PUSD Page Unified School District

District Newsletter

February 2026



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ON THE COVER

Shiloh Seschillie braids the hair of her sister McKenzie Seschillie during the traditional talent portion of the UNITY Pageant.

Trushayah Bitsoie Will Represent PUSD as Miss Bich' eekę'



Carlos Begay, American Indian Education Coordinator; Shiloh Seschillie, runner-up Miss Page Elementary; Aaliyah Manheimer, Miss Page Elementary; Trushayah Bitsoie, Miss Page High School; Kashiya Gray, runner-up Miss Page High School; Ophelia Fowler, Miss PECLC; and Desiree Fowler, PUSD Governing Board President.

PUSD's American Indian Education Office held its annual UNITY Pageant last Thursday and Trushayah Bitsoie was crowned Miss Page High School, also called Miss Bich' eekę'.

The UNITY Pageant was divided into categories for students attending Page Early Childhood Learning Center, Page Elementary, and Page High School, with a winner and runner-up crowned at each level.

Trushayah Bitsoie was crowned Miss Page High School; Kashiya Gray is runner-up Miss Page High School; Aaliyah Manheimer was crowned Miss Page Elementary; Shiloh Seschillie is runner-up Miss Page Elementary; and Ophelia Fowler was crowned Miss PECLC.

Contestants were judged on performance of a contemporary talent, a traditional talent and their answer to a question from the judges. In another portion of the pageant, contestants wore traditional Navajo attire and explained its different parts.

During the contemporary talent, some contestants sang, two of them did an art creation. During the traditional talent, some sang traditional songs in Navajo, some danced a traditional Navajo Dance and one contestant demonstrated a traditional way of braiding hair.

"I want to give them a lot of credit for their talents," said Carlos Begay, American Indian Education Coordinator, and pageant organizer. "They really put their heart into it."

The pageant also included entertainment between pageant categories. Drummers and dancers from Red Heritage performed a Grass Dance and a Hoop Dance.

The pageant winners will represent PUSD, its schools, the UNITY Club and the Navajo Nation in functions, cer-









emonies and events throughout the year. The younger students, Miss Bich' eekę' from PECLC and Page Elementary will represent PUSD and the UNITY Club at local cultural events, family nights and city events. Trushayah Bitsoie, Miss Bich' eekę' for Page High School, will represent PUSD, the UNITY Club and the Navajo Nation at all local cultural events, all UNITY conventions and numerous regional, state and national events and ceremonies. In the past, Miss Bich' eekę' has traveled to the Arizona School Board Association conference in Phoenix, the Navajo Nation capital in Window Rock, Ariz. and the NAFIS Conference in Washington, D.C.

Trushayah Bitsoie is excited to begin her new role as Miss Bich' eekę' and says it will be an honor to represent the students of PUSD.

"It feels awesome to be in this role," she said. "It feels like a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I'm stoked for it to begin. I'm so excited."

Mr. Begay believes Miss Bitsoie will make an excellent representative for PUSD, the UNITY Club and the Navajo Nation.

"Whe will actually advocate to Arizona senators and congressmen why the Impact Aid funding is necessary and ways that it helps us." said Mr. Begay. "This is a serious obligation and they should treat it that way."

Miss Bich' eekę' will help organize traditional dress up days, turquoise days, the shoe game, winter storytelling night and help put together programs and events next November for Indigenous People's Month.

Mr. Begay said this year's Miss Bich' eekę' should get her suitcase ready, because she'll be attending ceremonies and conferences from Phoenix, to Window Rock and possibly Washington, D.C.

Desiree Fowler, who serves as both PUSD Board Presi-







dent and President of the Arizona School Board Association, helped behind the scenes at the pageant. In her role as ASBA Board President, Fowler tries to find opportunities for Arizona students to get involved on a state and national level.

One of the first big events where Trushayah Begay will serve as representative and advocate will be this March at this year's Advocacy Day at the Capitol, an event where professionals, and members of an organization visit their legislators (federal or state) to lobby for specific policies, funding, or issues important to their field.

