

Tulare County Office of Education

Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools

April 1, 2025

Media Advisory

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Tulare County Office of Education Announces:

Countywide Excellence in Education winners announced

Administrator/Manager of the Year, Teacher of the Year, and School Employee of the Year selected in annual awards program

Yesterday, Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Tim Hire surprised the three winners named in the 31st Annual Tulare County Excellence in Education Awards program. The three winners notified were Andrew Woodley (2025 Administrator/Manager of the Year), Heather Silva (2025 Teacher of the Year), and Joanna Woodyatt (2025 School Employee of the Year).

In March, a selection committee of Tulare County business and education leaders reviewed the nominees in each of the three categories. A total of 35 nominations were received this year from Tulare County school districts. Each nomination was scored individually by every member of the selection committee.

“The winners share a desire to give students the tools they need to be successful, both academically and socially,” Hire said. “It’s a pleasure to celebrate the winners, finalists, and nominees, who represent Tulare County education so well.”

ADMINISTRATOR/MANAGER OF THE YEAR

Winner

Andrew Woodley

Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Porterville Unified School District

Andrew Woodley is the director of Curriculum and Instruction for Porterville Unified School District and Tulare County’s Administrator/Manager of the Year. In his role of six years with the district, he oversees instructional programs to advance student achievement, including English language development and the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC). Woodley also leads the district’s instructional coaches and supports teachers to improve instructional practices, often modeling lessons in classrooms. Of his efforts, one district principal said, “our scores are increasing because of the collaboration with coaches and district support of curriculum and instruction initiatives.”

In total, Woodley has been with Porterville Unified for 21 years, beginning as a teacher before moving to school site administration. One of his high school students who now works for the district in the communications department remembers him as “one of the best teachers I’ve ever had.... His class wasn’t

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just about learning English – it was about learning how to think critically, communicate effectively, and express ideas with confidence.”

Today, Woodley uses two foundational pillars to guide his work – systems and relationships. Within the instructional systems, he uses data to drive decision-making, saying, “If we cannot measure an outcome, we cannot replicate or improve it. Data provides us with direction, but it is our professional expertise and human judgment that allow us to turn numbers into meaningful action.”

Lillian Durbin, president of the district’s Board of Trustees, praised Woodley for leading the district to digital learning and supporting teachers during the pandemic.

Finalists

Dori Bingaman

Principal, Shannon Ranch Elementary School
Visalia Unified School District

Mathew Newcomb

Learning Director, Lincoln Elementary School
Lindsay Unified School District

TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Winner

Heather Silva

Eighth-Grade Teacher, Alpine Vista School
Tulare City School District

Heather Silva is the 2025 Tulare County Teacher of the Year. She has taught at Alpine Vista School for the past 13 years, serving as a 1st, 3rd, 4th, 6th, 7th, and - currently - 8th grade teacher. In her current assignment, she teaches leadership, English language development (ELD), and computer science classes. Her classroom reflects her core values that include student voice and choice, leadership opportunities, and a culture of kindness.

Silva is a champion for student engagement. In her computer science class, students are coding websites on topics that they are passionate about, while in her leadership class, students are producing weekly informational broadcasts and social media posts. This year, she stepped up as the ELD teacher to ensure the school's most vulnerable students feel welcomed, valued, and supported in both their academic and social development.

In addition, Silva has created a large number of clubs and ongoing activities, including the school's agriculture class and garden, Kindness Week, Back-to-School Car Show, annual school musical, Teacher Appreciation Week, and Eagles Care Project. She is also the school's Leader in Me/Lighthouse School coach. Her drive to create more opportunities for students to grow and lead stems from her teaching philosophy. “I believe that all students have genius within them, that everyone is a leader, and that we have

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the most fun in life when we take our genius and share it with others in order to better our communities,” Silva said.

Finalists

Megan Jensen

Fourth-Grade Teacher
Valley Life Charter School

Angela Leon

World Languages Teacher, Exeter Union High School
Exeter Unified School District

SCHOOL EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Winner

Joanna Woodyatt

Registered Behavior Technician, Rocky Hill Elementary School
Exeter Unified School District

Joanna Woodyatt is the 2025 Tulare County School Employee of the Year. As a registered behavior technician (RBT) at Rocky Hill Elementary School, she provides direct behavioral therapy to students, who often have autism or other developmental disorders. Additionally, Woodyatt assists with skills development for communication, social interactions, and daily living activities. She works to reduce the challenging behaviors, which often takes many years. She also supports teachers and staff with behavior strategies, and collaborates with families and caregivers.

A veteran who served in the US Army, Woodyatt has worked for Exeter Unified for 16 years, first as an instructional aide in behavior management. Two years ago, the district created a behavior support team with Woodyatt first to be invited to join. She spent several months studying to earn her RBT certification. Lynn Skaff, school psychologist at Rocky Hill Elementary, said, “Whether it is a kindergartener struggling with behavior or a fifth grader needing emotional support, Joanna instinctively knows how to meet each child at their individual needs. Her ability to connect with students, see their strengths, and guide them with patience and understanding is a gift that cannot be taught, it is simply who she is.”

Woodyatt is a member of the Tulare County Suicide Prevention Council, certified in the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), and is the district’s Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) instructor. On the rewards of working in education, she said, “The work and care we put into our students lets them truly know and believe that they are capable of far more than they once thought.”

Finalists

Augustin "Auggie" Lopez

Lead IT Specialist
Dinuba Unified School District

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Yesenia Lopez

Counseling Secretary II, Tulare Western High School
Tulare Joint Union High School District

RECOGNITION EVENT:

31st Annual Tulare County Excellence in Education Awards

Wednesday, October 22, 2025 (by invitation only)

7:30 – 9:15 a.m.

Tulare County Office of Education, Jim Vidak Education Center, 6200 S. Mooney Blvd.,
Visalia, CA

The Excellence in Education program is a partnership between the Tulare County Office of Education and Educational Employees Credit Union (EECU).

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