

# Meeting Challenges:

## *Resilience Through Creativity*





# Aubreyana Nicolas & Liliana Rodriguez

*Woodlake Unified School District*

Aubreyana (known as Aubrey) and Liliana have both been dedicated members of the Ballet Folklorico Tierra y Sol dance class at Woodlake High School for the past two years. Upon graduation, they proudly completed the Arts, Media, and Entertainment Pathway, a testament to their commitment to the performing arts.

As part of Tierra y Sol, students attend daily classes and often dedicate additional hours to after-school rehearsals and make-up workshops. Aubrey and Liliana consistently demonstrate exceptional participation and always give their personal best.

Throughout the school year, students have opportunities to showcase their talents at a variety of events, including Career Dance, the Woodlake Christmas Parade, and the Annual Student Showcase in April.

In this photo, Liliana (left) and Aubrey (right) are seen performing at the Tulare County Office of Education as part of the student entertainment for the Annual CAC Special Education Awards Luncheon, where their performance was warmly received and enjoyed by all.





# January

# 2026

## December 2025

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## February 2026

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[www.tulareselpa.org/cac](http://www.tulareselpa.org/cac)

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 <i>New Year's Day</i>	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19 <i>Martin Luther King Jr. Day</i>	20	21	22	23	24
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# Cassidy Vander Tuig

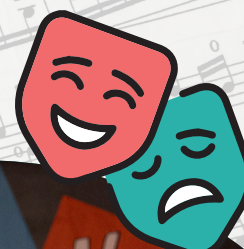
## Tulare City School District

Cassidy Vander Tuig shines on stage—and it's clear that the stage is exactly where she belongs. During her two years at Live Oak, Cassidy has embraced the spotlight, participating in multiple theater productions that showcased her love for performing.

Her journey began with a role in the ensemble cast of *Bye Bye Birdie*, and continued into eighth grade when she took the stage again in *Seussical Jr.* Cassidy's dedication and enthusiasm for theater were evident in every performance, but it was the connections she built behind the scenes that made her experience truly special.

Her teacher, Mrs. Kalama, shared that Cassidy not only grew as a performer, but also formed meaningful friendships with her fellow cast members—bonds that lasted long after the final curtain call. Through these experiences, Cassidy's confidence blossomed, both on stage and off.

With such a successful junior high theater journey, we're excited to see where Cassidy's passion takes her next. We hope she continues to find joy and purpose in the performing arts throughout high school and beyond. Break a leg, Cassidy!





# February 2026

## January 2026

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## March 2026

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[www.tulareselpa.org/cac](http://www.tulareselpa.org/cac)

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2 <i>Groundhog Day</i>	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12 <i>CAC Meeting</i>	13	14 <i>Valentine's Day</i>
15	16 <i>Presidents' Day</i>	17 <i>Lunar New Year</i>	18 <i>Ash Wednesday</i> <i>First Night of Ramadan</i>	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28



# Alexa Muñoz

## Burton School District

Alexa, also known as Lexi, has been a dedicated member of the auxiliary's color guard at Burton Middle School for one year—and she's excited to return for eighth grade. The color guard performs choreographed routines with large flags in front of the marching band, requiring precise timing and teamwork. Lexi's sign language interpreter, Ms. Daniela Medina, plays a vital role in ensuring Lexi receives all the communication during practices and performances.

Color guard practices take place weekly, with competitions held in both fall and spring. Highlights include performances at Disneyland and local elementary schools. Next year's schedule will expand to include competitions in Santa Cruz and Hollywood, along with continued events throughout the valley.

Lexi says what she enjoys most about color guard is the opportunity to make new friends while having fun. Performing in front of crowds has boosted her confidence and helped her grow into a leader among her peers. This newfound self-assurance has positively impacted other areas of her school life as well—Lexi even started a weekly sign language club on campus.

Lexi is a powerful example of how determination, perseverance, and the right support can make anything possible. Nicely done, Lexi!





# March

# 2026

## February 2026

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## April 2026

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[www.tulareselpa.org/cac](http://www.tulareselpa.org/cac)

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8 <i>Daylight Saving Time</i>	9	10	11	12 <i>CAC Meeting</i>	13	14
15	16	17 <i>St. Patrick's Day</i>	18	19	20 <i>Eid-al-Fitr</i>	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29 <i>Palm Sunday</i>	30	31				



# Mariana Lemus

*Lindsay Unified School District*

Mariana Lemus joined the classical guitar class at Lindsay High because the sound of the instrument felt familiar and comforting. Her connection to music runs in the family—her mother once played, and her uncle still does.

