

# Combs

J.O. Combs Unified School District

Learning Today. Leading Tomorrow



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2020-2021

**A DISTRICT OF HOPE**  
**J.O. COMBS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

A YEAR IN REVIEW AND A LOOK AHEAD  
COMBINED ANNUAL REPORT FOR  
JANUARY 2020 - JULY 2021

# A COMMUNITY OF EMPOWERED LEARNERS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

## OUR MISSION

We are a community of learners collaborating to ensure maximum academic and social growth for all students. We utilize research-based practices and strategies delivered by highly competent employees who are committed to excellence in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.

In order to fulfill this mission, the District has identified its priorities which include showcasing outstanding student achievement, demonstrating operational excellence, maximizing technology, ensuring exemplary customer service, and the provision of a safe, secure learning environment for all students and staff.

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To access an electronic version of this report, or to learn more about the J.O. Combs Unified School District, visit [www.jocombs.org/annualreport/](http://www.jocombs.org/annualreport/).

**PROUDLY NAMED A 2020 NATIONAL DISTRICT OF DISTINCTION BY MODERN TEACHER**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021**

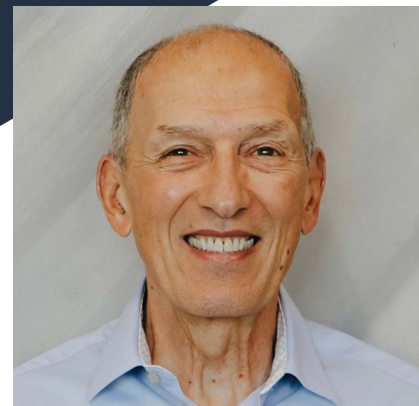


# MEET THE GOVERNING BOARD

The Governing Board is responsible for employing personnel, establishing budgets, determining educational goals and objectives, and policy development.



**SHELLY HARGIS**  
BOARD PRESIDENT



**BOB D'ELENA**  
BOARD CLERK



**CHAD MCLEOD**  
BOARD MEMBER



**STEVEN RAY**  
BOARD MEMBER



**LISA CARR**  
BOARD MEMBER

**OUR FIVE-MEMBER GOVERNING BOARD, ELECTED BY OUR COMMUNITY, ARE ENTRUSTED WITH ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT RESPONSIBILITIES ASSIGNED TO ANY CITIZEN — THAT OF HELPING TO PLAN THE EDUCATION OF THE YOUTH OF THE COMMUNITY.**

## SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

### WELCOME TO THE DISTRICT'S FIRST ANNUAL REPORT.

An annual report provides an opportunity for our greater community to learn about the amazing accomplishments from the previous year and help celebrate the J.O. Combs Unified School District. The 2020-21 Annual Report is being completed as the District and country come out of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the tremendous amount of change and stress that began in March 2020, this report will actually reflect an annual report from January 2020 through June 2021.

As we reflected on the celebration of our schools, students, staff and families post-pandemic, we realized that the district is a beacon of hope for our community. As such, the theme of this annual report is: "A District of Hope". The theme was chosen because regardless of the challenges posed by COVID-19, the District provided an unwavering sense of hope for so many. The importance of a school district to a community was highlighted this past year, demonstrating that hope is inherent within the district.

When I speak of hope, I reflect on the meals that our food services team provided for our community. During the fourth quarter of the 2019-20 school year, meals were provided for students throughout the community regardless of school of attendance. For the 2021-22 school year, these meals were provided for our students. In all cases, the meals were provided free of charge and allowed families facing economic hardship to not have to worry about feeding their children.

As we moved to virtual learning, the issue of a digital divide was faced by our district as well as districts throughout the country. As a "District of Hope", we were able to provide chromebooks for our students to ensure they could continue their studies. This program of providing families without technology access to technology has continued throughout the pandemic. The future for

the District also provides a sense of hope as we move to a 1:1 initiative which ensures each student has access to a computer. This project also includes upgrades to our technology infrastructure and options to increase connectivity for students.

In February 2020, our school district was recognized as a District of Distinction by Modern Teacher. Our district hosted three hundred educators from around the country and attendees were extremely impressed with our students, staff and schools in their implementation of #FORWARD, our Modern Teacher movement. This national spotlight, along with the work of our staff, has helped to distinguish that we are a "District of Hope", and only amplify our commitment to providing the best education for every student, every day."

We are a "District of Hope" because of our staff. Our team provides the hope that is necessary for every child to succeed. Our staff has received recognition at the local, state and national level. In fact over the past eighteen months, five district employees have been finalists for national awards from Modern Teacher, including Diana Tabor from Ranch Elementary who was named teacher of the year. This dedication to our students, our district, and our community ensures that students have a sense of hope as they move onto the next year in their educational journey. This hope is validated by the accomplishments that our students experience annually.

We are a "District of Hope" for our community as we worked with healthcare partners to provide a COVID-19 testing and vaccination site at Combs High School. Our business partners helped us provide hope through student scholarships as part of our educational foundation. These same partners helped us recognize the excellence in our staff through our annual awards night.

Please enjoy this annual report on your nationally recognized local school district, a district committed to our community and dedicated to providing the highest quality education for our students. A "District of Hope" that ensures every student will be successful and reach their highest potential.



