

Tulare County  
Office of Education

Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools

news  
galleryweek

March 25, 2026

**New Children First special to feature Tulare County students in leadership, addressing community issues**



On Sunday, ABC30 will air a new *Children First* program entitled *Leading Together*. The special will focus on the importance of providing young people with safe spaces for conversation and helping them develop their skills as future leaders.

Among the stories in the special is a feature on University Preparatory High School's (UPHS) civics education class. In Arturo Figueroa's class, students can work in teams to develop projects that address community problems. For their work, they can earn the State Seal of Civic Engagement at graduation.

Featured students include Matthew Henderson, who is part of a team developing a project to address Tulare County's feral cat population in a humane way, and Kareem

Al-Ghazali, who was part of a team that developed a project two years ago to study the effects of tests on students' mental health.

Figueroa utilizes the Civic Action Project curriculum and requires his students to submit their projects to a national competition organized by Teach Democracy. In the past, several UPHS students have won or were recognized at the national level.

A second segment will feature Jayda Freitas, a Tulare Union High School senior, who is helping educate peers and adults about tobacco use. Freitas is a student representative on both the county TUPE (Tobacco Use Prevention Education) Collaborative Oversight Group and the state TUPE Youth Advisory Board.

The *Children First* special will air on ABC30 at 6:30 p.m. on Sunday, March 29, and stream on YouTube TV, Hulu, and FUBO. The special will also be posted to <https://abc30.com/ChildrenFirst> following the airing.

Photo above:

~ UPHS Principal Helen Milliorn Feller, Ed.D. (left) and teacher Arturo Figueroa (seated) pose with students participating in the Civic Action Project. The students will be featured on the latest ABC30 *Children First* special, which airs Sunday, March 29.

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## Annual Support Staff Conference to focus on personal growth and leadership development

Registration is now open for TCOE's long-running Support Staff Conference. Participants will have the option of attending the half-day event on April 28 or 29 at TCOE's Mooney Administration Building in Visalia. The event will be held from 7:30 a.m. until noon. Breakfast is included.



Organizers have reimagined the event to include more opportunities for classified and support staff to participate in breakout sessions that inspire growth and empower their own leadership skills. "Today's classified staff shoulder far more responsibilities than their titles suggest," said Tim Hire, Tulare County Superintendent of Schools. "In fact, many

support staff have taken on duties that require the skills traditionally thought of as management tools.”

Breakout sessions will include presentations on working across the generations, student mental wellbeing and internet safety, and personal nutrition, fitness, and financial health.

This year’s keynote speaker is Jeff Utecht, an educational and leadership consultant who has spent more than 15 years working with school districts, county offices of education, and state departments across the United States and internationally. A former classroom teacher and district leader, Utecht understands the essential role classified staff play in keeping schools running every day. He will speak on the unique challenges of working among the generations serving in education today.

To register for the Support Staff Conference, visit <https://tcoe.org/SupportStaff>. The cost of the event, which includes breakfast, is \$65.00 for school, city, and county staff within Tulare County. Attendees working outside Tulare County may attend for \$75.00. Food truck options will be on-site for lunch on your own.

For more information, please contact Jennifer Fisher at [jenniferf@tcoe.org](mailto:jenniferf@tcoe.org) or 559-733-6172, or Jaime Burnitzki at [jaimeb@tcoe.org](mailto:jaimeb@tcoe.org) or 559-733-6302.

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## Mike Flynn speaks at Mathematics Leadership Network

Last week, Educational Resource Services’ Mathematics Department hosted its final Mathematics Leadership Network, bringing together district and school site administrators, teacher leaders, and instructional coaches from several counties.

The purpose of the network is to discuss ways the 2023 California Mathematics Framework influences instructional practices and professional development.



During the final session, participants were treated to a presentation by Mike Flynn, Ed.D, an author, mathematics policy leader, and teacher advocate. The network

examined resources that could be utilized to implement the instructional shifts asked by the framework, and strategies to empower teachers as they experiment and learn through their teaching practices.

Leaders recognized that sustained support for educators is essential to bring curriculum and the framework to life in classrooms. The Mathematics Leadership Network plans to serve as a hub for collaboration, reflection, and shared leadership for many school years to come. For more information on future mathematics trainings and networking opportunities, visit <https://tcoe.org/ERS/Math>.

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## Harmony wins four awards at state Academic Decathlon competition

This past Saturday in Santa Clara, Harmony Magnet Academy represented Tulare County at the California Academic Decathlon and won four awards at the state competition. Harmony earned its spot at state after winning its fourth-straight Tulare County Academic Decathlon championship in February.



Harmony's team was coached by Kimberly Marsh. The team was composed of Alejandra Rivas, Kris Kashyap, Xitlaly Prado, Claire Holly, Olivia Braghetta, Vincent Martinez, Daniel Jacuinde, Oliver Rodriguez, and Rogelio Nunez.

All Academic Decathlon teams are comprised of two to three students in each of three grade divisions: Honors (GPA 3.800 and higher), Scholastic (GPA 3.200-3.799), and Varsity (GPA 3.199 and below).

Below is a list of all awards won by Harmony:

2<sup>nd</sup> place – Essay (Scholastic) Division 4: Olivia Braghetta

3<sup>rd</sup> place – Social Science (Scholastic) Division 4: Claire Holly

2<sup>nd</sup> place – Science (Honors) Division 4: Kris Kashyap

3<sup>rd</sup> place – Interview (Honors) Division 4: Kris Kashyap

Kashyap was also recognized as being a member of the 7K Club for scoring over 7,000 points. He was the Harmony team's highest scoring decathlete with 7,107.1 points.

Photo above:

~ *The Harmony Magnet Academy Academic Decathlon team poses for a photo at the California Academic Decathlon.*

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