

Tulare County Office of Education
CHARACTER COUNTS! Week 2024
Newspaper Student Representatives



Student Name: Noah Castillo

School: Cutler Elementary School, Cutler

Pillar: Respect

Nominator: Oscar Zavala

Statement:

Noah Castillo consistently demonstrates excellence both in the classroom and on the field. He is a model student who consistently makes responsible decisions, showing maturity beyond his years. Noah treats everyone around him whether peers, teachers, or coaches with respect and kindness. His commitment to teamwork and fairness is evident in his sportsmanship during PE and in every competition. Whether he's on the field or playing against other schools with the after-school teams, Noah consistently upholds the values of integrity, respect, and dedication, making him a positive role model for his peers. His contributions both academically and athletically set a high standard for others to follow. He truly embodies our school motto, play with the heart of a champion.

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Student Name: Jason Lilis

School: Dinuba Community Based Instruction,
Dinuba

Pillar: Responsibility

Nominator: Krista Cisneros

Statement:

Jason exemplifies the pillar of responsibility. Jason consistently does what he is supposed to do in class and while out in the community. During instruction, Jason participates in class discussions and always has an answer. Throughout the school day, he continually takes care of his supplies. When out in the community, he takes the initiative and helps other students that he notices need a helping hand. Jason works hard and always does his best. Jason repeatedly cleans up after himself without being asked to do so.

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Student Names: Kylie Lopez and Sanjog Pannu

School: Dinuba High School, Dinuba

Pillar: Citizenship

Nominators: Tonya Pennebaker And TJ Celaya

Statement:

Two current Dinuba High School juniors who exemplify upstanding citizenship within our community are Kylie Lopez and Sanjog Pannu. Both young ladies are leaders on campus as officers of Dinuba High School's HOSA club for the Medical Academy, ASB, and the Mental Health club known as NAMI. Apart from this, both students have volunteered countless hours for the Central Valley food bank giveaway as well as other school functions. Despite their current involvement in these endeavors, their primary focus has been to spread awareness through a campaign that warns of the dangers of an epidemic that has affected many lives. Kylie has taken a tragic situation involving her family and has turned it into something remarkably positive with the help of her friend, Sanjog Pannu. What started as a school project has now become an ongoing passion of these young ladies as they seek to spread awareness on the dangers of fentanyl. Kylie and Sanjog have dedicated themselves to start a campaign called "One Pill will Kill." This Campaign's goal is to educate teenagers about the dangers of fentanyl with the hope of saving lives. Since last September, they have attended community events such as carnivals, parades, health fairs, town halls, and school assemblies to advocate for their important campaign message.

Kylie was also recognized last April as the Teen Woman of the Year for Tulare County. She was awarded this prestigious honor by County Supervisor Eddie Valero for the success of their campaign and for willingly participating in the aforementioned community events to spread their message. Since then, Kylie and Sanjog have been featured on local news where a special publication highlighted their efforts and campaign. This report showcased Kylie and Sanjog's work as they reached their goal in educating over 2,000 teens on the dangers of opioid and fentanyl use. They hope to double that number this school year. With their presentation, they have led instruction for adults and peers on proper Narcan training for emergency preparedness. Both students deserve to be recognized for their strong character qualities as well as their commitment to their peers and community. They both want to make a difference and change their lives for the better. Their continued involvement in school leadership and community service reveals their passion and determination.

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Student Name: Austin Thiessen

School: Jefferson Elementary School, Dinuba

Pillar: Caring

Nominator: Judy Estala

Statement:

I am proud to nominate Austin Thiessen for the Kid of Character award. He exemplifies the core values of respect and caring in every aspect of his school life, making him a true asset to our learning community. Austin treats others with kindness and consideration, embodying the principle of treating others the way he would like to be treated. His respectful demeanor is consistently evident in his interactions with both peers and teachers. He actively listens when others are speaking, showing genuine interest in what they have to say. This attentiveness not only fosters open communication but also encourages classmates to express their thoughts and ideas without fear of judgment. Austin recognizes the importance of including everyone in group discussions and activities, trying to ensure that all voices are heard and valued. This positive attitude has created a welcoming classroom environment where every student feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute. Austin consistently goes out of his way to help classmates who may be struggling, demonstrating compassion and empathy. He is always on the lookout for those who may need a little extra support, whether it be academic help or emotional encouragement. He has a unique ability to sense when someone is feeling down or overwhelmed. Austin takes the initiative to check in on those classmates, offering a kind word or a listening ear. Whether it's sharing a smile, giving a compliment, or simply being present, his caring nature has a profound impact on those around him. He understands the importance of fostering a supportive community and actively contributes to building strong relationships among classmates. His actions create a positive ripple effect throughout the classroom, encouraging a culture of kindness and support. I wholeheartedly believe that he deserves this recognition for his outstanding character and unwavering commitment to making our school and community a better place for everyone.

