

# news galleryweek

February 8, 2023

## TCOE supports parents and districts countywide in Universal Transitional Kindergarten



In 2021, state legislation was passed that requires all local educational agencies (LEA) operating a kindergarten to also provide a transitional kindergarten (TK) program by 2025-26 for all four-year-old children. While TK has been around for a decade, it was an optional service districts could choose to provide to their communities. With the new legislation mandating TK for all four-year-olds, the state is creating an entirely new grade level – something that hasn't been done in over 100 years.

Transitional kindergarten (TK) is the first of a two-year kindergarten program that is developmentally appropriate and aligned to [Preschool Learning Foundations](#). TK serves as a bridge between preschool and traditional kindergarten, utilizing a modified kindergarten curriculum taught by a credentialed teacher. The legislation used to create

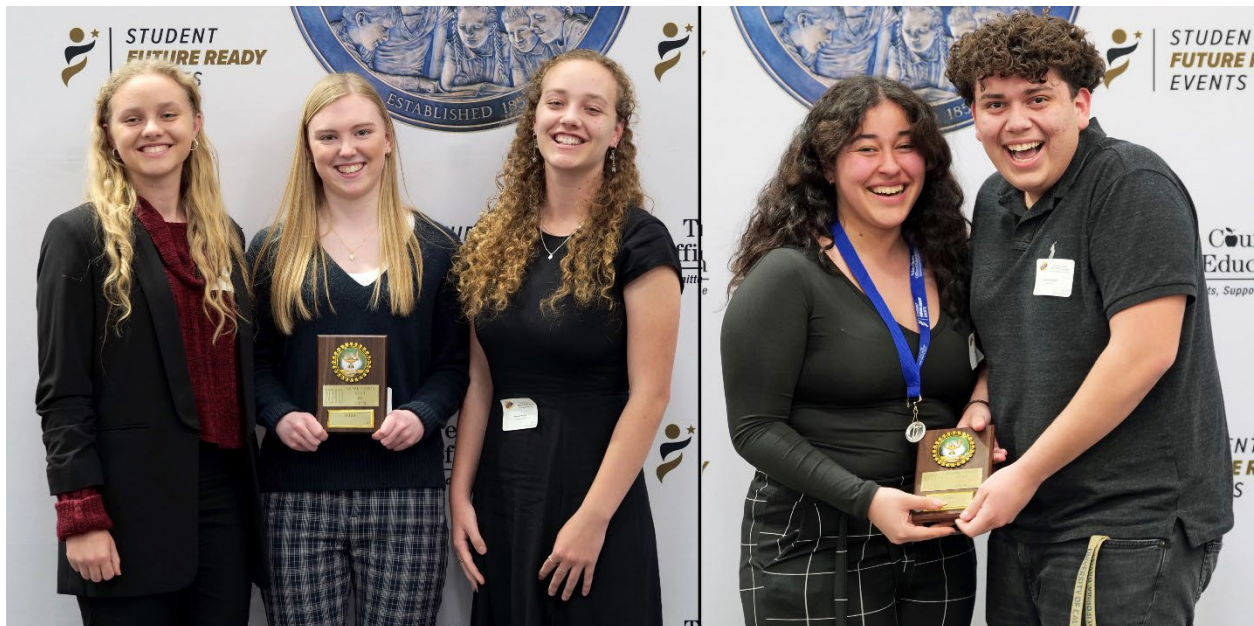
TK also protects the size of the classroom — limiting them to 12 students per adult with no more than 24 pupils in one classroom.

A new informational webpage, located at [tcoe.org/UTK](http://tcoe.org/UTK), was created to support educators and parents looking for information on TK. Parents can find helpful information on prekindergarten options and preparing their child for TK. Educators interested in teaching at the TK level can find information on the required qualifications and the coursework to fulfill those requirements. The webpages also have information on upcoming events.

“We are pleased to provide and continue to add to these online resources,” said Tim Hire, Tulare County Superintendent of Schools. “We also look forward to supporting Tulare County school districts and their families as they create and staff new TK classrooms.”

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## Students explore “Frontiers in History” at National History Day – Tulare County, 42 project advance to state



The annual National History Day – Tulare County wrapped Tuesday afternoon with 42 projects announced as finalists. These finalists’ projects advance to the state competition April 15-16 at California State University, Sacramento.

