

FALL 2022

# COMMUNITY CONNECT



*En Español*



Superintendent Yslas meets with local leaders to discuss the Decade of Dreams, the High School District's 10-year strategic plan. Pictured clockwise is Superintendent Yslas (standing), SW Valley Chamber of Commerce President/CEO Jeffrey Campos, Goodyear Council Member Wally Campbell, Desert Edge School Resource Officer Duane King, Avondale Elementary Governing Board Member Liz Canchola, County Board Supervisor and Hickman Farms CEO Clint Hickman, Avondale Council Member Veronica Malone, Goodyear Mayor Joe Pizzillo, Rep. Joanne Osborne.

## MESSAGE FROM SUPERINTENDENT MARK YSLAS

As I begin my second year as the high school superintendent, I can, without any hesitation, tell you that this is absolutely the right time to be connected to the Agua Fria High School District. Our family of high schools, Agua Fria, Canyon View, Desert Edge, Millennium and Verrado are great places for students to learn, play, and grow. I'm proud of the culture we are creating here. We value all stakeholders and we are committed to growing with our community.

In this edition of Community Connect we share how much we are growing and provide our 10-year strategic plan framework, the Decade of Dreams. The plan is heavily focused on meeting the needs of the rapidly growing Southwest Region including Avondale, Buckeye, Goodyear and Litchfield Park. We are honored to play an integral part in each cities' future.

As part of the plan, we have also created a new vision: Creating Choice, Crafting Character, Cultivating Community. Our vision statement expresses what we stand for at Agua Fria High School District.

- Students, with the guidance of their parents, will choose their college and career pathways, from an extensive list of educational programs and school choice.
- Our lessons will include developing students with strong, integrous character as they mature into adults.
- As educational leaders, we take our responsibility very seriously to uphold the community's quality of life.

Thank you for connecting with us and being part of our family of schools.



**HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT ELECTION**  
**NOVEMBER 8, 2022**

*- Mark*

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[AGUAFRIA.ORG/ELECTION](https://aguafria.org/election)



**VOTE**

# OVERRIDE ELECTION INFORMATION

## FOR THE NEXT SEVEN YEARS, THE OVERRIDE WOULD SUPPORT:

- ✓ **EMPLOYMENT OF SAFETY PERSONNEL AND UPGRADES TO SAFETY AND SECURITY PROTOCOLS**
- ✓ **EXPANSION OF CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS USED TO PROVIDE INTERNSHIPS, WORKPLACE SKILLS, AND INDUSTRY CERTIFICATIONS**
- ✓ **MAINTAINING TEACHER SALARIES**
- ✓ **HIRING ADDITIONAL TEACHERS TO MANAGE RAPID DISTRICT GROWTH AND TO MAINTAIN CLASS SIZE**
- ✓ **FUNDING TO HIRE TEACHERS AND SUPPORT STAFF FOR A NEW COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOL AND/OR SPECIALIZED WORKFORCE ACADEMIES AND COLLEGE PREP PROGRAMS**
- ✓ **CONTINUATION OF ESTABLISHED EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER-BASED PROGRAMS INCLUDING AGRICULTURE, ENGINEERING, MEDICAL PROFESSIONS, INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE, ARTS, ATHLETICS, ARMED FORCES JUNIOR OFFICER TRAINING CORPS (JROTC), AND CULINARY**



**IF THE OVERRIDE IS NOT APPROVED, THE DISTRICT'S ANNUAL BUDGET WILL BE REDUCED BY MORE THAN \$10 MILLION OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS.**

**POINTS**

**THE HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT WILL CONTINUE TO UTILIZE BOND AND OVERRIDE FUNDS TO MAINTAIN TEACHER SALARIES, SUPPORT CLASSROOMS, PROVIDE TECHNOLOGY AND GRADUATE STUDENTS.**