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Student Name: Kevin Castro

School: Lincoln Elementary School, Dinuba

Pillar: Responsibility

Nominator: Deanna Campbell

Statement:

Kevin is a very responsible student. He consistently completes his class work and homework and returns his assignments on time. He comes to school prepared and ready to learn each day. He shows his personal best by giving his best effort to his classroom assignments. He does a great job turning in his work and taking his time to do it right the first time. Kevin strives to do his very best on any task given to him.

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Student Name: Kimberly Carmona

School: Roosevelt Elementary School, Dinuba

Pillar: Fairness

Nominator: Jessica Hernandez

Statement:

Kimberly is a top athlete in the various sports she participates in, which offers plenty of opportunity to play fair... or not. However, she chooses daily to play by the rules at recess and during her extracurricular activities. I observed her take a leadership role during kickball, football, and basketball when others were frustrated or under pressure to win. Sometimes, it's a board game or a learning game in class, but she models and advocates for fair play. She influences others to do the same through her respectful demeanor, including peers that may not have wanted to follow rules. Kimberly always tries to win fair and square, trusting the skills she and her teammate bring to the table.

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Student Name: Mikayla Jaime

School: Washington Intermediate School, Dinuba

Pillar: Trustworthiness

Nominator: Hilda Osorio

Statement:

I would like to wholeheartedly recommend Mikayla Jaime for the pillar of TRUSTWORTHINESS. Throughout the time I have known her, Mikayla has consistently demonstrated the qualities that make up a trustworthy individual. She has demonstrated this trait through a situation that required honesty during a difficult situation. She has also demonstrated TRUSTWORTHINESS through her commitment to her participation last year in leadership activities and during Girl's Retreat. In addition, Mikayla consistently shows integrity in her everyday actions. She is a good friend, and she is committed to getting help from those in need. She's a very reliable friend and student. Her interactions with students and staff are honest, as she takes responsibility for her actions. Mikayla embodies what it means to be trustworthy. Her actions not only contribute to a positive and supportive school environment but also set a strong example for other students.

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Student Name: Emily Garcia

School: Wilson Elementary School, Dinuba

Pillar: Caring

Nominator: Doris Guzman

Statement:

Emily Garcia consistently demonstrates a deep sense of care and compassion for her peers, teacher, and our school community. Whether she is helping a fellow student with their studies, offering to help her teacher with any classroom jobs or offering emotional support, Emily's empathetic and hardworking nature shines through in everything she does. She is a reliable friend and an attentive listener, always willing to lend a hand when needed. Emily regularly volunteers to help classmates who struggle with certain subjects, offering her time and patience to ensure they understand the material. Whether it is writing, reading, assisting classmates with technology, or with emotional needs, she is there to help. She also takes the initiative to assist her teacher with jobs she notices need to get done by offering to coach one of her peers or checking her classmate's homework. A true example of Emily's caring nature was evident when one of her peers needed emotional, academic, and social support in our class. She has been a rock for this classmate since they both were in third grade. She has done this selflessly and without the teacher's prompting. Emily's caring nature and leadership qualities were evident within our classroom. Her peers often look up to her as a role model for kindness and her caring qualities. Emily Garcia is a student who truly characterizes care and compassion. Her positive influence on her peers and her willingness to help others make her an outstanding member of our school and classroom community!

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Student Name: Mateo Magana

School: Ivanhoe Elementary School, Ivanhoe

Pillar: Responsibility

Nominator: Maria Botello

Statement:

Mateo meets several of the pillars for Kids of Character, however, I will talk about the amazing things Mateo demonstrated in the pillar of responsibility. I have had the honor of being Mateo's teacher a second year but this time as a 6th grader. Mateo is the perfect example of what a responsible student looks and acts like in and out of the classroom. He is self-disciplined and makes sure his work is completed daily; Mateo takes charge of his actions and his words. He is careful with what he says and will take time to process what comes out of his mouth. He takes responsibility for his education and asks questions when he doesn't understand something. Mateo is a hard worker that knows the value of education and the value of a job well done. Mateo is worthy of the recognition for a Kid of Character representing RESPONSIBILITY. With great honor and admiration, I nominate Mateo Magana.