Projects that were selected as finalists came from Dinuba GATE, Goshen Elementary School, Dinuba High School, University Preparatory High School (Visalia), Sequoia Union School (Lemon Cove), Ridgeview Middle School (Visalia), Palm Elementary

School (Orosi), St. Aloysius School (Tulare), Green Acres Middle School (Visalia), Clay Elementary School (Kingsburg), and Redwood High School (Visalia).

National History Day (NHD) is a theme-based research program that showcases original presentations by students in grades 4-12 pertaining to historical issues, ideas, people and events. Students may choose any topic in local, national, or world history and explore its significance relative to the annual theme, which for 2023 is *Frontiers in History: People, Places, Ideas*.

This year, 200 elementary, middle and high school students from 14 Tulare County schools competed in three grade categories: 4-5, 6-8, and 9-12. Students in grades 4-5 competed in the two-dimensional category only. Students in the two upper-grade categories presented findings through one of the following categories: historical paper, exhibit, performance, documentary, podcast, or website.



The program showcased three Best of Event winners. The first was Lincoln Graves from University Preparatory High School who was recognized for his performance of *We're American, Too, Why Don't They Help?* in the Individual Performance – Senior Division category. University Preparatory High School's Addie Reardon, Hannah Wegley, and Hollen Wegley were also recognized for their video *Martha with Moxie: How Martha Gellhorn Revolutionized Journalism, War Correspondence, and Feminism* – a project entered in the Group Documentary – Senior Division category. Also from that category, Dinuba High School's Edtson Alvarado and Natalie Arias won Best of Event for their documentary *Joseph Valachi Frontier as the First Mafia Criminal Informant*.

For a complete list of winners, visit [tcoe.org/HistoryDay/Results](https://tcoe.org/HistoryDay/Results).

Photos above:

~ Best of Event winners pose with their plaques at the awards ceremony for National History Day. Addie Reardon, Hannah Wegley, and Hollen Wegley (left) from University Preparatory High School won in the Group Documentary – Senior Division category. In the same category, Dinuba High School's Edtson Alvarado and Natalie Arias (right) also won Best of Event.

~ Lincoln Graves from University Preparatory High School performs *We're American, Too, Why Don't They Help?* from the Individual Performances – Senior Division category. Graves also won Best of Event for his performance.

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## Visalia students recognized for Pursuing Victory with Honor



In partnership with the Downtown Visalia Kiwanis, TCOE's CHARACTER COUNTS! Program celebrated this winter's Pursuing Victory with Honor (PVWH) student-athletes at a lunch on Tuesday. The Downtown Visalia Kiwanis recognizes student-athletes, nominated by their coaches, each season for their sportsmanship. The awards included a certificate, a PVWH shirt and pin, and a lawn sign that reads "An Athlete of Character Lives Here." Below is a list of the Pursuing Victory with Honor award winners along with a quote from their coaches.

### Central Valley Christian High School

**Renee Vander Tuig – girls soccer:** Renee Vander Tuig is a four-year varsity player. She is a fierce competitor who always shows up on the field with respect for the game and her competitors. Win or lose, Renee always leaves everything she has on the field. This season as captain, she has shown incredible leadership both on and off the field. She has been diligent about encouraging teammates to work hard and challenge each other, both vocally and by example. Renee's hard work in training and during games is always accompanied by a positive, can-do attitude, even when facing tremendous adversity.

**Nicolas Lemstra – boys soccer:** Nic Lemstra is the kind of player who leads others by example through his actions. Nic always shows up to practice on time, ready to work, and with a good attitude. Nic works hard in every drill, from working to better his

fundamental skills to learning new concepts. He shares his knowledge of the game with the other players to help the team improve. He is encouraging to all players, and he is respectful to his coaches. He is always offering to help set up and pick up after practice. Nic plays the game hard but is often seen helping players up and encouraging the players around him. He is quick to check on a hurt player's wellbeing. Nic also treats officials with respect. Nic can be seen working to help defuse negativity towards both referees and players. Nic plays the game with integrity. He is a fantastic example to his teammates and fans alike. Nic is a well-focused player who works hard to balance student life with sports. Nic works closely with both his teachers and coaches to keep his school schedule and sports schedule in line. Nic is an example of what a student-athlete should be. He plays hard, respects others, is responsible, fair, and deeply cares for people. It's all these things that have me excited about the man Nic will become.