**95% Graduation Rate**  
Higher than state and national averages



**90% Teacher Retention Rate**  
Salaries are \$12,806 above state average



**Above Average Classroom Spending**  
Classroom spending has increased by 6.4% in the past five years

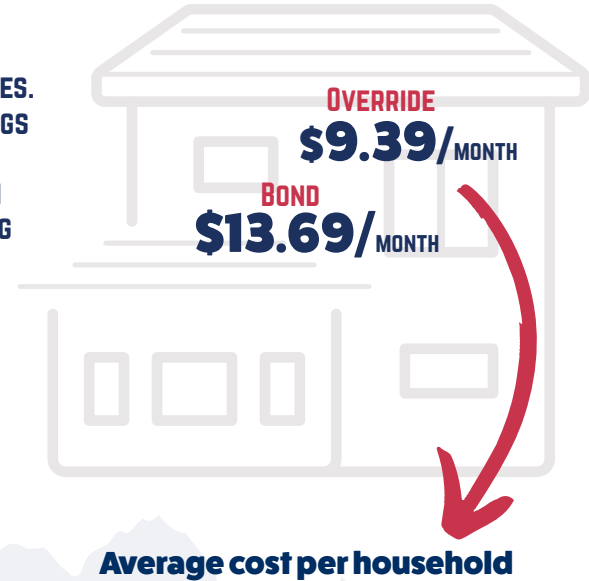


**1:1 Student Technology**  
Every student gets a Chromebook

# BOND ELECTION INFORMATION

## FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, THE BOND WOULD SUPPORT:

- ✓ CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOL TO ALLEVIATE OVERCROWDING
- ✓ SAFETY AND SECURITY IMPROVEMENTS OF GATES, DOORS, CAMERAS, FENCING, ALARMS, AND SYSTEMS AT ALL HIGH SCHOOLS AND FACILITIES. REPAIR AND MODERNIZATION OF AGING SCHOOL AND DISTRICT BUILDINGS
- ✓ GENERAL AND PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE OF ALL BUILDINGS, SUCH AS AIR CONDITIONING IMPROVEMENTS OR REPLACEMENT, AND PARKING IMPROVEMENTS
- ✓ DEVELOPMENT OF WORKFORCE AND ACADEMIC ACADEMIES
- ✓ PURCHASE LAND FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW HIGH SCHOOL CAMPUS
- ✓ PROVIDE CLASSROOM TECHNOLOGY, FURNITURE, AND EQUIPMENT TO SUPPORT INCREASED STUDENT ENROLLMENT



IF THE BOND IS NOT APPROVED THE DISTRICT WILL NOT HAVE FUNDING TO SUPPORT THE PROJECTS LISTED ABOVE.

OF PRIDE

PROPOSED  
BOND &  
OVERRIDE



SCAN ME

2022  
FACT  
SHEET

THE HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT WILL CONTINUE TO BE FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE, BY MANAGING BOND AND OVERRIDE FUNDS DILIGENTLY.



### 90%+ Financial Compliance

Score 90% plus on financial compliance audit annually (considered exceptional)



### Financial Certificates of Excellence

Annually receive AASBO and GFOA certificates of excellence in financial reporting and financial management



### Bond Rating - A1

Rating helps secure preferred interest rates





## CREATING EDUCATIONAL CHOICE

As the community around us continues to grow, we have to ensure the District is innovative and progressive. We dream of creating more educational choices for our students through the creation of academies and programs. By offering academic freedom within our District, we can ensure every student has a successful pathway to their dreams.

***It is no secret that good schools create strong communities. Our local high schools provide rich educational opportunities that empower students to be productive in the world around them.***

**Kathryn Prusinski**  
**Executive Director Verrado**

## Keeping Up With Growth

The Agua Fria High School District belongs to the people in the communities we serve. Our District's boundaries lie within four wonderful and fast-growing cities: Avondale, Buckeye, Goodyear and Litchfield Park. The residential, business, and industry growth in this region certainly make this community a vibrant place to be. And it has brought a lot of amazing new families to our schools.

If you have driven through our community lately you have likely seen the new housing communities and other examples of our growth. But what you may not know is how quickly that growth has occurred.



**The District includes significant portions of Buckeye and Goodyear, both of which are among the 10 fastest-growing U.S. cities, according to the most recent United States Census.**



**The City of Avondale topped the list for the biggest growth in single-family home building permits, reporting a whopping 427% increase in 2020.**



**We are also part of Litchfield Park with a 4% projected annual population growth, compared to the state of Arizona, at a rate of 1.87%.**



**First-day enrollment for the 22/23 school year was 9,824 students. By comparison, last year's first-day enrollment was 9,256.**



**In the next 10 years, enrollment is conservatively projected to increase to 13,000 students.**

The growth is exciting, but the climbing student population impacts classroom capacity. A new high school is needed to balance enrollment across the district and be prepared for continued enrollment gains.



