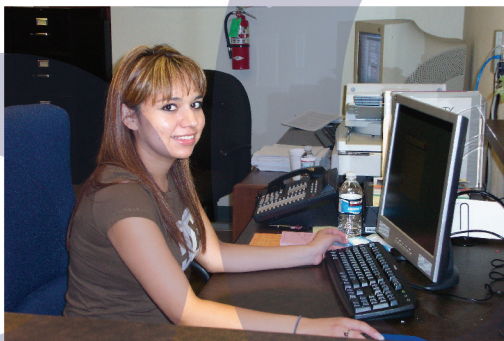


# Tulare County Office of Education

*Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools*



## ***Celebrating Milestones***

### ***2024-25 Annual Report***

A look at the Tulare County Office of Education's impact on students, educators, and parents as told through the celebration of program milestones



## A Message from the Tulare County Superintendent of Schools



*Celebrating Milestones* is the theme of the 2024-25 Tulare County Office of Education Annual Report. This year, we stand in awe of the many years these programs and activities have served the students, parents, and communities of Tulare County. The

vision, passion, and commitment of both past and present staff have created opportunities and conditions for success for the students and organizations we serve. It gives me great pleasure to recognize the programs and activities in this report. I hope you enjoy learning about the journey and the impact TCOE has made over the many years of its existence.

Of course it goes without saying that change is inevitable and what accompanies the milestone celebrations are additional highlights of more recent programs and services implemented by forward-thinking and responsive members of our staff. As technology continues to advance, the needs of our students and school districts change and we adjust to meet those needs. We are adding more Student *Future Ready* Events, creating teacher internship opportunities for high school students, adding more credentialing opportunities, and expanding our facilities to increase experiences for our students.

You will also find that our tradition of recognizing outstanding educators is alive and well. Our Excellence in Education and Educators of the Year recognition programs again honored



well-deserving educators from Tulare County. Those programs align with our organizational Core Values that are also shared in this report.

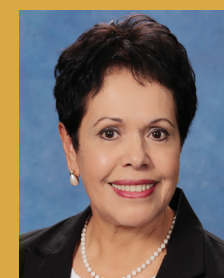
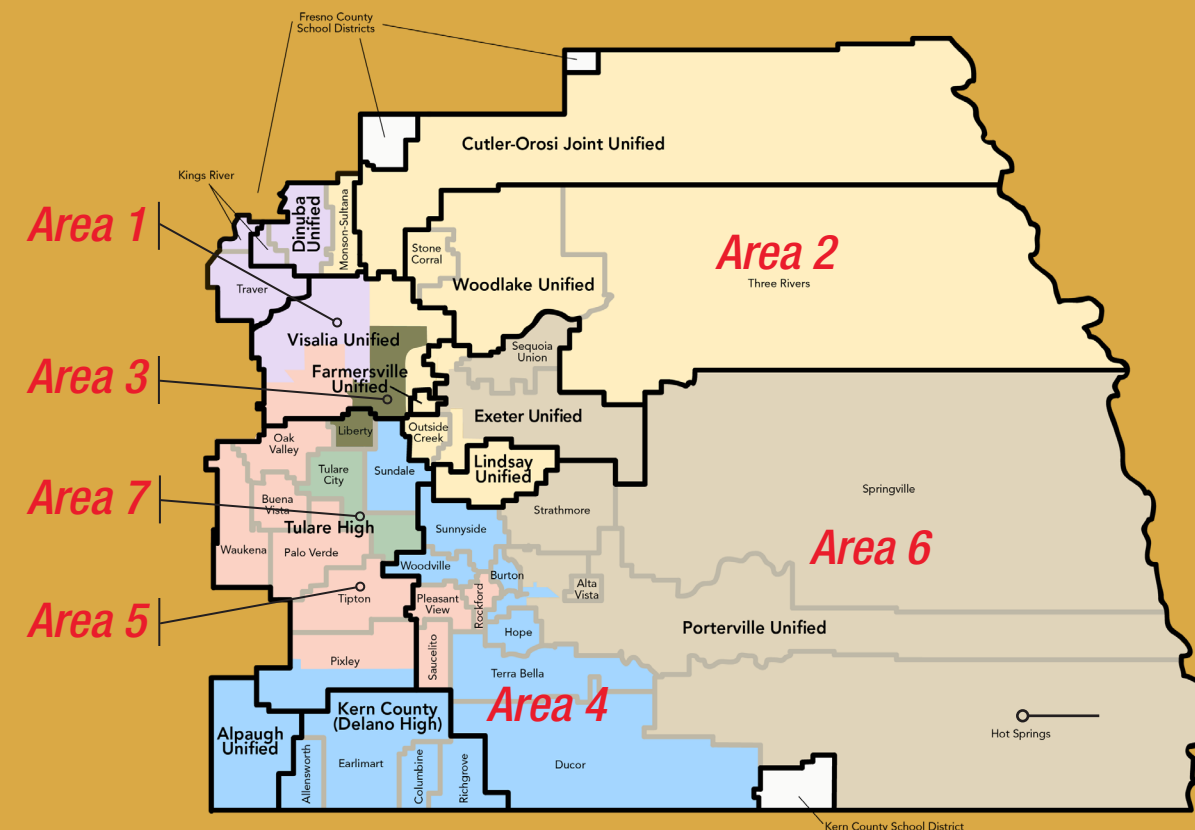
I hope that you enjoy learning about the fantastic things happening in Tulare County. It is an honor to serve in the leadership capacity of an organization with such long-running, successful programs and activities. Please join me in thanking the current staff who are carrying forward the vision, passion, and commitment of those who proudly served Tulare County for so many years. It is their deep rooted and determined commitment to the students that is the foundation for such success.

Respectfully,

Tim A. Hire,  
County Superintendent of Schools

## Tulare County Board of Education

The Tulare County Board of Education is comprised of seven elected trustees, each elected to four-year terms. The board typically meets the first Wednesday of each month at the Tulare County Office of Education's Jim Vidak Education Center on Mooney Boulevard in Visalia. For a schedule of meetings and to learn more about our trustees, visit [tcoe.org/Board](https://tcoe.org/Board).



**Trustee Area 1**  
Celia Maldonado-Arroyo



**Trustee Area 2**  
Ruben Macareno



**Trustee Area 3**  
Tom Link



**Trustee Area 4**  
Judy Coble



**Trustee Area 5**  
Mike Waters



**Trustee Area 6**  
Chris Reed  
President



**Trustee Area 7**  
Tony Rodriguez  
Vice President



## Our Mission and Core Values

### Mission Statement

The mission of the Tulare County Office of Education is to provide quality service and support to the students and school districts of Tulare County. This is achieved by promoting life-long learning opportunities that will help individuals lead healthy and productive lives. We are dedicated to work in a collaborative manner with students, parents, school districts, public agencies, and communities to prepare students to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

### Core Values

The Core Values are a set of organization-wide, shared beliefs that guide our every interaction – both internally and in interactions with parents, school district personnel, and community members.



#### Build Trusting Relationships

We value individual perspectives, honesty, respect, and honoring our commitments.

#### Grow and Empower

We value continuous learning, monitoring outcomes, celebrating success, and empowering one another.



#### Communicate with Care

We value mutual, clear communication, active listening, and the contribution of others.

#### Commit to Serve

We value empathy, collaboration, responsiveness, and innovation to meet the needs of our team members and those we serve.

## Organizational Responsibilities

As part of California's three-level public education system, the Tulare County Office of Education (TCOE) is the intermediate level between the California Department of Education and Tulare County school districts. Led by the elected Tulare County Superintendent of Schools, Tim A. Hire, TCOE provides the following support to the local districts and public charter schools.