**DR. GREGORY A. WYMAN**  
SUPERINTENDENT

# OUR HISTORY

## A STORY OF GROWTH & PERSEVERANCE

In the mid 1900's, students that lived in the north east area of Pinal County did not have a school building located within their small, rural farming community. Students and families were considered part of the Apache Junction School District, located more than 15 miles to the North. In spite of the rural conditions, parents wanted to have their own schools in their own farming community.

It was in 1949 that area residents began the steps necessary to form a local school district. By 1954, the community children were able to attend school in their own rural community, but their school consisted of two army barracks that had been purchased from the Osborn School District located north of Phoenix. These two barracks were situated on 5.42 acres that were generously donated by J.O. and Mamie Combs, local farming residents.

During the early years, the school barracks were still part of the Apache Junction School District and the superintendent at the time would travel between these two remote locations—many times on horseback. The barracks and the 5.42 acres didn't become the J.O. Combs Elementary School District #44 until 1958. The name of the school district was chosen to honor Mr. Combs, the local farmer who donated the land for the original school site. The first Governing Board Members were Mr. J.O. Combs, Mr. Walter P. Gantzel, and Mr. Jack Schnepf.

Over the next four decades, the District continued to grow and evolve, in ways no one would have imagined. There was a great desire from the community to provide a high school experience and education for the children in the community instead of sending them to neighboring districts. In 2006 the community, through voter approval, passed a unification measure, allowing the J.O. Combs Unified School District #44 to serve students in preschool - 12th grade. As a part of this 2006 voter initiative, approval also permitted the building of the first high school, Combs High School, which opened in 2009.

The District is unique as it experienced hyper-growth in housing developments resulting in student enrollment from 300 students in 2001 (with one school site) to the current enrollment of over 4,400 students and nine school sites. This excessive growth took place over a seven to nine year period.

In 2016, the District embarked on its journey to empower learners in today's modern learning environment. At this time, the District became a member of the Modern Teacher Network, joining 182 school districts in twenty-seven (27) states throughout the country in its ongoing pursuit to provide a personalized learning experience for all students.

## BY THE NUMBERS

During the time period of January 2020 through July 2021, the J.O. Combs Unified School District noted several key highlights.



### DISTRICT FAST FACTS

The District was formed in 1958 and is comprised of 68 square miles containing nine schools.



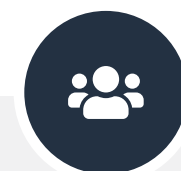
### MILES DRIVEN

The transportation team drove 275,000 miles, transporting 1,100 students on 160 routes.



### MEALS SERVED

Free breakfast and lunch meals were provided to students, totalling over 451,000 during the reporting period.



### BUDGET OVERVIEW

The District operates an annual budget of \$45,341,709, which includes M&O, capital, and federal funds.



### POST-SECONDARY SUCCESS

Students had a graduation rate of 88% and a four year average 88% pass rate for CTE State Skills Assessment.



### SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

Over \$1.7 million was awarded in scholarship funds to graduating seniors from Combs High School.



### STUDENT TEACHER RATIO

Those who selected in-person learning enjoyed classes with an average student teacher ratio of 19:1.



### DIVERSE PROGRAMS

Programming included Special Education, Gifted, English Language Learners, and AP/Dual Enrollment.



### QUALIFIED TEACHERS

The average experience for teachers was over ten years, with an average annual salary of \$45,508.



# STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT MORE THAN TEST SCORES



## PERSONALIZED INSTRUCTION FOR PERSONALIZED SUCCESS

How does a school district or school measure student achievement and success? The question is complex and provides multiple measures. Test scores, post high school education, community service, and career exploration are all measures of student academic success. Scores on standardized tests provide one measure, but just as important is success in a student's chosen passions. The part of school that drives and motivates our students. In this section of the annual report, information is provided for the different ways that student achievement is demonstrated in our schools.

Motivation and success is often demonstrated by involvement in courses that help drive student learning. As a "District of Hope" student achievement is much more than a test score; it is about the development of our students and preparation for the next step in their educational life. Combs graduates attend colleges throughout the United States, including some of the most prestigious schools in the country, like Harvard. Students join all branches of the military and many continue post secondary work in specific trades or enter the workforce. A personalized learning environment and student centered classroom means that success and growth is not just a number, but an individual and personalized story about how each student grew.

## A PASSION FOR THE FINE ARTS

During this past year, the Fine Arts Department at Combs High School approached the Governing Board to request approval for students to earn a State Seal of Arts Proficiency. This seal was approved by the state legislature and the criteria includes: A 3.0 or better GPA in a minimum of four (4) arts credits, completion of a minimum of eighty (80) hours of arts extracurricular activities, and completion a student-led senior capstone project under a mentor in Dance, Media Arts, Music, Theater Arts, or Visual Arts.

During the 2020-21 school year, five students completed all of the requirements for the seal. In Theater, under the direction of Mr. Nick Smith, Alora Hawman was awarded a Seal of Arts Proficiency. For the Dance program, under the direction of Ms. Andrea Downing, Maricella Garcia Gonzales, Sofia Martinez, Madelyn Oitzman, and Breanna Varley received their seal. Combs High School was one of eighty-two (82) high schools, out of one thousand and three (1,003) high schools in the state who participated.

## ACADEMIC COMPETITION WINNERS

Elementary and middle school students continue to demonstrate academic success, not only at the local level, but also at the county level. Combs Middle School was named Pinal County Math champions for the second year in a row, and the Pinal County Spelling Bee champion, Cody Hooper, from Ellsworth Elementary School represented the District at the state spelling bee.

