Catalina Foothills Unified School District #16
2101 E. River Road, Tucson, AZ 85718
(520) 209-7500 (520) 209-7570 FAX www.cfsd16.org

BOARD AGENDA ITEM

ITEM NO: 1.4

BOARD MEETING DATE: Tuesday, March 3, 2026

OPENING ITEM: Outstanding Achievements

SUBMITTED BY: Denise Bartlett, Superintendent

PRESENTED BY: Denise Bartlett, Superintendent

I am pleased to highlight the following CFSD student and staff achievements:

Five Catalina Foothills High School Seniors Named National Merit® Finalists
Catalina Foothills School District is proud to announce that all five Catalina Foothills High School National Merit® Semifinalists have advanced to Finalists.

The five Finalists are: Ethan Lin, William Luxbaucher, Katherine McNulty, Madeleine Reed, and Rex Shetlar

As Finalists, they are now among more than 15,000 students being considered for approximately 6,930 National Merit® Scholarship awards worth nearly $26 million, to be announced in March.

Congratulations to the students, and to the families, teachers, and mentors who have supported them along the way.

Five CFHS Guitarists Selected for Arizona All-State Guitar Ensemble
Catalina Foothills High School is proud to celebrate five exceptional musicians selected for the 2026 All-State Guitar Ensemble, which performed at the Arizona Music Educators Conference in Mesa.

Daniel Pew-Kenyon, Jack Deegan, Julia Riddle, Corgan Prisbrey, and Reece Rellora earned their places among the top 40 guitarists in Arizona through competitive statewide auditions.

Over two intensive days, students worked with legendary guitar composer and clinician Rex Willis from State College of Florida, gaining advanced technique, musicianship, and performance experience. Their learning culminated in a performance for music educators and families from across Arizona, a showcase of the highest level of high school guitar artistry in the state.

Selection for All-State ensembles represents the pinnacle of achievement for high school musicians, recognizing exceptional talent, dedication, and musical excellence.

Congratulations to the musicians and to their teacher, Mr. Jeffrey Good, on this outstanding achievement!

CFHS Counselor Chris Hsieh Selected for Inaugural U of A Franke Honors Counselor Advisory Board

We are proud to recognize Chris Hsieh, CFHS College and Career Counselor, who has been selected to serve on the University of Arizona W.A. Franke Honors College Counselor Advisory Board for the 2025-2026 school year. The inaugural advisory board brings together high school counselors from across the country, representing schools in Arizona, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Utah, and even Germany, to help shape how the Honors College serves students in the college admissions process.

Throughout the year, Mr. Hsieh has met bi-monthly with the Honors College leadership to explore best practices in college counseling, provide feedback on academic programming, share insights on how honors colleges can better support prospective students, and advise on scholarships, admissions processes, and marketing.

Mr. Hsieh's selection reflects both his expertise in college counseling and CFHS's strong partnership with the University of Arizona. This national-level advisory role extends his impact beyond CFHS, helping ensure that honors college programs across the country are designed with student success in mind.

Congratulations, Mr. Hsieh, on this well-deserved honor!

Boys State 2026 Selection

Catalina Foothills High School proudly announced four outstanding students who have been selected to represent CFHS at Boys State 2026: Damon Brown, Carter Lindsay, Ezra Mandel, and Kai Sadalla.

Arizona Boys State is a prestigious week-long leadership training and civics education experience for boys who have completed their junior year of high school. The program is sponsored by the American Legion and is designed to teach students about how our government functions and to encourage them to become engaged citizens. Our selection for Boys State was based on teacher nomination, academic achievement, extracurricular involvement, interest in public service, and leadership,

Please help us in congratulating these delegates on this well-deserved honor. They will represent our school with distinction.

CFHS Regional Band and Orchestra

Congratulations to the 87 Catalina Foothills High School musicians selected to the 2026 Southeast Regional Honors Ensembles: 67 to the Regional Band/Orchestra Winds/Percussion and 20 to the Regional Honors Orchestra. Selection is based on audition and represents one of the highest honors a high school musician can earn in Southern Arizona. Having 87 students selected from a single school is an extraordinary reflection of the CFHS music program under band director Renee Shane-Boyd and orchestra director Ryan Watson. Congratulations, Falcons!

