

TULARE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

05/06/2026 [03:00 PM]

REGULAR MEETING

For the Regular Board Meeting of May 6, 2026, at 3:00 p.m., in the Redwood Conference Center at the Jim Vidak Education Center, 6200 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia, California.

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Roll Call

Present: Judy Coble, Tim Hire, Tom Link, Ruben Macareno, Felipe Martinez, Chris Reed, Tony Rodriguez, Mike Waters

Write-ins: Staff members present: Evelyn Arciniega, Jody Arriaga, Dr. Jose Bedolla, Julie Berk, Jaime Burnitzki, Karen Costa, John Davis, Jennifer Esparza, Dr. Helen Feller, Jennifer Fisher, Liliana Flores, Sarah Hamilton, Kevin Jessee, Jerry Jolly, Christina Loya, Fernie Marroquin, Chris Meyer, Shantall Porchia, Dr. Jesse Sanchez, and Dedi Somavia. Guests Present: Rosa Gomez, Dennise Lino, Enrique Lino, Graciella Nava, Heather Pilgrim, Heather Rocha, Caila Rodriguez, Marcos Rodriguez, Jasmine Robledo, Nadirah Robledo, and Gail Zurick.
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1. Call to Order

a. Pledge of Allegiance

b. Welcome

Minutes

President Tony Rodriguez welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m., Tom Link led the Pledge of Allegiance. President Rodriguez asked that the record show that all board members are present.

2. ADA Accommodation Requirement

Persons who are in need of a disability-related modification or accommodation in order to participate in the board meeting must make a request in writing to the Office of the County Superintendent of Schools, 6200 South Mooney Boulevard, Visalia, California, P.O. Box 5091, 559/733-6301. A request for accommodation should specify the nature of the modification or accommodation requested, including any necessary auxiliary aids or services required and the name and telephone number of the person making the request. The written request should be made as soon as possible and no later than 2 days before the meeting. The agenda, agenda packet and any written documents distributed to the board during a public meeting will be made available in appropriate alternative formats upon request by a person with a disability as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Written documents concerning agenda items are available for public inspection during normal business hours within 72 hours of a regular board meeting at the Tulare County Office of Education, 6200 South Mooney Boulevard, Visalia, California.

3. Public Comments

Members of the public may address the board on any agenda item, or other item of interest within the subject matter jurisdiction of the board during the public comment period. Agenda items may also be addressed by the public at the time they are taken up by the board. The board is not able to discuss or take action on any item not appearing on the agenda. A five-minute time limit can be imposed on public input for individuals/issues as deemed necessary.

4. Action Items

a. Presentation of 2026 Poetry & Prose Student Performances - Chris Meyer

Minutes

Chris Meyer reported that this was the 41th year of Poetry and Prose. The event spanned over two weeks and included a total of 127 schools with around 2,000 students participating from Tulare, Fresno, and Kings Counties. After 41 years, we continue to celebrate the dedication of Nancy Bellin. Because of her, this event has grown to what we see today.

Three students performed their poetry recitation. From Columbine School, Caila Rodriguez presented "For Sale." From Oak Grove Elementary School, Jasmine Robledo & Nadirah Robledo presented "Sisters." From Oak Grove Elementary School, Graciella Nava presented "The Kitchen in which my Grandma Made."

The Board thanked Chris Meyer and the students for their presentations.

b. Presentation of the Migrant Education Program, Washington, DC and New York Student Trip - Evelyn Arciniega Leppke and Jennifer Esparza

Minutes

Evelyn Arciniega Leppke and Jennifer Esparza from the Migrant Education Program presented on the Close Up program and their recent five-day trip to Washington, D.C., and New York. The Close Up Foundation, established in 1971, is a nonprofit, non-partisan civic education organization dedicated to promoting informed and active participation in democracy among youth. This year, 20 students from local high schools in Tulare and Kings counties were able to participate in this enriching experience. The program offers a wide range of activities for both students and educators, including mock trials, debates, and opportunities to connect with peers from across the U.S. While in New York, they visited many important landmarks and areas, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Central Park. They also attended a Broadway show, *The Lost Voice*.

