



Catalina Foothills Unified School District #16  
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## **BOARD AGENDA ITEM**

**ITEM NO: 1.4**

**BOARD MEETING DATE:** Tuesday, February 10, 2026

**OPENING ITEM:** Outstanding Achievements

**SUBMITTED BY:** Denise Bartlett, Superintendent

**PRESENTED BY:** Denise Bartlett, Superintendent

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

### CFHS Advanced Theatre Earns Gold Status Honor Troupe at Arizona Thespian Festival

Congratulations to Catalina Foothills High School's Advanced Theatre program, which earned the prestigious Gold Status Honor Troupe ranking at the Arizona Thespian Festival in Phoenix on January 19-20. The Gold Honor Troupe distinction recognizes exceptional achievement across all aspects of theatre education and requires troupes to demonstrate excellence in:

- Student-led theatre productions (directing and design)
- Community service and outreach
- High ratings in acting and technical theatre competitions
- Active participation in Arizona Thespian workshops and festivals
- Attendance at professional theatre performances
- Collaboration with other theatre troupes throughout Tucson
- Robust club engagement, including industry partnerships and student opportunities

This honor reflects the dedication, talent, and leadership of our theatre students and the vibrant culture of excellence they've built together.

Advanced Theatre Club Officers: Nathaniel Wiley, Azailea Peterson, Alex Cramton, Lilly Porter, Rowan Sandeen, Calista Morrison

Advanced Theatre Students: Veronica Bavier, Layla Fraser, Kellen Tanner, Ivy Buffalo, Gemma Ricker, Tanner Bryant, Dylan Panno, Owen Cantor-Goldner, Maddox Craig, Jade Leon, Haylee Meadowcroft, Cullen Rae, Louisa Stine, Evan Welander, Quincy White, Dakota Gabriel, Carlson Bergthold, Zoe Sheffield, Amelia Manchester, Valkyrie Ussery-Strootman, Milo Peters

We're so proud of this outstanding achievement!

#### CFHS Theatre Arts Teacher Amy Byroad Named "Arts Hero" by ON Media

Catalina Foothills High School proudly celebrates theatre arts teacher Amy Byroad, who has been recognized as an "Arts Hero" by ON Media for her work strengthening theatre arts in our community. This monthly "Arts Hero" program celebrates individuals who champion the arts behind the scenes, in the box office, and throughout Arizona communities. A profile on Ms. Byroad will appear in performing arts programs across Arizona this month, reaching more than 3 million arts patrons statewide.

Ms. Byroad teaches 150 students across six acting and technical production classes each semester and oversees six shows a year. Through theatre arts, her students learn time management, problem-solving, collaboration, and resilience—often discovering they're capable of far more than they believed possible.

Beyond the CFHS stage, Ms. Byroad's students help with seasonal events at CFSD elementary schools and teach Shakespeare to middle schoolers. Because she believes theatre should be accessible to all, she guided a student project on producing sensory-friendly viewings of plays. Students with special needs will attend the final dress rehearsal of the March musical, *The Drowsy Chaperone*, adapted with reduced sound and house lights.

Congratulations, Ms. Byroad!

#### CFHS Senior Thomas Vamos Named Flinn Scholarship Finalist

Catalina Foothills High School is proud to celebrate senior Thomas Vamos, who has been named a Flinn Scholarship Finalist—one of only 37 Arizona high school students selected for this prestigious honor. The Flinn Scholarship is Arizona's most distinguished merit-based undergraduate award, valued at more than \$135,000. The scholarship provides full tuition, fees, and room and board at Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University, or the University of Arizona, along with

funding for at least two international trips, mentorship opportunities, and membership in a community of high-achieving peers.

Thomas is one of just 37 Finalists selected from 1,150 applications submitted in October, representing only 3% of the applicant pool. He advanced from 79 Semifinalists announced in December.

Over the coming weeks, Thomas will visit Arizona's three public universities and their Honors Colleges. He will travel to the Flinn Foundation in March for in-person interviews, with the final Flinn Scholars Class of 2026 to be announced in April. Congratulations, Thomas!

#### 2026 ACE (Arizona Choral Educators) Elementary Choral Educator of the Year Award

Congratulations to Kris Flores, music teacher at Sunrise Drive Elementary, who received the ACE Elementary Choral Educator of the Year Award at the 2026 Arizona Music Educators Association (AMEA) Annual Conference held on January 31st, which recognized her exceptional contributions to choral music education and her impact on students and colleagues throughout Arizona.

Adding to the honor, the Sunrise Drive choir, under Ms. Flores's direction, was selected to perform at the conference, a highly competitive honor, reserved for outstanding music programs from across the state. We're incredibly proud of Kris for the joy and excellence she brings to music education at Sunrise Drive and throughout CFSD. Congratulations, Kris!

#### CFSD Paraeducator Ryan Smail Honored with Statewide Outstanding Paraeducator Award

Catalina Foothills School District proudly celebrates Ryan Smail, who has been named the recipient of the AZCEC Outstanding Paraeducator Award. This statewide honor recognizes paraeducators who demonstrate exceptional dedication, professionalism, and impact in supporting students with special needs. Ryan's selection reflects the meaningful impact he has on students' and families' lives.

Ryan's commitment goes far beyond the call of duty. He worked extended hours at grad night so a student could celebrate with peers. He has done extensive work helping students find their voices through communication devices, opening new worlds of connection and expression.

Ryan's calm presence, his deep respect for the dignity of every student, and the trust he has built with families throughout the district helped earn him this award.

CFSD is honored to have him on our team, and we couldn't be prouder of this well-deserved recognition. Congratulations, Ryan!

### CFHS Pioneer Robotics Earns Second Place Inspire Award at Petrified Wood Qualifying Tournament

The CFHS Pioneer Robotics team continued their impressive season at the Petrified Wood Qualifying Tournament held January 24 at Brophy College Preparatory, earning the Second Place Inspire Award in this year's FIRST® Tech Challenge theme, DECODE™ presented by RTX.

This season, FIRST Tech Challenge teams are investigating the power of the world's artifacts and unlocking mysteries through STEM skills and teamwork.

The Pioneers' recognition at the Petrified Wood tournament carries special significance: having already won the Inspire Award at their first tournament, the team was ineligible to receive first place in this category at subsequent qualifiers. Earning second place at this tournament demonstrates that the Pioneers stood out as excellent across all judging categories to an entirely different panel of judges in a competitive field of 24 teams.

The Inspire Award is FIRST Tech Challenge's highest honor, celebrating teams who are an all-around inspiration to others by demonstrating excellence in robot design and performance, community outreach, teamwork, gracious professionalism, and a commitment to spreading the FIRST message. To earn this distinction twice from two different judging panels speaks to the consistent excellence and genuine character of the Pioneers.

Team Members: Kyle Lo, Quin Mekkelson, 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

Coach: Charlotte Ackerman

Congratulations to the entire Pioneer Robotics team on this well-deserved recognition! Your commitment to excellence, teamwork, and inspiring others exemplifies how CFSD learning sparks innovation.

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**RECOMMENDED MOTION: Information Item**