



# The Tolleson Quarterly

## A Message from Your Superintendent



Dr. Lupita Hightower  
Superintendent

Dear Tolleson ESD Families & Community;

We have so much to celebrate in Tolleson ESD. Here are few of the top items to share with you:

- We are so proud to announce all of our PK-8 schools are rated A & B by Arizona Department of Education. Arizona Desert Elementary School is our first A rated school! Congratulations to our students, families, staff, teachers, leaders and our entire community for making this a reality!



- Mr. Efrain Casillas was named Arizona Teacher of the Year!
- Mrs. Belinda Quezada was honored by Arizona Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents for her Outstanding Service on our Governing Board!
- Thanks to our community, our request to sell bonds was approved on the November 7th ballot! Thank you!

I hope you will take a few minutes to read this newsletter for all the details on these great celebrations!

Thank you for your ongoing support!

Sincerely,

Dr. Lupita Hightower  
Treasure Hunter & Superintendent  
Tolleson Elementary School District



### PRIORITY GOALS 2023-2024

1. Ensure instruction, curriculum and assessment are relevant and rigorous to promote academic and life success for students.
2. Foster the social-emotional learning, character development, and mental health of all students.
3. Recruit, develop, maintain, and support diverse, high-quality, high-performing staff committed to the district's mission and to the field of education.
4. Intentionally engage parents and caregivers in all aspects of teaching and learning.

## Important Dates

### December 2023

- 13th, Wednesday
  - Governing Board Meeting.
- 22nd, Friday
  - Early Release.
- 25th-January 5th, Monday-Friday
  - Winter Break. No School.

### January 2024

- 10th, Wednesday
  - Governing Board Meeting.
- 15th, Monday
  - Martin Luther King Jr. Day. No School.
- 22nd-26th, Monday-Friday
  - Academic Parent Teacher Team Meetings.

### February 2024

- 7th, Wednesday
  - Governing Board Meeting.
- 16th, Friday
  - In-Service Day. No School.
- 19th, Monday
  - Presidents' Day. No School.

### March 2024

- 6th, Wednesday
  - Governing Board Meeting.
- 7th-8th, Thursday-Friday
  - Parent Teacher Conferences. Early Release.
- 11th-15th, Monday-Friday
  - Spring Break. No School.
- 29th & April 1st, Friday & Monday
  - Spring Recess. No School.

For more detailed and up-to-date information, visit [TollesonSchools.com](https://TollesonSchools.com). Meeting dates, times and locations are subject to change.

**TollesonSchools.com**  
**623-533-3980**

# GREAT SCHOOLS IN TOLLESON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT



## ARIZONA DESERT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

8803 West Van Buren Street  
PreKindergarten - Grade 8  
623-907-5260 8:30 a.m.-3:15 p.m.



**A**  
RATING

### Arizona Desert Elementary School

For detailed program information visit, [azd.tollesonschools.com/Our-Programs](http://azd.tollesonschools.com/Our-Programs)

**A rated school, as defined by Arizona Department of Education.**



## DESERT OASIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

8802 West McDowell Road  
PreKindergarten - Grade 8  
623-533-3901 7:45 a.m.-2:30 p.m.



**B**  
RATING

### Desert Oasis Elementary School

For detailed program information visit, [does.tollesonschools.com/Our-Programs](http://does.tollesonschools.com/Our-Programs)

**B rated school, as defined by Arizona Department of Education.**



## PORFIRIO H. GONZALES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

9401 West Garfield Street  
PreKindergarten - Grade 8  
623-907-5181 8:30 a.m.-3:15 p.m.



**B**  
RATING

### Porfirio H. Gonzales Elementary School

For detailed program information visit, [phg.tollesonschools.com/Our-Programs](http://phg.tollesonschools.com/Our-Programs)

**B rated school, as defined by Arizona Department of Education.**



## SHEELY FARMS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

99450 West Encanto Boulevard  
PreKindergarten - Grade 8  
623-907-5270 7:45 a.m.-2:30 p.m.



**B**  
RATING

### Sheely Farms Elementary School

For detailed program information visit, [sfe.tollesonschools.com/Our-Programs](http://sfe.tollesonschools.com/Our-Programs)

**B rated school, as defined by Arizona Department of Education.**

### Tolleson Virtual Academy

Tolleson Virtual Academy was developed to serve students and families seeking continued online learning during the pandemic once our schools reopened, and we returned to the classroom. We are pleased to deliver the academy for this final year to 5th through 8th grade students, and are extremely proud of our students, teachers and staff for the engaged and effective teaching and learning at the academy.





## MR. EFRAIN CASILLAS – 2024 ARIZONA TEACHER OF THE YEAR

On Saturday, October 14 Mr. Efrain Casillas was named Arizona Teacher of the Year at Arizona Educational Foundation's (AEF) annual event, and he is now a contender for National Teacher of the Year. Mr. Casillas is known very well in our education community as he teaches music at both Porfirio H.