Regional Band (67): Aislyn Allison, Mareliss Alvarez, Julia Anderson, Greta Barber, Rylee Begay, Dominic Bell, Luke Bennett, Julia Bonet, Lilly Bowsher, Jacob Braitberg, Orsyola Brown, Bella Campa, Rose Cassell, Yash Chauhan, Jacob Colman, David Dehon, Kaleigh DeLong, Cameron Dickinson, Robert Ferber, Ethan Fraker, Sam Gaither, Benjamin Grander, Aiden Green, Jonah Ground, Matthew Hanson, Mason Hashim, Zach Henson, Brayden Hines, Anna Hisey, Sean Hull, Dillon Johnson, Tally Jones, Mason Kot, Felix Leblanc, Eli Le Peau, Madeleine Lister, William Liu, Tommy Logue, Fritz McGee, Lucy Neptune-Pratt, Justin Newberg, Gavin Pacanowski, Nick Pickard, Felisberto Pondeca, Elizabeth Povsner, Sebastian Quijada, Madeleine Reed, Lucas Rodriguez, Michael Rogers, Bella Samaniego, Keenan Sammani, Valentina Sanchez Barrios, Grace Seo, Zen Shah, Sahil Shah, Derek Shelton, Rex Shetlar, Amy Sternberg, Flynn Terry, Tyler Tom-Lin, Oden Toms, Alejandro Urbina, Ayumi Valencia, Magi Vasileski, Patrick Williams, Calvin Wright, Zechariah Wright

Regional Honors Orchestra (20): Andrea Adler, Alexis Appel, Mackenzie Badie, Sophie Bian, Brayden Carroll, Bianca Cheung, Braeden Gracy, Daniel Kendall, Eva Kolonelos, Elena McKaig, Quin Mekkelsen, Sam Nasser, Vivi Nguyen, Milo Peters, Vivienne Shehab, Mason Wadleigh, Joseph Wang, Kaelen Wilt, Cuyler Zeh Plunkett

Pioneer Robotics Earns Top Honors at Copper Tournament and State Championship

Catalina Foothills High School's Pioneer Robotics team delivered an exceptional competitive season, earning prestigious recognition at both the Copper Tournament and the Arizona State Championship.

At the Copper Tournament in Queen Creek on February 7, the team received the Sustain Award, introduced this season as a brand-new category in the FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC). The Sustain Award celebrates teams that have thoughtfully planned for long-term program success, recognizing efforts in financial sustainability, leadership development, and strategic season planning. For the Pioneers, that sustainability is strengthened in part by community tax credit contributions, helping ensure the program remains strong and accessible year after year.

On the competition field, the Pioneers also excelled. Their robot's performance earned them the role of alliance captains during playoff rounds, where they secured five consecutive victories to advance to the semifinals. Their impressive tournament run concluded in a hard-fought semifinal match decided by a single point.

Building on that momentum, Pioneer Robotics advanced to the Arizona State Championship on February 21, where they earned the Connect Award. This honor recognizes the team that most effectively engages with its local STEM community to learn and adopt new tools through effort and persistence, demonstrating a clear and purposeful plan to achieve its goals.

A standout example of the team's community engagement is *Print Ready!*, a curriculum project developed for CFSD elementary teachers. When one of the district's elementary schools acquired 3D printers without a structured implementation plan, Pioneer team members stepped in to help. They designed a comprehensive series of lessons covering logistics, key considerations, and CAD skills needed to successfully integrate 3D printing into classrooms. The team created complete instructional materials—including presentation slides, screencasts to guide students through design processes, and efficient project plans enabling each student to design and print two models. Pioneer members also trained the teachers directly, preparing them for classroom implementation this spring.

In addition to the team's recognition, Coach Charlotte Ackerman earned second place statewide for the Compass Award, which honors outstanding coaching. Selected from among 20 nominated coaches across Arizona, this recognition reflects the meaningful impact she has had on her students and the continued strength of the Pioneer Robotics program.

Team Members: Kyle Lo, Quin Mekkelsen, Sarah Orr, Ethan Lin, Aidan Chang, Isaak Martin, Sophia Barrios, Valerie McLamarrah, Ali Lucas, Archer Matika, Nathan Wu, Sunita Adhikari, Milo Peters, Isabella Barajas, Christian Pierson, Owen Cantor-Goldner, and Braeden Gracy.

Congratulations to the entire Pioneer Robotics team and to Coach Ackerman on these well-deserved honors and an outstanding season.

Middle School Students Shine at Southern Arizona Honor Band Festival

On February 14th, band students from Esperero Canyon Middle School and Orange Grove Middle School joined musicians from more than 30 other schools at the Southern Arizona Honor Band Festival. Nominated by their directors and selected by SAHB chairpersons, these talented young musicians earned spots in one of three grade-level honor bands. They received their music in January, prepared individually, then came together at Flowing Wells High School for a day of intensive rehearsals culminating in afternoon concerts.

True to form, CFSD students stood out for both their exceptional musicianship and outstanding behavior. Guest directors made a point of praising our students, and their performances spoke for themselves.

Congratulations to these musicians and their directors, Mr. Cory Walavich (ECMS) and Mr. Daniel Vega (OGMS), for representing Catalina Foothills School District with such excellence!