### Tulare County Superintendent of Schools

- Acts as the primary “implementation arm” of the California Department of Education
- Monitors and oversees fiscal stability of districts
- Reviews school district Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs)
- Provides academic support/assistance to districts and their schools through direct services for small districts, technical assistance, and regional support activities for districts and school staff



### Tulare County Office of Education

- Provides support and services to Tulare County school districts, not governance
- Ensures school district fiscal accountability/solvency
- Approves school district LCAPs
- Provides professional development opportunities
- Assists with academic performance initiatives
- Serves the county's most vulnerable students (expelled, incarcerated/on probation, homeless/foster youth, students with special needs, and early learners)
- Offers additional support through student events/competitions, enrichment activities, and outdoor education programs

### Tulare County Board of Education

- Approves the salary of the county superintendent
- Reviews and approves the county office of education's budget
- Reviews and approves the county office of education's LCAPs
- Establishes and oversees county charter schools
- Hears interdistrict transfer and expulsion appeals



# Organized to Support

The county office of education serves Tulare County’s 43 school districts through six divisions: Administration, Business Services, District Support Services, Human Resources, Special Services, and Student Support Services. It’s through each division that students, schools, staff, families, and the community receive support and services from TCOE.

Business Services collects, processes, and disseminates all fiscal and budgetary information and reports for all school districts within the county. Human Resources manages internal personnel functions, and is responsible for registering and monitoring credentials for every certificated educator in the county.

Instructional support for educators and students is delivered through District Support Services and Student Support Services. These two divisions are home to 16 programs, including SCICON, Educational Resource Services, and Early Childhood Education.

Special Services is the office’s largest division with over 900 employees who work primarily inside schools and communities providing services to approximately 8,200 students with special needs from birth to 22 years of age. The division also operates programs to meet the full range of needs for mildly impaired to profoundly impaired students.

### County Superintendent’s Office

California Center on Teaching Careers  
California Friday Night Live Partnership  
CHARACTER COUNTS!  
Communications  
Planetarium & Science Center  
Theatre Company

### Business Services

External Business Services  
General Services  
Information Systems  
Internal Business Services  
Maintenance & Operations

### District Support Services

College and Career Readiness  
Educational Resource Services  
Leadership Support Services  
Migrant Education Program  
New Teacher & Leadership Development (NTLD)  
Student *Future Ready* Events

### Human Resources

Credentials & Retirement  
Risk Management

### Special Services

Academic Collaboration for Exceptional Learners (AcCEL)  
Alternative Achievement Program (AAP)  
Behavioral Health Services (BHS)  
Bright Future Program  
Bright Start Parent/Infant Program  
Court/Community Schools  
Foster & Homeless Youth Education Services  
Intervention Resource Classrooms (IRCs)  
Mild to Moderate Programs  
Parent Liaisons  
Preschool Program  
Program Specialists  
Related Services  
SELPA Compliance  
School Psychologists  
Workability Program

### Student Support Services

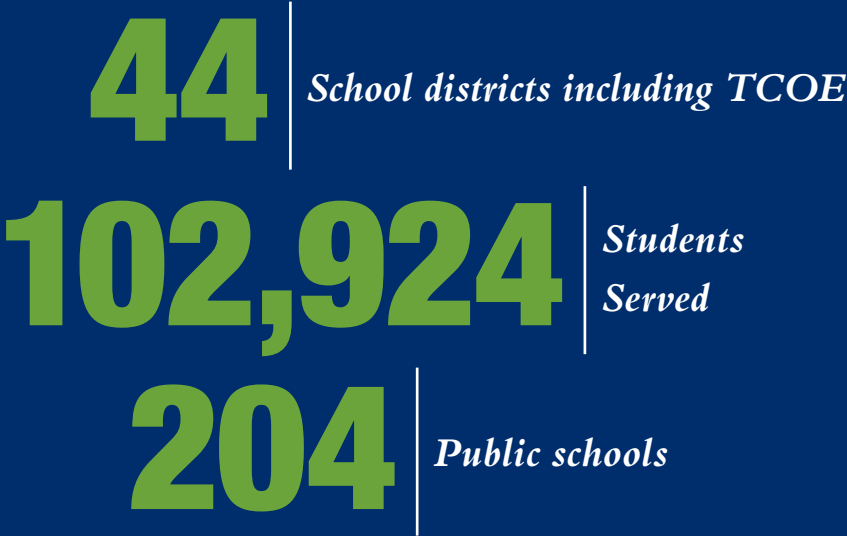
California Community Schools Partnership Program  
CHOICES Prevention/Intervention and After School Programs  
Early Childhood Education Program  
La Sierra Charter School  
Region VII System of Support for Extended Learning  
School Health Programs  
School Safety Program  
SCICON  
University Preparatory High School  
Universal PreKindergarten

# County at a Glance

Tulare County is home to 43 school districts and numerous public charter schools. Tulare County school districts range from single school districts, such as Hot Springs Elementary with 13 students, to the Visalia Unified School District with nearly 29,000 students. In California, only Kern and Los Angeles Counties serve more districts than Tulare County. Of the county’s districts, over 75% are considered small districts with less than 2,500 students. Tulare County has more small school districts than any county in the state.

## School Districts

	Schools	Enrollment
Allensworth .....	1	118
Alpaugh Unified .....	2	345
Alta Vista .....	1	531
Buena Vista .....	1	180
Burton .....	7	4,805
Columbine .....	1	172
Cutler-Orosi .....	10	3,815
Joint Unified		
Dinuba Unified.....	11	6,244
Ducor Union .....	1	136
Earlimart.....	3	1,383
Exeter Unified .....	7	2,597
Farmersville Unified .....	7	2,346
Hope .....	1	237
Hot Springs.....	1	10
Kings River Union .....	1	389
Liberty .....	1	861
Lindsay Unified.....	11	3,928
Monson-Sultana.....	1	440
Joint Union		
Oak Valley Union.....	1	562
Outside Creek.....	1	125
Palo Verde Union.....	1	511
Pixley Union .....	2	827
Pleasant View.....	2	449
Porterville Unified.....	23	13,893
Richgrove .....	1	477
Rockford.....	1	301
Saucelito.....	1	75
Sequoia Union .....	2	388
Springville Union .....	1	335
Stone Corral .....	1	109
Strathmore Union.....	2	702
Sundale Union .....	1	840
Sunnyside Union.....	1	311
Terra Bella Union .....	2	717
Three Rivers Union .....	1	93
Tipton.....	1	485
Traver Joint Union.....	1	235
Tulare City.....	18	9,294
Tulare Co. Office of Ed. ....	5	1,656
Tulare Joint Union High.....	8	5,598
Visalia Unified .....	42	28,809
Waukena Joint Union .....	1	220
Woodlake Unified .....	7	2,081
Woodville Union.....	1	371

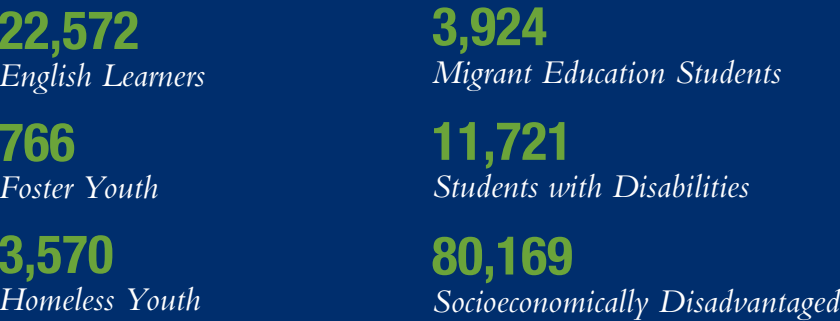


TCOE leads the state in serving the largest number of small school districts

## Public Charter Schools

Tulare County is home to 20 public charter schools with a total enrollment of 10,716.