The class, held twice a week in a beautifully arranged room filled with guitars (many displayed on the walls), provides a focused and creative environment. According to Ms. Wills, the guitar teacher, Mariana is always on task and spends her class time diligently practicing and playing her assignments.

Although she's unsure whether she'll take the class again next year, Mariana hopes to continue playing guitar at home—possibly even alongside a family member. She's especially interested in learning more about the 12-string guitar her uncle plays, hinting at a growing curiosity and appreciation for the instrument's depth and tradition.





# April

# 2026

## March 2026

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## May 2026

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[www.tulareselpa.org/cac](http://www.tulareselpa.org/cac)

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 <i>Passover</i> <i>April Fools' Day</i>	2	3 <i>Good Friday</i>	4
5 <i>Easter</i>	6	7	8	9 <i>CAC Meeting</i>	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22 <i>Earth Day</i>	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		



# Ambry Blackwell

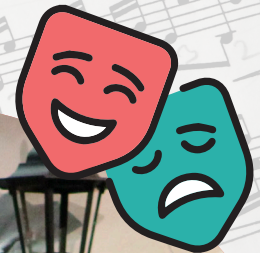
*Tulare County Office of Education*

Ambry Blackwell is a dedicated and passionate performer who has truly found his voice during his time at University Preparatory High School (UPHS). Over the years, he has taken on a variety of roles in the drama program—playing the lead in *The Little Prince*, serving as stage manager for *Clue*, and taking the stage as Sylvester in *Disco Inferno* (pictured).

Ambry says one of his favorite parts of theater is the connection that forms among cast members and the satisfaction of seeing a show come together. He really enjoys when everything clicks and the production is a success.

Mr. Rasner, his theater teacher, had high praise: “Ambry possesses qualities that are rare in an actor—modesty, sincerity, innocence, and honesty. He’s a team player, the best person to have in a cast. He’s also a brilliant improviser and absolutely hysterical.”

Ambry’s talent, humility, and collaborative spirit have made a lasting impact on the UPHS drama program.





# May

# 2026

## April 2026

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## June 2026

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3	4	5 <i>Cinco de Mayo</i>	6	7	8	9
10 <i>Mother's Day</i>	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21 <i>CAC Meeting</i>	22	23
24	25 <i>Memorial Day</i>	26	27 <i>Eid al-Adha</i>	28	29	30
31						



# Aurora Tinajero Banda

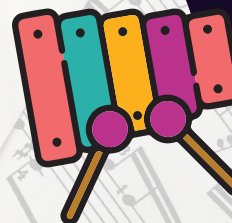
*Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District*

Aurora Tinajero Banda has been a shining star in the El Monte Middle School dance program since seventh grade. Gaining her spot on the team through a competitive audition process, Aurora's passion has continued to grow each year.

Now in eighth grade, she's taking the stage again with confidence and enthusiasm. Dance classes meet daily under the guidance of instructor Ms. Wolff, who shares that Aurora has truly stepped out of her comfort zone. "She is a light to the whole team," says Ms. Wolff. "It's going to be exciting to see how much more she grows this year."

Aurora's commitment extends beyond the classroom. She'll be representing El Monte Middle School in a variety of district-wide events, including the school talent show, the high school's Performing Arts Showcase, and the popular Friday Night Lights Lip Sync Contest.

Her busy year will also include performances at the Dinuba Cinco de Mayo Pageant and the annual Six Flags Dance Competition—where she'll continue to inspire others with her energy and team spirit. Way to go, Aurora! We can't wait to see where your passion for dance takes you next.





# June

# 2026

## May 2026

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## July 2026

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14 <i>Flag Day</i>	15	16	17	18	19 <i>Juneteenth</i>	20
21 <i>Father's Day</i>	22	23	24	25	26 <i>Ashura</i>	27
28	29	30				



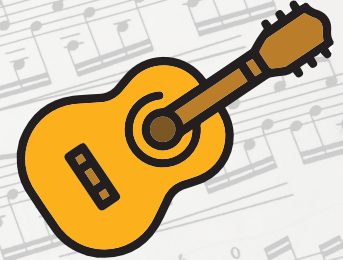
# Alejandro García Jr.