## NATIONAL MERIT PROGRAM COMMENDED SCHOLAR

In 2021, the National Merit Scholarship program recognized Connor Elder from Combs High School as a Commended Student. Commended students are recognized for their exceptional academic promise as demonstrated by their outstanding performance on the PSAT. The National Merit Scholarship Program recognizes students who scored in the top 4% across the nation on the PSAT test. Of the 1.5 million students who take the test 50,000 receive recognition in the program. Approximately 32,000 receive commended status, while the remaining students are named semifinalists and finalists.

## INDUSTRY CERTIFICATION: CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Combs High School provides eleven programs in its Career and Technical Education Program, in addition to a partnership offering twenty-five programs through their involvement with EVIT (East Valley Institution of Technology). These programs provide critical training that enable students to attain industry certifications in a variety of areas before even graduating high school. As part of the curriculum, students complete two years of course work, and take industry certifications at the state level. This past year, one hundred and twenty-three (123) students passed the test and received certification for entry into their specific industries of study. This represents a tripling of the number of students receiving certifications in just the past four years.



## AP CLASSES: A HEADSTART ON COLLEGE READINESS

At Combs High School students, can take advanced courses two different ways. Students have the opportunity to take fourteen (14) different Advanced Placement (AP) courses in a variety of subjects and earn college credit. In addition, they can participate in dual credit programs via partnerships with Central Arizona College (CAC) and Chandler-Gilbert Community College (CGCC), where they are able to earn college credit for the courses that they complete in high school.

## CTE MULTIMEDIA PROGRAM EXCELS AT STATE AND NATIONAL COMPETITIONS

Since 2017, the Digital Communications, TV Production, and Yearbook programs, under the leadership of Mr. Brian Taylor, has competed in the Interscholastic Press Association competition.

Over the past five years, the Rundown news program, Combs Courier newspaper and EPOCH yearbook have received twenty-eight state and national awards. This year, students in these programs demonstrated academic success by receiving five Superior awards, two Excellent awards and three Honorable Mention awards. Winning categories included feature story, promo, intro/outro, theme development, academic spread, motion graphic, sports photo, student life photo, feature, and photography.



# PROPELLING STUDENTS #FORWARD

OUR JOURNEY TO PERSONALIZED LEARNING



## IN 2016, THE DISTRICT EMBARKED ON ITS JOURNEY TO EMPOWER LEARNERS IN TODAY'S MODERN LEARNING ENVIRONMENT.

Coined #Forward, this innovative movement became the guiding philosophy for the District as it began its move toward a personalized, student-centered culture.

Utilizing a framework shared by Modern Teacher, the District developed six educational drivers to shape and define this work. These six drivers provide for growth across seven stages with specific success indicators to demonstrate success:

**Instructional Leadership:** Change management and systems thinking

**Instructional Models:** Foundations for digital transformations at scale

**Modern Curriculum:** Creation, alignment, integration and access

**Digital Ecosystem:** Organized systems to support digital transformation

**Professional Learning:** Teacher proficiency in the instructional model

**Community:** Expanded stakeholder engagement

## WHAT IS #FORWARD?

School districts develop their own brand for their movement to create an individualized learning environment. A critical part of the District's #Forward movement has been the development of an instructional model that is aligned to the District's vision, mission and priority map. The instructional model at Combs is built on four main components.

### +PURPOSEFUL LEARNING

The fundamental piece of #FORWARD, representing the goal and mission to provide relevant, authentic and engaging learning experiences with transferable skills applicable to the world in which students will live.

### +NURTURING CULTURE

The element that provides a supportive and nurturing culture to promote taking risks in order to achieve high-levels of learning.

### +INNOVATION

The component that empowers our learners for the 21st century, by opening the doors of innovation and encouraging new approaches to learning in order for students to produce authentic work.

### +ASSESSMENT

The element that assesses student progress by collecting a variety of actionable data and responding to the ever changing needs of students, teachers, parents and school community.

These elements work together to provide the essential pieces that create an opportunity for students to unlock their personal potential and gain the critical skills, knowledge and understanding to move them #Forward and successfully thrive in the changing world.

## PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE

The Portrait of a Graduate was developed with input from students, staff, parents and community members. These individuals were asked what students would need to possess in order to ensure future success.