## Enrollment by Student Group



Data obtained from California Department of Education, DataQuest 2023–2024 (Sept. 9, 2024)



## Tulare County's honored educators for 2025

To recognize the contributions of outstanding Tulare County educators, each year we present three awards – the Excellence in Education Awards, the Confucius' Birthday/Educators of the Year Awards, and the Brent Rast Award – an award named in honor of the late TCOE special education teacher, Brent Rast. It is given to a teacher of students with profound needs in the AcCEL Program.

### 2025 Confucius' Birthday/Educators of the Year Award Winners

The oldest of the recognition programs is the Educators of the Year Awards. Created in 1994 in partnership with the Central California Chinese Cultural Center, this award honors one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school teacher in September to celebrate Confucius' birthday. Confucius was one of China's greatest philosophers and an advocate for universal education.



#### **Elementary School Educator of the Year** **Alicia Bovetti**

**Rocky Hill Elementary School, Exeter Unified School District**

In her 11 years at Rocky Hill Elementary School, Alicia Bovetti has made a difference mentoring other teachers and nurturing young minds. Currently a grade level lead for third grade, Bovetti has created a system where her team meets every Wednesday and rotates among students. Outside of making sure her students and peers are supported, Bovetti also organizes many school and third-grade events.



#### **Middle School Educator of the Year** **Carmen Diaz**

**Alpaugh Elementary School, Alpaugh Unified School District**

Once Alpaugh Unified's librarian, Carmen Diaz has spent the past eight years as an eighth-grade teacher. Using Socratic seminars and her love of literature, the long-time Alpaugh resident fosters critical thinking among her students. Beyond creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment, Diaz also coaches middle school girls basketball and volleyball.



#### **High School Educator of the Year** **Ricardo Florez**

**Tulare Union High School, Tulare Joint Union High School District**

Ricardo Florez has been instrumental in the establishment of the Intervention Resource Classrooms at Mission Oak High School and Tulare Union High School (TUHS). Having served as the program lead at TUHS for the past four years, Florez has given students a place to deescalate, talk with a trusted adult, get academic support, or just find some peace and quiet.

## 2025 Excellence in Education Award Winners

In 1995, Educational Employees Credit Union (EECU) partnered with the Tulare County Office of Education to create the Excellence in Education Awards. This program honors nominees, finalists, and winners in three categories – Administrator/Manager of the Year, Teacher of the Year, and School Employee of the Year. Tulare County school districts and community colleges submit their top candidates. A committee of educators and community leaders review and score each nominee.



#### **Administrator/Manager of the Year** **Andrew Woodley**

**Porterville Unified School District**

As the director of curriculum and instruction for Porterville Unified School District, Andrew Woodley has supported instructional coaches and teachers to improve teaching practices. His work over the past six years has been guided by two principles: systems and relationships. Combining data with professional expertise, Woodley has helped increase his district's test scores. During the pandemic, he led the district toward digital learning, supporting teachers and students in making the transition.



#### **Teacher of the Year** **Heather Silva**

**Alpine Vista School, Tulare City School District**

Heather Silva has taught many grade levels in her 13 years with Alpine Vista School. Currently she teaches leadership, computer science classes, and English language development (ELD), engaging students through hands-on learning. She has also developed many activities, including an agriculture class and garden, Kindness Week, Back-to-School Car Show, annual school musical, Teacher Appreciation Week, and Eagles Care Project.



#### **School Employee of the Year** **Joanna Woodyatt**

**Rocky Hill Elementary School, Exeter Unified School District**

Joanna Woodyatt has worked for Exeter Unified for 16 years, first as an instructional aide in behavior management and currently as a registered behavior technician at Rocky Hill Elementary School. Not only does she help students with autism and developmental challenges, Woodyatt is also a member of the Tulare County Suicide Prevention Council and is the district's Crisis Prevention Institute instructor.



## 2025 Brent Rast Award Winner

### **Alyson Leos**

As a teacher in AcCEL's special day class at Porterville's Pioneer Middle School, Alyson Leos creates a supportive learning environment by personalizing lessons to meet the unique strengths and challenges of each student. Not only is she proactive in identifying student needs, but she also collaborates with parents, colleagues, and administrators to create a solid support system, treating every student in her care like one of her own kids.





## Beloved music education program turns 65



“We can certainly take pride in sponsoring the Children’s Concerts for 25 years, and we hope to continue another 25 years.”

That is what a 1985 TCOE *News Gallery* article said about the 25th Annual Youth Concert. Now, 40 years after that article was written, the Young People’s Concert has surpassed that goal. The 2024-25 school year marked 65 years since the program began, and it’s still going strong.

First organized by music coordinator Rudy Weyland and a group of local musicians – including former Tulare County Board of Education Trustee Pat Hillman – the event coincides with the founding of the Tulare County Symphony (now the Sequoia Symphony Orchestra). In its early years the symphony would host multiple concerts put on specifically for students. TCOE would sponsor a student soloist who performed with the group, and then students from fourth to eighth grades would attend the concerts to learn about instruments, composers, and concert manners. In the first 25 years, the concerts grew to around 5,000 students in attendance.

Today, the event looks a little different. After a hiatus during COVID, the Young People’s Concert returned in 2024 with 750 students in attendance. Utilizing Carnegie Hall/Weill Music Institute’s Link Up curriculum, music educators at nine different elementary schools taught students how to sing and play the recorder. Then, students played alongside the Sequoia Symphony Orchestra at the Visalia Fox Theatre. As students get a more hands-on approach to the symphony, their appreciation for music is sure to grow.

*(upper photo)* Many elements of the Young People’s Concert have stayed consistent over its six and a half decades. The event still introduces students to musical instruments and symphonic compositions. *(lower photo)* Today’s Young People’s Concert incorporates a curriculum developed by Carnegie Hall that allows students to play, sing, and dance along with the orchestra.



## Early Childhood Education celebrates Head Start’s 60th year



The federal Head Start program is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year. Created in 1965 by former President Lyndon B. Johnson as a part of the War on Poverty, the goal of this program is to meet the social and educational needs of 3- to 5-year-olds from low-income families. Here in Tulare County, the Head Start program has a rich history.

On the day the program was unveiled, Johnson announced that the Tulare County Community Action Agency (TCCAA) was approved for a \$20,530 grant to begin Head Start programs at Maple, Roosevelt, and Lincoln elementary schools in Tulare. In total there would be four classes with 24 children each. Shortly after those classes began, several other centers were organized by grass roots support. These included Crowley, Cutler, Visalia, Woodlake, and Goshen – all opening in 1965.

Then, in 1967, Head Start transferred from TCCAA leadership to the Tulare County Office of Education. Under TCOE’s guidance, the program grew to become the Early Child Education Program (ECEP), then known as the Child Care Program.

Over the years, Early Childhood Education introduced programs alongside Head Start. First, ECEP launched Migrant Head Start in 1972. Specifically geared to help the children of seasonal and migrant agricultural workers, this program expanded the services of Head Start.

A few years later, TCOE introduced the Resource and Referral program. The program began in 1976 in response to the State of California passing legislation to license more home-based childcare providers, and it served to connect community members with the childcare options in their area that worked best for them.



*(upper photo)* The Goshen Elementary Preschool photo is from October 1965, just five months after the Tulare County Community Action Agency received its first federal Head Start grant. *(lower photo)* In the early years of the program, child development centers were established in dozens of communities, including the Linnell Farm Labor Center east of Visalia.





## Passing along the help she and her family received

Forty-eight years ago, Blanca Contreras started her educational journey at the Farmersville Head Start program. The daughter of migrant farm workers, Contreras was enrolled in the program so that she had a place to go while her parents worked. Contreras attended child development centers in Farmersville before eventually finding her place at the Linnell Center. Not only did Linnell provide the family with affordable childcare, it also helped them build relationships in their community.

