearly 20,000 members across the United States and internationally, celebrates excellence in school nursing. In the award notification, NASN leaders praised Stone's commitment, stating, "Your students, faculty, and families are fortunate to have you serving in their community."

Aimee Stone's dedication to the health and well-being of students embodies the very best of school nursing. Her recognition reflects her tireless efforts to advance student health, support school communities, and serve as a leader in her profession.

Congratulations to Aimee Stone on this outstanding achievement. 🌲



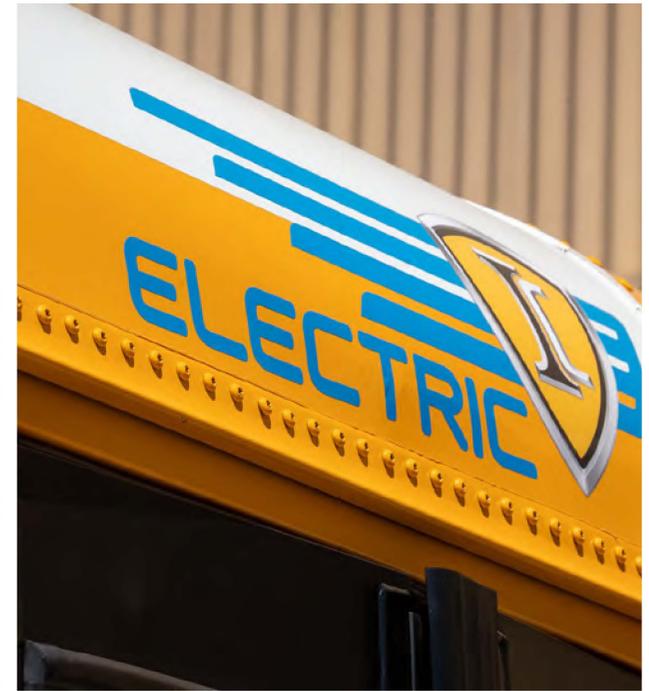
THANK YOU, PARENTS!

State testing season is officially complete and we want to extend a heartfelt thank you to all our families for your support!

Your efforts getting students to school on time, encouraging healthy routines, and helping them feel prepared made a big difference.

BE
SMART

Secure all guns in your home and vehicles	Model responsible behavior around guns	Ask about the presence of unsecured guns in other homes	Recognize the role of guns in suicide	Tell your peers to be SMART
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FUSD Celebrates Bus Drivers, New Electric Buses on Bus Driver Appreciation Day

April 25, 2025

On April 22, 2025, the Flagstaff Unified School District celebrated Bus Driver Appreciation Day by recognizing the outstanding drivers and transportation staff who ensure the safe travel of students each day.

As part of the celebration, FUSD hosted a Green Ribbon Cutting Ceremony at the district's transportation yard to commemorate the arrival of two new electric school buses. Staff, students, and community members gathered for a ribbon cutting, remarks, and a cookout featuring hot dogs and burgers. The event celebrated both the district's commitment to sustainability and the essential role transportation staff play every day.

School Bus Drivers' Day, recognized annually on the fourth Tuesday in April, honors the critical role drivers play in education. FUSD drivers are often the first and last faces students see each day, providing not only transportation but also a welcoming and safe environment.

In addition to our drivers, FUSD recognizes the vital work of transportation mechanics, dispatchers, trainers, and support staff who help maintain safety and reliability every day.

The district sincerely thanks the transportation team for their dedication, professionalism, and commitment to student success.





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APRIL 2025

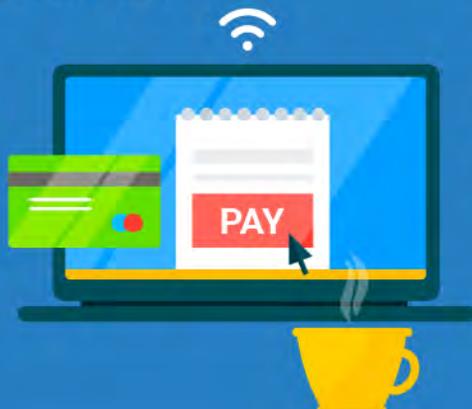
- 5/2: Early Release for All Schools
- 5/6: Governing Board Meeting
- 5/13: Bond Oversight Committee Meeting
- 5/15: Elementary Early Release
- 5/16: Early Release for All Schools
- 5/20: Secondary Early Release
Governing Board Meeting
- 5/21: Secondary Early Release
- 5/22: LAST DAY OF SCHOOL
Early Release for All Schools
Summit High School Graduation
- 5/23: Coconino High School Graduation
Flagstaff High School Graduation
- 5/26: Memorial Day - All FUSD Sites Closed

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