



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

**ITEM NO:** 1.4

**BOARD MEETING DATE:** Tuesday, April 8, 2025

**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:

### 2025 KEYS Research Interns

We are happy to share that Catalina Foothills High School students William Jacobsen and Inara Smith have been selected for the prestigious 2025 KEYS Research Internship at the University of Arizona's BIO5 Institute. They are among 66 exceptional high school students from 35 schools across Arizona chosen for this highly competitive seven-week summer program, which runs from June 2 to July 18.

The KEYS (Keep Engaging Youth in Science) internship empowers students to work alongside top research faculty, contributing to real-world bioscience projects that use cutting-edge biotechnology and data analysis techniques. Interns deepen their scientific understanding and sharpen their science communication and literacy skills as they engage in interdisciplinary research experiences.

### Early Childhood Learning

We are proud to recognize the exceptional accomplishments of our early childhood learning students at the recent Arizona Proficiency and Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) STAR Events competitions. These talented students demonstrated creativity, leadership, and a deep understanding of early childhood education through their impressive performances.

- Audrey Fiore earned a Silver medal in The Art of Storytelling
- Abigail Knutson received a Gold medal in Toys that Teach
- Emma Harphant was awarded Bronze in the Entrepreneurship category
- Baaba Sarsah earned a Silver medal for her Leadership presentation
- Sophia Venning, who was elected to a state leadership officer position

These achievements reflect the dedication and passion of our students and the strength of our early childhood education program and the guidance of Ms. Brenda Cabarga. Congratulations to all!

### Esperero Canyon Middle School Band

We are proud to share that the Esperero Canyon Middle School Band, under the direction of Mr. Cory Walavich, received a Superior rating at the Arizona Band and Orchestra Directors Association (ABODA) Band Festival on February 27 at Queen Creek High School. This marks the third consecutive year that the ECMS Band has earned this prestigious recognition!

This outstanding achievement reflects the dedication and talent of our student musicians, the leadership of Mr. Walavich, and the district's strong commitment to the arts. Congratulations to the entire ECMS Band community for continuing to set a high standard of excellence!

### Catalina Foothills High School Choir

The Catalina Foothills High School Choir earned a Gold rating and placed 2nd in the Concert Choir category in the 3A division at the Nashville Heritage Festival.

As a result of their exceptional performance, the choir has been invited to perform in Chicago in 2026 as part of the prestigious Elite Festival of Gold.

A special highlight of the trip: the choir performed an original composition by CFHS student Carter Ferrell.

We also celebrate Senior Meryl Abdelmessieh, who was honored as the only student at the festival to receive the WorldStrides Ovation Award for her outstanding mentorship of incoming students in the choir program.

Congratulations to Meryl, Carter, and all of our talented singers who represented us with excellence.

### Exemplary Educator Award Finalist

We are pleased to announce that Renee Shane-Boyd, Director of Bands, has been named a finalist for the Exemplary Educator award at the Metro Education Commission's upcoming Evening to Empower(ED) event on May 9, 2025.

This special event coincides with Teacher Appreciation Week and builds on three decades of honoring educational excellence through the Crystal Apple Awards. Exemplary Educators are individuals who demonstrate exceptional service to learners and empower them on their journey toward prosperity. Renee Shane-Boyd is that ideal.

Renee has served Catalina Foothills School District for 42 years, teaching at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Under her leadership, the CFHS Marching Band has been the largest in Arizona for decades and has performed at renowned venues, including the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade (twice), the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, and the 2008 Pre-Olympic Ceremonies in Beijing, China. The band has also performed in Hawaii, Australia, and England. As Fine Arts Chair for the Catalina Foothills School District, she has served on numerous curriculum and architectural committees.

Renee's contributions have been recognized through numerous honors, including the OM Hartsell Excellence in Music Education Award, 2025 University of Arizona Honored Educator, 2009 CFSD Teacher of the Year Award, AMEA Longevity in Teaching Award, and a Paul Harris Fellow designation from Rotary International for her outstanding service to the community. She is also a regular guest conductor with the Arizona Symphonic Winds.

We are incredibly proud to see Renee's extraordinary career and service recognized on such a prestigious regional stage.

### CFHS Choir

Senior Finch Silverman was awarded first chair in the Tenor section for the 2025 Arizona All-State Choir. Finch, along with seniors Fox Foster and Siena Mayfield, Juniors Carter Ferrell and Louisa Stine, and Freshman Avisia Victory will be traveling with Mr. Evans to Northern Arizona University in mid-April to participate in the All-State Music Festival. The singers will unite as a part of a 200-voice choir made up of the best singers from around the state of Arizona. The choir will be conducted by the Director of Choral Activities from the University of Oregon, Dr. Sharon Paul.

### FBLA State Conference Success

This year the Computer Science club had 14 students compete in presentation events at the FBLA State Leadership Conference. In addition, 12 students took objective tests. Two teams made it to the final rounds of competition:

- Caitlyn Trail and Calvin Mathew in Mobile Application Development
- William Jacobsen, Wyatt Miller and Gordon Kim in Data Analysis

William, Wyatt, and Gordon took first place in their event and qualified to go to the National Leadership conference over the summer.

All students that competed made awesome programs that showcased their programming talent.

### STARTALK Chinese Language Program

We are proud to share that CFHS students Jaylin Peterson and Sofie Collins have been selected to participate in the prestigious STARTALK Chinese language program at the University of Arizona in 2025.

STARTALK, a federal program funded by the National Security Agency, supports the study of critically needed world languages in the United States. This year's program, *Chinese Pathways in Arizona*, offers an immersive Mandarin Chinese experience and provides one University of Arizona credit upon successful completion. With a highly competitive applicant pool from across the nation, Jaylin and Sofie were selected for their exceptional proficiency and strong interviews.

Please join us in congratulating these students. Their success reflects the district's continued commitment to world language excellence and global learning opportunities.

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**RECOMMENDED MOTION: Information Item**