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Student Name: Kaysie Grove

School: Kings River Union School, Kingsburg

Pillar: Responsibility

Nominator: Jenny Burrow

Statement:

Kaysie Grove is in my GATE class for this year. She has shown perseverance and grit to continue in our GATE class. She continues to maintain open communication to ensure she is keeping her commitment to the program and the grade requirement. Over the semester, Kaysie strived to keep her grades up in Math. Math in middle school is not easy so I respect how much effort she puts into her work to achieve this.

GATE is an academic subject requiring students to maintain a 3.0 or better in their core classrooms to stay in. There are several other criteria as well including good behavior, attendance, citizenship and respectfulness. Kaysie goes over and beyond all the character requirements for GATE. She also is one of the most talented artists I have seen in many years for her age. Kaysie should be recognized for her perseverance and hard work to achieve something she really wanted in her academics. I am very proud to teach such a hard-working and dedicated student.

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Student Name: Brandon Madrigal Garcia

School: El Monte Middle School, Orosi

Pillar: Caring

Nominator: Nancy Murillo Salas

Statement:

Brandon exemplifies both caring and kindness in his interactions with classmates. His gentle and approachable demeanor makes others feel comfortable seeking help. When leading partner share or group share activities, he uses patient and encouraging language, never making anyone feel inadequate for not understanding. His kindness is evident in his warm smile and supportive words, creating a positive and inclusive atmosphere within the classroom. He celebrates others' successes and offers comfort during challenges, showing a deep sense of empathy and compassion. Brandon's actions go beyond mere academic assistance; he genuinely cares about his peers' well-being and strives to make everyone feel valued and supported.

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Student Name: James Moreno

School: Esperanza High School, Oroquieta

Pillar: Responsibility

Nominator: Karen Stuart

Statement:

James has done outstanding work in independent study. He has met and exceeded his goals monthly. He has been a model independent study student.

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Student Name: Alexis Sandoval

School: Golden Valley Elementary School, Orosi

Pillar: Responsibility

Nominator: Raquel Barragan

Statement:

Alexis Sandoval excels in STEM and consistently approaches class with an eagerness to learn that inspires his peers, as well as myself. He is always on task, striving to produce his best work. Alexis challenges himself to focus deeply on each activity, and his dedication shines through in everything he does. Recently, during a research project on different types of robots, Alexis did a stellar job. His presentation on humanoid robots was captivating, and he engaged the audience with thoughtful questions and insights. For a moment, I forgot he was only in 5th grade because he conducted himself with such maturity and poise. Besides his academic achievements, Alexis's character stands out. At the end of each STEM class, while others line up to leave, Alexis stays behind to help organize the classroom. His willingness to collect name cards and reset the pocket chart for the next class demonstrates his thoughtfulness and responsibility. Alexis embodies what Character Counts is all about. His actions reflect kindness, responsibility, and a genuine desire to help others. It's simply who he is, and it's a privilege to have him in class.

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Student Name: Ruby Figueroa

School: Lovell High School, Orosi

Pillar: Citizenship

Nominator: Victoria Guzman

Statement:

Ruby Figueroa is our brand-new board representative. She is a brave young lady who put aside her nerves and stepped up to the plate to serve her student body. We are proud of Ruby's accomplishments as a student representative and as part of the school's leadership team.

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Student Name: Aaron Jimenez

School: Orosi Community Based Instruction AcCEL Program, Orosi

Pillar: Responsibility

Nominator: Diana Oliver

Statement:

Aaron consistently demonstrates a strong sense of responsibility both in the classroom and on campus. He comes prepared and eager to learn each day. Additionally, he willingly volunteers to help with tasks such as cleaning tables and picking up trash around the school. His commitment to contributing to our community is truly commendable. While Aaron faces challenges with his speech, he consistently puts forth his best effort to participate in discussions. It's heartwarming to see him take pride in his accomplishments, no matter how small.

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Student Name: Anthony Garcia

School: Oroshi High School, Oroshi

Pillar: Responsibility

Nominator: Kathleen Giannandrea

Statement:

Anthony is a student in my dual enrollment English class for COS at Oroshi High School. He is also enrolled in an engineering course at Reedley College. This requires Anthony to leave our 5th- period English course 10-20 minutes early, and he misses out on a lot of information, instruction, and practice. Anthony always completes the work, though. After his long day of learning and even longer afternoon of football practice, he goes home to check our slide deck and completes the work needed to continue learning at the same pace as the rest of the class. I think this is a great example of the Character Counts pillar of responsibility.