"Trushayah has a special role that goes with her title," said Ms. Fowler. "She will spend a day onsite and participate in student panels with our senators and legislators. It's good for our leaders to hear a student's perspective and insights about what they might be struggling with, and what's working.

"It's important for Trushayah and other students be a role model and ambassador for their schools, peers and communities. She's basically the ambassador for us that day."

Ms. Fowler has a second motivation for bringing Miss Bich' eekę' to state and national events: It will give her an opportunity to meet other movers and shakers and get a glimpse "behind the curtain".

"This is a great opportunity for her to expand her horizons, meet new people and get a better idea of how things work," said Fowler.

Mr. Begay spent months planning the UNITY Pageant, arranging for judges, entertainers, photographers, crowns, prizes, gifts and the venue itself.

"I also got a lot of help from our UNITY Club students, the American Indian Education Program, our UNITY Club boosters and Desiree Fowler," said Mr. Begay. "I want to give a huge Thank You for their help."

3 Welding Students Bring Home Awards



Three Sand Devil welding students really made the sparks fly at the Universal Technical Institute (UTI) welding competition in Avondale, AZ.

Congratulations to Milo Sylvania (9th place), Daren Whitehat (2nd place) and Deegan Sparks (3rd place).

The event included student welders from Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas.

"These students put in a lot of extra time and effort, and it showed," said Page High School welding instructor, Sam Rangel. "If you see them this week, please help me congratulate them on representing Page High School so well."

Way to go, Milo, Daren and Deegan!

PHS Marching Band Student Performs in Fiesta Bowl Parade





"It was really fun! I'm so happy I got to do it," said Page High School junior, Ava `Ash' Evans.

Evans was one of a hundred high school students who marched in this year's Fiesta Bowl Parade as part of the Arizona All-State All-Star Marching Band. The marching band had students from more than 50 high schools across Arizona. This was its inaugural year and the Fiesta Bowl Parade was its first performance.

Page High School Band teacher, Livia Haas, learned about Arizona All-State All-Star Marching Band when she received an email from them in September. The marching band sent emails to all Arizona high school band teachers encouraging them to have their students apply to be in it.

"I had several students who I thought would be great at this," Haas said.

"When I heard about it, I thought `I'm going to give it a try. I think I could get in.'"

Evans filed her application, which listed what school she attends, what instrument she plays and her marching band experience. A few days later, her band teacher Livia Haas, received an email asking her why Evans would be a good fit for the state-wide marching band.

It was an easy recommendation to make, Evans said.

"This whole class has been a huge help helping me transition into my new job here, Ash especially," said Haas. This is Haas's first year teaching. "I knew the characteristics she demonstrates in my class would also help her succeed in the statewide marching band. I was very happy when I learned that she'd been accepted."

A few weeks later, Evans received an email informing her that she had been selected.

She said it was a very positive experience.

"It was really fun," she said. "I got to make a bunch of new friends, and at the parade itself I got to see my old friends that I haven't seen since I moved to Page, because they were also in the parade." Evans moved from Glendale to Page her 8th grade year.

Evans has stayed in touch with some of the people she met, and will see them again at the upcoming Winter Guard event this Saturday.

This is Evans' eighth year in band, her second year doing marching band. She plays the baritone sax.

During the Fiesta Bowl Parade, the marching band played Toxic by Brittany Spears, and Hot to Go by Chappell Roan. Members of the band received the music in November and were told to practice it. As the performance date got closer, members of the marching band logged onto a Zoom call and met each other, and the instructor gave them further information and instructions about what to expect and what to be prepared for.

As far as the marching went, the students came in already knowing how to march. They didn't have to perform any formations like they do when performing on a football field, but they had to maintain proper pacing and distance while marching down the street. The parade route was two miles long. It started at Central Ave., then went south to Camelback Road, then East to 7th Street, and ended at Minnezona Ave.

Con Brio!

New PHS Teacher Brings Enthusiasm to the Band Program





When Page Unified School District goes on teacher recruitment trips they are looking for teachers who are knowledgeable in their field and passionate about teaching. A teacher who brings energy and innovative ideas. A teacher who creates connections with their students; the kind of connection that inspires their students, makes them want to try something new, try harder, get a little better.