“I remember my dad telling me that [Head Start] really helped him,” Contreras said. “It empowered [my parents] to know the agencies that were out there to support my family.”

The Contreras family spoke Spanish, but the Linnell Center staff pushed to engage them in educational events. Eventually, Contreras’ parents began volunteering at the center. By leading activities in the classroom and helping trim the center’s trees, the couple got more involved in their daughter’s education. “When parents enroll their children, they’re enrolling themselves as well,” Contreras said. “So, [the program] becomes a family. It becomes a team.”

Today, Contreras helps families build relationships with their community. After teaching for the Head Start program and working for TCOE as a disability specialist, Contreras took on her current position as Early Childhood Education’s Family/Community Partnerships Manager. In her role, she connects families in crisis with resource agencies, teaches parenting classes in English and Spanish, and even hosts family engagement events like the ones her family attended. Thanks to the support the Head Start program gave to her family, Contreras is able to foster the same sense of community that her parents benefited from.

## ECEP continued

In 1978, TCOE started its Home Based Childcare program. In this program, a home educator works with parents and children to assess children’s needs and help parents understand the important role they play as the child’s first educator.

By the early 2000s, the Home Based Program had grown and ECE was operating over 40 Child Development Centers throughout the county.

## ECEP today

TCOE’s Early Child Education program has come a long way since the 60s and 70s. Today, the program serves over 5,200 children across its center- and home-based programs, and Connections for Quality Care alternative payment program. With funds provided by 23 state and federal grants, the program manages a budget of approximately \$88 million and employs 419 staff members. Current programs include Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant Seasonal Head Start, California State Preschool Program, General Child Care and Development, Foster Bridge, Early Stars, and Connections for Quality Care. In the near future, ECEP will open a new child development center in partnership with the Farmersville Unified School District and assume operations of the Village Preschool in Visalia.

As it has grown over the years, ECEP has helped kids from across generations succeed.



(upper photo) Bella Ayon-Valenzuela is now a sophomore at Wonderful College Prep Academy in Delano. She is pictured below attending the former Market Street Child Development Center as a 3-year-old.

## Establishing a foundation for academic and social success

At just 15-years-old, Bella Ayon-Valenzuela vividly remembers her Head Start experience. Her dad would drive her to the Market Street Child Development Center in Earlimart early in the morning before he and her mom went to work in the fields.

The center (since closed) had a big backyard, a library, and two tablets that children could read on. “[The tablets] were my favorite because there would be audios, and I would just read random books,” Ayon-Valenzuela remembers. “It was so fun.”

While her love for reading started while she was in the Head Start program, Ayon-Valenzuela has carried it with her through elementary, middle, and now high school. Now, she’ll read anything: novels, comic books, and webtoons. She even reads court cases.

When she’s not reading, Ayon-Valenzuela is involved with Wonderful College Prep Academy’s Key Club, Mathletes team, and Associated Student Body. She also volunteers at Alila Elementary School in Earlimart and takes dual enrollment classes through Bakersfield College. Despite all these extracurriculars, her favorite is Mock Trial. Typically taking on the pre-trial role for the prosecution, Ayon-Valenzuela enjoys reading the details and statements of the cases.

Thanks to the leg up she got through TCOE’s Head Start program, Ayon-Valenzuela is on track to attend a four-year college. As she finishes high school, she’ll continue trying to decide what she wants to study.

“I maybe want to be a pediatrician because it has always kind of called to me,” Ayon-Valenzuela said. “Or maybe I’ll be a teacher. I just like teachers. They get to do something good... I’ve also always been interested in computers.”

She’s keeping her options open for now, but whatever Ayon-Valenzuela decides on, she’s sure to succeed.



(photo on page 12) Senaida Garcia was an administrator with the Tulare County Community Action Agency (TCCAA), the organization that first received federal Head Start grants in 1965. When the Tulare County Office of Education assumed operations of the Head Start program in 1967, Garcia became the first administrator of the Child Care Program (now Early Childhood Education Program). She and her team masterfully blended state and federal income sources to expand the program. (photo on page 13). The Woodville School Child Development center is ECEP’s newest center, built in collaboration with the district.



## SEE leaves legacy of changing lives



After decades of preparing Tulare County residents for the workforce, Services for Education and Employment (SEE) closed its doors on June 30, 2025. For 60 years, SEE focused on serving at-risk youth, pregnant and parenting teens, welfare recipients, and other underserved groups.

Its early programs included the Youth Employment Training Program, which provided work experience for at-risk youth aged 16–21; the Teenage Parenting Program (TAPP), which helped young parents complete their education and develop parenting skills; and Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN), which supported welfare recipients in finding jobs. In recent years, SEE expanded to offer Youth@Work, Student Training and Employment Program (STEP), Return 2 Youth, Ticket to Success, and WorkFirst.



### The early years

SEE's story began with President Lyndon B. Johnson's 1964 Neighborhood Youth Corps, which provided federally-funded job training for disadvantaged youth. Tulare County launched its own version in 1965 through a U.S. Department of Labor grant, creating work experience programs that lasted for decades.

By the early 1980s, the Youth Employment Training Program had grown into the Youth Employment Service (YES), which offered job-search workshops, skills training, and childcare

connections. In 1985, YES expanded further, launching the New Horizons Program for juvenile offenders and partnering with school districts to establish TAPP, which grew to multiple sites across the county.

### Becoming SEE

In 1987, YES and other initiatives were consolidated into one umbrella program – Services for Education and Employment (SEE). At its launch, SEE offered education and employment support for high school dropouts, teen parents, youth offenders, and welfare recipients. That same year, SEE joined GAIN, giving welfare recipients access to employment services.

SEE soon earned recognition. In 1988, TAPP received the national Job Training Partnership Act Presidential Award for the Outstanding Program Serving Those with Multiple Barriers for Employment. In 1991, it was honored by the Private Industry Council at the Governor's Recognition reception in Sacramento.

### Expansion and innovation

During the 1990s, SEE developed new ways to connect education with workforce training. After taking full control of GAIN in 1992, the program streamlined operations and saved the county around \$1 million annually. Welfare-to-work initiatives followed, offering participants both job experience and support services.

The 1990s also saw partnerships with the College of the Sequoias, childcare centers for parents in GAIN, and welfare-to-work reforms. Programs like Alternative Work Experience (AWEX) matched participants with local employers, while the SEE gave welfare recipients hands-on business training. Other efforts included the MOVE program, which helped families relocate for out-of-state jobs, and a nonprofit retail sales training store.

In 1999, SEE renovated the old Fairway Market in Visalia, transforming it into a hub for vocational programs including food service, building trades, graphic arts, and clerical training.

### New directions

SEE continued to adapt in the 2000s. It administered Ticket to Success, a Social Security Administration program connecting disability beneficiaries with employment services. Its Youth@Work, STEP, and Return 2 Youth programs ensured that SEE remained a vital resource for both students and adults entering the workforce.

### A legacy of opportunity

From its roots in the federal anti-poverty

programs of the 1960s to its closure in 2025, SEE touched thousands of lives across Tulare County. Through education, training, and innovative community partnerships, it provided opportunities for people facing barriers to employment.

Though its doors have closed, the legacy of SEE lives on in the young parents who finished school, the welfare recipients who became self-sufficient, the at-risk youth who gained their first work experience, and the many Tulare County residents who built careers with its support.

## Summer worker to student advocate, SEE shaped Gomez's path



Although Tulare County's Services for Education and Employment (SEE) closed this year, its impact remains visible in the careers of people like Misael Gomez. Now coordinating program secretary for TCOE's Foster & Homeless Youth Services, Gomez helps connect students with community resources. Nearly two decades ago, he was a high school junior in SEE's Summer Youth program, taking his first steps into the workforce.