### + 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

**Critical Thinking:** Students critically evaluate complex information through analysis and open mindedness.

**Collaboration:** Students effectively and respectfully work with others to successfully meet goals.

**Problem Solving:** Students possess the skills and perseverance to develop solutions to complex problems.

### + KNOWLEDGE

**Communication (Written/Verbal):** Students possess effective interpersonal, written and verbal communication skills.

**Technology:** Students are digitally literate and able to utilize innovation and modern technology.

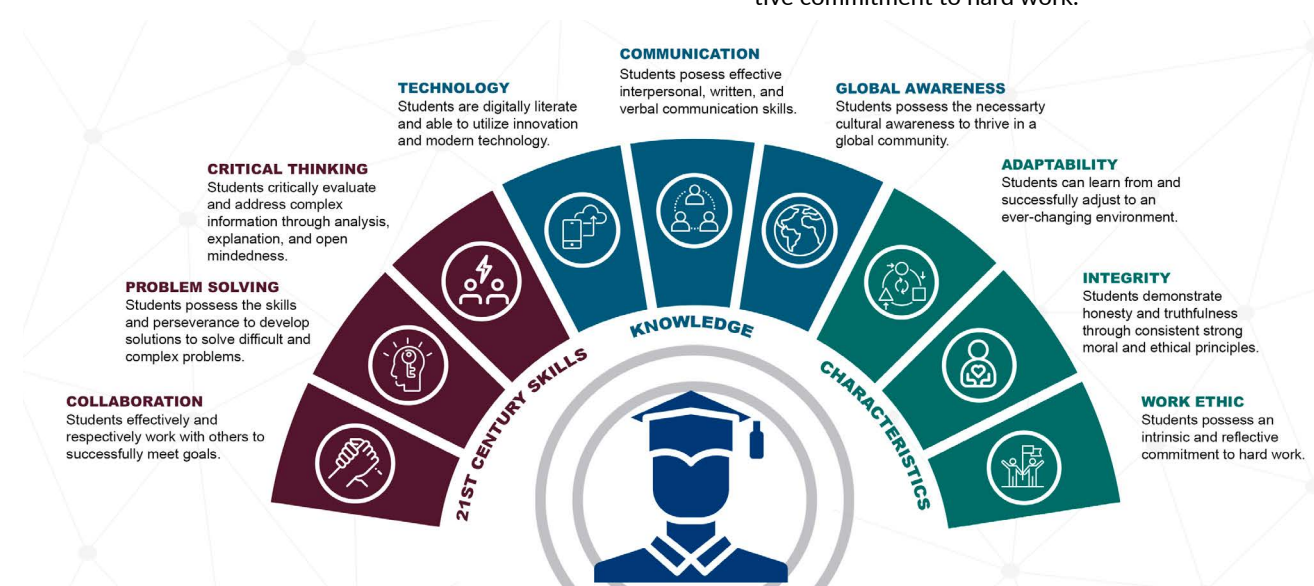
**Global Awareness (Culturally):** Students possess the necessary cultural awareness to thrive in a global community.

### + CHARACTERISTICS

**Adaptability:** Students can learn from and successfully adjust to an ever-changing environment.

**Integrity:** Students demonstrate honesty and truthfulness through strong moral and ethical principles.

**Work Ethic:** Students possess an intrinsic and reflective commitment to hard work.



# STUDENT SUCCESS: LEARNING TODAY, LEADING TOMORROW



## DISTRICT OPENS NEW SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

The J.O. Combs Unified School District understands the personalized nature of every student's educational journey. Our commitment to #FORWARD and an individualized education for each student was the impetus to create the District's first ever schools of choice. During the 2020-2021 school year, the District created three new programs under the new Combs Center for Success. The three programs include two alternative schools and an online school. The schools include a 9-12 Alternative School, 6-8 Alternative School and a K-12 Online School. The schools are located in the former administration buildings adjacent to Combs Traditional Academy.

Combs Center for Success High School and Combs Center for Success Middle School provide face to face education with a certified teacher. The school schedule is flexible and provides morning, afternoon or all day sessions. Students work in a blended educational environment working between online classes and help from teachers. This model allows students to move through the curriculum at their own pace. The flexible schedule also allows students who have to work, who have a family, or who have medical issues to juggle a hectic schedule while progressing towards graduation.

Combs Center for Success Online School is a traditional K-12 online school utilizing Edgenuity and Florida Virtual for course work. Students work online and are supported by District certified staff. In addition, students are required to come into the Combs Center for meet with staff to ensure that the students are main

success location weekly to maintain adequate academic progress.

These school of choices allow the District to offer an alternative education for students who would like a smaller school setting or have the need for a learning environment that meets their personal needs. The connection to our District allows these students to still participate in extracurricular activities at the high school or the middle school.

The pandemic highlighted many issues in education; however, a positive was the recognition of the need for a variety of instructional models for students. As a "District of Hope" the Combs Center for Success will provide an option and hope for students who have not been successful in the traditional school environment. Every student deserves the very best education every day, and these schools ensure that the educational needs of all students can be met.

## EXCELLENCE ON THE COURT AND IN THE CLASSROOM

The Combs High School Boys Basketball team demonstrated success on both the court and in the classroom in 2021. Six members of the team received recognition on the Academic All-State Team. Hunter Clare, Levi Tuckfield, Alex Aikens and Brodee Tucker all were named first team, while Isaac Guevara and Tanner Price received an honorable mention.



## LEADING TOMORROW: STUDENT GOVERNMENT RECOGNIZED NATIONALLY

The Combs High School Student Council's most cherished accomplishment of the school year was its recognition by the Association of Arizona Student Councils (AASC). At its annual state convention, AASC recognizes the hard work, dedication and accomplishments with three awards categories: Charitable Contributions, Special Projects and the prestigious AASC Council of Distinction Awards.

Combs High School Student Council was awarded the following:

- Raising Charitable Contributions or performed Service Projects that range in dollar amounts that exceed \$3,000.00.
- Have engaged in Special Projects that range in time from more than 300 hours of service time performed.

They also received the cherished Outstanding Council of Distinction award for exemplary achievement in Student Council Organization, Leadership Development/Curriculum, Best Student Council Activity, Best School Service Project, Best Community Service/Charity Project (outside of school), High School Traditions and Yearly Events, Leadership Conference Attendance, Testimonies of Support, and Entry Presentation.

## DANCING TO SUCCESS

Students in our District achieved success in the Fine Arts in our dance program. Under the leadership of Andrea Downing the Rush Dance Company was able to participate in one dance competition this year. At the Celebrity Dance Competition the team scored High Gold in all five dances. In addition the company's piece "Emotional Mirage" earned second place in the Senior Open Division.