Deniese Lino, a student from Mt. Whitney High School, shared her experience visiting Washington, D.C., and New York through the Close Up Foundation. Highlights of the trip included visiting key government sites and observing how policy debates take place. She also interacted with participants from different states, which helped her gain a better understanding of diverse perspectives, particularly during discussions on issues such as gun control.

The program involved long days filled with workshops and seminars led by professionals, including a cybersecurity expert and a lobbyist, who provided insight into policymaking and the role of Congress. Overall, the experience broadened her understanding of government and the role citizens play in it.

After graduating, Lino plans to attend California State University, Long Beach, where she intends to study business marketing and cybersecurity, and possibly explore political science.

c. Routine Matters

1. Consent Calendar

Vote Results

Yea: 7 Judy Coble, Tom Link, Ruben Macareno, Felipe Martinez, Chris Reed, Tony Rodriguez, Mike Waters
Nay: 0
Abstain: 0
Not Cast: 0

Motion: Judy Coble **Second:** Tom Link

- a. Approval of Minutes for Special Board Meeting of March 31, 2026**
- b. Approval of Minutes for the Regular Board Meeting of April 1, 2026**
- c. Approval of Minutes for the Special Board Planning Meeting Board Retreat of April 1, 2026**
- d. Authorization of Countywide Registration of Credentials**
- e. Authorization of Temporary County Certificates**
- f. Authorization of Countywide Emergency Permit Applications**

d. Old Business

1. Consideration and Approval, Second Reading of Board Policy 5131.8 - Mobile Communication Devices - Tammy Bradford

Board Policy 5131.8 - Mobile Communications Devices

Minutes

Fernie Marroquin requested the Board's approval of Board Policy 5131.8 - Mobile Communications Devices.

Vote Results

Yea: 7 Judy Coble, Tom Link, Ruben Macareno, Felipe Martinez, Chris Reed, Tony Rodriguez, Mike Waters
Nay: 0
Abstain: 0
Not Cast: 0

Motion: Mike Waters **Second:** Chris Reed

2. Consideration and Approval, Second Reading of Board Policy and Administrative Regulation 6143 - Courses of Study - Julie Berk

Minutes

Julie Berk requested the Board's approval of Board Policy and Administrative Regulation 6143 - Courses of Study.

Vote Results

Yea: 7 Judy Coble, Tom Link, Ruben Macareno, Felipe Martinez, Chris Reed, Tony Rodriguez, Mike Waters
Nay: 0
Abstain: 0
Not Cast: 0

Motion: Chris Reed **Second:** Mike Waters

e. New Business

1. Presentation of the Williams/Valenzuela Uniform Complaint Report for the 1st Quarter of 2026 from Tulare County School Districts - Dedi Somavia

Minutes

Dedi Somavia presented the 1st Quarter of the 2026 Williams Valenzuela Uniform Complaint Report. There were no complaints received during this period.

2. Public Hearing for Initial Negotiations Proposal of the California School Employees Association (CSEA), Chapter 428 to TCOE for 2026-2027 - Dedi Somavia

Minutes

Tony Rodriguez opened the public hearing at 3:27 p.m. for the Initial Negotiations Proposal of the California School Employees Association (CSEA), Chapter 428 to TCOE for 2026-2027. Receiving no comments, Mr. Rodriguez closed the hearing at 3:28 p.m.

3. Public Hearing for Initial Negotiations Proposal of the California School Employees Association (CSEA), Chapter 899 to TCOE for 2026-2027 - Dedi Somavia

Minutes

Tony Rodriguez opened the public hearing at 3:28 p.m. for the Initial Negotiations Proposal of the California School Employees Association (CSEA), Chapter 899 to TCOE for 2026-2027. Receiving no comments, Mr. Rodriguez closed the hearing at 3:29 p.m.

4. Public Hearing for Initial Negotiations Proposal of TCOE to the California School Employees Association (CSEA), Chapter 428 for 2026-2027 - Dedi Somavia

Minutes

Tony Rodriguez opened the public hearing at 3:29 p.m. for the Initial Negotiations Proposal of TCOE to the California School Employees Association (CSEA), Chapter 428 for 2026-2027. Receiving no comments, Mr. Rodriguez closed the hearing at 3:30 p.m.