Gonzales Elementary School and Desert Oasis Elementary School and is a beloved teacher. We are so proud of Mr. Casillas, and grateful to AEF for recognizing him. I know his colleagues, our families and his students know that no one deserves this recognition more. Here is the announcement from AEF:

"Efrain Casillas, coordinator of music programs for Tolleson Elementary School District (Tolleson ESD) in Tolleson, has had a tremendous impact on his students. A public-school music teacher for 22 years, he is currently teaching both general and instrumental music at two schools in the Tolleson district. He graduated with a BA in music performance and education degree from Western Connecticut State University in 1999. As both a classroom teacher and department coordinator at Tolleson ESD, he created the district's first Mariachi, jazz, marching, concert, and Latin jazz bands. The Tolleson Elementary School Mariachi band has competed at the Tucson Mariachi International Conference and won first and second place for the Choice Awards for three years in a row. They've also performed at Disneyland and in the Disneyland Parade. His Latin jazz band opened for Pete Escobedo and played alongside him. They have also participated in the Fiesta Bowl Parade for three consecutive years.

Casillas is an active member of the Arizona Music Education Association and a candidate for National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT). He has also been a presenter for the National Symposium of Multicultural Music at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville in 2004. In 2015, Casillas was selected for Tolleson ESD's teacher of the year and nominated for the Life Changer Award in 2017. He was selected to receive the Esperanza Award from Chicanos Por La Causa in 2018, and the Music Teachers of Excellence from the Country Music Foundation. His dedication as a music teacher also had him featured at the Kelly Clarkson Show in 2020.

The prize package for the Arizona teacher of the year includes \$15,000 from the Arizona Educational Foundation and travel to National Teacher of the Year events, including a trip to the White House to meet the president and a week-long trip to International Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama. Casillas will also be considered for an honorary doctorate from Northern Arizona University."



## District Governing Board

### GOVERNING BOARD MEMBERS

Tida Garcia, President  
tgarcia@tesd17.org  
Roberta Garcia, Vice President  
rgarcia@tesd17.org  
Anthony Aponte, Member  
aaponte@tesd17.org  
Belinda Quezada, Member  
bquezada@tesd17.org  
Samuel Quezada, Jr., Member  
squezada@tesd17.org

### Congratulations to Ms. Belinda Quezada -



honored by Arizona  
Association of Latino  
Administrators &  
Superintendents!

## Attitude of Gratitude



### Copia en Español

Si desea una copia de este  
informe en español, por  
favor llame al 623-533-3980  
o visite nuestro sitio web en  
TollesonSchools.com.

## BOND ELECTION - THANK YOU!

We want to thank our community for support of our request to sell bonds at the November 7 election. We are incredibly grateful for your support enabling us to deliver the following enhancements to support teaching and learning in our schools:

- Renovations and improvements to existing school facilities (including kitchens, cafeterias, classrooms, and exterior weatherproofing).
- Improving school grounds (including playgrounds, playfields, and drainage).
- Replacement of pupil transportation and fleet vehicles.
- Improving the safety, security, and equipment in school buildings such as:
  - Replacement of aging or non-serviceable air-conditioning and heating units
- Upgrading of fire alarm and security systems
- Security window treatment and protective glass (bulletproof)
- Roof replacements
- Replacement of worn flooring
- Replacement of furniture and equipment
- Upgrade classroom technology equipment

At the October public meeting of our District Governing Board each year, we deliver an update on the projects and how the funds are used.

**TollesonSchools.com 623-533-3980**



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Tolleson, AZ 85353

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## Elementary Schools

Arizona Desert  
Desert Oasis  
Porfirio H. Gonzales  
Sheely Farms  
Tolleson Virtual Academy

**We are Grateful  
for Your Tax Credit Donations!**

Plan today for April 2023 Tax Returns.

**Learn more at  
[www.tollesonschools.com/  
Tax-Credits](http://www.tollesonschools.com/Tax-Credits)**

\*\*\*ECRWSSDDM\*\*\*  
POSTAL CUSTOMER

Preschoolers through 8th Graders

# JOIN US

TOLLESON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT



**Tolleson ESD where all children are capable of success – NO EXCEPTIONS!**

## WELCOME CENTER

We are here to help you enroll  
at any of our 5 great schools!  
9401 West Garfield Street  
623-533-3980

At Tolleson Elementary School District we are all treasure hunters committed to search for all the talents, skills and intelligence that exist in all children and youth. We believe All Children are Capable of Success – NO EXCEPTIONS!

Located just off Interstate 10 West of downtown Phoenix, our five schools – Arizona Desert, Desert Oasis, Porfirio H. Gonzales, Sheely Farms, and Tolleson Virtual Academy – are ready to welcome you and your children to enroll at any time throughout the year.

• Academics: Preschool, Kindergarten - Free, Full-day Programs, English Language Learners, Gifted Education, Special Education, Targeted Academic Interventions • Science & Technology: Computer & Technology Lab, Library & Media Center, Science Labs • Beyond Academics: Art, Athletics, Bands, Physical Education • Health Services: Counselors, Nurses, Banner Children's Community Clinic • After School & Clubs: 21st Century & TASK, Student Council, Yearbook Club • Additional Supports & Services: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner for students who are in the afterschool program, Student Transportation (for those who qualify), and Community Education for Parents



## REWARDING JOB OPPORTUNITIES

At Tolleson ESD, we have rewarding job opportunities for you to work with our treasures right in your neighborhood. Please consider joining our team as we need SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS, BUS DRIVERS, PARAPROFESSIONALS, CROSSING GUARDS and more. Our rate for substitute teachers is among the highest you will find in the valley at \$175.00/per day. Our bus drivers are full-time employees receiving benefits. For all the details, call us today or check us out online at <https://tolleson.tedk12.com/hire/index.aspx>.

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