## TRAP AND SKEET: NATIONAL CONFERENCE WINNERS

As part of its commitment to personalized experiences for students, the district endeavors to create programs, clubs and activities whenever there is an identified need for our students. An example of this in 2020-21 was the development of the Combs High School Trap and Skeet Club. This club, the first one of its kind in the State of Arizona, provides an opportunity for students to compete against other skeet shooting clubs around the country. Already in its first year, this club won its national conference.

## MORE THAN ACADEMICS: A SENSE OF COMPASSION AND COMMUNITY

Combs High School students Naomi Oakes and Kylee Wiles were accepted as co-candidates in The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's (LLS) 2021 Students of the Year campaign. Both students were nominated by the Arizona Chapter's Board of Trustees, Leadership Team, school administrator or staff member for their amazing leadership, passion to find a cure for blood cancers and involvement in the community.

Students of the Year is a national seven-week challenge that allows high school student leaders to raise funds and awareness for the fight against blood cancers. The funds raised benefit the LLS mission: to find a cure for leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease and myeloma, and to improve the quality of life of patients and their families.

Since the campaign's inception in 2014, the Students of the Year program has made an incredible impact for blood cancer research, patient aid, and community outreach programs. Last year alone, there were more than 5,000 high school students participating throughout the country. This is truly an elite group! The District was fortunate to have Naomi and Kylee as part of this campaign to represent Combs High School.

## STATE CHEER CHAMPIONS

In 2020, the Combs High School competitive cheer squad participated in the AIA Division 2 Spiritline State Championships. The team won both the Game Day Championship and the Crowd Leading Division, receiving the first state championship for the competitive cheer team in Combs High School history.

## STATEWIDE STANDOUT

Taniela "Bubba" Taunima epitomized Combs success on the playing field. Not only was Bubba named state champion for heavyweight wrestling for the second year in a row, he was also named tournament MVP in addition to earning the state championship in the Shot Put for the Track Team.





# A TIME FOR CELEBRATIONS

## ACKNOWLEDGING OUR COMBS COMMUNITY

It truly takes a village to raise a child, which means that maintaining collaborative partnerships with local and state businesses is critical to the District's success. Each month, the District partners with Banner Ironwood Medical Center to administer the Student of the Month program. The program provides an opportunity each month for one student from each of the District's ten schools to be recognized for demonstrating one of the various pillars of the Character Counts program. Traits include responsibility, trustworthiness, citizenship, caring, respect and fairness.

A strong partnership with area businesses has also been critical to the Combs Educational Foundation (CEF). Founded in 2016, this 501(c)3 organization raises funds to provide student scholarships and recognize staff excellence. The CEF has a volunteer board of directors, who help guide the organization with fundraising and scholarship creation, which includes Arcadis, Banner Healthcare, Canyon State Bus Company, Central Arizona College, Crossroads Church, Hardison/Downey Construction, McCarthy Building Company, Pinal County Appraisal, Rural Metro Fire Department, SPS+ Architects, and Wilmeng Construction.

When the pandemic posed multiple challenges, the business community stepped up to help students. Their support allowed for traditional activities to take place with enhanced safety protocols, including an in-person graduation and 2021 prom. Thank you to Midstate Energy, CORE Construction, A&P Construction, 1GPA and Veregy for these contributions.



## DISTRICT FORMS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

- ➔ With the ten year reunion of the first graduating class from Combs High School rapidly approaching, the District and the Combs Education Foundation announced the formation of the Combs High School Alumni Association in 2020.
- ➔ As a "District of Hope" the Alumni Association will allow the District to celebrate and recognize past graduates. The association will also provide hope through continued scholarships that will allow current students to pursue their dreams.

# INNOVATION IN EDUCATION

We made great strides in **innovation and technology** in our daily pursuit of empowering 21st century learners.



### INTRODUCING SWIVL DEVICES

- » Innovative Technology that allows for simultaneous virtual and in-person instruction
- » Minimizes disruptions for students and allows flexibility
- » Vital tool for parent choice



### TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE

- » Upgraded from 1 Gbps to 10 Gbps internet bandwidth
- » Firewall upgrades to enhance security
- » Protections against malware and ransomware



### FACILITY UPGRADES THROUGH FMX

- » New software to manage heating and cooling systems
- » Preprogramming allows needs of students and staff to be met
- » Efficiencies produce cost savings



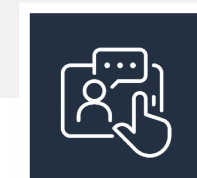
### 1:1 COMPUTING INITIATIVE

- » Provides one device for each student
- » K-6 graders will be provided a computer in the classroom
- » 7-12 graders will be provided with a take home device



### TECHNOLOGY FOR BUS RIDERS

- » Synovia software allows parents to track their child's bus route
- » Real time student tracking to provide accurate arrival and drop off times.
- » GPS tracking and driver safety



### LAUNCH OF ONLINE REGISTRATION

- » Introduced new Student Information System
- » Enables families to complete enrollment process online
- » Allows parents to check grades and student progress in real time

## 21 X 2021 MAKE AN IMPACT

Would you like to make a lifelong impact on the life of a student? There are currently opportunities through the Combs Education Foundation to establish a scholarship fund, provide a one-time gift, or even involve your organization or company. Contact the Foundation at (480) 987-5300 to learn more.



