

## Students begin returning to select AcCEL classrooms countywide

On her first day returning to school, Meryam, a second-grade student with special needs at Vandalia Elementary School in Porterville, ran out of her home and kissed the bus. Meryam's enthusiasm for the in-person instruction she now enjoys twice a week is shared by most of the students in Special Services AcCEL classes around the county allowed to return to campus under state provisions. State guidelines released in late August allow districts the flexibility to identify select students to receive targeted in-person instruction.



Over the past few weeks, Special Services' AcCEL Program has worked very closely with partner school districts to bring small cohorts of students back on campus at 19 Tulare County school sites. The classes average between four and six students at over a dozen elementary schools and a variety of other campuses. Instruction is offered for two to three hours each day students are on campus.

To prepare for the transition to in-person instruction, the AcCEL management team considered student needs, cohort sizes, and schedules, and developed individual plans for each school site

that chose to welcome their students with special needs. The planning also included transportation schedules and campus access. Comprehensive protocols were developed for AcCEL staff to address social distancing, personal protective equipment for students and staff, the monitoring of student temperatures, handwashing, and what to do if a student develops COVID-19 symptoms at school. Teachers and instructional staff developed strategies to deliver in-person lessons while simultaneously teaching students virtually who are not returning to campus.



“Our AcCEL staff has worked tirelessly since the schools closed in March,” said AcCEL Administrator Sarah Hamilton. “They have always been skilled at modifying and adapting to meet the needs of their students, but what they have done with virtual instruction, hands-on materials, and work packets has been remarkable! We commend them while also thanking the parents who have been supporting their children’s instruction these many months. It has been a joy for us to watch our students learn through virtual instruction, and now an even bigger joy to bring them back for in-person instruction.”

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## Eric Sonnenfeld wins statewide award

Last week, Eric Sonnenfeld, assistant administrator for Early Childhood Education (ECE), received the Rocky Lee Advocacy Award from the Every Child California organization. Mr. Sonnenfeld accepted the award at the organization's annual virtual conference. "This award recognizes leadership and advocacy for early care and education at the local, state, and federal levels and the advancement of early childhood education as a profession," said ECE Administrator Dr. Alex Elliott. "This year, we've seen a large influx of legislation and adaptations regarding early childhood education due to the pandemic. Eric worked diligently to communicate with stakeholders locally and statewide, and with the California Department of Education and Department of Social Services. This award celebrates the impact his advocacy is having statewide for staff, families, and children served by early care programs."



Every Child California usually gives the award to one person annually, but due to the unusual amount of early care and education advocacy required during the pandemic, the award was given to four individuals this year. A nomination committee within the Every Child California organization recommended Mr. Sonnenfeld for the prestigious award.

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## CHOICES opens registration for TUPE Leadership Training

The CHOICES Prevention Program's annual TUPE Middle School Leadership Training, usually held in September, has been reimagined as a virtual event. On December 2, CHOICES will release five videos designed to help students, grades 6-8, build their skills as campus leaders. The videos will include sessions on understanding yourself in leadership, embracing change, self-care, bullying, and vaping.

Administrators and student leadership advisors are encouraged to register their schools for the event by visiting [bit.ly/tupeleadership20](https://bit.ly/tupeleadership20). Schools may register one or two groups of up to five students each. Each team must have an adult advisor. The deadline to register is November 20. For more





information about the event or registration, please contact the Choices Prevention Program at (559) 651-0155.

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### **Annual Legislative Event for early childhood educators and community leaders scheduled virtually for December 2**

The Tulare County Council on Child & Youth Development is hosting its 12th Annual Legislative Event virtually this year on Wednesday, December 2, from 9:00 until 11:00 a.m. The focus of the event this year is the importance of childcare during a crisis. The event will include a provider panel and a community agency panel with representatives sharing the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the field of early childhood education and the collaborative effort our county has put forth to assist essential workers during this challenging time.



Early childhood educators, legislators, and community leaders are invited to register for the free event at [www.tularecountykids.org](http://www.tularecountykids.org). Registration is appreciated by Monday, November 30. This event is open to the public and the council encourages all to attend.

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### **County offers website with information on school re-opening**



This fall, an increasing number of elementary schools in Tulare County have reopened to small cohorts of students on campus under terms set by the governor and the California Department of Public Health. Over 70 schools have received waivers, with nearly 40 others having applied to resume in-person instruction under the same conditions. To assist schools with the process of applying for waivers and to report to the public those schools that are open or have applied to reopen, the Tulare County Public Health Department has created an online resource.

Through the waiver and reopening process, the Tulare County Public Health Department works closely with schools to ensure they have the protections and protocols in place to safely allow students and staff back on campus. Working in consultation with California Department of Public Health, Tulare County Public Health officials provide the final approval for each waiver. “I have appreciated the vision and leadership Tulare County Public Health has shown in helping school districts apply for waivers and navigate the complicated process of meeting state regulations,” said Tim Hire, Tulare County Superintendent of Schools. “The large number of schools on the list that have successfully completed the process in the past two months is an indication to their commitment to accommodate our schools in this difficult time.”

To view information on the waiver process and the list of Tulare County schools allowing small numbers of students on campus, visit [covid19.tularecounty.ca.gov/school-resources](https://covid19.tularecounty.ca.gov/school-resources).

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## Distance Learning Resources

- [Arts All Around Us](#)
- [TCOE Learning at Home](#)
- [TCOE's Educational Resource Services Library](#)

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Editor: [Robert Herman](#), Public Information Officer

Contributors: Marlene Moreno, Jennifer Fisher, Lorena White, Tammy McKean, Katrina Smith, Sarah Hamilton, Alex Elliott, Jeff Lynch, Tony Cavanagh, and Samantha Terry.

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