

Related Services hosts annual training for understanding the needs of visually impaired students

The Related Services team for Vision and Orientation and Mobility held an in-service training titled “Visually Impaired Students, Understanding Educational Needs” last Friday for area educators, psychologists, instructional aides, and others at the Tulare County Office of Education (TCOE). Related Services currently serves approximately 70 students within the disability category of visually impaired.

The training provided an overview of the challenges and supports available for students with visual impairments in public school. Topics included implications of visual impairment for the classroom, social skills, orientation and mobility, and assistive technology.

Speaking at the training was Claire Smothermon, a graduate of the Porterville Unified School District. Smothermon shared about her experiences with using her BrailleNote Touch to access curriculum, learning orientation and mobility skills to independently travel around school campuses and her community, and her experiences in the marching band. Smothermon is currently attending California State University, Fresno where she is majoring in music and voice studies.



Related Services used hands-on activities for the attendees to learn travel skills while blindfolded, used a Perkins Braille writer to learn Braille code, and used tactile symbols to play Go Fish.

On October 6, Related Services will hold a “Hearing Impaired Students, Understanding Educational Needs” training. The training will be from 8:30 a.m. until 11:30 a.m. and is open to educators in Tulare County. Those interested in attending can register at tulare.k12oms.org/146-231742.

For more information about Related Services, visit tcoe.org/SpecialEducation/RelatedServices or contact Rachel Weaver at rachelw@tcoe.org.

Photo above:

~ Claire Smothermon, a graduate of the Porterville Unified School District, demonstrates the BrailleNote Touch. Smothermon, now a student at Fresno State, spoke to Tulare County educators at a training hosted by Related Services about her experiences as a high school student with a visually impairment.

TCOE programs partner to conduct training on developing math skills in young learners

Last week, preschool educators from five districts attended the first professional learning workshop of “Nurturing Hearts and Minds: Math Exploration with Young Children.” The Tulare County Office of Education’s Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Educational Resource Services (ERS) partnered to show teachers and instructional coaches in attendance how to apply lessons with children at Woodville Union School.



Participants experienced best practices that build positive math attitudes, uncovered children’s math understanding, incorporated play, explored early math topics, and promoted family math.

Throughout the day, participants engaged in conversations and activities aimed at nurturing young children’s math experiences. Educators facilitated activities with TK students, which elicited their interests, math ideas, and math language. Participants were also able to put their new learning immediately into practice by trying the routine in another transitional kindergarten classroom. One participant commented, “It’s great to learn about best practices, but to see it modeled with real kids was helpful.”

Educational Resource Services appreciates Woodville Union School Superintendent Lou Saephan and Principal Amanda Renteria for hosting the participants. The second session of the three-part series, “Nurturing Hearts and Minds: Math Exploration with Young Children,” will be held in February 2024. For more information, contact Arcy Alafa at arcy.alafa@tcoe.org.

Photo above:

~ Participants at a training held last week at Woodville Union School observe students receiving math instruction. The observers were part of a three-part series hosted by Early Childhood Education and Educational Resource Services to help them engage young students in math learning.

California Center on Teaching Careers receives grant, partnering with Visalia Unified School District

The California Center on Teaching Careers (the Center), which is housed at TCOE, was awarded the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program, Equity, Excellence, Effectiveness (E³) grant. Through the E³ grant, the Center will receive \$2.6 million in the first year – and an estimated \$8 million over three years – to work in partnership with Visalia Unified School

District to enhance educator growth, support leadership capacity, strengthen efforts to manage school change, and build system coherence.

One of the key components of E³ is the development of a comprehensive Human Capital Management System (HCMS) with a structured Performance Based Compensation System (PBCS). It will prioritize recruitment, selection, placement,



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development, and retention of highly qualified educators and opportunities for career advancement for teachers, principals, and other school leaders in six high-need schools.

E³ will also address *Competitive Preference Priority 1* (Equity and Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities) through the implementation of practices that differentiate instruction, services, and resource distribution which aim to effectively respond to the diverse needs of students and narrow the achievement gap.

Key to the development of the HCMS/PBCS are strategies to recruit, support, and retain a diverse educator workforce representative of the school community served. E³ will build on best practices and lessons learned by the Center over more than two decades of developing and implementing recruitment, selection, and placement strategies to meet California's critical shortage of highly qualified, diverse educators.

