

news galleryweek

June 16, 2021

Granite Hills finds graduation success with CIE

Twenty-nine English learner students from Granite Hills High School (GHHS) were facing the possibility of failing their senior year based on poor grades as of December 2020. But the school's Continuous Improvement for Equity (CIE) program stepped in and helped give them an opportunity to turn things around.

Granite Hills, a high school within Porterville Unified School District, was new to the Tulare County CIE community of practice this school year. Their CIE team was central to helping the seniors and was comprised of site principal, Apolinar Marroquin, vice principals Kim Ramirez and Evelia Alvarez, guidance counselors Denise Valadez and Angelica Carmona, resource coordinator Sarah Thompkins, and English learner teachers Rey Baddo and Russell Rutherford.



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT FOR EQUITY
ALL MEANS ALL

At the beginning of the school year, teams participating in the CIE program were charged with creating a focus, whether it be academic, behavioral, or social emotional learning. The teams were to investigate their ability to implement change in that system, craft a theory for improvement complete with an aim (goal), and then test the change while documenting, studying, and learning from it.

The change idea the Granite Hills team chose was to divide the 29 seniors as a caseload for each team member and conduct weekly 1:1 check-ins. Check-in questions included "How is it going?", "How can I help you?", "What are some barriers?", and "Is there a specific class that is more challenging and why?". After collecting data, the CIE team then took action steps to help remove barriers with follow-up correspondence to parents, student case managers, and their teachers.

"Don't accept the 'Yep' from a student when you ask them if everything is okay," principal Marroquin said about what he learned from the process and check-ins. "This student was not graduating. Things were not okay, so I asked more questions."

After five months, the results were astonishing.

Of the 29 seniors in danger of not graduating, 24 crossed the stage on June 3 and received their diplomas. Four others were redirected and enrolled into the local adult school to complete their GED requirements. Only one student decided not to accept help at this time and went to work instead.

One student, who in early January had zero interest in a diploma, asked vice principal Evelia Alvarez in April, "Is it too late to get a cap and gown?" when she found out she was going to be able to cross the stage. She is a first-generation graduate.

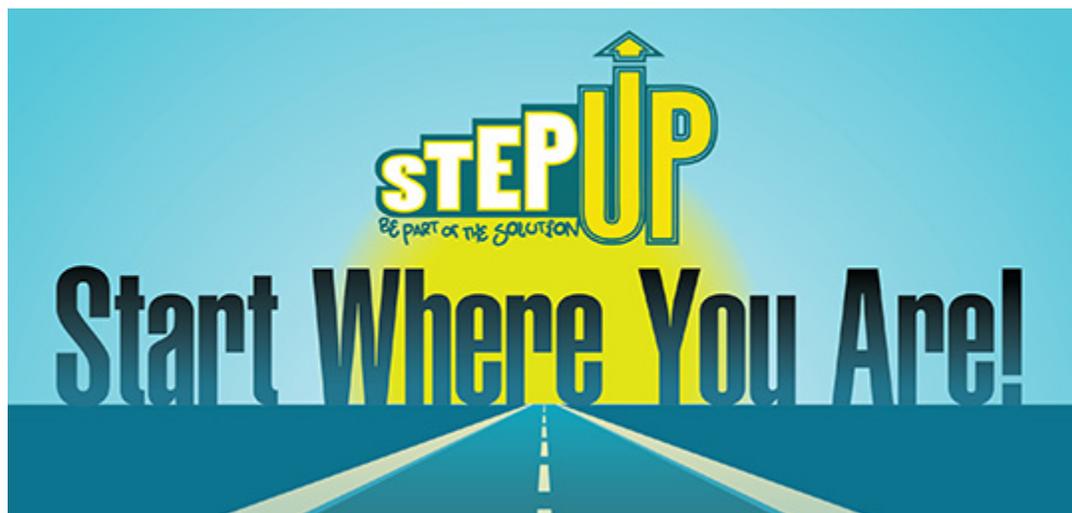
"From an improvement lens, we can see that a small change, when implemented, made a monumental impact for these 28 students," said CIE co-facilitator Jennifer Biagio. "From a social emotional wellness standpoint, we can see the data makes a compelling case for the importance of relationship building and fostering connections through the (social and emotional learning) competencies."

Biagio added, "Granite Hills High School was just one of 19 incredible stories, and we look forward to celebrating and honoring all this work and team success, as well as jumping into more improvement in the year to come!"

CIE is a project of Educational Resource Services (ERS) and Leadership Support Services (LSS). It is co-facilitated by Jennifer Biagio, Administrator of Differentiated Assistance at LSS, and Lisa Lemus, English Language Arts/ELD Staff Development & Curriculum Specialist at ERS.

For more information about CIE, contact Jennifer Biagio at jennifer.biagio@tcoe.org or Lisa Lemus at lisa.lemus@tcoe.org.