They are looking for a teacher like Livia Haas.

This is Haas's first year teaching at PUSD. She teaches band and marching band. Band teacher is one of those positions that require a good bit of extra time outside of the classroom: leading concerts, creating marching band routines, rehearsing those routines, and performing at football games and in various parades. You will find Haas and her spirited kids in the football stands playing their hearts out. You'll find them practicing their positioning and pacing for marching band competitions, you'll find those kids at concerts in October, December, March and May.

Haas graduated from Eastern Illinois University in 2025, where she was in its marching band. Haas's musical journey started in the fifth grade. She played flute. She played flute all through middle and high school, including marching band. Her love of music led her to learn more and more instruments, until now she can play most of the band instruments.

Haas is an adventurous soul, and traveling is one of her top-tier passions. In 2024 she worked at Ogichi Daa Kwe, an immersive outdoor experience company. At Ogichi Daa Kwe she led groups of young women on eight- and ten-day backcountry canoe trips on the Boundary Waters. She will work there again this summer.

"Working there taught me so much about my own strength and resilience, and I loved the break from technology," she said. "It was like living in a bubble of girlhood, adventure, art, and strength that I had never witnessed before without any societal influence, or need to be trendy."

Last summer she took a hiatus from Ogichi Daa Kwe to backpack the Camino de Santiago in Spain with her high school best friend. Just prior to that trip, she did her student teaching in Ireland (she was in Ireland when she applied for band teacher at Page High School).

"I was on any and all websites scrolling through them, seeing what each place might have to offer, because with music, and with my certification of K-12 music, I can do band, choir, general, elementary and everything in between," she said. "Because of my certifications I felt like I could be a little bit choosy about where I wanted to live. I kind of felt like the world was my oyster."

During her job search she found a position for a band teacher at Page High School. It checked off two of her highest priorities: her preferred career choice and an interesting location.

"When I saw that Page had an opening in band – my preferred job choice – I looked into it more and thought, `Oh. That looks like a cool place, with a lot of adventure opportunities, so I applied. A few days later I did a Zoom call with [Page High School Principal] Leigh Guenther and he offered me the job. I thought, `I guess I'll move to





Arizona.'"

Page and its beauty lived up the hype.

"Just to be around the red rocks, being close to so many national parks and living in a spot where there are so many opportunities for adventure is very appealing to me," she said.

Since arriving in Page, Haas has kayaked antelope canyon, visited Zion National Park, Grand Canyon National Park, Mesa Verde, and Great Sand Dunes. She also enjoys the local hikes such as The Chains and Hanging Gardens. Lees Ferry has become one of her favorite spots. She visits it regularly to hike and to fish.

For teachers moving to Page from far away, one of the biggest challenges can be finding their community, finding or making new friends with shared interests. For Haas, it happened spontaneously and quickly.

"That's something I've told to everyone back home, my friends and parents, is that coming to Page was an instant community," she said.

PUSD recently purchased a housing unit for incoming teachers as a solution to Page's housing shortage. Upon signing her teaching contract, Haas learned that there was an opening at the housing unit. Adam Telechbush, an algebra teacher at Page High School, also lives at the teacher housing. He called Haas to introduce himself while she was driving from Illinois to Page, and asked when she planned on arriving. Haas told him she'd be arriving the next day. Telechbush told her that another teacher, Shania Valentine, was going to be having a get together at her house. He invited Haas to join them.

"The next day when we got to Page, my mom and I got dinner, stopped at my new apartment, then we watched the sun set from the overlook," Haas recalled. "I dropped my mom off at the hotel, then when to Shania's party, where I met a bunch of teachers."

One of the teachers at the party was Haas's mentor, Kayley Montes.

"It worked out great," said Haas. "I got to know her super-quick. She invited me to go to Flag with her, and go to the Saturday markets. It really was all of a sudden."

A few days later, Haas would have another serendipitous meeting. At New Teacher Orientation she met Harrison Gaal, who had just been hired as Page Elementary's music teacher. They immediately struck up a conversation around their shared love of music, and starting a new life in a new town.

