

Tulare County  
Office of Education

*Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools*

news  
galleryweek

June 1, 2022

---

**Graduations continue for TCOE students, Bermejo-Salazar, Harris chosen as “Honored Scholars”**



Students are continuing to don their caps and gowns for graduations across the county. On Thursday, one of the next groups to move their tassels to the left will be the 30 high

school graduates of La Sierra Charter School's Military Academy (LSMA) and Independent Study Program.

To honor graduates throughout the valley, each year ABC30 runs a feature entitled "Honored Scholars." Schools are invited to submit the names of a top male and top female from their senior classes. This year, the students chosen by La Sierra are Aneisha Harris and Damian Bermejo-Salazar.

On Bermejo-Salazar, LSMA principal Scott Pierce said, "Cadet Bermejo-Salazar has been an academic leader throughout his four years at La Sierra Military Academy. He has excelled in all areas of study and been at the top of his class. He has also earned countless GPA awards, obtained perfect attendance, and received multiple CHARACTER COUNTS! awards. Bermejo-Salazar was accepted into Fresno State and CSU San Marcos, and completed all coursework to earn his high school diploma in April."

Bermejo-Salazar is La Sierra's valedictorian.

On Harris, Pierce said, "Cadet Harris exemplifies what it means to be a La Sierra Military Academy cadet. During her four years at LSMA, Harris has been honored for her GPA, attendance, and was awarded the CHARACTER COUNTS! Award for Respect. She has served as a company commander and earned the rank of first sergeant. Harris is a leader. She served as our boot camp instructor during summer basic training."

For her academic achievements, Harris is La Sierra's salutatorian.

Last week, 36 young adults from Special Services AcCEL Programs in Visalia, North County, and Porterville areas, including the Community Based Instruction Programs, graduated! These graduates were recognized for their efforts not only in the classroom, but for their spirit and energy that made their teachers and classmates truly enjoy their time together.

Below is a list of the final upcoming ceremonies:

### **2022 Tulare County Office of Education and Charter School Graduation and Promotion Ceremonies**

Thursday, June 2, 2022 @ 9:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.

**La Sierra Military Academy Graduation**

Jr. High School Graduation at 9:00 a.m.  
High School and Independent Study Graduation at 7:00 p.m.  
1735 E. Houston, Visalia

Monday, June 6, 2022 @ 3:00 p.m.  
**Court/Community School Graduation**  
TCOE's Redwood Conference Center  
6200 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia

Tuesday, June 7, 2022 @ 10:00 a.m.  
**Tulare AcCEL Program Area**  
City of Tulare Parks and Recreation Building  
830 S. Blackstone St., Tulare

Photo above:

~ (l-r) Damian Bermejo-Salazar and Aneisha Harris are two of the 30 seniors graduating from La Sierra Charter School's Military Academy (LSMA) and Independent Study Program this week. The pair will also be featured on ABC30's Honored Scholars program.

---

## Central San Joaquin Valley receives grant to support college and career transitions



Last week, Governor Gavin Newsom announced that the Central San Joaquin Valley K-16 Partnership would receive a four-year grant of \$18.13M to strengthen education-to-workforce pathways and ensure that partners address income, racial, and gender

inequalities in education and employment. The Partnership is a collaboration between the Fresno-Madera K-16 Collaborative and TCOE's Tulare-Kings College + Career Collaborative (TKCCC) – one of six collaboratives to receive the state's maximum award.

“For nearly a decade, the TKCCC has worked to streamline and strengthen student transitions to post-secondary institutions and the workforce,” said Tim Hire, Tulare County Superintendent of Schools and TKCCC board member. “As valley educators, we see firsthand the challenges all of our students face in making those transitions, so equity has been a key component of our work. We are delighted to partner with Fresno-Madera K-16 Collaborative to share our successes and to learn from theirs in supporting the unique needs and challenges of Central Valley students.”

McKenna Salazar, TKCCC director, reports that the Tulare-Kings and Fresno-Madera collaboratives will work together to implement recommendations from the Council on Postsecondary Education Recovery Taskforce's February 2021 *Recovery with Equity* report. Specifically, the Partnership will address college affordability, student supports and transitions, retaining quality teachers, and ensuring teacher diversity.