5. Public Hearing for Initial Negotiations Proposal of TCOE to the California School Employees Association (CSEA), Chapter 899 for 2026-2027 - Dedi Somavia

Minutes

Tony Rodriguez opened the public hearing at 3:30 p.m. for the Initial Negotiations Proposal of TCOE to the California School Employees Association (CSEA), Chapter 899 for 2026-2027. Receiving no comments, Mr. Rodriguez closed the hearing at 3:31 p.m.

6. Presentation of Annual Charter School Oversight Report- Blue Oak Academy, Sycamore Valley Academy, and Eleanor Roosevelt Community Learning Center - Karen Costa, Dr. Jesse Sanchez, and Christina Loya

Minutes

Karen Costa, Dr. Jesse Sanchez & Christina Loya presented the Annual Oversight Report for Blue Oak Academy, Sycamore Valley Academy, and Eleanor Roosevelt Community Learning Center.

Sycamore Valley and Blue Oak were found to be fiscally strong, with stable budgets and strong reserves. Both schools align with their missions and emphasize “gifted education for all,” showing strengths in student engagement and literacy, though improvement is needed in math and closing achievement gaps among student groups. Their learning environments are inclusive, with strong community involvement and positive school culture. Governance practices were effective overall, with only minor compliance issues that are being corrected. Both schools are also working to improve demographic diversity and address transportation barriers affecting enrollment.

Eleanor Roosevelt Community Learning Center demonstrated strong alignment between its educational model and implementation, with individualized learning plans and significant parent involvement. The school showed notable academic growth in both English language arts and math, along with increasing enrollment and demand. Its homeschool-based model fosters high student engagement, independence, and a collaborative school culture. Financially and operationally, the school is stable.

Overall, all three charter schools were commended for their strong programs, positive cultures, and continuous efforts to improve student outcomes and equity.

Chris Reed clarified that Eleanor Roosevelt Community Learning Center operates as a homeschool-based program. Parents serve as the primary educators for their children rather than traditional classroom teachers. The school does not have standard classroom instruction but instead offers enrichment classes, while parents remain deeply involved and committed to their children’s education.

7. Public hearing for Adoption of the 2026-2027 Annual Service Plan and Annual Budget Plan for Tulare County/District SELPA - Tammy Bradford

Minutes

Kevin Jesse asked for a public hearing for the 2026-2027 Annual Service Plan and Annual Budget Plan for Tulare County/District SELPA. The service plan and budget are required to be approved annually.

Tony Rodriguez opened a public hearing at 3:54 p.m. Receiving no comments, Mr. Rodriguez closed the public hearing at 3:55 p.m.

8. Consideration and Adoption, 2026-2027 Annual Service Plan for Tulare County/District SELPA - Tammy Bradford

Minutes

Kevin Jesse requested the Board's adoption of the 2026-2027 Annual Service Plan for Tulare County/District SELPA.

Vote Results

Yea: 7 Judy Coble, Tom Link, Ruben Macareno, Felipe Martinez, Chris Reed, Tony Rodriguez, Mike Waters

Nay: 0

Abstain: 0

Not Cast: 0

Motion: Tom Link **Second:** Mike Waters

9. Consideration and Adoption, 2026-2027 Annual Budget Plan for Tulare County/District SELPA - Tammy Bradford

Minutes

Kevin Jesse requested the board's approval for the 2026-2027 Annual Budget Plan for Tulare County/District SELPA.

Kevin reported that the majority of revenue (about 55%) comes from state special education funding (AB 602), with smaller contributions from federal programs such as Part C, which supports infants and toddlers (ages 0–3) with disabilities.

Most expenditures are directed toward salaries and benefits for special education teachers, classified staff, and SELPA program operations. The total projected funding is approximately \$168 million, with rising costs largely due to increased salaries and benefits.