## *Exeter Unified School District*

Alejandro García Jr., who goes by AJ, has been an active member of the Wilson Middle School band for the past two years. He practices daily alongside his classmates and enjoys playing a range of percussion instruments—one of his favorites being the bells, as seen in the photo.

While AJ also tried the flute for a time, he admits it wasn't quite the right fit for him. His passion clearly lies in percussion, where he's found both enjoyment and growth. In addition to regular class sessions, AJ has participated in concerts, parades, and judged music festivals with his peers—experiences that have expanded his confidence and performance skills.

AJ shared that beyond being fun, band has helped him improve his focus and ability to pay attention, both in and out of the classroom. His dedication and growth are a testament to the positive impact of music education.





# July

# 2026

## June 2026

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## August 2026

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4 <i>Independence Day</i>
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
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# Guadalupe Santillan

## Woodlake Unified School District

Guadalupe Santillan has been a dedicated member of the Woodlake High School dance program for the past two years and plans to return for her senior year in the fall. As part of the Ballet Folklórico Tierra y Sol group, Guadalupe attends daily dance classes, participates in school rehearsals, and makes time for make-up workshops when needed.

In addition to her regular commitment, Guadalupe also takes part in special events such as the Woodlake Christmas Parade, field trips, and community performances like the Annual CAC Special Education Awards Luncheon (pictured), where the dancers share their talent with a wider audience.

Dance instructor Lisa Perez shared her appreciation for Guadalupe's consistently positive attitude and the kindness and respect she shows to others and looks forward to another great year of dancing.

Guadalupe's dedication and character make her a valued part of the program and a joy to watch on stage.





# August

# 2026

*July 2026*

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*September 2026*

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[www.tulareselpa.org/cac](http://www.tulareselpa.org/cac)

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
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# Tyrell Tucker & Felipe Rivera

## *Tulare City School District*

Tyrell Tucker (left) has participated in drumline for one year and what he enjoys most is the music. He likes to practice, which is a good thing since the class meets Monday through Friday. In addition to classes, Tyrell has also been a part of marching band parades, drum competitions, a fall concert, a winter dessert concert, a spring concert, high school football games, and a tour at the elementary schools. Wow! That's a lot of drumming!

Felipe Rivera (right) has participated in drumline for two years and also has class Monday through Friday. Felipe appreciates the chance to learn and play music and says that being in the drumline has helped him to focus and stand still—something that has always been a struggle. Felipe has also been a part of the various marching band parades and concerts throughout the year, as well as touring the elementary schools and playing at the high school football games. Finally, Felipe also had the opportunity to perform in front of his peers at various assemblies at Live Oak School.



# September 2026

## August 2026

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## October 2026

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2	3 CAC Meeting	4	5
6	7 Labor Day	8	9	10	11	12 Rosh Hashanah
13 Rosh Hashanah (Day 2)	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21 Yom Kippur	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			



# Frank García

## Porterville Unified School District

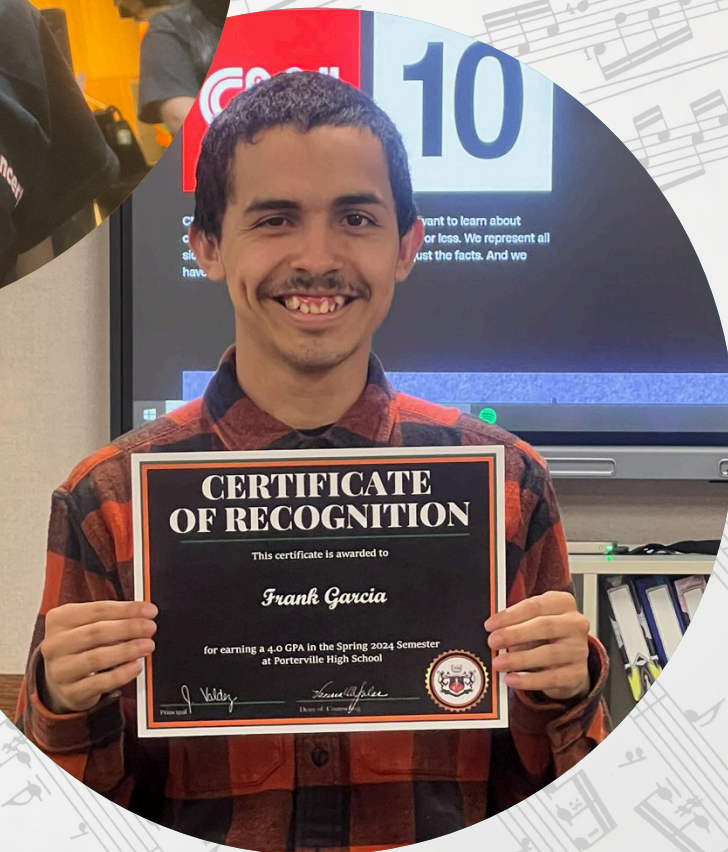
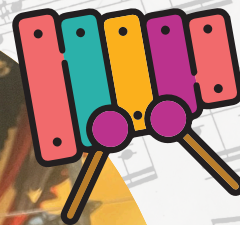
Frank García is part of Tulare County's AcCEL (Academic Collaborative for Exceptional Learners) program at Monache High School. Several years ago, Frank's mother inquired about enrolling him in choir. Thanks to the collaboration between his classroom teacher, Mr. Greg Brown, and choir teacher Ms. Klippenstein, that wish became a reality.