As a teenager, Gomez didn't picture himself in college. "I wanted to help people learn about the Bible," he recalled. "So, I wanted to find work to support myself and eventually my family." His guidance counselor connected him with SEE, and that summer he set up a computer lab and materials at Castle Rock Elementary. The paycheck helped, but the confidence and skills mattered most. "SEE teaches you how to present yourself, how to act in the workforce," Gomez said. "Building connections with administrators and teachers built my confidence."

After graduation, Gomez returned to SEE to update his resume and earn a typing certificate. Soon after, he was hired as a recruitment technician, visiting schools to promote the very program that had launched his journey. One of his most memorable moments came when he returned to Woodlake High School, his alma mater, to speak to students. "Here comes 20-year-old me presenting about our summer program... and I just graduated like last year. It pushed me to speak," he said.

Budget cuts eventually ended his role, but the experience left him prepared. He quickly landed a teacher assistant position at Lindsay Unified, later advancing to behavior technician and special projects secretary. After marrying, he sought work closer to Visalia, returning briefly to SEE before moving on to TCOE's Bright Future Program. When TCOE's Behavioral Health Services launched, Gomez became its budget operations clerk. For 12 years, he welcomed families, interpreted, and assisted the crisis team. It was there he saw firsthand how foster youth often struggled for support.

During the pandemic, Gomez and his wife felt called to help. In the process of becoming foster parents, they learned they were expecting their own child and would soon need to take in their niece and nephew as well. Though parenting kept them busy, Gomez found another way to serve through TCOE's Foster and Homeless Youth Program. "It aligned with what [my wife and I] wanted to do. I love helping families," he said.

Today, Gomez provides for his family while fulfilling the calling he recognized at 16 – to serve others. "Even though I decided not to go to college, this helps my family support ourselves, and we can be teachers and help others in the congregation."

Through professionals like Gomez, SEE's legacy endures – proof that one summer opportunity can shape a lifetime of service.



## Friday Night Live celebrates 40th year



This past school year marks the 40th anniversary of the Friday Night Live (FNL) program. FNL began as an alternative activity for high school



students on Friday nights, the deadliest night of the week for young people due to underage drinking and driving. Today, FNL is a prominent statewide youth development program in the field of prevention.

Take a look at some of FNL's achievements over the years.

### 1980s and 1990s

The California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs (ADP) started the FNL program for California youth in 1984. In the early years, youth participants were organized into high school-based student action groups, but due to overwhelming success, a middle school component was developed in 1988 at TCOE under then County Superintendent Jim Vidak, to build leadership skills in young students. The late 80s saw the creation of the annual Teenwork conference that would run through 2006, serving thousands of young people across California. By 1990, the number of FNL counties had increased

300% and grew to not only target underage drinking, but the prevention of tobacco and other substance use among youth.

As young people began to engage in risky behaviors at a younger age, TCOE continued their innovative work to meet the evolving needs of young people by expanding the program to include 4th-6th graders. As FNL grew across the state, so did young peoples' interest in taking the lead on issues that impacted them and their peers. In 1993, the California Youth Council (CYC) was created. The CYC is a statewide delegation of

FNL student leaders that elevate youth voice at the state level.

ADP recognized the impact and success FNL was having across the state and in 1996 released a bid for the California Friday Night Live Partnership (CFNLP), an office that would provide programmatic oversight and support to all county FNL programs. TCOE applied for, and was awarded, the contract to house the CFNLP in Tulare County. In 1998, FNL transitioned from an alternative activity to a youth development-based program supported by a set of requirements and standards of practice that every county FNL program adheres to, to ensure young people have the same positive experience in FNL throughout the state.

### 2000s and 2010s

FNL was gaining visibility as one of the only youth-serving groups in California with a statewide reach, and by the early 2000s had programmatic and fiscal support from multiple state agencies – the Department of Health Care Services, Department of Public Health, Department of Education, the Office of Traffic Safety, and the Office of Problem Gambling.

The 2000s also saw the creation of two annual conferences, the Leadership Training Institute for adult allies, and the FNL Youth Summit for students. With new funders, partnerships, and youth-driven change happening throughout California, TCOE was recognized for its statewide oversight of the FNL program in 2012 and was awarded a sole source contract for the CFNLP.

### 2020s

FNL has spent the last five years examining the structure and promotion of the program to ensure its continuous success in meeting the needs of young people. To mark the 40th anniversary, FNL released a new suite of logos and program definitions, ushering in a new season of growth and opportunity for youth across California.

In Tulare County, the TCOE CHOICES department has run local FNL programming for over 35 years, with countless students being part of the FNL legacy.

In 2024, the CFNLP team approached County Superintendent Tim Hire and TCOE CHOICES to run its own FNL chapter. While the CFNLP's focus is on statewide support, the team sought first-hand experience, and thanks to a small but dedicated group of students, the new Redwood High School FNL Club was created for the 2024-25 school year.

Chapter members attended the FNL Youth Summit and came back to campus eager to target vaping/tobacco use amongst their peers. Through a partnership with San Diego State University (SDSU), students learned how to detect third hand smoke in the restrooms of local youth-serving establishments by swabbing surfaces and gathering tobacco residue in the air. SDSU tested the samples and provided chapter members with a summary of findings to guide their advocacy work.



(left photo) Students from around the state participate in the 1989 FNL Teenwork Conference, held in Sacramento. The focus of early Teenwork Conferences was to gather FNL students from across the state to raise awareness of youth-facing issues and support leadership development. (photos above) Members of the new Redwood High School FNL Club partnered with San Diego State University this year to detect the presence of tobacco residue in local youth-serving establishments.



## Helping districts recruit teachers for 40 years



In February, the California Center on Teaching Careers hosted the 40th annual Tulare & Kings Counties Teacher Recruitment Fair. With over 500 teachers and 30 districts and educational agencies in

attendance, the fair connected job seekers with a wide range of career prospects.

During the event, participants had the opportunity to learn about open positions in the region, share their resume, and even interview for jobs on the spot. These opportunities were tailored to educators holding single subject, multiple subject, education specialist, and career technical education credentials.

The recruitment fair has changed quite a bit since its inception 40 years ago. While it has always connected strong candidates with school districts and charter schools in need, different programs have administered the fair along the way. When it started in 1985, the fair was put

on by TCOE's Human Resources. The teacher recruitment fair was a natural extension of Human Resources work in helping teachers navigate the credentialing process.

With experience coordinating virtual and live recruitment fairs for districts throughout the state, the California Center on Teaching Careers (the Center) recently took the lead in coordinating the event. A statewide recruitment program housed at TCOE, the Center works to alleviate California's teacher shortage by partnering with state agencies and institutions of higher education.

The technology used at the fair has also changed over time. Advertisements for early fairs boasted that there was no reason for candidates to print multiple copies of their resume, as a copy machine would be available on site. Today, candidates can avoid printing multiple copies of their resume altogether. This year, participants were able to download the Center's Virtual Events app and exchange information with representatives using their phone. According to participants' feedback, using the new app went very well.

With increased partnerships and new technology, the Tulare & Kings Counties Teacher Recruitment Fair has withstood the test of time. The Tulare County Office of Education is excited to continue connecting prospective teachers with career opportunities.

*(photos above)* Representatives from Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District and Valley Life Charter Schools speak with teachers about open positions in their districts or school sites. During the annual recruitment fair, representatives met with over 500 teachers looking for employment for the 2025-26 school year.

## 25 years of leadership and character development



complete a vocational training certificate in order to graduate. Students could also participate in Humane Advocates for Responsible Decisions (HARD) Corps – an adventure program that taught wilderness survival training, personal fitness, and leadership development.

In August 2003, La Sierra transitioned into the military academy it is today that is based on supported academics, leadership and character development, and physical fitness training in a military structure. An Independent Studies

Program was added in 2001.

