

BUILDING futures

A Publication of the Fresno Unified School District

A C H I E V I N G O U R G R E A T E S T P O T E N T I A L

Enrollment Open for Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten

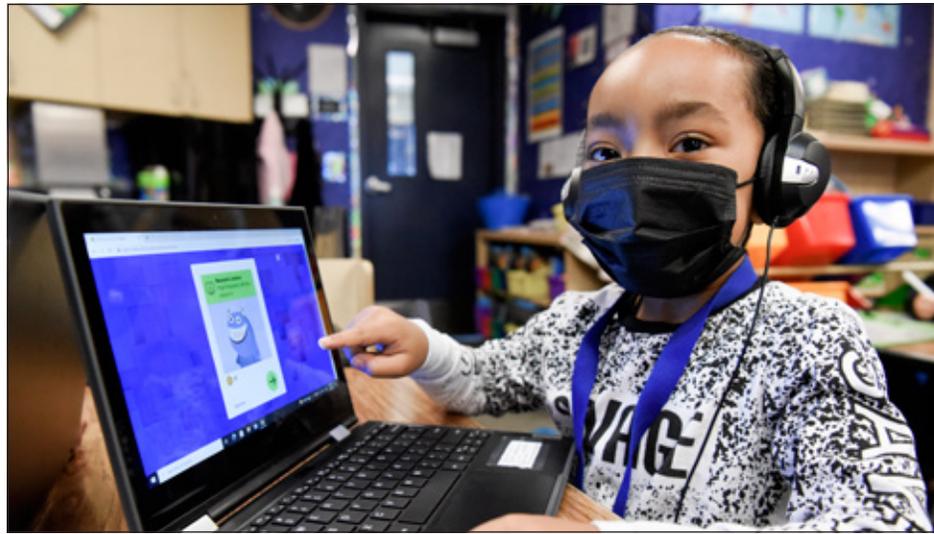
■ Enroll Now for Dual Immersion Programs

Registration began March 1 for enrollment in [transitional kindergarten](#) and kindergarten, and can be done online. [Online Registration](#)



CONNECTION TO DISTRICT GOALS
 "Fresno Unified School District – Where students, families, and staff are valued and empowered to achieve their greatest potential."

Families are urged to enroll their kindergarten students now for the



Kindergartner Grayson Parker already knows basic computer skills. She is in Carlanda Miller's class at King Elementary School. [Kindergarten Registration Flyer](#)

See **KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT**
 Continued on page 2

IN THIS EDITION FOCUS ON EARLY LEARNING

- Page 1: Kindergarten Registration
- Page 2: Kindergarten Registration in Spanish and Hmong
- Page 3: Community Message on Early Learning
- Page 4: Inclusion and Play and Learn Centers

Excellence in Education Winners Surprised at their Campuses



At left, teacher on special assignment Isabel Mayoral is surprised by Misty Her, deputy superintendent, and Superintendent Bob Nelson on Feb. 14 at Wilson Elementary School. Mayoral was selected as the Excellence in Education winner in the certificated elementary school employee category.

■ Meet the Excellence in Education Winners (Pages 6-8)

Superintendent Bob Nelson and Misty Her, deputy superintendent, made surprise visits on Feb. 14 and 15 to the winners of the 2022 Excellence in Education awards. Selected from among 10 finalists in each category:

- Administrator: Eugene Reinor, vice principal at Scandinavian Middle School
- Certificated Elementary School: Isabel Mayoral, teacher on special assignment from Wilson Elementary School
- Certificated Middle School: Kristin Cosentino from Sequoia Middle

School

- Certificated High School: Registered nurse Liz Torres from Rata High School serving as interim manager of Health Services
- Classified Employee: Dawn Gardner, office manager for J.E. Young Academic Center and the Alternative Education Department

Excellence in Education winners are traditionally announced at the Excellence in Education dinner. However, with the pandemic leading to postponement of the dinner, winners were surprised with the news at their

See **EIE OVERVIEW**
 Continued on page 5



Nominate Outstanding Students (Page 2)



Excellence in Education Winners (Pages 6-8)



Meet Vartan Vrnzlyan (Page 10)



Superintendent Message in Spanish and Hmong (Page 14)



FOCUS ON EARLY LEARNING

KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT Continued from page 1

2022-23 school year so that there are no delays in students starting school on the first day of the academic year, Monday, Aug. 15. By learning about registration now, parents can be prepared for enrollment requirements and have time to complete them.

Transitional kindergarten (TK) is open to all students turning 5 between Sept. 2 and Feb. 2. Children who are 5 on or before Sept. 1 qualify for kindergarten.