For more information about the Center, visit tcoe.org/cctc or contact Marvin Lopez at marvin@tcoe.org.

Three educators honored at annual Confucius' Birthday/Educators of the Year Awards



Last week, the Tulare County Office of Education and the Central California Chinese Cultural Center honored three extraordinary teachers at the 27th Annual Confucius' Birthday/Educators of the Year Awards. Renee Carson, a sixth-grade GATE teacher at

Westfield Elementary School (Porterville) was honored as the Elementary Educator of the Year. Monica Robles, a seventh- and eighth-grade math teacher from Burton Middle School (Porterville) was honored as the Middle School Educator of the Year. The High School Educator of the Year was Renee Thornburg, an agriculture teacher and FFA advisor from Woodlake High School.

“We appreciate that the Chinese Cultural Center has recognized over 80 outstanding Tulare County teachers since creating this partnership in 1994,” said Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Tim Hire. “Each year, the process of honoring teachers brings to light the creativity, love, selfless dedication, and countless hours of work the award winners give to their students and their schools.”

To see the tribute video celebrating the careers of Carson, Robles, and Thornburg, visit tcoe.org/EOTY.

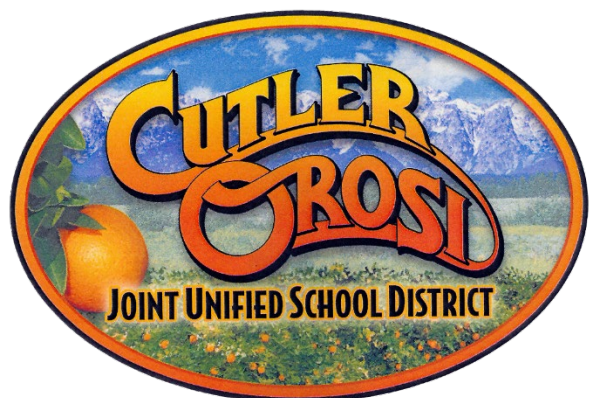
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~ From left to right: Monica Robles, Renee Carson, and Renee Thornburg, pose for a photo before being recognized at the 27th Annual Confucius' Birthday/Educators of the Year Awards.

Around the County

Educational Resource Services helps Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District shine in "Bright Spots" for EL advancement

In the recent publication, "Bright Spots: Five Districts Move the English Learner Roadmap Forward," authored by Dr. Laurie Olsen and funded by the California Department of Education, Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District (COJUSD) was recognized for its outstanding work in English language development (ELD) and dual language immersion programs, thanks to its partnership with Educational Resource Services (ERS).



"Bright Spots" showcases five districts across California that are excelling in implementing California's English Learner Roadmap policy. COJUSD's dedication to equity in English language (EL) education demonstrated their commitment to leaving no EL students behind.

The success of COJUSD is closely tied to its collaboration with ERS. This partnership empowered educators, administrators, and district leaders with tools and knowledge to implement practices aligned with the state policy. Ryann Derington, ERS staff development and curriculum specialist, reported that COJUSD achieved success by taking a multi-year approach to the challenge of implementing the California EL Roadmap.

For the district, the first year focused on professional development about the state EL policy, and school site implementation for administrators and district leaders. The second year was a continuation of the work with the addition of professional learning for all dual language teachers, as well as designated ELD learning for all elementary teachers. The third year saw the piloting of designated ELD lessons created by district coaches and teachers with ERS support.

"This year, we are utilizing the lessons in all elementary grades and at all the district's school sites," Derington said. "Like most districts in California, Cutler-Orosi was seeking curriculum solutions for designated ELD. Through our partnership, teachers have deepened their understanding of language instruction and students will be provided with the much-needed lessons to address their language needs."

COJUSD's emphasis on lesson design and teacher collaboration have been key to the success of the project. Through its partnership with ERS, teacher effectiveness and the collective commitment to EL student success has been enhanced.

The COJUSD story sets an example for other California districts striving to provide quality education to English learners. To read the article, click [here](#).

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

Contributors: Nayirah Dosu, Marlene Moreno, Jennifer Fisher, Rachel Weaver, Arcy Alafa, Ryann Derington, Marvin Lopez, Samantha Tate

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