Esperero Canyon Middle School

6th Grade: Matthew Bennett, Audrey Fraser, Daniel Bounds, and Beckett Brasfield

7th Grade: Charlie Linneman, Adam Zollner, Mia Zwickl, and Abby Henson

8th Grade: Suzanne Doonan, Ben Barlow, and Amelia Barnes

Orange Grove Middle School

6th Grade: Bodie Fitzpatrick, Ollie McGee, Elliot Keur, Sidhaant Chaudhary, and Dylan Toussaint

7th Grade: Adelaide Jensen, Violet LeRoy, and Maeve McGovern

8th Grade: Charlie Grandner, Eleanor Fellrath, and Haylin Rock

CFSD Students Dominate at 2026 Arizona State Chess Championship

CFSD chess players brought home an impressive collection of awards at the 2026 Arizona State Grades Championship on Saturday, February 7, at Madison Meadows Middle School, including a team championship, a 3rd place individual finish, and multiple top 20 placements statewide.

Ventana Vista Elementary's 2nd Grade Chess Team captured first place, competing against schools across Arizona, including Knox Gifted Academy and multiple BASIS schools, and Aiden Liu from Sunrise Drive captured 3rd place in his grade.

Ventana Vista Championship Team:

- Nik Jain (4 points) – placed 7th overall individually statewide
- Angelos Kyriacou (3 points) – placed 17th individually
- Ian Moore (1.5 points) – placed 34th individually

Sunrise Drive Elementary:

- Aiden Liu (3rd grade) – 3rd place individually statewide
- Bryce Kuhlman (3rd grade) – 26th place
- Samuel Liu Polito (3rd grade) – 27th place

Manzanita Elementary:

- Benjamin Elitzer (1st grade) – 13th place
- Adams Elitzer (4th grade) – 15th place

All of these students were coached by Ken Larsen through our Community Schools program. Mr. Larsen's impact on CFSD chess spans more than four decades.

Congratulations to Mr. Larsen and all our CFSD chess players! Your strategic thinking, dedication, and competitive spirit make us proud.

25 Students Advance to Chinese Speech Contest Finals at ASU

Congratulations to the 25 Catalina Foothills students who have been selected as finalists in the 4th Annual CLTA-Arizona Chinese Speech Contest. The statewide competition drew over 240 video submissions from 37 schools across Arizona, and CFSD is well represented in the finals at Arizona State University on Saturday, February 28.

Nine Orange Grove Middle School students earned finalist spots in the middle school divisions, claiming nearly half of the 20 available positions statewide. KK Wang also qualified in the heritage division, competing against students who speak Chinese at home. At Sunrise Drive Elementary, 16 of the 38 students who entered have advanced to the final round across multiple grade-level and heritage categories.

Congratulations to all of our finalists, to teachers Siyi Chen and Ying Wang at Sunrise Drive and Kim Gaskill at Orange Grove, and to the families who supported their students throughout the process.

Orange Grove Finalists: Elsie Bazarnic, James Kerwin, Yahia Alkhayat, Cora Crawford, Emma Auston, Katie Lin, Lily Dickson, Milena Rubin, Xavier Wu | Heritage: KK Wang | Runners-Up: Emery Maland, Penelope Lockwood, Jacqueline Tija

Sunrise Drive Finalists: Kian Asgari, Eva Sofía Blanco Vietor, Ishwari Bandopadhay, Arthur Lam, Mila Hui, Wayne Lee, Clara Lee, Jackson Benson, James Enzo Fernandez, Kaylee Xu, Margaret Ratta, Ezri Jansen, Kennedy Kay, Paulo Ricardo Araiza-Alonzo, Ace Chou, Lily Auston

Sunrise Drive Elementary School 5th Graders Publish Original Book

Congratulations to fifth graders Ishwari Bandopadhay, Amelia Puell, and Maarya Alfakhouri, who have published an original book titled Stand Up, Speak Out! The book was created as part of their Junior Girl Scout Bronze Award Project, the highest honor a Junior Girl Scout can earn.

The Bronze Award challenges young scouts to identify an issue they care about, develop a plan, and carry out a project that makes a lasting impact. For Ishwari, Amelia, and Maarya, that meant writing and publishing their own book.

This spring, the three student authors will be featured as part of Sunrise Drive's Love of Reading celebration, which highlights multiple authors throughout the season. In May, they will read *Stand Up, Speak Out!* to third graders at Sunrise Drive, bringing their work full circle within the school community.

We are proud to see our students using their voices, both on the page and in person, to inspire younger readers.

Congratulations, Ishwari, Amelia, and Maarya!

RECOMMENDED MOTION: Information Item