Not long after that, Haas and Telechbush went to karaoke night at The Hyatt. Gaal was there too. The three teachers started talking about music. They learned that Haas plays the flute, Harrison plays the violin, and Telechbush plays the cello.

"We just started spitballing," said Haas. "Oh my gosh, you play the violin. You play the cello. I play the flute. We should play music together just for fun. That's how the ball got rolling. We started getting together once a week to make music together. We were playing random stuff just to get the feel for it, and then we were like, `Let's book a performance so we have something to prepare for.'"

The three of them played at the October Band Concert. They played "In the Hall of the Mountain Cave" by Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg. The trio joined forces again later that month and played several musical numbers during Page Elementary's Halloween party.

"It served as a good introduction for me," Haas said. "It showed Page that I am a musician still, and I love teaching music to your kids, and that music can be achieved well beyond the school years."

This is the kind of thing that gets noticed by Haas's students. For Haas's students, who are also passionate about

See HAAS pg. 12

Page Elementary 6th Graders Explore CTE Classes







One of the greatest collaborations between PUSD schools is CTE Career Exploration Day, a day when sixth graders from Page Elementary visit the Page High School campus and spend three hours checking out Page High School's Career and Technical Education classes.

On Monday, the sixth graders divided into nine groups, and spent 15 minutes in each CTE class. In some of the classes, the CTE instructors explained to the students what happens in their class. Some of the classes had CTE students who demonstrated some of the skills they will learn in that class, and in several classrooms the students got to try for themselves some of the skills and techniques.

Sixth grader Piper Mangum liked the field trip to the high school. Her favorite part of the CTE tour was visiting Culinary Arts. Chef Wyatt Swinton, Culinary Arts Instructor, had four workstations set up with some of his best students manning each station. They how to debone a chicken, how to finely chop an onion and how to decorate a cake. The sixth grade students got to try their hand at cake decorating. They used a Styrofoam "dummy" cake instead of a real cake.

"I liked that we got to do our own designs on the Styrofoam cake, and pipe all the frosting onto it," Mangum said. Mangum says she plans to take Culinary Arts when she attends high school.

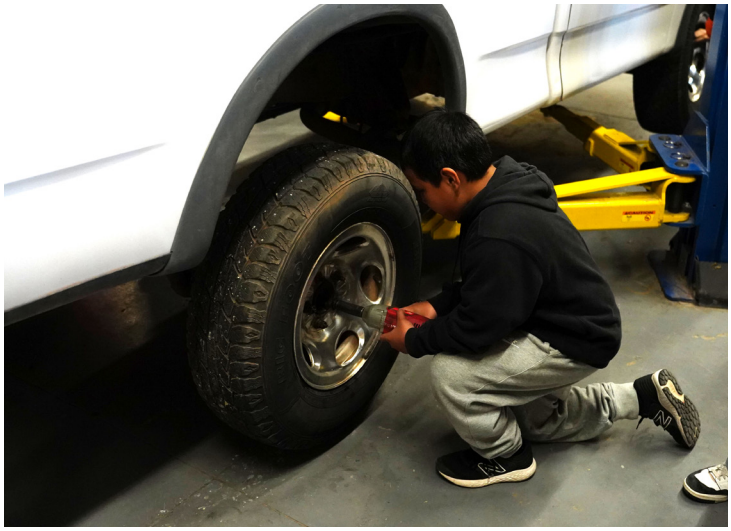
Sixth grader Ethan Cody got to try his hand at welding. The CTE student helped Cody get into a spark jacket, then put on gloves and a welder's helmet. The goal was for Cody to weld a straight line along a piece of metal. He tried it and it worked. It was pretty satisfying.

"It was pretty cool," he said. Cody says there is a good chance he will take welding classes in high school and weld as a hobby as an adult.

This was the second year the CTE classes have invited students from Page Elementary to check out their offerings. The CTE programs are some of Page High School's most popular classes. Page High School's CTE classes are welding technologies, culinary arts, architectural drafting, auto collision, auto technologies, business operations, graphic design, construction technologies, early childhood education and technology devices maintenance.