In both its middle school and high school academies, La Sierra Military Academy (LSMA) uses a highly organized chain of command to conduct the school's daily activities. Students are encouraged to take leadership roles within their battalion or class.

In addition to traditional academics, cadets can participate in intramural sports, become a member of the school's California Cadet Corps battalions, enroll in the Media Arts Academy, which produces a weekly news program, and be concurrently enrolled at College of the Sequoias.

Hand-in-hand with leadership development and discipline is a system of social supports to ensure students grow as positive, respectful, and resilient young people who are ready to take on college and career. Eagle Proud and Eagle Strong!

La Sierra Charter Schools owes its existence to Services for Education & Employment (SEE), the former employment development and training program that TCOE operated for 60 years (profiled on pages 14-15).

On July 1, 1999, SEE received a large grant from the Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency to help welfare recipients transition from aid to employment. The funds prompted SEE to renovate the old Fairway Market building located at 1735 East Houston Avenue in Visalia and start developing a central facility that could hold all of its employment programs.

As funding for adult vocational programs changed, SEE administrators saw an opportunity to utilize the Houston Avenue facility to support high school students. Twenty-five years ago, La Sierra High School opened its doors to serve students seeking a high school diploma and vocational training. The Tulare County Board of Education granted the school its charter status.

The school's mission was to improve students' employability by helping them complete high school and build vocational skills. In addition to completing an academic program, each student enrolled at La Sierra was originally required to





*Vizcarra dedicates herself to serving others post-grad*



As a military academy, TCOE’s LSMA teaches more than academics. In addition to core courses, cadets are immersed in military etiquette and preparedness courses and concurrent college classes. Most importantly though, the academy teaches cadets lifelong values like honor, leadership, ambition, and service.

In the school’s 25 years of operation,

Milcah Vizcarra is one of the many students to have exemplified these values. After attending a small Christian elementary school, she found an environment she thrived in at LSMA.

“If [my teachers] knew academically that something was wrong, they would schedule one-on-one sessions with me,” Vizcarra said.

Beyond personalized learning, Vizcarra also found a passion for military service at LSMA. Her experiences prepared her for the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps, which she joined at 14. A U.S. Navy sponsored program for cadets ages 13-18, the Sea Cadet Corps allowed Vizcarra to do medical and land navigation training on naval bases.

These experiences pushed Vizcarra to think about her future. “My drill sergeant at La Sierra used to have this saying: ‘You need to find a career not a J-O-B,’ and I remember one time I asked him ‘What is a J-O-B?’ And he said, ‘Vizcarra, a J-O-B is just over broke.’”

After graduating from La Sierra in 2013, a year early, she started a career with the Army National Guard. Taking advantage of the guard’s Montgomery GI Bill Kicker program, she was able to serve in the National

Guard while also going to college and participating in her school’s ROTC program. But not everything went according to plan. She graduated but was injured and received a medically honorable discharge from the National Guard. While her next steps seemed uncertain, her time at La Sierra had prepared her in a way.

“La Sierra taught me how to prioritize things and meet every benchmark I have,” Vizcarra reflected. “If that doesn’t work, reevaluate what you’re doing, and see what you’re missing and what needs to be adjusted.”

After reconsidering her career path, Vizcarra put her degree to work as a data analyst at the Drug Enforcement Agency’s Controlled Substance Program in Fort Bliss, Texas. For the next three years, she built a family with her husband in the Lone Star State. But, in 2021, Vizcarra had to reevaluate again. After experiencing domestic violence, she divorced her husband and moved back to the Central Valley to find a safer environment for her two sons. She also decided to channel her hurt into helping others.

Now, Vizcarra works as an advocate for the elderly with Blue Shield of California. She also volunteers with Tulare County Family Services as a crisis counselor in her spare time. Bonding with clients through her own experiences, Vizcarra helps them “start life all over again.”

Vizcarra also advocates for herself and her dreams. She’s pursuing her Apostolic Foundation Certification from Wilson University so that she can do mission work in the U.S. through Hope Corps. Her nonprofit, Until There Is Unity, supports students with their extra educational needs.

“I really want to help out [my] community and advocate for those who don’t have a voice,” Vizcarra said. “[I want them to] see they can move forward in life mentally, physically, and spiritually.”

By ambitiously pursuing a future of service to her community with honor, Vizcarra is making a difference in the lives of Tulare County’s most vulnerable. She truly exemplifies the values of a La Sierra Eagle.

*Stars in the Hills Prom celebrates 20 years of bringing community and students together*

From the start of the night, until the very end, the dance floor at the Stars in the Hills prom was never empty. Two of the night’s biggest hits were *La Chona*, requested by the Porterville Police Department, and of course, the *Y.M.C.A.*

The Stars in the Hills prom, which celebrated its 20th year this April, is for Porterville students with special needs. Since 2005, it has been sponsored by the Porterville Breakfast Rotary Club, bringing together the community for a night to remember.

“What we did is we looked at the community and saw a need,” said Porterville Rotarian Janice Castle. “These kids were not attending the normal proms, and they felt intimidated and not at ease. So we wanted to start a prom where they felt totally comfortable. So that’s why their parents are invited, their teachers are invited, and they have a ball. They really do.”

The support of local businesses is a cornerstone of the prom’s success. Dresses, suits, alterations, lighting, pictures, a salon day, laundry services, decorations, and much more are all provided or discounted by local businesses and volunteers – many of whom have participated in the prom since its early years.

Denise Everhart is one of those multi-year volunteers and has helped set up the salon days. For this prom, she and other stylists at Jess & Co. Beauty Salon in Porterville styled and cut students’ hair, while also providing manicures.

Another volunteer is John Hasson, the owner of Tux-N-Tails in Visalia. Hasson comes to Porterville at least twice a year for the event. During his first trip he measures every boy and ensures he gets his pick of ties, cummerbunds, and shoes. He then returns with all the items and ensures everything fits properly.

“He’s a great supporter of this prom,” Castle said. “It’s just in his heart and it makes him feel good to know that he’s made a difference.”



On prom nights, Porterville Police Department, Porterville Fire Department, and Tulare County Fire Department also attend to welcome the students and their families. High school students from Granite Hills, Porterville, Monache, and Porterville Military Academy contribute to the event throughout the day and evening, including Monache’s Multimedia & Technology Academy students who follow prom participants around and create a video that families and teachers are able to purchase.

“The whole thing, it’s really a community event from the very beginning all the way through, and it always has been,” said Castle.



# Pioneering Migrant Education program celebrates its 10th year



## STEAM DREAM!

**By Ximena Delgado**

Have you ever wanted to learn more about science, technology, engineering, art, and math all in one place? Well if so, a STEAM conference might be for you!

Our journalism team will be attending the Fresno State annual STEAM conference at Fresno State University, in Fresno, California on Saturday, April 5, 2025. Our goal is to interview leaders who are professionals in the STEAM field as well as both participate and learn more about the programs and jobs in the STEAM field.

The acronym STEAM stands for science, technology, engineering, the arts, and math. All of these subjects are combined and used by scientists.

One of the workshops that will be presented at the Fresno STEAM conference this year is job opportunities in the engineering field. What is engineering?

This is one of the jobs of a Civil Engineer. The engineers in the photo are working at a construction site.

The Downing Planetarium at Fresno State. This is the 30-ft hemispherical dome that can display astronomical shows.

Engineering involves problem solving and the use of scientific and mathematical concepts. There are different types of engineering fields. At the STEAM conference, the engineering workshop will discuss the fields of Civil Engineering, Computer Engineering, and Electrical Engineering. Civil engineering is a career that involves designing, building, and maintaining the physical environment. Civil engineers plan, design, and supervise the construction and maintenance of building and infrastructure projects. Electrical and computer engineers combine the two fields to design, develop, and maintain the hardware and software components of computer systems as well as computer-controlled equipment. In the electrical and computer engineering portion of the workshop, students will have the chance to use Micro Bit microcomputers for a hands-on coding opportunity.