# Training Our Future Workforce

Workforce development is the number-one issue for our municipal partners, economic developers, and the business community. Businesses want to locate in communities that offer an excellent education for their families and provide the well-trained, well-qualified workforce needed for companies to hire. Our long-term economic success will depend on our ability to equip and train the next generation of workers.

As the region continues to grow and change, the District is focused on preparing all students for post-secondary success through exposure to workforce-focused experiences and authentic opportunities to learn essential and employable skills. We offer robust academic experiences to prepare our students for the future, with multiple pathways to success.

Whether it is college, trade school, running their own business or joining the military, we give students a foundation for success. The Agua Fria High School District values career and technical education and is working with industry partners and business leaders to offer quality, competitive education that is relevant to the 21st-century economy. Strong academic skills, blended with relevant career and technical curriculum, will lead to viable and profitable career paths.



## MEDICAL ASSISTING

We offer students more than 60 courses that provide industry certifications, internships and work-based learning. One of the most popular career programs among our high school students is Medical Assisting which offers the following:

- ✿ Clinical and administrative knowledge to become an entry-level medical assistant.
- ✿ Hands-on training to properly administer injections, take vital signs, record EKGs, and medical documentation.
- ✿ Certification as a Registered Medical Assistant or Certified Phlebotomy Technician.
- ✿ Programs like Medical Assisting provide our students with real-world training while allowing the District to play an active role in addressing the healthcare worker shortage that faces our community.



# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



## SAM HESS

**Class of 2025**

**Career Goal:** Church ministry, firefighter, or professional baseball player

**School Activities:** Student Government, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and Baseball

**Fun Fact:** Hiked two National Parks



## CARLOS

**Class of 2023**

**Career Goal:** Pilot

**School Activities:** Reserve Officer (JROTC), Varsity Soccer

**Fun Fact:** Scuba dove multiple times



## ELYANA ORTIZ

**Class of 2025**

**Career Goal:** Marine Biologist or television anchor

**School Activities:** Varsity volleyball

**Fun Fact:** Was in a commercial at the age of 7



## RACHEL

**Class of 2024**

**Career Goal:** [unclear]

**School Activities:** marching band

**Fun Fact:** Arizona loves to snow



**TWINS**

## RACHELLE NKEZE

**Class of 2023**

**Career Goal:** Pediatric Neurologist, Oncologist

**School Activities:** National Honor Society, Student Ambassadors Club, Health Occupations Student Union, Black Student Union, Black Student Union Neighborhood Cohort of Arizona, Key Club, Student Leaders

**Fun Fact:** Loves traveling and has been in 30

## ADELLE NKEZE

**Class of 2023**

**Career Goal:** Human Resources manager or

**School Activities:** Student Government, Black Student Ambassadors, Key Club, Bring Change

**Fun Fact:** Loves to sing and write

# A Family OF HIGH SCHOOLS

## ELZ

United States Air Force

ties: Air Force Junior  
rs' Training Corps  
ity Football, Varsity

ba certified and has  
imes



## BENTZ

Sound Engineer

ties: Varsity

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ski



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Student  
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physical therapist  
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## AGUA FRIA HIGH SCHOOL

What impresses me the most about Agua Fria students is how prepared they are for the future. Not only are the Owls academically successful, but they gain real-world skills like financial literacy and excellent character to support their goals and dreams.

**Manny Murillo, Agua Fria High School Alum, Substitute Teacher, Manny Murillo Scholarship Program For Employed Students**

## CANYON VIEW HIGH SCHOOL

When it comes to preparing students for a lifetime of success, Canyon View has an award-winning model. The school's focus on career pathways and innovative learning are among many reasons why our family chose the Jaguar Way.

**Rachel Clark, Canyon View Parent and Owner of Sahuaro Lane**

## DESERT EDGE HIGH SCHOOL

Desert Edge is a special place where students and staff feel connected like family. My children have thrived because of the incredible campus culture and rigorous academics.

**Kristee Gomez, Desert Edge Parent**



## MILLENNIUM HIGH SCHOOL

As the region attracts top businesses and the population flock to the Southwest Valley, good schools are an important part of the growth formula. Millennium High School has a great reputation for stellar academics and for hiring the brightest teachers, which has helped our entire community flourish.

**Ann Donahue, City of Litchfield Park Council Member and Parent of Millennium Alum**



## VERRADO HIGH SCHOOL

We feel so fortunate to be stationed here and intentionally chose our home for its proximity to Verrado High School where both our sons receive a world-class education. The Viper community is welcoming and friendly, which has helped our whole family feel connected. We recommend VHS to all our military and civilian friends!

**Lt. Col. Ray and Ms. Corby Naylor, Verrado Parents, United States Air Force**

## AGUA FRIA ONLINE

The Online Academy has provided an excellent education for my daughter. Instructors set clear expectations and objectives, and offer ongoing support. Despite learning remotely, she feels connected to caring adults and is confident she'll achieve her academic goals.

**Heather Weiler, Agua Fria Online Parent**



2021-2031

# Strategic Plan Framework

COMMUNITY OUTREACH



CAREER OPPORTUNITIES



ACADEMIC SUCCESS



WELLNESS &  
CONNECTEDNESS



RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP



The Agua Fria High School District belongs to the people in the communities it serves. Our District's boundaries lie within four fast-growing cities: Avondale, Buckeye, Goodyear, and Litchfield Park. The residential, business, and industry growth in this region make our community a vibrant place to be and full of opportunity.

Thanks to the hard work and input from more than 300 community partners, We are excited to share the framework for our Decade of Dreams, 10-year Strategic Plan.

This framework reaffirms our commitment to working with our parents to develop strong character traits in our teenagers.

It underscores how critical it is to forge positive relationships with our stakeholders throughout our District.

And most importantly, through academic choice, we are poised to become the best high school district in the nation!

Our success will be determined by how well we work together as a community to achieve our Decade of Dreams. To do that, we need forward-thinking partners who share our vision and will collaborate with us.

## DISTRICT LEADERS

Top row, left to right

**TREY TERRY - GOVERNING BOARD PRESIDENT**

**VICKIE LANDIS - GOVERNING BOARD MEMBER**

**KRISTEN ACTON - GOVERNING BOARD MEMBER**

Front row, left to right

**GINA DECOSTE - GOVERNING BOARD VICE PRESIDENT**

**MARK YSLAS - SUPERINTENDENT**

**MAXINE HILL - GOVERNING BOARD MEMBER**





# NEW VISION

## CREATING CHOICE. CRAFTING CHARACTER. CULTIVATING COMMUNITY.

The strategic plan is a reflection of our District's vision and values. Our new vision and core values are a direct reflection of what our community dreams for the future of the Agua Fria High School District. Through extensive stakeholder outreach these three words came up over and over again, and ultimately became our inspiration.

### Choice

We will provide a robust, tailored academic experience that will prepare students for the future of their choosing: whether it is going to college or trade school, running their own business or working for someone, joining a branch of the military or in service to others. Through innovation, options, and flexibility, every family will have academic freedom in choosing a path to post-secondary success.

### Character

We will dedicate time, training, resources, and opportunities to enhance character through professional skills, social emotional learning, advisory, service learning, clubs, arts, and athletics.

### Community

We will continually work to build partnerships, value all stakeholder input, invite collaboration, and serve our community graciously.



## CORE VALUES

### Student Choice

Students are empowered to choose, own, and embrace opportunities that align to their individual goals.

### Community

A shared responsibility between the District and community are vital to success.

### Passion

All stakeholders will demonstrate a relentless pursuit of excellence in achieving goals.

### Innovation

Stakeholders will continually seek to enhance value through time, talent, and technology.

### Opportunity & Access

All students have access and support in pursuit of academic achievement and post-secondary opportunities.

### Parents As Partners

Commitment to partnering with families plays an integral role in student achievement.

# STRATEGIC PLAN (DECADE OF DREAMS)



The strategic plan framework, our Decade of Dreams serves as a roadmap to achieve excellence and shape the future of the Agua Fria High School District over the next 10 years. This framework was created from sound research and represents the shared values and priorities of more than 300 stakeholders, consisting of faculty, students, parents, retirees, members of feeder districts, faith-based organizations, businesses, and government entities. The journey to gather this feedback included extensive community outreach and participation in multiple planning workshops, listening tours and surveys. Because education is dynamic and constantly evolving, the plan will be reviewed regularly to ensure initiatives are meeting the ever-changing needs of our students and our community.

The needs of our stakeholders will always be at the forefront of our decision-making. When the community was asked to share its dream for the District, five priority areas were identified: Community Outreach, Career Opportunities, Academic Success, Wellness & Connectedness, and Resource Stewardship. Through this strategic plan, these foundational tenets will set the standard of greatness and maximize the potential of every student.