# MODERN AND ECO-FRIENDLY SCHOOLS



## CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

**Project**  
District Modernization

**Cost**  
\$17 Million

**Projected Utility Savings**  
\$700,000 Annually

**Project Timeline**  
May 2020 - May 2021

Although the pandemic created a great deal of disruption in the daily operations of school districts nationally, the J.O. Combs Unified School District used this time to jump start and complete \$17 million in facility upgrades to its school sites. Under the vision of the Governing Board and administration, the District was able to modernize its facilities, move the District to operate more environmentally friendly, provide safer schools to combat the pandemic, and ultimately complete the project without incurring any additional cost to the taxpayer.

The District utilized guaranteed energy cost savings contracts, help from the School Facilities Board (SFB), current capital facilities bond funds, adjacent ways funds and District capital funds to ensure all schools in the district received necessary upgrades to provide state of the art learning environments for students and staff.

## ENERGY COST SAVINGS (ESCO)

The guaranteed energy cost savings projects utilized a provision in state law that allows for a school district to upgrade facilities and pay for the improvements over time with the savings generated from the new energy efficient equipment. Working with Midstate Energy, the selected Energy Savings Company, the District completed energy efficient projects in the areas of:

- ➔ **HVAC:** New HVAC units were replaced at Combs Traditional Academy, Harmon Elementary, and Simonton Elementary. These new units, along with being more energy efficient, provide a refresh of fresh air in all classrooms every twenty minutes, helping to combat fresh air issues in classrooms associated with the pandemic.
- ➔ **Solar:** Solar structures were constructed at all school sites, and will allow the District to reduce electrical costs. The generation of excess electricity through the solar units will be funneled back into the SRP grid.
- ➔ **Lighting:** All lighting throughout the District was replaced with new energy efficient LEDs. The new lighting will provide energy savings to the District and also maintenance savings as the new lights require less frequent replacement.
- ➔ **Water:** District-wide upgrade of plumbing valving, fixtures and drains were completed to increase proper flow and decrease water consumption.
- ➔ **Building Automation and Integration:** This automated, cloud based system now ensures the District is most efficient in managing and scheduling heating and cooling throughout the District.

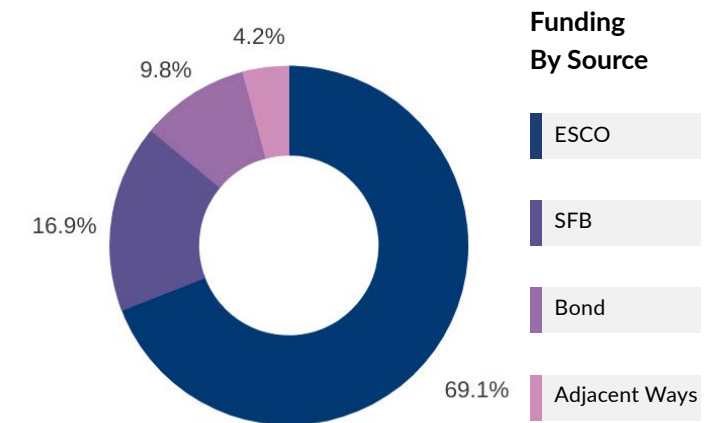


## ADDITIONAL FUNDING SOURCES

With the help of the Arizona School Facilities Board (SFB), the District was able to re-paint all school sites with the exception of Harmon Elementary and Simonton Elementary, which were painted last year. In addition to the painting projects, the District also used SFB funding to fix and repair roofing on all schools in the District.

Combs Traditional Academy saw significant improvements as a new bus loading zone was created with bond and adjacent ways funding. This new area created a safer loading and unloading area for our students and relieved traffic congestion in the front of the school. The back parking lot was repaved and the front of the school received curb appeal upgrades including new fencing, landscaping and a marquee.

The former District office was also remodeled to create the new Combs Center for Success, which offers alternative school options for high school students, middle school students as well as an online school.



”

The J.O. Combs Unified School District is perhaps one of the most innovative and progressive districts in the country.

**Marc Stitt**  
Chief Marketing Officer/GOFMX

## 2020-2021

# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Beginning in 2000, the state requires the Arizona Auditor General to complete a report on all traditional public schools in Arizona on how they spend their budgets.

Although the law defines classroom dollars as money spent in the categories below, the reality is that school districts in Arizona spend all the funds they receive on students.

Since the mission of the District is to provide the best possible education for every student every day, all financial decisions are made with the best interest of students in mind, as well as a commitment to fiscal responsibility.

### INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

**AWARDED EXCELLENCE IN FINANCIAL REPORTING FOR EIGHT CONSECUTIVE YEARS FROM THE GOVERNMENT FINANCE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION (GFOA)**

**CLASSROOM SPENDING**

**67%**

OF TOTAL BUDGET

**OPERATIONAL SPENDING**

**51%**

SPENT ON INSTRUCTION

**TEACHER SALARY**

**AVERAGE PAY \$45,508 ANNUALLY**

REPRESENTS A 18% INCREASE IN TEACHER SALARIES SINCE 2017

**PER PUPIL SPENDING**

**DISTRICT SPENDS \$11,084 ANNUALLY**

COMPARED TO \$10,288 SPENT BY THE DISTRICT'S PEER GROUP



As part of its ongoing commitment to fiscal responsibility and transparency, the District is pleased to share a summation of its financial overview for the Fiscal Year 2020, as well as the federal COVID relief funds passed in 2020-2021.