The purpose of the sixth graders visiting the CTE pro-









gram is to get them starting to think about a possible career in the trades, said CTE Director, Chuck Sharp.

"This is more about awareness than anything, and to expose them to programs they can look forward to taking in high school," Sharp said.

Page High School's CTE program is one of the most-respected in the state due to its students consistently winning state- and even national-level competitions.

Sharp would like students to take a serious look at them as a career option. The trades are white hot in the Unites States right now with very high pay scales, and a high level of job openings. One of the biggest advantages of pursuing a career in the trade industry is that students can get their certifications and start their careers while accumulating little or no student debt.

"In fact a lot of companies today are paying for the tuition for kids to go to tech schools, with the requirement of coming back and working a year or two at that company," said Sharp. "That's a big trend right now because the need for workers is so high.

"The trades right now are lacking a full work force, and job demand is very high," said Sharp. "A lot of people in the trades are at retirement age and that is only adding to the void of ready workers. And because of the demand for workers, the salaries in the trades have gone a lot higher. The big three professions to be in right now are construction, electrician and plumbing. A plumber's wage today is out the roof."

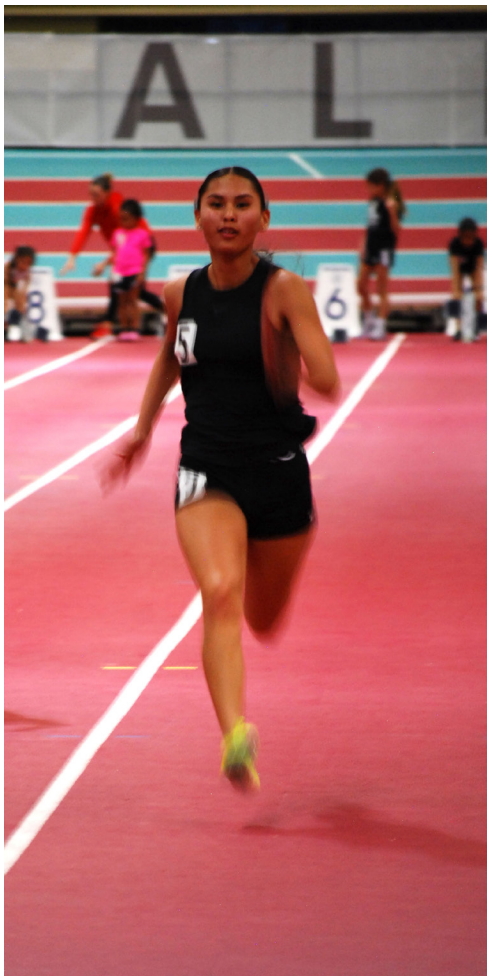
A career in the trades is very rewarding in many ways, says Sharp. When the job is done, that person has created or repaired something that is of vital importance to individuals, families, communities, the American economy and infrastructure.

PUSD students can enroll in CTE classes as early as ninth grade, but the Arizona Legislature is considering adopting ECTE programs, which would fund CTE classes for students as young as seventh grade.

Braylon Rupp Sets New 60M Record

Kasiya Akee now holds 3rd all-time PHS 60M time





Congratulations to Braylon Rupp (the one pictured on the left) who just ran the fastest 60m Dash in Page High School history at the New Mexico Lobo Cherry & Silver Open in Albuquerque last weekend with a time was 7.48 seconds.

The 60m dash has only been an event in HS since the late 1990s. It's an event that's only run on indoor tracks.

Rupp is a sophomore at Page High School. You can see him on the football field and the track where he runs the 100M, 200M and 4x100M. The track coaches plan to have him dabble in the 4x400M this spring too.

"Braylon has shown tremendous growth over the winter in his power and stamina,"

said PHS track coach Jonathon Prather. "This was Braylon's first indoor meet of his life, so his time is impressive.

"It's even more impressive because of the fact that we have only been doing base work this winter (Strength work with hills and sleds). We have not gone fast. We never hit speed work or blocks, just base."