“In the area of student supports, we will focus on counselor trainings at the middle school, high school, and community college levels so that these valuable educators can better guide their students,” Salazar said. “To aid with transitions, our work is about gathering the entire continuum of education partners to discuss how high school coursework is built upon at the community college level and finally at the university level. We want to ensure students are graduating with the knowledge employers seek, a process that requires a thorough examination of courses, syllabi, outcomes, and activities at all levels.”

The grant also requires partners to focus on strengthening and expanding Central San Joaquin Valley student pathways. The pathway programs identified by the Partnership for growth include those in the areas of business management, education, engineering or computing, and healthcare. “We will work with districts that have existing pathways to strengthen



and expand them, and reach out to districts interested in creating new pathways in these industry sectors,” Salazar said.

The Tulare-Kings College + Career Collaborative is a regional collaborative of 12 K-12 school districts, two county offices of education, eight post-secondary institutions, and over 500 workforce development partners. Together, the collaborative strives to create high quality career pathways, work-based learning experiences, shared data analysis, and transitional alignment to provide students with the greatest potential for their success. The Tulare-Kings College & Career Collaborative was named as a Linked Learning Regional Hub of Excellence by the James Irvine Foundation for its work in scaling and elevating high-quality Linked Learning pathways.

For more information about the Central San Joaquin Valley K-16 Partnership, contact McKenna Salazar at [mckenna.salazar@tcoe.org](mailto:mckenna.salazar@tcoe.org).

Photo above:

~ A student creates a splint during a competition at the 2022 Tulare-Kings College & Career EXPO.

---

## Bryce Melgar finishes as National Spelling Bee semifinalist

The Tulare County Spelling Champion, Bryce Melgar, became the county’s first-ever semifinalist after advancing to the Scripps National Spelling Bee semifinal round held this week in the Washington, D.C. area. Melgar advanced to the semifinals by spelling the word “amberina” correctly.



This afternoon, the seventh grader from Ridgeview Middle School in Visalia, misspelled the word “retroussage,” which is a process of wiping an engraved plate so as to soften the definition of the lines when printed. Melgar was among 48 of 234 spellers that advanced to the semifinals.

Melgar won the 2022 Tulare County Spelling Championship, which was held at the Valley Strong Ballpark, March 1.

Photo above:

~ Bryce Melgar, of Ridgeview Middle School in Visalia, became the county's first-ever semifinalist at the Scripps National Spelling Bee on Wednesday. Photo by Scripps National Spelling Bee Facebook.

---

## Around the County

---

### Linwood competes at Odyssey of the Mind



Last week, fourth- and fifth-grade students from Linwood Elementary School in Visalia competed for their first time at the annual Odyssey of the Mind World Finals held May 25-28 at Iowa State University.

Linwood competed against over 60 teams which included teams from South Korea, Poland, Switzerland, as well as others from across the United States. The Linwood team, which won the state championship in April, placed 13th overall.

“We are very proud of them for representing our school and district well,” said Linwood Principal Andrew Bishop.

The team consists of Gaby Paprzycki, Brock White, Arwa Abdelfattah, Sophie Defty, Cameron Chapman, and Julia Villegas. They were coached by Lisa Kruger and Julie Marsh.

Odyssey of the Mind is an international education and STEAM program that challenges students to go beyond conventional thinking and incorporate creative problem solving in their learning. Thousands of teams throughout the U.S. and over 25 countries around the world participate in the program. While most of the program involves long hours each school day making props and costumes, teams also prepare to improvise solutions to "spontaneous" problems given during competition day.

Photo above:

*~ Linwood Elementary students, l-r, Gaby Paprzycki, Brock White, Arwa Abdelfattah, Sophie Defty, Cameron Chapman, and Julia Villegas.*

---

Editor: [Robert Herman](#), Communications Director

Contributors: Nayirah Dosu, Marlene Moreno, Jennifer Fisher, Scott Pierce, Mike Franco, McKenna Salazar, Andrea Perez, Brook Killingsworth, and Nancy Bellin.

Contact Jennifer Fisher at [jenniferf@tcoe.org](mailto:jenniferf@tcoe.org) or (559) 733-6172.