For the past three years, Frank has been an active member of an integrated choir class, attending four times a week. He also performs in school concerts throughout the year, dedicating extra time to after-school rehearsals, and has even traveled to places like Disneyland on music-related field trips.

Frank's independence has grown remarkably. While he was originally escorted by an aide to and from class, he now confidently navigates the campus on his own. Recently, Frank received the Principal's Award (pictured) for earning a 4.0 GPA in choir, a clear reflection of his responsibility and dedication.

Beyond his academic success, Frank's involvement in choir has helped him gain recognition and friendships among his general education peers—boosting his confidence and bringing him joy.

Way to go, Frank! Your hard work, spirit, and love for music continue to inspire everyone around you.





# October

# 2026

## September 2026

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## November 2026

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8 CAC Meeting	9	10
11	12 Indigenous Peoples' Day Columbus Day	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31 Halloween



# Aubrey López

## Sunnyside Union Elementary School District

Aubrey López has a deep love for her culture and all the rich traditions that come with it—from the food, art, and clothing to feast days, language, music, and of course, the dances of her ancestors. She enjoys organizing family gatherings and cherishes time spent with older relatives who share stories and wisdom from the past.

So when the opportunity came to choose a middle school elective, folklorico dance was an easy decision. Aubrey has now participated in dance for two years, and when she is on stage, she radiates confidence, resilience, and teamwork.

At Sunnyside Elementary, Aubrey has performed at a variety of school and community events including Grandparents' Day, Christmas, Cinco de Mayo, and the end-of-year showcase. Most recently, she was honored to perform at the Donor Appreciation Dinner for the TCOE Foundation (pictured), sharing her passion and pride with a broader audience.

Aubrey is a shining example of how cultural heritage and personal dedication can come together in a powerful, inspiring way.



# November 2026

## October 2026

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## December 2026

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[www.tulareselpa.org/cac](http://www.tulareselpa.org/cac)

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 <i>Daylight Saving Time end</i>	2 <i>Day of the Dead</i>	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11 <i>Veterans Day</i>	12 <i>CAC Meeting</i>	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26 <i>Thanksgiving</i>	27	28
29	30					



## Karisma Jesus Uribe & Emilie Hernández

### Visalia Unified School District

Karisma Jesus Uribe (right) loves to dance and has been a dedicated member of the Mt. Whitney High School dance program for four years. Every day during third period, she heads to dance class where instructor Mrs. Arreola has created a warm and welcoming space where all students' talents are celebrated.

The class is made up of a diverse group of students, and for many—like Karisma—it's more than just an elective; it's a place where friendships grow and confidence thrives. True to her name, Karisma is full of personality and is known for greeting her friends with a big smile throughout the day. That same joyful energy lights up the stage when she performs—especially during Mt. Whitney's annual dance show, a beloved tradition for over a decade.

Emilie Hernández (left) is another standout student in the AcCEL program and a classmate of Karisma's. Emilie began dancing just last year but quickly discovered a love for it. Now in her second year, she looks forward to class each day as a chance to connect with peers, grow her skills, and have fun. Her previous teacher saw her interest in dance and encouraged her to join—a decision that's brought many smiles and new friendships.

Both Karisma and Emilie stay active in the dance community at school, participating in performances at rallies, seasonal shows, and the Pioneer Partners Dance Event, which showcases students across the TCOE AcCEL program.