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Student Name: Nazareth Zavala Hernandez

School: Palm Elementary School, Orosi

Pillar: Responsibility

Nominator: Vanessa Sierra

Statement:

Nazareth is an outstanding student. She has taken initiative in group activities, showing leadership by organizing tasks, motivating others, and managing responsibilities effectively. She always completes her assignments and meets deadlines on time showing that she can be counted on by teachers, peers, and family. Nazareth has addressed challenges with a growth mindset and a proactive attitude, finding solutions and taking responsibility for her own learning. She has set a positive example for peers by adhering to rules, being honest, and showing ethical behavior in both academic and social situations. I am honored to have Nazareth Zavala as my student this 2024 school year.

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Student Name: Ailani Malagon Rayo

School: Monson-Sultana Joint Union School,
Sultana

Pillar: Caring

Nominator: Kristyn Wagenleitner

Statement:

Ailani is a shining example of what it means to embody the pillar of Caring. As a second grader, she demonstrates remarkable empathy, kindness, and an instinct to help others every single day. Her sweet and gentle nature creates a warm and supportive atmosphere in our classroom, and she consistently goes above and beyond to make sure her classmates and teacher feel valued and cared for. One of the first things you notice about Ailani is her genuine thoughtfulness. Whether it's a simple act of kindness like sharing supplies with a friend or offering a comforting word to someone who is upset, Ailani is always tuned in to the feelings and needs of those around her. She has a unique ability to recognize when someone needs help, and she steps in without hesitation. Her empathy is truly special, as she not only understands the feelings of others but also takes action to make a positive difference. In addition to her caring heart, Ailani is always eager to help. Whether it's assisting a classmate with a tricky math problem or helping tidy up the classroom, she is quick to offer her support. Her willingness to lend a hand is not just about getting tasks done. It's about making sure everyone around her feels supported and encouraged. This kind of generosity and selflessness is rare, especially in someone so young, and it is a testament to Ailani's strong character. Her kind spirit is contagious, and her actions remind all of us how important it is to show care and kindness to others. She leads by example, quietly and humbly, making our classroom a more loving and supportive space for everyone. For all these reasons and more, Ailani is truly deserving of the Character Counts award for Caring. She is a bright light in our classroom, and her caring heart makes a lasting impact on everyone she meets.

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Student Name: Maya Maryanow

School: Three Rivers Union School, Three Rivers

Pillar: Responsibility

Nominator: Jami Beck

Statement:

I am nominating Maya for the pillar of responsibility. This is Maya's first year at TRUS. She consistently demonstrates exceptional responsibility traits daily. Maya's commitment to her schoolwork is truly commendable. She works hard and is dedicated to achieving her goals. She was the first person in my class to achieve her Accelerated Reader Goal. She has surpassed her goal and continues to keep reading. She ensures to complete all her classroom assignments. She tries her best. If Maya is unsure of something she will ask questions to make sure she understands. She is always prepared. Maya's sense of responsibility extends beyond the classroom. She makes sure to put recess toy equipment away. She will also pick up other toy equipment that other students have left on the playground. Maya approaches her tasks with a great attitude and a strong sense of dedication. She strives for success. I am honored to nominate Maya for the pillar of responsibility.

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Student Name: John Ramos

School: Traver Joint School, Traver

Pillar: Caring

Nominator: Linda Navarro

Statement:

John is a very quiet soft spoken young man but always has a smile on his face. Whenever he comes in the office, he is such a polite and well-mannered student not only to the office staff but also to his peers.

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Student Name: Atlas Needham

School: Elbow Creek Elementary School, Visalia

Pillar: Caring

Nominator: Kim Needham

Statement:

Atlas has proven over and over how much of a caring young girl she is. She volunteers to help before school starts with kindergarten by walking them to their classroom. Atlas is kind to her friends at school and meets them with smiles each day. Atlas shows the same characteristics at home. When someone needs help feeding their animals, she is willing to take care of that. She never complains. Atlas understands that it is important to spend time with others to show that you care. Atlas is very generous to others with her time.

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Student Name: Bryce Minturn

School: Eleanor Roosevelt Community Learning Center, Visalia

Pillar: Respect

Nominators: Alisha Lewis and Lisa Hardy

Statement:

Bryce is an incredible leader in our high school program. He is involved in our student leadership class, leads our Queer Student Alliance Club, take college classes, and still manages to earn straight A's. He is respectful and well-liked by his peers and his teachers. He is conscientious, compassionate and hardworking and is a true example of a student with AMAZING character! To be honest, Bryce Minturn displays every single one of these attributes, so it took me a minute to figure out which one to nominate him for. I finally realized that "Caring" covers all the other traits as well, so I selected that one. Bryce is an extremely helpful and involved student. He lightens the load for us teachers. Twice a year we have a performing arts showcase at our school and Bryce designs and creates the programs for those events. He is part of the student activities class and helps to plan and carry out spirit days and other fun events at the school. Whenever an event is happening, Bryce helps! Bryce is truly one of the most caring students on our campus. He is president of the QSA club (Queer Student Alliance) and makes our school a kinder and more inclusive place. He works hard and gets good grades, and he exemplifies all the traits of the character award qualities. We are so blessed to have Bryce at our school, and we will surely miss him when he graduates at the end of this year.