## OVER \$11 MILLION IN FEDERAL COVID FUNDS

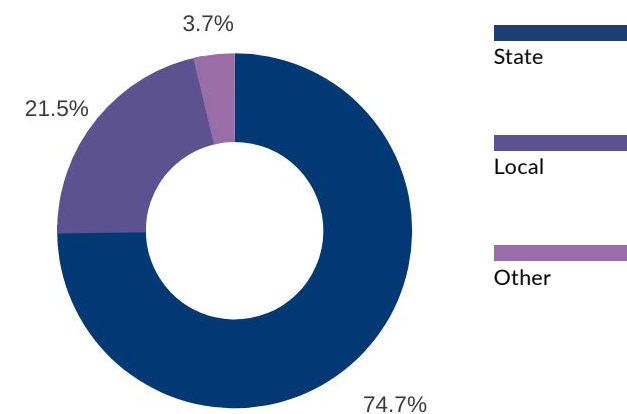
Eligible projects that were funded with federal relief money include personal protective equipment (PPE), devices for students, software, staffing, and more. Details on how funds were allocated can be found on [www.jocombs.org](http://www.jocombs.org).

### EXPENDITURES

Funding Source	FY 2019/20	FY 2020/21*	FY 2021/22*
Stabilization Act**	\$15,302	\$1,359,985	\$0
ESSERS I***	\$0	\$793,456	\$0
ESSERS II****	\$0	\$1,911,960	\$901,265
ESSERS III*****	\$0	\$0	\$6,398,745
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$15,302</b>	<b>\$4,065,401</b>	<b>\$7,300,010</b>

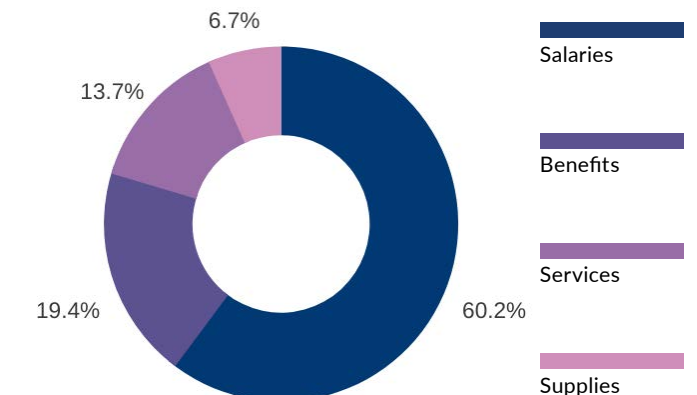
\*Represents projections as estimated during the time of the preparation of this report.  
 \*\*Funds were required to be expended by December 2020.  
 \*\*\*Funds are required to be expended by September 2022.  
 \*\*\*\*Funds are required to be expended by September 2023.  
 \*\*\*\*\*Funds are required to be expended by September 2024.

### FY20 REVENUES BREAKDOWN BY SOURCE



Local revenue consists of property taxes, state revenue consists of state and county equalization, and federal revenue includes grants.

### FY20 EXPENDITURES BREAKDOWN BY CATEGORY



A detailed breakdown of annual expenditures can be accessed via the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, which is available at [www.jocombs.org](http://www.jocombs.org).



# WHY JOIN OUR TEAM?

Make a difference in the lives of students. Join our **Combs Community** and become part of an award winning team.

## → COMPETITIVE SALARY AND BENEFITS

In addition to competitive wages, eligible employees receive health insurance, voluntary dental, vision, and short term disability.

## → ROBUST PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

A culture emphasizing lifelong learners that offers ongoing professional development trainings to certified and classified employees.

## → CONVENIENT LOCATION WITH CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

Located just southeast of Phoenix, the District offers the conveniences of a metro area with the benefits of a small community.

## → SUPPORTIVE ADMINISTRATION AND LEADERSHIP

Over 95% of employees stated they would be likely to recommend the District in the 2021 Workplace Conditions Survey.

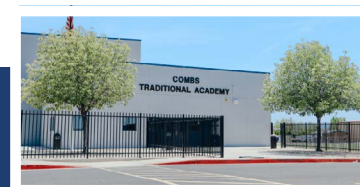
## → COMMITMENT TO HEALTH AND SAFETY

For three consecutive years, the District has been the proud recipient of the Healthy Arizona Worksite Designation.



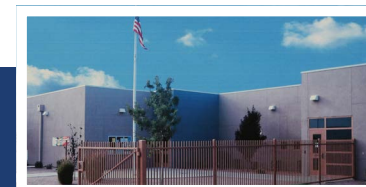
# OUR SCHOOLS

We offer a variety of options for every stage of your child's educational journey.