In addition to learning about all of the unique careers in the STEAM field at the Fresno State STEAM conference, there will be an opportunity to learn information about the CAMP program. The CAMP program which stands for, college assistance migrant program, provides students with assistance in things like college orientation, academics, personal and financial issues as well as help with any concerns that

**STEAM DREAM...continued on page 3**

Ten years ago, TCOE’s Migrant Education Program began the Migrant Education Region VIII Journalism Project. Fifty students from Earlimart, Pixley, Tipton, and Tulare City school districts gathered in after school programs and learned about news gathering.

Their work culminated in the first-ever publication of *The Migrant Voice*, a student newspaper that focuses on topics relevant to migrant students in Tulare and Kings counties. Since then, the program has published one to four newspapers each year, except for one year during the pandemic.

While it may seem like another fun after-school activity, the program is a strategic initiative to help students increase their English proficiency. When the first edition of *The Migrant Voice* came out, only 24% of migrant students met ELA/ literacy standards on the California Assessment of Standard Performance and Progress (CAASPP).

## MUSIC

### Maná comes to Fresno

By Jefferson journalism class

On February 1, 2024, Camila Cuellar interviewed Mariela Cuellar. Cuellar went to a concert on December 2, 2023. She went to the concert with her husband, Juan Diego Cuellar. The concert was at the Save Mart Center in Fresno. The group that performed is called Maná.

The Maná group was formed in 1980. The concert was two and a half hours. Cuellar went to this concert because it is one of her favorite groups. It was her first time seeing them. The group played her favorite song, The San Blas Piece. On stage there was a simulation of a pie. During the song The Cockoo Clock, Maná was transported to another part of the stage. All the lights went out. They projected a clock.

Before singing, they talked about a foundation called Selva Negra. The foundation works to protect animal species such as sea turtles. Also, it helps rebuild ecosystems. Additionally, they educate people to create a healthy environment.

Cuellar said she would prefer to be in the VIP section because she wanted to see them closer. Cuellar also said that she did like the concert. “They sound just like they do on the radio,” Cuellar commented.

### Maná llega a Fresno

Por clase de periodismo de Jefferson

El primero de febrero de 2024 Camila Cuellar entrevistó a Mariela Cuellar. Cuellar fue a un concierto el 2 de diciembre de 2023. Ella fue al concierto con su esposo Juan Diego Cuellar. El concierto fue en el SaveMart Center de Fresno. El grupo que presentó se llama Maná.

El grupo Maná se formó en 1980. El concierto tardó dos horas y media. Cuellar fue a este concierto porque es uno de sus grupos favoritos. Fue su primera vez que los vio. El grupo tocó su canción favorita, El muelle de San Blas. En el escenario había una simulación de un pastel. Durante la canción El Reloj Cuckoo, Maná se transportó a otra parte del escenario. Todas las luces se apagaron. Proyectaron un reloj.

Antes de cantar, hablaron de una fundación llamada Selva Negra. La fundación trabaja para proteger a especies de animales como las tortugas del mar. También, ayuda a reconstruir ecosistemas. Además, educa para tener un ambiente saludable.

Cuellar dijo que preferiría estar en VIP porque quería verlos más cerca. Cuellar también dijo que si le gustó el concierto. “Se escuchan igual que en la radio”, comentó.

This project addresses that. Created in partnership with Loyola Marymount University’s Center for Equity for English Learners, the project provides journalism teachers with training from LMU professors as well as tailor-made curriculum.

By putting together a newspaper, students experience the role of a journalist by gathering information, interviewing people, and writing articles. They practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in English, and increase ownership and self-awareness of their own learning skills and strategies.

According to their teachers, participating students also demonstrate more academic vocabularies, bolder/more enthusiastic writing, and an overall increase in confidence.

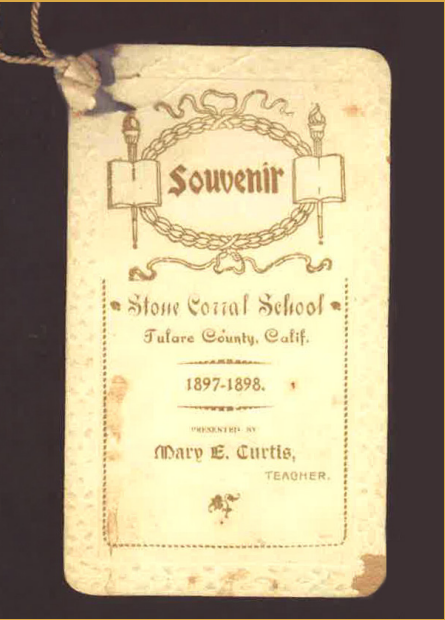
During the 2024-2025 school year, 20 students in Tulare and Kings county elementary schools participated in creating *The Migrant Voice*. Two editions were produced, one in English and one as a bilingual edition – powerful examples of a program that has changed the way students learn and the way they feel about themselves.

# District Milestone Celebrations

During the 2024–25 school year, a significant number of Tulare County’s 43 school districts celebrated milestone anniversaries.

The dates that the following districts were organized come from “History of the Organization and Administration of Public Schools in Tulare County, California 1852-1970” a dissertation written by former County Superintendent Dean Hall.

Congratulations to each district for the impact you have made on thousands of students and generations of Tulare County families!



<b>Outside Creek School</b> <b>October 10, 1864</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>Tipton School</b> <b>November 3, 1874</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>Traver School</b> <b>March 2, 1885</b> <i>Became Traver Joint School April 4, 1904</i>	<b>150</b>
<b>Sundale Union School</b> <b>May 8, 1945</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>Monson-Sultana Joint Union School</b> <b>December 16, 1949</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>Palo Verde Union School</b> <b>June 22, 1945</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Oak Valley Union School</b> <b>November 9, 1954</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Alta Vista School</b> <b>February 9, 1910</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Stone Corral School</b> <b>May 4, 1875</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Saucelito School</b> <b>November 3, 1874</b>	<b>70</b>



# Our Schools

## TCOE Charter Schools

### La Sierra Charter School

1735 E. Houston Ave., Visalia  
Grades: 7-12

Having marked its 25th year, La Sierra offers a military program where middle and high school cadets focus on military science, physical fitness, and leadership development. The school is a member of the California Cadet Corps. Dual enrollment college classes, an independent studies program, and a growing Media Arts pathway are also offered.

### University Preparatory High School (UPHS)

915 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia  
Grades: 9-12

UPHS focuses on providing an early college experience. Students take a variety of college courses through College of the Sequoias, while also participating in core academics designed to prepare them for college. The school also has an award-winning robotics team, and offers a robust arts program with choir, orchestra, hand bells, guitar, and theatre arts opportunities. An independent studies program was introduced for the 2024-25 school year.

## TCOE Authorized Independent Charters

### The Academies Charter Management Organization

**Blue Oak Academy**  
28050 Road 148, Visalia  
Grades: K-8

**Sycamore Valley Academy**  
6832 Avenue 280, Visalia  
Grades: K-8

The Academies offer an accelerated academic program with project-based learning, gifted education for all, social-emotional learning, and community service opportunities.

## Court/Community Schools

TCOE operates Mid-County Community School (Visalia) for students who have been expelled from their home district. The school provides a credit recovery program and a robust career technical education (CTE) program, including building trades, health sciences, and hospitality training. TCOE's Court School provides education for incarcerated youth. This includes traditional educational programming, as well as specialized CTE education and rehabilitative services.

Since 2023, Mid-County students opened the M.C. Café at TCOE's Doe Avenue Complex. Each week during the school year, students make and sell coffee, tea, smoothies, sandwiches, salads, fruit cups, cookies, and more to the employees who work at the Doe Avenue Complex.