### **El Diamante High School**

**Sofia Perez – girls basketball:** Sofia Perez is a phenomenal leader on and off the court. Her teammates and peers look up to her and count on her. She is the glue that holds us together. She knows the program's expectations and holds not just our team but the entire program accountable for their actions. She is the first to praise someone whether it be on the court, in the classroom, or elsewhere. She puts others first always and cares about her teammates well-being. She is definitely a team-over-self athlete. Sofia gets it done in the classroom as well and is very serious about her academics. She currently has a 4.67 GPA. She steps up and helps her teammates that are struggling in the classroom as well to make sure they are successful too.

**Barclay Avila – boys wrestling:** Barclay is an outstanding student-athlete with a high GPA of 4.17. He works hard in the classroom, wrestling room, and clubs he is involved with. He is very respectful and does whatever is needed. He is a role model to his peers.

### **Golden West High School**

**Amya Lemus – girls basketball:** Amya Lemus illustrates the true definition of character as a student-athlete. Amya shows great passion and puts 110% in everything she does. I have had the pleasure of coaching Amya for all four years of basketball, both as a head coach and assistant. She leads by example on the court and controls the team spirit with her words and actions. She was a team captain on junior varsity and a team captain this year on varsity. Amya has played softball and basketball, and shows great teamwork and competitiveness. She communicates, hypes up the team, works hard, and takes the time to demonstrate leadership when her teammates need it. While playing softball and basketball, Amya has continued to keep a 4.0 GPA, and participates in the Black Student Union Club where she shows commitment and dedication to an organization. Amya has a one of kind personality that is highly addicting to everyone – her smile and laugh can change your day. Her happiness and joy is a game changer for her team. You will hear her cheer on her team at the top of

her lungs no matter the score. Her dedication and commitment to basketball this season has not gone unnoticed. She is the true definition of character, and I am proud to grant her this recognition of Pursuing Victory with Honor.

**Andre Figueroa – boys basketball:** Andre Figueroa is an outstanding and accomplished student-athlete. That being said, I can confidently say that Andre's biggest accomplishments are still ahead of him. I can say this because I have had the privilege to get to know Andre as an athlete, but more importantly as a person the last four years that he has been a part of the Golden West boys basketball program. Aside from being a great teammate and player, Andre is also a loving son and a great big brother who loves nothing more than spending time with his family. Andre is a two-year, varsity starter whose impact has been felt both on and off the court. Andre earned his starting role through consistent effort, hard work, and attention to detail. More impressively, Andre's consistent demeanor and character has earned the respect and admiration of his teammates. Andre is a quiet leader who leads with his actions, not his words. I have witnessed Andre have a positive impact on his teammates, with his reactions to failure and challenging situations during games and practices. Andre's interactions with game officials, coaches, and teammates are always respectful and handled with great maturity. These communication skills and respect of others will lead Andre to future success in whatever field he decides to pursue. It is my pleasure to be given this opportunity to recognize a very deserving student-athlete. Congratulations, Andre, for earning this Pursuing Victory with Honor award.

### **Mt. Whitney High School**

**Diana Castillo – girls soccer:** Diane Castillo is an outstanding example of Pursuing Victory with Honor. I have been blessed to be her soccer coach for the last four years at Mt. Whitney High School. I have watched her work hard to develop her skills as a goalkeeper and transform into an outstanding player with over 100 saves each of the last two seasons. She demonstrates responsibility as a captain by making all practices, arriving on time, and putting in hard work. In addition to her hard work, she has always been respectful of her teammates, opponents, coaches, and referees. She maintains a good grade point average, and is respected by teachers, friends, teammates, and coaches for her positive attitude and her trustworthiness. She somehow manages to smile, and make others smile, even after a tough loss. She is one of the most caring, sincerest, most coachable players I have had the pleasure to coach, and I will be missing her next season as I try to find someone to fill the void she will leave behind.

**Julien Romero – boys wrestling:** Julien is a true scholar-athlete. Julien is currently earning a 3.5 GPA. He excels in and out of the classroom. As a wrestler, Julien has gone above and beyond to ensure the success of his team. Julien has wrestled at 138, 148, and 152 pounds to help the team. Julien has been part of the Mt. Whitney program for three years. In these three years, Julien has displayed great leadership. His work ethic in the wrestling room and in the classroom is admirable. Julien is trustworthy and a great

asset to our team. He is a great role model to his peers, displaying respect and fairness toward his peers and coaches. He is a great scholar-athlete.

