Tulare County
Office of Education

Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools

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Media Advisory

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Tulare County Office of Education Announces:

Countywide Excellence in Education winners to be honored Wednesday, October 22

Administrator/Manager of the Year, Teacher of the Year, School Employee of the Year, finalists, and nominees to be honored at awards breakfast

WHAT: Winners, finalists and nominees in the annual *Excellence in Education* Awards program will be honored at an **invitation-only** breakfast event in the Tulare County Office of Education's Redwood Conference Center at 6200 S. Mooney Blvd. in Visalia. Over 250 friends, family members and colleagues are expected to attend. This year, a total of 35 nominees were chosen to participate in the competition. The nominees were submitted by Tulare County school districts and the Tulare County Office of Education in three categories – Administrator/Manager of the Year, Teacher of the Year, and School Employee of the Year. A committee of Tulare County business and educational leaders individually reviewed and scored each nominee to determine the winners, which were announced in March.

ADMINISTRATOR/MANAGER OF THE YEAR

Winner
Andrew Woodley
Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Porterville Unified School District

Andrew Woodley, Porterville Unified's Director of Curriculum and Instruction, was named Tulare County's Administrator/Manager of the Year. In his six years in this role—and 21 years total with the district—he has led initiatives to improve student achievement, including English language development and ELPAC testing. He oversees instructional coaches and supports teachers, often modeling lessons himself.

A principal credits rising test scores to "collaboration with coaches and district support," while a former student, now a colleague, recalls him as "one of the best teachers I've ever had," noting his focus on critical thinking and communication.

Woodley grounds his leadership in two pillars: systems and relationships. He uses data to guide decisions, believing it must be paired with professional judgment to drive meaningful outcomes.

Board President Lillian Durbin commended his leadership in digital learning and his support of 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, the 2025 Tulare County Teacher of the Year, has taught at Alpine Vista School for 13 years across multiple grade levels. She currently teaches 6th grade. Her classroom emphasizes student voice, leadership, and a culture of kindness. A strong advocate for student engagement, Silva's computer science students code websites based on personal passions, while her leadership class produces weekly broadcasts and social media content.

Last year, she took on the role of ELD teacher to support the school's most vulnerable learners. Beyond the classroom, Silva has launched numerous student-centered programs, including an agriculture class and garden, Kindness Week, the school musical, and the Eagles Care Project. She also leads as the school's Leader in Me/Lighthouse coach.

"I believe all students have genius within them," she says, "and that we have the most fun in life when we use our genius to better our communities."

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. A registered behavior technician (RBT) at Rocky Hill Elementary, she provides direct therapy to students with autism and developmental disorders, helping them build communication, social, and life skills. She also supports staff with behavior strategies and works closely with families.

A U.S. Army veteran, Woodyatt has served Exeter Unified for 16 years, starting as an instructional aide before joining the district's behavior support team. She earned her RBT certification through months of dedicated study.

School psychologist Lynn Skaff says Woodyatt "instinctively knows how to meet each child at their individual needs," calling her connection with students a rare gift.

Woodyatt also serves on the Tulare County Suicide Prevention Council, is ASIST-certified, and leads Crisis Prevention Institute training for the district. "The care we give helps students see they're capable of far more than they once believed," she says.

Finalists
Augustin "Auggie" Lopez
Lead IT Specialist
Dinuba Unified School District

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, 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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