

Tulare County Office of Education

Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools

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Media Alert

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Tulare County Office of Education Announces:

Educators of the Year to be honored Thursday, September 25, 2025

At an invitation-only dinner on Thursday, September 25, the Central California Chinese Cultural Center and the Tulare County Office of Education (TCOE) will again honor three Tulare County teachers at the annual Confucius' Birthday/Educators of the Year Awards.

On March 7 and March 11 of this year, Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Tim Hire and Wendy Jay, a member of the Chinese Cultural Center's board of directors, surprised the three honorees with the news that they had been selected as Educators of the Year.

Since 1994, the Central California Chinese Cultural Center has partnered with the Tulare County Office of Education to honor one elementary, one middle school, and one high school teacher as part of the Confucius' Birthday/Educators of the Year Awards. Chinese people around the world often mark the occasion of Confucius' birthday in late September by recognizing exemplary teachers. Each year, members of the Chinese Cultural Center hold a dinner celebration at their center in Visalia for the honorees, their colleagues, and family members.

"This year's winners are exceptional in their abilities to engage students and make learning exciting for each one," said Hire.

The winners of the 2025 Educators of the Year Awards are:

Elementary Educator of the Year
Alicia Bovetti, Third-Grade Teacher
Rocky Hill Elementary School, Exeter

Alicia Bovetti has spent the past 11 years as a teacher at Rocky Hill Elementary in Exeter. She is currently the grade-level lead for third grade. Rocky Hill principal, Beth Micari, says she has created a system for the third grade where her team meets every Wednesday to collaborate and create an inclusive learning environment. The team shares all of the third-grade students in order to encourage students' growth, which lessened the need for interventions. Micari describes Bovetti's dedication to mentoring other teachers as unsurpassed. Her classroom is always open to

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any teacher who may be struggling. Annually, Bovetti organizes the school's Halloween festivities, fundraises and organizes the third-grade field trip, and tutors students after school. Her passion for nurturing young minds is truly inspiring. She is an invaluable asset to her school and community.

Middle School Educator of the Year

Carmen Diaz, Eighth-Grade Teacher

Alpaugh Elementary School, Alpaugh

Carmen Diaz has dedicated herself to the students and families of Alpaugh Unified School District as an eighth-grade teacher for the past eight years. Previously, she served as the district librarian, where she expanded her love of literature to bring stories to life for her students. Alpaugh superintendent Troy Hayes says her classroom is a hub of active learning and meaningful engagement. Diaz uses Socratic seminar as her instructional model, which fosters critical thinking and values student perspectives. As a previous student at Alpaugh and the district's only teacher who lives in Alpaugh, all of the students know her from the community. She is an active leader in the Alpaugh school community, hosting the eighth-grade graduation ceremony and coaching middle school girls' basketball and volleyball. Her positive impact extends far beyond the classroom walls.

High School Educator of the Year

Ricardo Florez, Intervention Resource Classroom Teacher

Tulare Union High School, Tulare

Ricardo Florez has been the Intervention Resource Classroom (IRC) program lead at Tulare Union High School for the past four years. Florez leads a team that includes two full-time behavior specialists. His classroom is not like traditional classrooms. Instead, you will find couches and beanbags, which help create a welcoming and safe place for students. His principal, Michelle Nunley, Ed.D., says his classroom is a room where students can de-escalate, talk with an adult, get instructional help, or have quiet space. He walks students to class, has lunch with them, talks to them during breaks and even plays games at lunch in a shirt and a tie with the students. Because he supports not just at-risk students, but all students on campus, Florez has become a trusted and respected teacher, mentor, and colleague.

For more information on the Educators of the Year Awards, visit www.tcoe.org/EOTY.