The reason for the base work only is so the PHS sprinters will possess the power levels to handle the workouts coming down the line to bring them to speed, said Coach Prather.

"Our goal for all events is to peak at the end of April and into May."

Albuquerque has a world-class indoor track facility. Top high school, college and professional runners compete there to record fast times.

Kasiya Akee, a PHS sophomore, finished first in her heat and top 35 overall in the first indoor track meet of her life. She is now third on the all time list for the fastest 60 meter dash in Page High School history with a time of 8.93 seconds. She is also a flag football standout as well.

Cheer Team Runners-Up at Showcase

Page High School Regional Cheer Squad competed in their third annual Regional Showcase last weekend in Chinle with one clear goal: to earn a three-peat as Overall Regional Champions. While that title narrowly slipped away, their performance was nothing short of exceptional, and they finished as the 3A North Region Spiritline Gameday Showcase Runner-Up.

Head Coach Kelly Hansen could not have been more proud of the squad's performance, energy, and preparation. Maggie delivered strong, confident tumbling, and flyers Reagan, Audri, and Pixie executed every stunt without a single bobble. The squad performed with high energy, big smiles, and visible confidence, a reflection of countless hours of practice and dedication.

Coaches Kelly, Brittany, and Jentri were thrilled to see the team place in every category, a first in Page High School history. The squad earned first place in School Spirit Chant, second place in Situational and Crowd Leading, and second place in the Performance Halftime Routine.

While it is disappointing to fall just short of a three-peat this year, the pride in this team outweighs any disappointment. Their work ethic, unity, resilience, and commitment to excellence were on full display. This group represented Page High School with class, heart, and determination, and their future is incredibly bright.





Employees of the Month

Certified Employee of the Month
December 2025



Selene Henderson

Classified Employee of the Month
December 2025



Kendra Childs

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music, watching their teacher making music – especially when its outside what is required – demonstrates that she also loves music, and loves sharing her musical abilities with the larger community.

One of those students is Lucy Byrom. Byrom is a senior at Page High School. She's been in band and marching band all four years of high school.

"I like her energy," Byrom said. "She greets us with a really supportive and engaging atmosphere. She's open to our questions, open to feedback and she respects the musical abilities I already have and believes in me. Because I know that she believes in me it's so much easier to go up to her and ask her anything. No question is a stupid question."

Byrom also greatly appreciates the humanity and honesty Haas brings to the band room.

"It was really cool to see a teacher get up and play at our concert," Byrom said. "I like that she is really into it. You connect more to your teacher when you see her get up in front of a crowd and do that. And she's not afraid to mess up in class. There are some instruments she doesn't know as well but she'll play them and do her best to help out everyone. If she messes up, she just shrugs it off and lets us know it's part of the learning process. It makes her more human, you know. I really like that about her."

DECEMBER Students of the Month



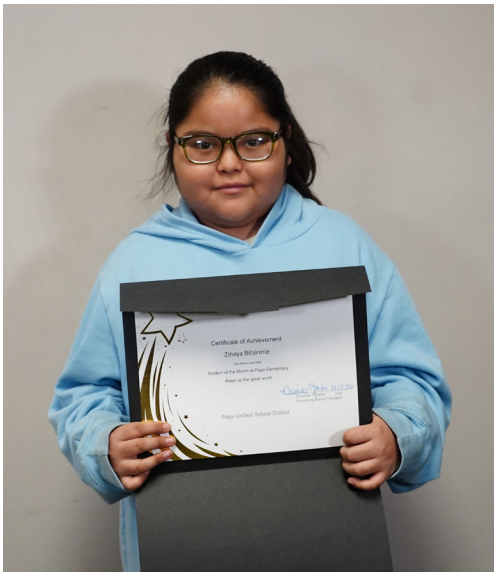
Taylee Aquero

Page Preschool



Sophia Owens

Page Early Childhood Learning Center



Zinaya Bitsinnie

Page Elementary



Keira Kee

Page Jr. High School



David Dawavendewa

Page High School



Breanna Smith

Manson Mesa High School