

## Educators convene to focus on equity



The first annual TCOE Equity Conference was held Monday to provide educators with the latest practices to examine and remove inequities that may impede student success, particularly for those students who come from economically-disadvantaged homes. Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Tim Hire opened the conference, welcoming over 250 educators to the event. He shared two moving stories from his teaching and administrative service at Woodlake High School. Through both stories, he encouraged attendees to get to know their students beyond the classroom to understand the personal challenges they're facing. "The development of caring, supportive relationships can help educators remove those barriers students are too embarrassed to share," he said.



Following Mr. Hire's welcome, Dr. Paul Gorski, founder and lead equity specialist for the Equity Literacy Institute, provided the morning keynote address. Dr. Gorski and his team consult with school districts throughout the country on ways to improve equity for all students. He challenged the audience to increase their equity literacy by recognizing, responding to, and redressing inequities in their school districts. He explained that this involves analyzing practices and policies that may create inequities for students. He provided several examples, including access to the internet at home, access to after-school extracurricular activities, parent involvement, clothing, and discipline procedures.



Following Dr. Gorski's presentation, attendees were offered three series of breakout sessions. In total, local presenters conducted 24 sessions on topics that included district best practices, equity for English Learner students, social/emotional well-being, equity in student discipline, staff hiring practices, and chronic absenteeism.

At the end of the conference, Dr. Victor Rios spoke. He is dean of Social Sciences and professor of Sociology at University of California, Santa Barbara. Dr. Rios shared his story of growing up in Oakland, where he became gang-involved, incarcerated, and witness to the murder of his friend. At his lowest point, he remembered the words of his teacher, Ms. Russ, who said, “when you’re ready, I’ll be here for you.” Dr. Rios returned to school and, with the support of Ms. Russ, made up for lost credits to graduate on time. At her insistence, he went on to college and then to graduate school. Dr. Rios’ presentation balanced Dr. Gorski’s address. While Dr. Gorski emphasized a systematic approach to dealing with inequity, Dr. Rios stressed the importance of building caring relationships with students to address their needs.



The conference was organized by a committee of staff members from both Instructional Services and Special Services Divisions, with leadership provided by Assistant Superintendents Charlene Stringham and Julie Berk. For educators who were unable to attend the event, many presenters have included their breakout session materials under the Agenda tab on the event website at [bit.ly/tcequityprogram](https://bit.ly/tcequityprogram). Assistant Superintendent Julie Berk encouraged the audience to reach out to presenters and continue the discussions about eliminating inequities. “This is not a ‘one and done’ conference,” she smiled. “Our work around equity will continue this year and we want to support you in your own work. We invite you to reach out to us.” The committee has selected January 21, 2021 as the date for its second annual Equity Conference.

*Photos above:*

*~ Keynote speaker Dr. Paul Gorski is pictured conducting a breakout session on "Avoiding Equity Detours." Dr. Gorski is the founder and lead equity specialist for the Equity Literacy Institute.*

*~ Brandon Gridiron, Visalia Unified’s administrator of Student and School Supports, presented a session on cultivating equitable learning environments.*

*~ Donna Glassman-Sommer, TCOE’s executive director of the California Center on Teaching Careers, led a panel of district, community college, university, and state representatives to discuss the recruitment of diverse educators for California's classrooms.*

*~ Following his closing address, keynote speaker Dr. Victor Rios signed his books for conference attendees. Dr. Rios is dean of Social Sciences and professor of Sociology at University of California, Santa Barbara.*



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## College and Career Program supports the Amazing Shake event for second year



Last week, the College and Career Program helped to coordinate a portion of the Amazing Shake Competition. The Tulare County Office of Education became a partner in the event last year when the competition was held between Sundale Union School and Central Valley Christian School. This year, Burton Middle School joined the Amazing Shake.