### Eleanor Roosevelt Community Learning Center (ERCLC)

31191 Road 180, Visalia  
Grades: K-12

ERCLC is a free public charter that supports home-schooling families by providing academic resources, extracurricular activities, and instructional support.

### Valley Life Charter Schools

3737 S. Akers St., Visalia  
Grades: TK-3  
3737 W. Walnut Ave., Visalia  
Grades: 4-8

Valley Life Charter focuses on leadership, and the visual and performing arts. They also offer a K-12 independent studies program.

# Looking Forward

Take a look at six new projects we'll be working on during the 2025-26 school year! We're expanding our Student *Future Ready* Events, by offering Mock Trial, Academic Pentathlon, and an Esports League to middle school students for the first time. SCICON is refurbishing its Raptor Center, constructing a brand-new flight cage to help birds safely recover from wing injuries. The expanded raptor center will also include a viewing area for students. New Teacher & Leadership Development is now offering an add-on single subject credential, while the California Center on Teaching Careers is piloting the state's first Registered Apprenticeship Program for high school students.

## Student Future Ready Events introduces three new events

With the goal of having every student attend at least one co-curricular, or extracurricular event per year, TCOE's Student *Future Ready* Events is always looking for new ways to engage students. This year, the team identified room for growth in their middle school offerings and began developing new events for sixth through eighth graders. These included Middle School Mock Trial, Academic Pentathlon, and TCOE Esports League.

As middle school students prepare to take their next big step into high school, these new offerings familiarize them with extracurricular programs, build transferrable skills, and encourage continued engagement throughout high school.

### Middle School Mock Trial

Since the program's introduction in the 80s, high schoolers across Tulare County have participated in Mock Trial. But this year, middle schoolers will get the opportunity to plead their case in the courtroom. Using the same curriculum and methods as their high school counterparts, TCOE's new Middle School Mock Trial event will give sixth through eighth graders a chance to experience the judicial system firsthand. As they take on prosecution and defense roles, students will develop skills such as research, public speaking, and teamwork.

### Academic Pentathlon

Tailoring Academic Decathlon to a younger crowd, TCOE's new Academic Pentathlon event will prepare middle schoolers for the classwork and extracurriculars of high school. With five academic events rather than 10, students study a theme through the lens of five different subjects. Then, they complete a series of tests and essays to demonstrate what they've learned. Top performers advance to the state level and state champions progress to the national level. National curriculum is already available at [usad.org/Pentathlon](http://usad.org/Pentathlon), so that students can begin preparing for the county competition.





# Looking Forward



## TCOE Esports League

Technology is intertwined with education now more than ever. That’s why TCOE is launching a brand-new Esports League. Geared toward middle schoolers, the league provides a fun and engaging way for students to develop teamwork and problem-solving skills. Currently, events are organized locally. Schools will set their own practice schedules and matches with the help of TCOE Student *Future Ready* Events, and twice a year all participating teams will come together for a tournament. As the program grows, events will eventually be hosted in the new ERS library, anticipated to be completed in 2027. Student *Future Ready* Events also hopes to purchase consoles and add PC gaming, simulcasting, and podcasting.

## Center pilots state’s first teacher apprenticeship program

The California Center on Teaching Careers (the Center), in partnership with Hanford Joint Union High School District, is leading a multi-year effort to develop the first Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) for K–12 teachers in California.

For the past six years, the Center has supported aspiring educators through a variety of “grow your own” teacher residency programs. The new apprenticeship model builds on this foundation by engaging young people in the teaching profession earlier in their lives. It also removes traditional barriers to the profession and keeps talent local by training students to serve in the communities where they live.

A \$500,000 California Opportunity Youth Apprenticeship (COYA) grant will support the design and implementation of a teacher apprenticeship pipeline that begins in high school and leads to a full teaching credential. The program is designed to provide a youth-centered, earn-and-learn pathway that addresses both

the state’s special education and STEM teacher shortages and the broader challenge of youth disconnection in rural areas.

The RAP includes both a Youth Pre-Apprenticeship for high school students ages 16-18 and a Paraprofessional Apprenticeship for recent graduates and classified staff ages 18-24. The Center’s teacher residency apprenticeship program leads to a preliminary teaching credential.

Currently, the proposal to create the state’s first RAP for teachers is under review by the Division of Apprenticeship Standards (within the California Department of Industrial Relations) and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. Approval is anticipated later this year.

By re-imagining how and when young people enter the education workforce, this program aims to transform both the teacher pipeline and student outcomes in the Central Valley and beyond.

# SCICON expands Raptor Center

Tulare County residents usually only see raptors soaring high above them. But at SCICON, students can see birds of prey eye to eye. SCICON’s Raptor Center helps rehabilitate raptors such as owls, hawks, and turkey vultures as they recover from injuries preventing them from thriving in the wild, and this year, the center is receiving treatment of its own.

To update the Raptor Center, SCICON is refurbishing the student side of the facility, renovating the center’s roof, and constructing a brand-new flight cage. Once completed, the flight cage will help raptors recover from wing injuries by giving them a safe environment to practice flying. It will also include a viewing area for students.

In early January, SCICON’s maintenance crew laid the foundation of the flight cage. Then, after taking a break to prepare for SCICON’s annual BBQ, they shifted their focus to the student



viewing area. Currently the team is renovating the center’s back cages, rainproofing the roof, and connecting the roof to the flight cage. Once this part of the update is finished, the crew will install a sprinkler misting system.

## NTLD introduces new single subject credential add-on option

This fall, New Teacher & Leadership Development (NTLD) is promoting a new program for teachers to add a single subject teaching credential to an existing multiple or single subject credential in several short steps.

For teachers who possess a clear credential, the first step for adding an additional single subject credential is meeting content area subject-matter competency. This can be achieved by holding a degree in the subject, passing a CSET test, or having a subject matter review. Additionally, clear credential holders must complete a methodologies course, possess an English learner authorization by the state Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), and complete a CTC application.

Teachers who hold a preliminary credential must additionally complete coursework in developing English language skills and demonstrate knowledge of the principles and provisions of the U.S. Constitution.

For school districts, having teachers add a new credential could help with increasing course offerings and solve master scheduling issues. It could also help teachers achieve the dream of teaching something new.

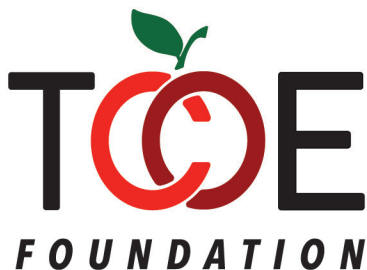
The cost of the program is less than \$1,500 with classes beginning in late October of this year.

For additional information, call (559) 730-2955, extension 1361.





## Support Us!



Founded in 2000, the Tulare County Office of Education Foundation raises money to support TCOE programs and educators in school districts throughout the county that have innovative ideas. During the 2024-2025 school year, the Foundation awarded over \$24,000 in grants!

Tulare County teachers, schools, or programs, with innovative ideas that could benefit from a grant from the Foundation, are encouraged apply at [tcoe.org/Foundation](https://tcoe.org/Foundation).

## Connect With Us!

If you're a Tulare County resident and have children in school or an interest in education, consider connecting with TCOE through our weekly newsletter or social media platforms!

TCOE's newsletter, News Gallery Week, shares stories about TCOE programs, TCOE events, standout staff members and students, and happenings around the county. Newsletters are published weekly at [tcoe.org/NewsGallery](https://tcoe.org/NewsGallery). If you'd like to be emailed our newsletter on a weekly basis, visit [tcoe.org/NewsGallery/SignUp](https://tcoe.org/NewsGallery/SignUp) to sign up.

You can also find us on the following social media platforms:

