Tulare County Office of Education
Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools
news gallery week
September 23, 2026

TCOE and Chinese Cultural Center celebrate 30 years of honoring Tulare County educators



Last week, TCOE and the Central California Chinese Cultural Center honored three extraordinary teachers at the annual Confucius' Birthday/Educators of the Year Awards. This year was a special event as the partnership celebrated 30 years of honoring Tulare County educators.

Each year, the program recognizes one elementary school educator, one middle school educator, and one high school educator to commemorate the birthday of Confucius, China’s great philosopher and advocate for universal education.

This year, Lupe Acosta, a first/second grade teacher at Saucelito School (Terra Bella), Maria Pacheco, a sixth/seventh grade math and history teacher from Rockford School (Porterville), and Jeromy Blackwell, a social studies teacher and coach at Harmony Magnet Academy (Strathmore), were celebrated for their outstanding commitment to the students they serve.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Tim Hire presented Chinese Cultural Center board members Wendy Jay and Wayne Chun Wong with a commemorative plaque to mark the occasion. Included on the plaque was a copy of the article from The Visalia Times-Delta that reported on the first awards ceremony in 1994.



For more information and to see the tribute video about this year's honorees, visit tcoe.org/EOTY.

Register today for annual CHOICES Leadership Conference



Registration is now open for the annual CHOICES Leadership Conference, an event designed to train and empower middle school students to create positive, inclusive programs on campus.

This year, the conference will be held November 5 from 8:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. at McDermont X in Lindsay. Through a series of hands-on workshops, participants will learn about being a leader on campus, social-emotional learning, event planning, creating and managing school-wide campaigns, and making healthy choices free from vaping, tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs.

Advisors are invited to register their teams of up to seven students at https://bit.ly/CHOICESLeadership2026. Registration is $150 and the deadline to register is October 2.

For more information about the conference, contact Brittaney Quinonez at brittaney.quinonez@tcoe.org or 559-651-0155.

Behavioral Health Services offers training on two valuable programs this year



Behavioral Health Services will offer three training sessions each this school year on the **Youth Mental Health First Aid** and the **School Suicide Intervention and Community Resources** programs. To register for the trainings, search the calendar at https://tulare.k12oms.org

Youth Mental Health First Aid teaches educators how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance abuse disorders. This eight-hour certification training gives adults who interact with youth the skills to reach out and provide initial support to adolescents (ages 12-18), who may be developing a mental health or substance abuse problem, and connect them to the appropriate care. Trainings will be offered December 15, 2026, and February 1 and May 7, 2027.

Educators attending the School Suicide Intervention and Community Resources training will learn how to use the Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS), an evidence-supported tool widely used to screen and prevent suicide. The C-SSRS is a short and simple questionnaire that can be administered quickly by caring adults with no formal mental health training. Basic crisis evaluation strategies and suggestions will

be discussed to help support participants in working with students experiencing a crisis. In addition, information will be shared regarding various community resources and support available to assist a student in crisis. School Suicide Intervention and Community Resources trainings will be offered November 18, 2026, and February 17 and May 5, 2027.

Around the County

Lindsay High School visits state capitol to celebrate personal finance bill

Yesterday, Lindsay High School teacher, Maria Caballero, and students Miriam Hernandez Gaytan and Nathaly Penuelas-Rangel, were invited by Next Generation Personal Finance (NGPF) to the State Capitol to celebrate the personal finance bill, Assembly Bill (AB) 2927. The bill became law in 2024, making California the 26th state in the nation to require personal finance as a high school graduation requirement.



The celebration included a screening of the documentary “The Most Important Class You Never Had: Mission, Movement & Momentum” by NGPF. Caballero’s personal finance course and Hernandez Gaytan are featured in the film at the 20-minute mark. Penuelas-Rangel also took the course, and both students are a part of Lindsay’s award-winning Business and Finance Pathway, as well as officers for the LHS chapter of Future Business Leaders of America.

At the event, the trio discussed the importance of teaching personal finance and the benefits for students to learn about topics like budgeting, debt, savings, investing, and behavioral economics.

Those who take the personal finance course at Lindsay are also eligible for a $2,500 Maria Caballero Personal Finance Scholarship established by NGPF.



On the scholarship, NGPF co-founder Tim Ranzetta, said, “This scholarship honors the dedication and commitment of Maria Caballero as a teacher and advocate for personal finance education at Lindsay High School and recognizes her role in helping guarantee this course for all Californians.”

Photos above:

~ From left to right, Maria Caballero, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond, Miriam Hernandez Gaytan, and Nathaly Penuelas-Rangel

~ From left to right, Next Generation Personal Finance co-founder Tim Ranzetta, Miriam Hernandez Gaytan, and Nathaly Penuelas-Rangel

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To receive the News Gallery Week, sign up using the form, or contact Jennifer Fisher at jenniferf@tcoe.org or 559-733-6172.