

Tulare County
Office of Education

Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools

news
galleryweek

May 29, 2024

TCOE begins graduation ceremonies, four seniors recognized as Honored Scholars



This morning, 28 young adults graduated from Special Services AcCEL Programs located in Visalia and North County areas, including the Community Based Instruction Programs in Visalia, Exeter, Dinuba, and Orosi. Their teachers shared that many of the graduates are transitioning to community adult programs.

This evening, La Sierra Charter School will hold its graduation ceremony. The charter school has a senior class of 33 from its military academy and independent study program. Tomorrow night, University Preparatory High School (UPHS) will graduate 61 students.

Among the students at the charter schools are four seniors selected to be part of the annual ABC30 “Honored Scholars” program. Each year, the station invites schools from throughout the Valley to submit the names of two outstanding students from their senior classes. Ruby Rodriguez Barajas and Evelyn Gonzalez-Blow represent La Sierra Charter School. The seniors from UPHS are Addison Reardon and Marcus Anderson.

La Sierra Military Academy (LSMA) Honored Scholars

Ruby Rodriguez Barajas has earned the recognition of LSMA Class of 2024 valedictorian. Rodriguez Barajas has exemplified outstanding academics throughout her high school experience, holding a 4.0 GPA all four years. Rodriguez Barajas has been a part of the United Student Organization, where she participated in organizing school events, community outreach, and fundraising opportunities. She will be attending California State University, Fresno in the fall, majoring in psychology.



Evelyn Gonzalez-Blow has earned the recognition of LSMA Class of 2024 salutatorian. Gonzalez-Blow held the position of the cadet battalion commander and consistently demonstrated leadership qualities among her peers, staff, and throughout the community. She has been an integral part of La Sierra’s participation in the California Cadet Corps. She has run summer boot camps in San Luis Obispo, and she held the position as the assistant safety and security officer at the state level. She also has held the position as vice president for the LSMA Leo Club. Gonzalez-Blow will be attending California State University, Sacramento in the fall, majoring in political science.

UPHS Honored Scholars

Addison Reardon graduates from UPHS as a valedictorian, robotics team captain, ACTS Club leader, and a member of the journalism team. She is known among her peers as a dedicated student and leader. At College of the Sequoias (COS), she completed 65 college units while attending UPHS to satisfy the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Credits (IGETC) pathway. Reardon will be attending California Baptist University in the fall to study biomedical engineering.



Marcus Anderson graduates from UPHS as a valedictorian, robotics team member, Science Olympiad team member, and a photographer for the journalism team. His peers describe him as a talented mathematician and a great computer programmer. At COS, he completed an Associate of Arts in university studies. Next year, Anderson plans to complete an Associate of Science in mathematics and physics, and an Associate of Arts in economics. After completing his COS degrees, he plans to transfer to a University of California campus.

TCOE Graduation Ceremonies

May 29 at 7:00 p.m.

La Sierra Military Academy and Independent Study Program

1735 E. Houston Avenue, Visalia

May 30 at 10:00 a.m.

Porterville Special Education Program

Porterville College Student Center

100 E. College Ave., Porterville

May 30 at 6:00 p.m.

University Preparatory High School

Visalia Fox Theatre

308 W. Main St., Visalia

June 4 at 10:00 a.m.

Tulare Special Education Programs

Claude Meitzenheimer Community Center

830 S. Blackstone St., Tulare

Graduations will also be held next month for students attending Court/Community Schools.

Transitional Kindergarten trainings available for summer

The Tulare County Office of Education's Transitional Kindergarten (TK) program has developed a full range of new trainings. The professional learning opportunities, which begin in June, include sessions on



student assessment, learning environments and routines, mathematics, and early writing.

Teachers will also have the opportunity register for the TK Teacher Collaborative – a yearlong, hybrid series of meetings designed to build a community of support on a variety of topics, including classroom behaviors, literacy, and math. The TK program is also offering the Powerful Partnership in Transitional Kindergarten Series, which focuses on building classroom strategies to master teacher/paraprofessional teaming to support all learners. The Powerful Partnership series offers a stipend for teams that complete various meetings held in July, October, and February.

TK teachers, paraprofessionals, and district administrators are encouraged to visit www.tcoe.org/UPK/Events for more information and to register for the trainings.

Cutler-Orosi holds graduation ceremony for first cohort of dual immersion students



Last week, nearly 80 fifth graders from Cutler Elementary School and Golden Valley Elementary School became the Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District's first cohort of students to graduate from the district's dual immersion program. Most of the fifth graders have been cohorted together since they began the program as transitional kindergarteners.

Ryann Derington, an ELA/ELD staff development and curriculum specialist at TCOE's Educational Resource Services (ERS), joined in the celebration as she has supported the district's program with teacher trainings for the past two years.

COJUSD's program is available to all newly enrolled TK/kindergarten students and newcomers to help them become proficient in speaking, reading, and writing in both Spanish and English languages; perform at or above grade level academically in both languages; and develop positive cross-cultural attitudes and global understanding.

In the dual language program, students build literacy skills in both Spanish and English through a 50/50 model, with instruction delivered equally between the two languages. Teacher teams from kindergarten through fifth grade facilitate the process over the course of six years.

A few years ago, the district realized the need to improve its assessment methods for measuring students' biliteracy development. To address this, COJUSD connected with Derington to plan



professional learning days for each grade level.

“The partnership with TCOE has been pivotal in the challenging process of building a dual language program,” said Yolanda Valdez, COJUSD superintendent. “In recent years, the intensive trainings have given our veteran and new teachers a deeper understanding of bridging the languages so that we are more effectively teaching for comprehension.”

During these trainings, COJUSD teachers analyzed student writing samples using the Biliteracy Squared Rubric developed by Dr. Kathy Escamilla, a nationally renowned

educational professor and researcher on developmental bilingualism and biliteracy. This rubric helped teachers view students as writers in both languages, focusing on content and structural elements over spelling.

By prioritizing content and structure over spelling, teachers were able to better identify areas where students needed support based on class and individual trends. This approach shifted COJUSD teachers' mindsets, emphasizing the importance of seeing students as writers in both languages and implementing strategies that transfer literacy skills across languages.

“We are so excited and proud of the work these teachers and students have done in living up to the Global California 2030 initiative and in preparation for the state seal for biliteracy,” Derington said.

For more information about English language development, contact Ryann Derington at ryann.derington@tcoe.org.

Sarvadnya Kadam reaches fourth round of Spelling Bee



Tulare County spelling champion Sarvadnya Kadam, a seventh-grade student at Oak Grove Elementary School in Visalia, finished as a quarterfinalist Wednesday at the Scripps National Spelling Bee competition.

Kadam advanced through the preliminary rounds after correctly spelling Aesir, Excision, and sardonyx. However, his run at the spelling bee was cut short in the fourth round after he misspelled platanist. The fourth round was a particularly difficult round for many spellers with only 59 of 148 spellers advancing.

This year, Kadam went back-to-back as the Tulare County Spelling Champion. He won his second title by correctly spelling ratatouille in the 20th round. At last year's national spelling bee, Kadam tied for 23rd.

The Scripps National Spelling Bee is held in Maryland and continues tonight with the semifinals beginning at 5:00 p.m. on ION. The spelling bee can be watched via livestream at <https://www.spellingbee.com/watch>.

Photo above:

~ Speller 26 Sarvadnya Kadam of Visalia, CA, representing Visalia Times-Delta/Tulare Advance-Register, competes in the preliminaries of the 2024 Scripps National Spelling Bee in National Harbor, MD, on Tuesday, May 28, 2024. Craig Hudson / Scripps National Spelling Bee

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