# December 2026

## November 2026

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## January 2027

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[www.tulareselpa.org/cac](http://www.tulareselpa.org/cac)

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2	3	4	5 <i>Hanukkah</i>
6	7	8	9	10 <i>CAC Meeting</i>	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24 <i>Christmas Eve</i>	25 <i>Christmas Day</i>	26 <i>Kawanzaa</i>
27	28	29	30	31 <i>New Year's Eve</i>		



# **TULARE COUNTY SPECIAL EDUCATION LOCAL PLAN AREA (SELPA)**

## **COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

### **WHY GET INVOLVED?**

- Improve your knowledge of Special Education
- Meet and share ideas with other parents who have similar interests
- Be informed about local programs & events created specifically for students and adults with disabilities
- Provide your input to school professionals and community members who work with people with special needs

### **JOIN US!**

The Tulare County SELPA Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is looking for individuals who are interested in working alongside parents, teachers, students, community members, and school professionals to increase awareness of the needs and abilities of special education students. We understand that effective Special Education requires collaboration, creativity, and community—and we welcome your ideas! To get involved and make a difference or find out about becoming a member, please join us at our next meeting.

### **MEETING INFORMATION:**

Meetings are from 9:00 am – 10:30 am and are open to the public with a Zoom option available. For information about location, zoom links, or to view agendas and minutes, visit: [www.tulareselpa.org/cac](http://www.tulareselpa.org/cac).

### **HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER:**

- If you would like to serve on the committee, please call the Director of Special Education in your district or call Malinda Furtado, Parent Liaison Coordinator, TCOE at 730-2910 ext. 5125
- Note: We suggest that you attend several meetings prior to requesting membership.



## TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

Bright Future Program.....	(559) 747-3984, ext. 6830
Bright Start FACES Program.....	(559) 747-3984, ext. 6831
Bright Start Parent Infant Program	
Porterville.....	(559) 783-2405
Visalia.....	(559) 740-4321
Central Valley Regional Center (CVRC).....	(559) 738-2200
Child Care Resource and Referral.....	(559) 651-0185
Down Syndrome Association of Central CA (DSACC).....	(559) 228-0411
First 5 Tulare County.....	(559) 622-8650
Parenting Network	
Dinuba.....	(559) 334-3269
Porterville.....	(559) 793-2527
Visalia.....	(559) 625-0384
Special Olympics Tulare County.....	(559) 732-9123
Tulare County Child Welfare Services	
Hotline .....	1 (800) 331-1585
Tulare County HHSA Child Health and Disability Prevention Program (CHDP).....	(559) 685-5800
Tulare County SELPA	
Community Advisory Committee.....	(559) 730-2910, ext. 5125
Tulare County Office of Education (TCOE).....	(559) 730-2910, ext. 5141
TCOE Deaf and Hard of Hearing.....	(559) 730-2910, ext. 5146
TCOE Early Childhood Education Program.....	(559) 651-3022
TCOE Speech and Language Program.....	(559) 730-2910, ext. 5123
TCOE Special Education Parent Liaisons.....	(559) 302-3679
TCOE Special Services Division.....	(559) 730-2910, ext. 5120

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE:**  
[WWW.TULARESELPA.ORG](http://WWW.TULARESELPA.ORG)

## CHILD FIND

**DO YOU KNOW A CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS?**

**WE'RE HERE TO HELP.**



Special education services and programs are available in Tulare County for children from birth to 21 years of age who have a disability.

For more information, call **Child Find** at **730-2910 ext. 5125** or your local school. Child Find is located in the Tulare County Office of Education.



**TULARE COUNTY**  
**SPECIAL EDUCATION**  
SPECIAL EDUCATION LOCAL PLAN AREA



No one can deny the power of the arts in schools to uncover hidden talents and ignite passions in students. Arts education has the unique ability to transform the ordinary into something vibrant and inspiring. The performing arts take this transformation a step further, offering students the chance to actively showcase their talents to peers, families, and the broader community—promoting inclusion and fostering a sense of empowerment.

The Tulare County SELPA Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is proud to present *Meeting Challenges: Resilience Through Creativity*.

Our 2026 Meeting Challenges Calendar features students from across Tulare County participating in a wide range of performing arts, both at school and in the community. Inside, you'll read inspiring stories of actors, dancers, drummers, singers, and band members who have found joy in performing—each one overcoming personal challenges to achieve success and connection. We hope these stories remind you of the profound impact the arts can have in a student's life—and the light they can spark within.

Tulare County  
Office of Education

Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools

CAC  
COMMUNITY  
ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE



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