Step Up Youth Challenge returns for new school year



After a one-year hiatus, the County of Tulare's Step Up Youth Challenge is returning this fall. Now in its tenth year, the Challenge is a six-month service-learning program designed for students to create projects that positively impact school culture and their communities. The theme of this year's event was inspired by a quote from tennis legend Arthur Ashe, "Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can." Participating middle and high schools will be competing for grants totaling \$13,000.

The program kicks off with a mandatory Advisor Training on September 9 beginning at 4:00 p.m. Details on the Youth Summit, the project development and submission process, and the Red Carpet Awards ceremony will be shared at the Advisor Training. Advisors are encouraged to **register by September 7** to attend the training by visiting tulare.k12oms.org/1530-204401.

On September 22 and 23, advisors and their student team members will come together for a full-day Youth Summit designed to motivate and inspire them on their journey to create impactful projects. Middle school teams will attend the September 22 training; high school teams will attend the training on September 23.

The Step Up Youth Challenge is coordinated on behalf of the County of Tulare by TCOE's CHARACTER COUNTS! program. For more information, contact Kelley Petty, program coordinator, at (559) 740-4303 or kelleyp@tcoe.org.

Resource & Referral program to host drive-thru event to distribute Quality Improvement Materials



On July 8, Early Childhood Education's (ECE) Resource & Referral Program will hold a drive-thru materials distribution event for Tulare County Early Learning care providers. Up to 200 providers — who **register by June 30** — may pick up free math, science, and literacy materials at the Doe Avenue building on Thursday morning, July 8. Those eligible to receive the free supplies include license exempt providers, and those who operate family resource centers, family childcare homes, and private centers.

Early Learning care providers must register at <https://bit.ly/3cj35XP> in order to attend the event. Registration closes June 30.

To receive news about future Resource & Referral network events, Early Learning care providers are encouraged to notify staff of any changes to their contact information by calling (559) 651-0185 or emailing referralsrr@cc.tcoe.org.

Around the County

Exeter girls soccer win Valley championship



Exeter High School girls soccer was crowned Central Section Division IV champions on May 28 when the team defeated Central Valley Christian (CVC) 2-1 in overtime. Exeter was the only Tulare County team, boys or girls, to win a soccer Valley championship this season.

Exeter trailed CVC 1-0 in the first half after a goal from CVC freshman Sophia Marroquin. Madisson Woods of Exeter tied the game with a goal in the second half, then scored the game-winner in overtime.

"I'm super proud of the girls," Exeter head coach Darin Lasky said in a post-game interview with the Central Section All-Stars. "I mean, that was a huge comeback against a team like CVC. Jacob (DeGroot of CVC) is a great coach. They have a great program and for us to come back from one down, take it to overtime and then win it, I'm as proud as I can be as a coach right now."

In state playoffs, No. 5 Exeter upset No. 4 Venice (Los Angeles City Section) with a 3-0 win in the first round of the Division IV CIF Southern California Regional championships. The team's season ended in the regional semifinals with a 4-0 loss to No. 1 El Segundo (Southern Section).

Photo above:

~ Exeter High School girls soccer poses with the CIF Central Section Division IV championship plaque after winning the Valley title game.

Porterville boys win city's first swim Valley title



After two years of coming up short, Porterville High School (PHS) boys swim finally got a chance to stand atop the championship podium as Central Section Division II champions.

"We have been chasing this for years," PHS head coach Lance Hyder told *The Porterville Recorder*.

Porterville went undefeated all season and won the city's first swim Valley title on May 29 with a score of 224.50. Ethan Merritt also picked up a win in the 100-yard breaststroke and broke the previous school record with a time of 59.28 seconds.

Porterville won the title not by winning every race, but by working together to score in every race from first place all the way down to 16th.

"I see a great value to what our students can learn through athletics and working together with others on a team to pursue a common goal," Hyder said in an email to TCOE. "Developing a work ethic, learning how to support others, finding ways to communicate effectively, being disciplined to show up on time consistently; I believe these are life skills, that when learned and adopted, will benefit them for the rest of their lives."

Hyder continued, "That is the good stuff. When we invest in their future, we are investing in the future of our community. It's not all about the accolades from having all A's or championships (although that is great) but it's really about what is learned and developed in the pursuit of those accomplishments. It's all about the process."

Photo above:

~ Porterville High School boys swim poses with the CIF Central Section Division II championship plaque after winning the Valley title meet.

Around the County is a regular feature of TCOE's *News Gallery Week*. To be considered for this section, Tulare County districts are encouraged to share major student, school, and district achievements and high-resolution photography with Rob Herman, communications director, at robh@tcoe.org.

Distance Learning Resources

- [Arts All Around Us](#)
 - [TCOE Learning at Home](#)
 - [TCOE's Educational Resource Services Library](#)
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To receive *News Gallery Week*, visit tcoe.org/GetTheGallery, or contact Jennifer Fisher at jenniferf@tcoe.org or (559) 733-6172.