

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

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For Immediate Release

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Tulare County Office of Education Announces:

Educators of the Year to be honored at the 23rd Annual Confucius' Birthday Celebration at Chinese Cultural Center September 22, 2016 • 6:00 p.m. • Chinese Cultural Center • 500 S. Akers St., Visalia

September 22, three Tulare County educators will have a special night under the stars with family, friends and colleagues celebrating their unique talents and accomplishments. The evening honors are part of the annual partnership with the Central California Chinese Cultural Center. Known as the Confucius' Birthday/Educators of the Year Celebration, the teacher recognition program celebrates three teachers on the birthday of Confucius – an occasion Chinese people around the world often use to celebrate teachers.

“The remarkable love and dedication our winners have for their students is certainly evident,” said Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. “What makes the winners extraordinary is that they work to support the rest of their colleagues and make their schools better learning environments.”

Kristy Caesar is a kindergarten learning facilitator at Kennedy Elementary in Lindsay. Originally from Washington State, Mrs. Caesar and her family moved to Tulare County when her husband was hired by Lindsay Unified to help implement its performance-based education system. While in Washington, Mrs. Caesar had been utilizing the performance-based system, which has students working at their performance level and advancing through the curriculum when they have demonstrated knowledge or skills

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proficiency. Mrs. Caesar says that the foundation of a performance-based education is that students know what they're learning, they know where they've been, and what they're learning next.

Mrs. Caesar's former principal, Nikolaus Namba, says that she has an amazing ability to connect with learners and personalize their learning experience. He says, "There is nothing more amazing than hearing five- and six-year-old children being this articulate and informed about their education."

Mrs. Caesar is one of the district's leads for its K-2 achievement team because of her knowledge of instructional strategies and their effectiveness with students. The district regularly records her classroom instruction time for training purposes among the staff. Mrs. Caesar was also praised for her consistent integration of the arts in daily lessons to foster students' creativity and help them absorb the content in meaningful ways.

AmyRose Lardner is a first-grade teacher at Kohn Elementary School in Tulare, where she has taught for 17 years. Her principal, Whitney Avila, says, "There is not one student on our campus she does not consider to be her own. If she notices a child who needs a little TLC, she is the first to recognize it and offer to help – whether it's giving that child a few positive words of encouragement, a hug or inviting them back to her classroom to take their mind off of things."

Through her own initiative, Mrs. Lardner has become a campus leader in the use of technology. A few years ago when Superintendent Dr. Clare Gist made technology a district-wide priority, Mrs. Lardner took it upon herself to research applications for the iPads the school was given. Through networking with teachers around the nation and conversations with Google staff, she discovered valuable teaching tools she incorporates into her classroom. "First-graders are just as capable of doing things on computers as most adults," she said.

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Students in her classroom enjoy using OSMO, an intuitive coding tool that allows them to program games and stories. Now as Kohn's lead technology teacher, Mrs. Lardner works with other teachers to incorporate and trouble-shoot technology in all classrooms.

John Domingcil is the band director at Dinuba High School (DHS). He began his career at Dinuba Unified in 2001 as the Washington Intermediate School (WIS) band director. During his tenure there, the WIS band received numerous awards, including the sweepstakes award at the Pismo Beach Band Review.

In 2013, he became the band director for Dinuba High School, while also serving a year as the WIS band director to help with the transition. Prior to his arrival at DHS, the program had only 32 band members and eight color guard members. For the 2016-17 school year, the band has a membership of 87 musicians, with an additional 39 students in the color guard and drill team.

Through a repertoire of current pop music and a USC high-step marching style, Mr. Domingcil has made football field shows and music at many sporting events the driving force behind DHS's school spirit. In the short time he has been band director at DHS, the program has received numerous awards. In that time, he has also built a growing guitar program. Mr. Domingcil reports that the guitar program has been a stepping stone for students who don't have previous musical experience. This year, he has two guitar classes with nearly 30 students each.

For more information about the Confucius Birthday/Educators of the Year Program, contact Marlene Moreno at (559) 733-6302.

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