## Redwood High School

**Leah See – girls soccer:** Leah embodies everything a coach looks for in a student-athlete. Leah is a driving force in our midfield and a major key to Redwood’s recent success on the pitch. More importantly, Leah is a tremendous teammate. She has a kind, caring heart. Leah bounces around practice from teammate to teammate, talking to them, hyping them up and just generally being a person for them to rely on. Every training session Leah greets me with “Hey coach!” and a fist bump. When a teammate struggles, it is often Leah who is the first one to wrap an arm around them and encourage them to move forward. She’s just a wonderful human, and we’re lucky she’s a part of the Redwood girls soccer program. As a coach, I am very fortunate to have had the opportunity to have her on my team. As a person, I am very thankful I have had the opportunity to meet Leah See.

**Jordan Nelsen – boys soccer:** Jordan is a fine young man and is what every coach dreams of having as a student-athlete. He goes above and beyond to ensure that everyone is treated equal, and the same goes for opponents. I have received multiple compliments from players and coaches that Jordan is a respectable person, and always goes out of his way to show his gratitude toward others and that is why he is my nominee.

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## Harmony Magnet Academy wins Tulare County Academic Decathlon



On Saturday, Harmony Magnet Academy (Strathmore) unseated four-time, reigning champion El Diamante High School (Visalia) and won the overall Academic Decathlon championship. They will represent Tulare County at the state competition March 24-26 in Santa Clara.

The championship team was made up of Jay Dillon, Allison Daguman, Alyssandra Oracion, Elisabeth Ceballos, Janie Wilkinson, Miguel Prado, Quinn Soriano, Sean Phillips, and Alexander Delgado. The Harmony team also won top team in the small school category.

Since 2012, the overall Academic Decathlon champion has come from one of three high schools – Harmony (2012, 2013, 2014, 2023), Granite Hills High School of Porterville (2016, 2017, 2018), or El Diamante (2019, 2020, 2021, 2022).

At this year's competition, El Diamante was also the top team in the large school category and the SuperQuiz winners.

All Academic Decathlon teams are comprised of two to three students in each of three grade divisions: Honors (GPA 3.800 and higher), Scholastic (GPA 3.200-3.799), and Varsity (GPA 3.199 and below).

The top students in the three categories were Patrick Oliver (Honors) from El Diamante, David Gomez (Scholastic) from Granite Hills High School in Porterville, and Geovani Tapia (Varsity) from Granite Hills. All three received individual trophies as well.



Students also received medals and awards in each of the competition's 10 categories. The top students in each category were:



**Art**

Patrick Oliver, El Diamante High School, Visalia

**Economics**

Jay Dillon, Harmony Magnet Academy, Strathmore and Patrick Oliver, El Diamante High School, Visalia

**Essay**

Diego Corona, Granite Hills High School, Porterville

**Interview**

Derrick Smith, Granite Hills High School, Porterville and Andrea Andrade, Granite Hills High School, Porterville

**Literature**

Patrick Oliver, El Diamante High School, Visalia

**Mathematics**

Daniel Ramos, Harmony Magnet Academy, Strathmore and Jay Dillon, Harmony Magnet Academy, Strathmore

**Music**

Alyssandra Oracion, Harmony Magnet Academy, Strathmore

**Science**

Patrick Oliver, El Diamante High School, Visalia

**Social Science**

Patrick Oliver, El Diamante High School, Visalia

**Speech**

Geovani Tapia, Granite Hills High School, Porterville

For more information on Academic Decathlon, visit [tcoe.org/AcademicDecathlon](http://tcoe.org/AcademicDecathlon).

Photos above:

~ Harmony Magnet Academy (Strathmore) won the Tulare County Academic Decathlon on Saturday. It was the school's first win since a three-year championship run ending in 2014.

~ From left to right, the top students in the three Academic Decathlon categories were Patrick Oliver (Honors) from El Diamante, David Gomez (Scholastic) from Granite Hills High School in Porterville, and Geovani Tapia (Varsity) from Granite Hills.

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## Expanded Poetry Live! event crowns Poetry Out Loud and first-ever Poet's Own Voice champions



The Tulare County Office of Education's poetry program offerings for middle and high school students grew this year. Poetry Live! was created as an umbrella program for Poetry Out Loud – which has been offered in Tulare County since 2016 – and the new Poet's Own Voice competition.