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Student Name: Ariana Robles

School: Stone Corral School, Visalia

Pillar: Responsibility

Nominator: Lenor Roman

Statement:

Ariana Robles truly exemplifies the pillar of responsibility in our classroom, and it is a joy to witness her growth each day. She is always well-prepared, with her materials organized and ready to go, which shows how much she values her learning. During math, Ariana demonstrates great initiative, never hesitating to ask for help when she needs it—whether it's from me or her peers. This shows her strong commitment to doing her best and continuously improving.

What makes Ariana stand out even more is the positive impact she has on our classroom environment. She kindly encourages her classmates to stay on task and leads by example with her calm and responsible demeanor. Ariana consistently completes her homework and brings it back on time, a reflection of how seriously she takes her responsibilities. Outside of academics, Ariana continues to demonstrate responsibility in everything she does. She lines up promptly after recess, taking charge of her own learning and making sure she's ready to transition smoothly back into the classroom. She's also incredibly thoughtful in how she interacts with others; always treating her classmates with kindness and respect. Ariana never makes anyone feel less capable and maintains a positive, supportive attitude when helping others make responsible choices. Her reliability, her caring nature, and her leadership make her a role model for her peers and a student who truly deserves this recognition for her exceptional responsibility.

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Student Name: Aaliyah Cuevas

School: Castle Rock Elementary School, Woodlake

Pillar: Caring

Nominator: Nancy Gordon

Statement:

This student consistently encouraged other classmates throughout the year in third grade. She was quiet, but really paid attention to the needs of her fellow students. At the end of the year, she wrote a letter to the class and asked to read it on the last day of school. In it, she named each individual child and explained at least one thing about them that was positive and affirming. In addition, EVERY DAY for the last quarter of the school year, she left a post it-note on my desk encouraging me and affirming my teaching.

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Student Name: Illeana Ramirez Morales

School: Francis J. White Learning Center,
Woodlake

Pillar: Caring

Nominator: Alondra Aguilar

Statement:

Illeana is so kind and helpful to her classmates! When a classmate cannot find a certain crayon, Illeana shares her crayons. During math, she helps her classmates write numbers by singing them the song that correlates with how to write the numbers. She also demonstrates kindness on the playground. When someone gets hurt, she walks them to the nurse. Illeana is a role model to her peers by exhibiting caring characteristics daily.

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Student Name: Cecilia Barragan

School: Woodlake AcCEL Program, Woodlake

Pillar: Responsibility

Nominator: Debbie Michaelian

Statement:

Cecilia demonstrates the Character Counts Pillar of Responsibility by doing what she is supposed to do. Cecilia engages in all activities with a cheerful demeanor and willingness to learn.

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Student Name: Hannah Lafferty

School: Woodlake High School, Woodlake

Pillar: Trustworthiness

Nominator: Jeannae Carmichael

Statement:

It is an honor to nominate a student that exemplifies Trustworthiness in a myriad of ways. She is reliable and follows through when committing to something. She has been an asset to our Associated Student Body (ASB) by capturing eventful memories at Pep Rallies, Lunchtime Activities, School-Related Events and at WHS Athletic Events. She has received multiple Gold Tiger Awards for having a 4.0 GPA and is an academic athlete. She is the lead photographer for the Yearbook class and goes above and beyond to help deliver quality images and capture student life on campus. She was part of the 2024 Central Section Softball Championship team. She is the pinnacle of trustworthiness and honesty and is a member of the WHS Leadership Team. She has a portfolio that showcases her academic, extracurricular and artistic accomplishments, goals and dreams. She is a stellar student who has overcome adversity and is the perfect candidate to represent Woodlake High School and Tulare County Character Counts.

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Student Name: Alejandra Aguilar

School: Woodlake Valley Middle School, Woodlake

Pillar: Responsibility

Nominator: Dana Jobe

Statement:

Alejandra embraces ALL the qualities presented in Character Counts. She helps other students in the classroom and has sacrificed 3 days at the end of her last 2 summers to train as a WEB (Where Every Bengal Belongs) leader. This is her second year being a leader of mentoring younger classmates by being an example, showing kindness and patience to students and adults on our campus. She is very observant and offers to help others in need, always has a kind word to say and encourages me personally as I see her change our campus for good. Woodlake Valley Middle School is a better place because Alejandra is here.