The College and Career Program helped to coordinate the Gauntlet portion of the competition – one of four segments in the Amazing Shake. During the Gauntlet, students have two minutes in each of eight rooms to address real-life scenarios. As judges watched, students

were scored on their skills in handling a variety of situations, including presenting an administrator with the “Principal of the Year” award, consulting with a tech company that faced plummeting videogame sales, and addressing restaurant customers who found roaches in their food.



The Amazing Shake is a national competition that places an emphasis on teaching students manners, discipline, respect, and professional conduct. Students learn the nuances of professional human interaction as they are taught skills such as how to give a proper handshake, how to "work a room," how to give a successful interview, and how to remain composed under pressure. The focus of the Amazing Shake is to develop employability and life skills in students.



Following the Gauntlet, the top 20 students from each school were selected to advance to work in teams to pitch their best proposal about a community issue to a panel of industry and community executives. The final portion of the competition takes place between the top three students from each school competing on stage in a presidential-style debate.



For more information on the Amazing Shake Competition, call Joy Soares at (559) 733-6101.

*Photos above:*

*~ TCOE hosted the Gauntlet portion of the Amazing Shake competition. Students moved between eight rooms where they were presented with different scenarios to address on the spot. In this room, students were tasked with instructing chefs on how to make a cookie recipe with a “secret ingredient.”*

*~ At the conclusion of the Gauntlet, students conducted red carpet interviews.*

*~ Sami Cloutier from Sundale Union School was the top finisher in the Gauntlet competition. She is pictured with Terri Rufert, Sundale Union superintendent and Tim Hire, Tulare County Superintendent of Schools.*

*~ In this portion of the competition, students were asked to provide solutions to a tech company faced with plummeting videogame sales.*

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## **Second installment of annual Student Art Exhibition opens**

The second portion of the annual Student Art Exhibition opened this week in the lobby of the TCOE Administration Building at 6200 South Mooney Boulevard in Visalia. Over 250 pieces of new art and sculpture are on display from students in 22 schools within districts A-P. The exhibition will remain open through February 28. Included in the exhibition is a piece entitled *What a Lonely World* by Yessenia Sanchez, a junior at Orosi High School.



In March, pieces selected as "Best of Show" from the November-December and January-February exhibitions will be displayed. A public open house honoring the "Best of Show" student artists will be held 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. on March 4 in the lobby.

For more information, contact Kate Stover, visual and performing arts staff development and curriculum specialist, at (559) 741-0809.

*Photo above:*

*~ What a Lonely World by Yessenia Sanchez, a junior at Oroqui High School, is one of 250 pieces in the second installment in the annual Student Art Exhibition. The pieces will be on view in the lobby of the TCOE Administration Building through the end of the month.*

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## Coming Up!

- **January 21, 23, 28, 30, February 6, 18**  
**Tulare County Mock Trial**  
5:00 - 8:00pm, Tulare County Courthouse, Visalia  
[More information](#)
- **January 21 - February 28**  
**Student Art Exhibition**  
TCOE Administration Building Lobby, 6200 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia  
[More information.](#)
- **February 6**  
**University Preparatory High School Information Night**  
6:00 - 7:00pm, COS Visalia campus, Yokut Room 9, 915 S. Mooney Blvd.  
[More information](#)
- **February 7**  
**Planetarium Public Shows**  
**6:00pm: *Secret of the Cardboard Rocket***  
**7:00pm: *Saturn: Jewel of the Heavens***  
TCOE Planetarium & Science Center, 11535 Avenue 264, Visalia  
[More information](#)
- **February 7**  
**Poetry Out Loud**  
6:00 - 8:00pm, 210 Café, 210 W. Center Ave., Visalia  
[More information.](#)

View more events at [tcoe.org/CalendarofEvents](https://tcoe.org/CalendarofEvents).

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To receive *News Gallery Week*, visit [tcoe.org/GetTheGallery](http://tcoe.org/GetTheGallery), or contact Jennifer Fisher at [jenniferf@tcoe.org](mailto:jenniferf@tcoe.org) or (559) 733-6172.

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