- Rachel Gross  
Chief of Staff

#MakeItHappen



## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Having the support, input and accountability from the community is critical to ensuring we can successfully offer the best academic programs, develop a quality workforce pipeline, and build character through service. In order to achieve excellence, there has to be a shared responsibility between the District, parents, businesses and community members to educate our students.

- Engage with stakeholders by hosting more community events and offering accessible information for all.
- Increase the number of community partners interested in hosting internships for District students to train the future workforce.
- Increase the number of community partners interested in providing support (manpower, funding, resources, etc) to our schools, so we can further develop students as leaders in innovation, and create the best high school district in the nation.
- Increase the number of Student Service Learning Opportunities for all District students to cultivate character and produce the next generation of citizens who will continue to contribute to society.



## CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

It is imperative to prepare all students for postsecondary success through exposure to authentic workforce opportunities and essential employability skills.

Our goal is to establish career academies and academic pathways, increase internship opportunities, offer flexible school scheduling options and additional transportation, as well as create co-curricular academies.

- Ensure all students have access to career and technical education courses throughout the District.
- Strengthen employability standards in all courses to build student workforce skills.
- Establish a career academy or career pathway model districtwide.



June 15, 2022  
**Governing Board  
Approved**



August 31, 2022  
**Public Access**  
All stakeholders have access to a digital tracker that illustrates the status of every action step



# REAMS) FRAMEWORK SUMMARY



## ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Academic success is achieved when we foster a culture which supports the highest level of individual success and the pursuit of continuous improvement to our school letter grades. This includes access to quality instruction at the course level and key professional life skills necessary for postsecondary success.

- Increase student leadership, voice, and impact in the District's direction.
- Incorporate the Portrait of a Graduate (Critical Thinking, Integrity, Communication, Collaboration, and Responsibility) into all elements of the District's academic culture.
- Develop and implement a cycle of continuous assessment and improvement for District Guaranteed & Viable Curriculum (GVC).
- Develop and implement learning and individualized feedback regarding professional skills.
- Develop creative scheduling options to increase student access, including school opportunities outside of the traditional school day.
- Provide students creative opportunities for reteach and enrichment regarding academic achievement and behavior.



## WELLNESS & CONNECTEDNESS

Students and staff must have the ability to thrive, not only within the school environment, but also in their personal lives. Competencies for social, emotional and physical wellbeing, combined with a safe learning environment, will promote student learning and highly engaged teachers.

- Provide resources and programs that support students' social, emotional, and mental wellness.
- Provide opportunities that will improve relationships and experiences so that students, staff, and families feel more connected.
- Explore, implement, and educate on topics and opportunities that will improve the physical well-being of students and staff.
- Formalize the process of ensuring campus safety through thorough assessments of safety mechanisms.



## RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP

By hiring the best, qualified staff, ensuring sufficient financial resources, providing a safe, clean learning environment, and by maintaining access to high-quality technology, we can create a pathway to student success.

- Implement strategies to recruit and retain high-quality employees.
- Develop, manage, and streamline systems to leverage financial resources effectively.
- Evaluate and improve infrastructure to increase operational efficiency.



**FULL PLAN & PROGRESS TRACKER**  
[AGUAFRIA.ORG/STRATEGIC-PLAN](http://AGUAFRIA.ORG/STRATEGIC-PLAN)



SCAN ME



July 2023

### State of the District

Annual communication outlining completed Action Steps and new ones added



Spring 2024

### Strategic Planning Workshop

Gather community input on current needs and priorities to update Strategic Plan



1481 N. Eliseo Felix Jr. Way  
Avondale, AZ 85323

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# VOTE

## ELECTION INFORMATION

HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT BALLOT INITIATIVES

- ✓ **OVERRIDE CONTINUATION**
- ✓ **BOND RENEWAL**

## DATES TO REMEMBER



**OCTOBER 12**

Early-voting ballots begin arriving to mailboxes



**NOVEMBER 1**

Last day to mail back your early-voting ballot



**NOVEMBER 8**

In-person voting from 7am to 7pm

## A Family OF HIGH SCHOOLS



**AGUA FRIA HS**  
AVONDALE



**DESERT EDGE HS**  
GOODYEAR



**VERRADO HS**  
BUCKEYE



**MILLENNIUM HS**  
GOODYEAR



**CANYON VIEW HS**  
BUCKEYE