Despite some incremental funding increases, special education remains underfunded, and districts must continue contributing additional resources. Changes in recent years have allowed districts more flexibility in managing their own special education funds, which has impacted how SELPA operates. Charter schools may choose whether to participate in a SELPA or join a charter-specific SELPA.

Vote Results

Yea: 7 Judy Coble, Tom Link, Ruben Macareno, Felipe Martinez, Chris Reed, Tony Rodriguez, Mike Waters

Nay: 0

Abstain: 0

Not Cast: 0

Motion: Chris Reed **Second:** Ruben Macareno

10. Public Hearing for Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) for Tulare County Office of Education, Special Services - Kevin Jessee

Minutes

Tony Rodriguez opened a public hearing at 4:03 p.m. Kevin Jessee presented the Tulare County Office of Education LCAP for Special Services. Notable successes included a significant reduction in suspensions from 5.9% to 0% and a 15.2% increase in the graduation rate. However, chronic absenteeism remains an ongoing challenge, and continued efforts will be needed to address it. This marks the final year of the current three-year LCAP cycle, with a new cycle and updated goals to begin next year. The plan will return to the board next month for approval. Mr. Rodriguez closed the public hearing at 4:04 p.m.

11. Public Hearing for Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) for University Preparatory High School (UPHS) - Dr. Helen Feller

Minutes

Tony Rodriguez opened a public hearing at 4:05 p.m. Dr. Helen Feller presented the Tulare County Office of Education LCAP for University Preparatory High School (UPHS). Dr. Feller reported some of the highlights include strong academic performance and college readiness as the school enters the final year of its three-year cycle. Students significantly outperform state averages, with notable gains in English language arts, math, and science. GPA averages have also risen, reflecting improved academic outcomes. These successes are attributed to targeted support, differentiated instruction, structured tutoring, and focused professional development for teachers. College and career readiness remain one of the key strengths, with a 96% graduation rate and high college enrollment. Many students earn college credits—and even associate degrees—while in high school through partnerships with College of the Sequoias. The school is also working to expand opportunities for bilingual students to earn both the

Seal of Bilingualism and an associate degree in Spanish. Areas for growth include improving English learner (ELL) progress and reclassification rates. The school is increasing targeted supports and training to address this gap. Overall, University Prep demonstrates strong outcomes, continued improvement, and a focus on expanding opportunities for students as it prepares for the next LCAP cycle. Mr. Rodriguez closed the public hearing at 4:14 p.m.

12. Public Hearing for Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) for La Sierra Military Academy - Dr. Jose Bedolla

Minutes

Tony Rodriguez opened a public hearing at 4:14 p.m. Dr. Bedolla presented the La Sierra Military Academy LCAP. Dr. Bedolla reported that it is the final year of the current three-year cycle. The plan focuses on five goals aimed at improving students' academic achievement and social development. The school has demonstrated strong progress, particularly with two consecutive years of growth in mathematics. College and career readiness has also improved, increasing by 14.3% over the past two years, though it remains an area of continued focus. New opportunities have been introduced for students, including a forestry pathway and expanded course offerings such as chemistry and pre-calculus. These additions reflect efforts to strengthen student preparation and capacity building. Dr. Bedolla credited staff, leadership, and families for their dedication and contributions to student success, highlighting ongoing collaboration as a key factor in the school's progress. Receiving no comments, Mr. Rodriguez closed the public hearing at 4:16 p.m.

13. Presentation of Update on the California Community Schools Partnership Program for La Sierra Military Academy - Dr. Jose Bedolla

Minutes

Dr. Jose Bedolla presented on La Sierra's participation in the California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP), a grant-funded initiative supporting whole-child school improvement. La Sierra is in the early years of a five-year, \$1.18 million grant.

The funding has enabled the creation of a community school teaching position that provides academic and behavioral support, as well as enrichment and targeted instruction for students in grades 7–12. Since implementing the program, the school has seen positive outcomes, including two consecutive years of declining suspensions and a 100% high school graduation rate.

The grant also supports credit recovery and summer enrichment programs to help students stay on track for graduation. Additionally, the school has implemented a Compassionate Systems Framework to support student goal-setting and strengthen family engagement.

