

District 1: The Podcast – January 15, 2020

Welcome to District 1: The Podcast. Your host is Leslie Lenhart, and she is joined by Superintendent Dr. Gabriel Trujillo.

Leslie Lenhart: Thank you. That was Amaia Hoyos, 11th grader at Tucson High Magnet School. Hi, Dr. Trujillo, welcome to 2020! How are you today?

Gabriel Trujillo: Good week to the new year. New decade, new day here in Tucson Unified, and we're off to a great start.

Leslie Lenhart: So we have a lot happening in the district as we've just the first few weeks in, but I know we've been talking about unitary status. You want to give us an update on that?

Gabriel Trujillo: Well, what unitary status means, for all of you in the listening public, is full and unconditional release from court supervision. As many of you know, we have been under court supervision, mostly on but for a few years off, since 1978, and on December 31, 2019 the district filed in federal court its official request to be released from court supervision, so we're excited. The schedule for briefings that the court has released, which allows for all the plaintiff objections, and our responses, has all those timelines built in really as looking towards an August 1st, any time prior, probably between July 4th and August 1st as a time period for a final ruling. So, I know that there's many that join me in saying that it is long past time for this desegregation order to come to an end.

Leslie Lenhart: We'll look forward to learning more in the next few months about the court release from the desegregation case.

Gabriel Trujillo: Yes.

Leslie Lenhart: We've also had some great news about what is called "results-based funding" for 17 of our schools. Do you want to talk a little bit about what that means and maybe mention a few of the schools that have really just had a great success this year.

Gabriel Trujillo: Results-based funding, though I have my critiques of it in terms of could it be a little bit more equitably distributed? Sure, but conceptually I'm a fan of it. The concept of rewarding schools that have percentages of students that meet the federal guidelines for poverty and rewarding them for landing them in the top 25 percentile of student achievement in English, language, arts, and math, that's a good concept and it shows that learning is happening. It also shows that poverty does not have to have the final say-so with regard to academic outcomes. It showcases the talent, and the skills, the commitment, and the passion of the gifted, wonderful teachers that are working with these students. So, I think that with recent press attention on Tucson Unified struggling schools, I'd like to see them pay a little bit more attention to these 17 wonderful learning communities where learning is happening in an award-winning way. So, leading the group, we have three schools earn just about a quarter of a million dollars in results-

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based funding. You had University High School with \$245,000. You had Mansfeld with \$227,000. And then you had John E. White, a school that's sort of in the far southwest sector of our district, \$251,000. And so those are just really, really great stories. Henry, Kellond Elementary, Bloom Elementary, Bonillas Magnet, Carrillo Magnet, Fruchthendler Elementary, Banks Elementary, Marshall, Mission View, Sam Hughes, Tolson, Van Buskirk, and Sewell Elementary, those were the other schools that rounded out our 17. In all, they hauled in \$1.8 million, so just a wonderful victory for the district and a testament to all of the great learning that is happening.

Leslie Lenhart: That's great, and I know those funds that they earn will be going to help support some of their programs that they have in their schools to help the students continue with their success. We had a board meeting recently and can you tell us a little bit about the SRO discussion?

Gabriel Trujillo: School resources officers are back for another year, so I want to thank our governing board for voting to renew the agreement we have with the City of Tucson. We split the cost 50/50, equal, for eight officers and our share is \$243,000, but our officers do a wonderful job. They are embedded in our schools and a lot of them take on coaching. They're all responsible for working with teachers to facilitate what's called "law-related education," talking to students about understanding the law, making good decisions. I'd like to really highlight Officer Cajigas, he works over at Catalina, and the personal interest he takes in the student body. He does a lot of coaching and he's very, very responsive to community needs, and that's just one example of one of these great school resource officers and just what big supporters they are of the district.

Leslie Lenhart: That's great and there was some wonderful things said about all the resource officers from some of the leadership so really a great program and so we are so lucky to have them within our schools. You had recently started some student focus groups, you want to talk about what those are going to be?

Gabriel Trujillo: I've got a series of student focus groups. I'll be visiting every district high school starting with Pueblo, I think next week, where I'll be meeting with students. I've asked the student body president for each high school to identify 7 to 10 students that represent the student body as a whole. I'm asking to meet with a good mix of students. I want to connect with the student athlete. I want the student performance artist. I want the student taking a CTE class. I want the student not taking anything and just coming to school and being a good kid. I want to connect with the student that struggled a little bit. Students will be selecting the topics that they would like me to address. I believe the first one I will be addressing at Pueblo is the gender-neutral dress code policy. So, we will be bringing that feedback back to the Governing Board.

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We'll be inviting student body presidents from each school to be sitting on the dais to give a report out on how the focus groups went.

Leslie Lenhart: Great, well that'll be interesting to learn as hear from what the students think. That's great. We also recently had our district spelling bee and I know you were present and helping at the event. You want to talk a little bit about the winners and what happened there?

Gabriel Trujillo: Well, I gotta tell you, that was probably my favorite event that I've done, at least this year. I mean, so many great events I get to do, but I want to congratulate the 32 schools. It was great to see all the parents out there supporting their children. And it was great to see such high-quality scholar athletes. So, we had our Final Four, we had, Hannah Moran out of the lone Linweaver Lion, her school's only entry, coming all the way across the field and making it into the Final Four, finishing in 4th place. Finishing in 3rd was Sally Hicks out of Fruchthendler. And then we had a very, very, a very compelling duel for the championship. We had a spell-off between 1st and 2nd place that actually lasted a good 15, 20 minutes as they traded words back and forth. Ari Cabrera from Fruchthendler and we had the eventual champion out of Pistor, Sergio Huerta, who ended up winning in a dramatic fashion. And in a touch of sportsmanship and class, the first thing he did was shake the hands of his three competitors and congratulate them on a great job that they had done. So, they will, all four of them will go and compete at the Pima County Spelling Bee Championships. I know that they'll represent Tucson Unified very well. I want to thank Mrs. Grijalva who took time out of her busy Saturday to come and actually serve as one of our guest judges. Absolutely wonderful event.

Leslie Lenhart: Well that's great, and I know we have some video and different things up on the website, so great and congratulations to all the winners. Any last words as we wrap up today?

Gabriel Trujillo: Have a great week, everybody.

Leslie Lenhart: Thank you. And now Amaia will take us out.

One thing I learned in school is Earth and Space Science. This is Amaia Hoyos, signing off.