## COMBS TRADITIONAL ACADEMY

- » Opened in 2010
- » Serving K-6 Grades
- » Approx. 300 Students
- » Principal Shanna Shoffner



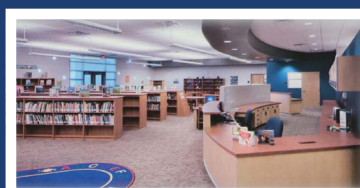
## ELLSWORTH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- » Opened in 2007
- » Serving Pre K-6 Grades
- » Approx. 650 Students
- » Principal Santa Dunker



## JACK W. HARMON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- » Opened in 2005
- » Serving Pre K-6 Grades
- » Approx. 560 Students
- » Principal Angie Beauchene



## RANCH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- » Opened in 2008
- » Serving Pre K-6 Grades
- » Approx. 530 Students
- » Principal Sue Kruse



## SIMONTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- » Opened in 2003
- » Serving Pre K-6 Grades
- » Approx. 430 Students
- » Principal Sue Paschal



## COMBS MIDDLE SCHOOL

- » Opened in 2007
- » Serving 7-8 Grades
- » Approx. 730 Students
- » Principal Laura Ridge



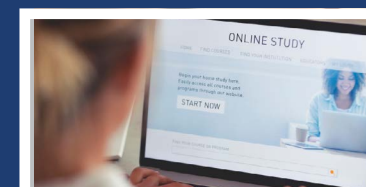
## COMBS HIGH SCHOOL

- » Opened in 2008
- » Serving 9-12 Grades
- » Approx. 1450 Students
- » Principal Chris Farabee



## COMBS CENTER FOR SUCCESS

- » Opened in 2020
- » Two Schools Serving 7-8 Grades and 9-12 Grades
- » Principal Dr. Pat Goolsby



## COMBS ONLINE CENTER FOR SUCCESS

- » Opening in 2021
- » Serving K-6 with Florida Virtual
- » Serving 7-12 with Edgenuity
- » On Demand Virtual Learning

ACCOMPLISHMENTS  
**2020-21**

**NATIONAL  
RECOGNITION FOR  
COMBS TEAM**

WINNER

**PERSONALIZED  
LEARNING CLASSROOM  
OF THE YEAR**

DIANA TABOR

FINALIST

**CHANGE MANAGE-  
MENT PRINCIPAL OF  
THE YEAR**

SANTA DUNKER

FINALIST

**CHANGE MANAGE-  
MENT DISTRICT  
LEADER OF THE YEAR**

DORSEY MIDDAUGH



**LOOKING #FORWARD:  
THE FUTURE OF  
PERSONALIZED LEARNING**

AS THE WORLD EMERGES FROM THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC, K-12 EDUCATION HAS THE POTENTIAL TO UNDERGO SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE WAY THAT EDUCATION IS PROVIDED FOR STUDENTS. THE J.O. COMBS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT IS NO DIFFERENT THAN OTHER SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN FACING THESE CHANGES. HOWEVER, IN MANY WAYS THE DISTRICT WAS ALREADY MOVING TOWARD THESE CHANGES PRIOR TO THE PANDEMIC. ALTHOUGH THE PANDEMIC MAGNIFIED THE NEED FOR CHANGE, IT ALSO PROVIDED SUPPORT FOR THE DISTRICT'S DECISION TO EMBRACE THE MOVEMENT #FORWARD.

The key aspect of #FORWARD is the concept of education any time, any place and anywhere for students. This means that students may receive traditional in-person learning, blended learning or virtual learning. All learning methods utilized during the past twelve to fifteen months. The change to a more personalized learning environment with a focus on the individual learning style of the student is the foundation of the District's instructional model. This instructional model provides differentiated instruction, but also an emphasis on the whole child. This means that in addition to the academic, extracurricular, career and technical education of the student the school must also address the social and emotional learning (SEL) of the student. This component was especially highlighted during the recent pandemic as students learned from home for extended periods of time.

These changes are also critical as we move forward with the education of the next generation of students. This new generation of students are called Gen Alpha (Gen A) and represent those children born between 2010 and 2024. Many of this generation of students will have experienced the impact of the pandemic on their educational experience. This new generation of students are projected to be the most technology savvy, and will enjoy a longer lifespan than all other previous generations. This longer life span means education will truly become a lifelong endeavor. Gen Alphas will also see the shrinking of the earth as communication between individuals from around the world becomes easier. The interaction and melding of different cultures will provide Gen Alpha students with a unique learning experience that includes concepts like: a focus on skills instead of content, flexible learning with a greater purpose, and the need for collaboration and cultivating soft skills.

In many ways the movement #FORWARD provides the foundation for this transition. The National NCDC conference in February 2020 resulted in 300 educators from around the country visiting our district. The excitement and impact of this visit and the validation of the innovative educational model, called #FORWARD, got lost in the impact of the pandemic. However, the commitment of the District and staff to create a new way of providing outstanding education for our students never wavered. Our vision that every student deserves the very best education every day provides the energy for the J.O. Combs Unified School District to make the necessary changes in the delivery of a new and innovative educational model for our students. This sense of excitement and hope for this generation and the next generation of students is why when we look ahead we see a "District of Hope." Your local school district, a district that has received national recognition, providing the next generation of students with a sense of hope and an educational model designed to allow them to reach their full potential.

**DR. GREGORY A. WYMAN**  
SUPERINTENDENT



**“EVERY CLASSROOM I VISITED HAD THE STUDENTS AT THE CENTER OF THE LEARNING PROCESS, HAD CREATED A NURTURING AND CARING ENVIRONMENT, AND HAD KIDS DOING THE HEAVY THINKING...HONESTLY, IT WAS ONE OF THE COOLEST THINGS I’VE SEEN IN MY 22 YEARS IN EDUCATION.”**

**-DR. SHAWN SMITH, FOUNDER OF MODERN TEACHER**

**Combs**

J.O. Combs Unified School District

Learning Today. Leading Tomorrow

**A COMMUNITY OF EMPOWERED LEARNERS  
FOR THE 21ST CENTURY**



(480) 987-5300  
(480) 987-3487



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WWW.JOCOMBS.ORG



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