

*Governing Board Resolution
Dr. Camille Casteel High School
Named in Honor of Dr. Camille Romley Casteel*

Dr. Camille Romley Casteel joined the Chandler Unified School District in 1971. She taught first grade at both Erie and Knox elementary schools. She became the district's first female principal in 1983, which caused quite a stir at the time. Her little school in the country, Weinberg Elementary, quickly garnered honor after honor and in 1986 was named the number one elementary school in the state and represented Arizona as a National Blue Ribbon School in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Ted Perry, the superintendent at the time, realized he had a once-in-a-lifetime leader in the first-ever female principal for Chandler Schools and he needed her expertise for the entire district. Though Camille insisted she would rather remain at Weinberg, Dr. Perry convinced her to join the district administrative team as the Assistant Superintendent in 1986. She was promoted to Associate Superintendent in 1991 by then Superintendent Dr. Howard Conley. Just five years later, in 1996, she was selected as the district's first-ever female Superintendent. And, for the past nineteen years, she has embraced every day and met every challenge to bring excellence, honor and success to the Chandler Unified School District, its students, parents and staff. And she is still going strong.

The Chandler School District has reached a pinnacle of success under Dr. Casteel's leadership. In concert with the Governing Board, she worked with teachers and administrators to create Journey 2020, a ten-year strategic plan for Chandler Schools to create a world class school district for the entire community. CUSD was recently named as the top school district in the state by Niche, a web organization that uses sophisticated metrics to rank schools. Additionally, the Arizona Department of Education awarded CUSD an "A" grade; one of only nine school districts to have earned an "A" grade every year since the inception of the program. The district has earned numerous awards for excellence in fiscal management, academics, athletics and the arts. CUSD is the third largest district in the state of Arizona and the second largest employer in the City of Chandler. There are over 42,000 students, approximately 5,000 employees with a budget of over 300 million dollars - and the Chief Executive Officer was a first grade teacher.

What are the factors that have contributed to the success of this first grade teacher? Dr. Casteel is quick to point out that her family is the foundation of her life and the basis from which she draws her support and strength. She was born in Phoenix, Arizona to Bill and Sally Romley, children of immigrants who came to this country from Baskinta, Lebanon in the early 1900's. Bill and Sally raised Camille, her brother, Bill, and two sisters, Michelle and Cheryl, with old-fashioned values. From this upbringing, Camille and her siblings learned some important guiding principles. They will each tell you that family is first; you take care of each other and, no matter the consequences, you do the right thing. That is the foundation on which Bill and Sally sent these children into the world. Camille's husband, Tom, is her most devoted and loyal supporter. A former science teacher and school administrator, Tom is currently a full-time volunteer at Perry High and has been since the school opened in 2007. Her two daughters, Tawni and Cari, followed in their footsteps, one a math teacher and the other an assistant principal in other valley school districts.

Camille's ability to focus on strategic priorities has been the foundation of her success through the years. She has fostered a district culture that prioritizes success for all students, compassion for others and a number of educational options for parents through "The Choice is Yours" campaign. No one who knows her would question her commitment to these values. And thousands have benefitted from her success in realizing these priorities. Dr. Casteel was instrumental in the development and implementation of a number of significant initiatives. The Chandler CARE Center was built to ensure that every child is fed, clothed, healthy and ready to learn. The Chandler Child Crisis Fund provides funds to students facing grave illnesses or devastating losses. The employee childcare program gives staff members the opportunity to secure quality childcare within the district. She has directed the creation of the K-6 traditional academies, which give parents new choices. The year-round calendar, support of all-day kindergarten, prep academies, on-line learning programs ... and the list goes on.

During the past 19 years, Dr. Casteel has guided the district through unprecedented growth, presiding over the building of 25 schools, the Instructional Resource Center, the CARE Center and 17 major renovations and expansions. In 1996, when Camille became the CUSD Superintendent, the district had 17 schools and approximately 15,000 students. At present, there are 43 schools and more than 42,000 students. She has addressed shifts in district population brilliantly, keeping the schools in the northern part of the district thriving while offering the community even more choices through repurposing schools with declining population. She has navigated the district through the tumultuous years of tremendous budget cuts without laying off teachers or increasing class sizes.

Remarkably, she has managed these changes with a minimum of community dissension or unrest, as she is collaborative, respectful, and she listens to those who are impacted.

Camille's awards, honors and accolades are too numerous to be cited, but a recent honor that shines light on this very illustrious career is the Dr. Raymond Kellis Leadership Award, which she received during the summer of 2014. This award is given rarely and is awarded to administrators who demonstrate exemplary ethical conduct, moral conviction, who mentor aspiring leaders and who see the best in others. It is not surprising that the Arizona School Administrators bestowed this honor upon our Superintendent. There are many district employees who would affirm that they owe their careers to the fact that Dr. Casteel recognized their potential and gave them an opportunity to lead. Camille's community involvement efforts are likewise too numerous to be shared, but the most significant is her involvement as a member of the Dignity Health East Valley Hospital Board, which she joined in 1988 and continues to this day.

Though Dr. Casteel is a gifted strategic thinker and a supremely effective taskmaster, her capacity to connect on a human level is extraordinary. Those who work closely with her know that she will tell you the truth even when it is hard to hear, but when you leave, you know that you would walk through fire for her. Her heart is so true, so full, and so good. On her desk, she keeps a list of names of staff members and students who are going through difficult times. She writes occasional notes to them, calls them to see how they are doing and includes them in her prayers. Dr. Casteel is confident, courageous, innovative, persistent, dedicated and well-respected among her peers and throughout the state. At the same time she is humble, compassionate, loyal, generous, kind, and forgiving.

The truth is that Dr. Casteel loves her job and she loves this district like extended family and, true to what she learned at home, she takes care of them. We are so grateful for her skilled leadership throughout the years because it has promoted a sense of camaraderie, pride and unparalleled success. Perhaps the late Eddie Basha, Jr., a man who truly loved Chandler and Chandler Schools, said it best.

"In your note to me, Camille, you said that Chandler Schools has been the best thing to happen to you professionally. I have to tell you, the reverse is even truer: You are the best thing ever to happen to Chandler Schools."

We couldn't agree more.

To honor the contribution of this extraordinary leader for her more than four decades of service, we are proud to name the school at Power and Riggs Roads, Dr. Camille Casteel High School.

As presented to Superintendent Dr. Camille Casteel and signed this 14th day of January 2015.

Robert J.C. Rice, President

Barbara Mozdzen, Vice President

Annette Auxier, Member

Karen M. McGee, Member

David Evans, Member