Overall, the program has significantly enhanced student support systems, and school leadership expressed strong appreciation for the funding and its impact.

14. First Reading of Administrative Regulation 3440 - Inventories - Jody Arriaga

Minutes

Jody Arriaga presented the first reading of Administrative Regulation (AR) 3440 on inventories. The update is based on a 2026 requirement (Education Code 35168) that raises the threshold for inventory tracking to items valued at \$1,500 or more. Currently, the organization inventories items valued at \$500 or more, so this change would increase the minimum value for tracked items.

15. Presentation of the 2026-2027 Proposed Budget for TCOE - Jody Arriaga

Minutes

Jody Arriaga presented the 2026-2027 Proposed Budget. She reviewed the budget assumptions and recent changes. She reported the CSSF revenues of \$238,541,593.00 and expenditures of \$233,478,114.00. The estimated ending fund balance is \$135,315,173.08. She reviewed La Sierra enrollment, revenues, and expenses. The La Sierra Charter estimated ending fund balance is \$77,881.74. Ms. Arriaga reviewed UPHS enrollment, revenues, and expenses. The UPHS estimated ending fund balance is \$421,116.06. She reviewed the Early Childhood Education revenues and expenses. The ending fund balance for Early Childhood Education is \$5,034,838.19. She reported the components of the Early Childhood Education fund. Ms. Arriaga reviewed other funds, including SCICON Cafeteria, La Sierra Cafeteria, UPHS Cafeteria, Special Education Pass Through, Forest Reserve Funds, and Levis Trust. Finally, she reported total revenue of all government funds. Jody advised that our budget is well within the range accepted by the state. Jody thanked Mr. Hire and the Board for their support.

The Board thanked Ms. Arriaga for her report.

16. Public Hearing on the 2026-2027 Proposed Budget for the Tulare County Office of Education - Dr. Fernie Marroquin

Minutes

Tony Rodriguez opened the public hearing at 4:34 p.m. for the 2026-2027 Proposed Budget for the Tulare County Office of Education. Receiving no comments, Mr. Rodriguez closed the public hearing at 4:34 p.m.

17. Subcommittee's Recommendations to Tulare County Superintendent Tim A. Hire regarding the Naming of Facilities at the Education Campus - Mike Waters

Minutes

Mike Waters presented the subcommittee's recommendation to name the new education campus the "Tim A. Hire Education Campus" in recognition of Superintendent Tim Hire's leadership and contributions. The proposal was well received by the board, with members expressing appreciation for his dedication and impact.

Superintendent Hire shared his gratitude and emphasized that the accomplishment reflects a collective team effort focused on serving students and staff. The board acknowledged his leadership and commitment to the organization.

The groundbreaking ceremony for the new campus is scheduled for Tuesday, May 12th at 11:00 a.m., where staff will highlight the programs that will be housed at the facility.

18. Consideration and Approval, Adopt Resolution 25/26-42, Ordering Regular Election on November 3, 2026 - Tim A. Hire

Minutes

Tim A. Hire asked for the board's approval of Resolution 25/26-42, which calls for a regular election on November 3, 2026, for trustee areas 1, 4, and 7. These seats are currently held by the board president, Tony Rodriguez, Judy Coble, and newly appointed member Felipe Martinez.

The resolution authorizes the county to coordinate with the Tulare County Elections Office to initiate the election process.

Vote Results

Yea: 7 Judy Coble, Tom Link, Ruben Macareno, Felipe Martinez, Chris Reed, Tony Rodriguez, Mike Waters

Nay: 0

Abstain: 0

Not Cast: 0

Motion: Tom Link **Second:** Mike Waters

5. Information (Non-Discussion Items)

a. Letters and Communication/Correspondence

Minutes

Mike Waters presented a proposed training and orientation outline for new Board of Education members, titled “Tulare County Board of Education Responsibilities and Qualifications.” The plan includes an overview of current onboarding practices and introduces a formal mentorship program, where the board president assigns an experienced member to guide new members during their first six months.