Last week, students from two Tulare high schools competed in Poetry Live! The 2023 Tulare County Poetry Out Loud champion is Sabrina Castillo, a junior at Tulare Union High School. To prepare for the competition, Sabrina chose three pieces from the organization's national archive to recite in front of judges. She will represent Tulare County at the California Poetry Out Loud competition next month.

The 2023 Poet's Own Voice champion — and the first-ever Tulare County Youth Poet Laureate — is Audrey Reis, a senior at Mission Oak High School in Tulare. Open to middle and high school students, Poet's Own Voice invites students write and perform their own works. Audrey performed her last composition – an ode – singing and playing her ukulele. She will represent Tulare County at a regional competition next month. As Youth Poet Laureate, Audrey will also serve as an ambassador and advocate for the art form, visiting schools and community organizations this year.

Middle and high school teachers are encouraged to visit [tcoe.org/PoetryLive](https://tcoe.org/PoetryLive) to learn more about the various programs and how to get involved next year.

For information on the long-running Poetry & Prose On Stage program for elementary and middle school students, visit [tcoe.org/PNP](http://tcoe.org/PNP).

Photo above:

~ Audrey Reis (left) won the Poet's Own Voice competition for her original works performed at Poetry Live! last week. The Mission Oak High School senior was also named the first-ever Tulare County Youth Poet Laureate. Sabrina Castillo (right) was crowned the Poetry Out Loud champion. The Tulare Union High School junior will represent Tulare County at the Poetry Out Loud state championships next month.

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## CVNIC College-Ready and CVNIC Mathematics hosts February convenings to share improvement progress



Two regional improvement science networks met last week to continue their discussion around improvement learning and to share the progress they're making on their campuses. The two networks are known as Central Valley Networked Improvement Community (CVNIC). One is dedicated to improving college readiness (CVNIC: College-Ready) and the other to improving mathematics instruction (CVNIC: Mathematics 3-8).

**CVNIC: College-Ready** held its third network convening on February 1 with high school teams from 13 school sites across four counties working on improving learning environments needed to support first-time success in math courses. The group works

with the theory that, “student voice, mindset, and belonging are directly related to students’ math identities and success.”

At the CVNIC: College-Ready, two high school teams were invited to share their improvement work – Redwood High School in Visalia and Strathmore High School.

Redwood administrators shared their work in improving the registration process for mathematics to keep students “opted in” for third-year math. This change to the system ensures that more students have met the state university systems’ A-G course requirements upon graduation, giving them more choice in their post-secondary aspirations. Redwood administrators also shared that students choosing to opt out of a third-year math course would require a parent meeting.

At Strathmore High School, administrators shared that their mathematics chair and counselor are now conducting A-G course presentations to the entire freshman class. Strathmore developed A-G posters and shared them with students to clarify the necessary courses needed upon graduation to be A-G eligible.

**CVNIC: Mathematics 3-8** held its third network convening of the year on February 2. Teams from nine school sites in Tulare County have been working toward the following outcomes: cultivating relationships within and across the network; growing capacity in mathematics instruction; understanding how continuous improvement supports classroom work; and learning how to increase diversity, access, equity, and inclusion. The network’s aim is to impact students’ confidence and develop strong habits for students’ success in mathematics.

Administrators at Earlimart Middle School shared their team’s working theory that if they continue to utilize youcubed tasks and Number Talks curriculum then students will enjoy challenging tasks and activities. Challenging tasks require students to problem solve instead of working to “get the answer.” The Earlimart team collected data on students’ feelings after completing challenging math tasks and it showed that when they had more time and experience with these challenging tasks, they are more likely to stay engaged in the problem-solving process. It also helped students to shift their mindset about what it is like for them to think mathematically.



For more information on the CVNIC networks, contact Samantha Tate at [samantha.tate@tcoe.org](mailto:samantha.tate@tcoe.org)

Photos above:

~ At the CVNIC: College-Ready convening John Lujan, mathematics department chair at Strathmore High School, shared how his school has designed a program to educate each freshman class about universities' A-G course requirements.

~ At the CVNIC: Mathematics 3-8 convening, the Earlimart Middle School mathematics team shared their efforts to engage students in challenging math problems and measure their feelings about the process having had more training in the problem-solving process.

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