The mentorship is intended to help new members better understand procedures and expectations. It was noted that informal mentoring is already taking place, and this proposal would formalize that process. The outline was shared for review, with general agreement and no major concerns expressed.

b. Reports from Superintendent and Staff

Minutes

Mr. Hire presented the Board with several items, including the Tulare County Farm Bureau Student Art Calendar; a list of upcoming graduations, with a reminder to notify Jennifer or Jaime of those they plan to attend; and invitations and flyers for upcoming events, including Valley Life Charter Community Night, the PVWH Honors Reception, the Your Character Matters Award Reception, and the Retiree Recognition.

Mr. Hire expressed appreciation to those who attended the 17th Annual Legislative Event and the Support Staff Conference, noting the strong participation at both events.

Mr. Hire also provided updates on several recent events. Highlights included the Step Up Youth Challenge, where Traver Elementary and Strathmore High School were recognized; the Math Super Bowl, which included 680 participating students; and the Poetry & Prose event, which engaged more than 2,000 students across three counties.

Additional events included the School Safety Symposium, which hosted nearly 200 participants; Special Olympics events in both Porterville and Tulare serving hundreds of students; and the Young People’s Concerts, which reached more than 3,400 students. Oak Grove in Visalia was also noted for strong performances at both the Math Super Bowl and the Science Olympiad.

Other highlights included CC! Day at the Rawhide with 1,400 students, the Middle School Reading Revolution won by Blue Oak Academy, the TEACH Conference with 190 participating students, and Monson-Sultana’s win at the CHOICES Lip Sync Battle.

Mr. Hire recognized the Excellence in Education award recipients: Josefina Velazquez, Michael Bedoya, and Placido Flores, congratulating each for their achievements.

Looking ahead, Mr. Hire shared several upcoming events, including the Elementary Reading Revolution, Slick Rock Student Film Festival, Education Campus Groundbreaking, Tulare County Physics Day, Community Design Challenge Final Presentations, and the Visalia Area Special Olympics.

Mr. Hire also provided an update on the current construction progress. He encouraged Board members to visit the third floor, northeast corner, to view the site. Construction began approximately two weeks prior, and significant progress is already visible, including the footprint of the warehouse, future roadway access, food truck area, special education classrooms, and the Redwood Café. Underground work has begun for the eastern office building, a new drainage basin has been excavated, and work is ongoing to fill the existing basin from the former church property. Landscaping and redwood trees have been removed, and overall, the project is progressing well.

c. Reports from Board, Information, and Questions

Minutes

Chris Reed took a moment to express appreciation to Janice Castle, President of the TCOE Foundation, for her leadership in organizing the 21st Annual Stars on the Hill prom. She highlighted her exceptional ability to both raise significant funds, approximately \$20,000 to \$25,000 annually and bring together volunteers from across the Porterville community to support the event.

Despite a challenging time in the community, Mr. Reed noted that the prom was a meaningful and uplifting event, made possible through the collective efforts of numerous contributors. Volunteers included local law enforcement, fire personnel, and comfort dog teams, as well as cadets from the Porterville Military Academy, who assisted with food service and decorating the party bus that transported students from local high schools. Additional contributions included a volunteer photographer, a special education bus driver, and a local seamstress who altered dresses. Even the local butcher shop owner donated tablecloths for the event. Mrs. Reed added that the event's DJ and his partner were graduates of the special education program, making the evening particularly special and meaningful.

Mrs. Reed emphasized that the event would not be possible without Ms. Castle's continued dedication over the past 21 years and expressed sincere gratitude for her contributions.

Mrs. Reed also thanked Alex Elliott from Early Childhood Education for her recent visit to Porterville alongside state representatives. She shared that the visit to the Early Childhood Education Center provided an opportunity to showcase the collaborative efforts between Porterville and Lindsay, and noted that the visitors were highly impressed with the work being accomplished. Mr. Reed expressed appreciation for the ongoing collaboration and the positive impact of these programs.

6. Next Scheduled Board Meeting

June 3, 2026 - 3:00 p.m.

7. Adjournment

Minutes

The meeting adjourned at 5:01 p.m.