The district is also pleased to offer [dual immersion language programs](#) at select schools. Through dual immersion, students learn to speak, read and write in two languages. Programs are available in Spanish and Hmong.

Fresno Unified offers preschool for 3- and 4-year-old students. Enrollment opens on April 4 for Fresno Unified's high-quality early learning programs. Call the Early Learning Department at (559) 457-3416 or visit the [Early Learning web page](#) for more information.

Children's brains and bodies develop rapidly in the first 5 years of life. This means early childhood is the best time to establish a strong foundation for learning.

The Early Learning Department of Fresno Unified School District knows that all adults in a child's life can help create the nurturing and engaging connections children need. The department supports this with child-centered environments and high-quality educational programs that value and respect the language, culture, and needs of all students, families, staff and communities.

Inscripciones Abiertas para Kinder Transicional y Kinder

■ Inscríbese ahora para los programas de doble inmersión

El registro comienza el 1 de marzo para inscribirse en [transitional kindergarten](#) (kínder transicional) y kínder, y se puede hacer en línea. [Online Registration](#) (Registro en línea)

Se insiste con urgencia a las familias a inscribir a sus estudiantes de kínder ahora para el año escolar 2022-23 para que no haya retrasos en el inicio de clases de los estudiantes el primer día del año académico, el lunes 15 de agosto. Al aprender sobre la inscripción ahora, los padres pueden estar preparados para los requisitos de inscripción y tener tiempo para completarlos.

El kínder transicional (TK) está abierto para todos los estudiantes que cumplen 5 años entre el 2 de septiembre y el 2 de febrero. Los niños que cumplen 5 años el 1 de septiembre o antes califican para kínder.

El distrito también se complace en ofrecer [dual immersion language programs](#) (programas de idiomas de doble inmersión) en escuelas seleccionadas. A través de la inmersión doble, los estudiantes aprenden a hablar, leer y escribir en dos idiomas. Los programas están disponibles en español y hmong.

El Distrito Escolar Unificado de Fresno ofrece preescolar para estudiantes de 3 y 4 años. La inscripción se abre el 4 de abril para los programas de aprendizaje temprano de alta calidad del Distrito Escolar Unificado de Fresno. Llame al Departamento de Aprendizaje Temprano al (559) 457-3416 o visite el



Carlanda Miller engages her kindergarten class at King Elementary School. Kindergarten enrollment begins March 1.

[Early Learning web page](#) (página web de Aprendizaje Temprano) para más información.

El cerebro y el cuerpo de los niños se desarrollan rápidamente en los primeros 5 años de vida. Esto significa que la primera infancia es el mejor momento para establecer una base sólida para el aprendizaje.

El Departamento de Aprendizaje Temprano del Distrito Escolar Unificado de Fresno sabe que todos los adultos en la vida de un niño pueden ayudar a crear las conexiones enriquecedoras y atractivas que los niños necesitan. El departamento apoya esto con entornos centrados en el niño y programas educativos de

alta calidad que valoran y respetan el idioma, la cultura y las necesidades de todos los estudiantes, familias, personal y comunidades.

Sij Hawm Qhib Cuv Npe rau Transitional Kindergarten, Kindergarten

■ Cuv Npe Tam Sim No rau cov kev Kawm Ob Hom Lus, Dual Immersion Programs

Kev cuv npe pib lub Peb Hlis Hnub Tim 1 rau cov yuav kawm [transitional kindergarten](#) thiab kindergarten, thiab

See **KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT** Continued on page 5

Accepting Nominations for Outstanding Students

The Office of Communications is excited to launch Faces of Fresno Unified – *Student Edition*, highlighting exceptional students who have demonstrated all-around good character. Teachers and school administrators are invited to nominate students for this video series.

Faces of Fresno Unified was created to showcase the wonderful stories behind the amazing staff (and now students) of Fresno Unified. Characteristics of nominees could include:

- Strong work ethic
- Perseverant
- Goal-driven
- Strong and effective leader



- Outstanding academics
- Outstanding academics and outstanding athlete/other extracurricular activity
- Note-worthy community service involvement
- Overcoming hardship
- Kind, honest and helpful

[Click here to submit your nomination.](#)



Fresno Unified School District

Important Dates

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| March 1 | Kindergarten Enrollment Starts (Dual Enrollment Programs Available) |
| March 21 | Buyback Day – No School for Students |
| April 4 | Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten Enrollment Starts |
| April 11-18 | Spring Break |
| June 10 | Last Day of School |
| August 15 | First Day of 2022-23 School Year |



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Building Futures is a monthly publication of Fresno Unified School District prepared by the Communications Office. To place an ad, contact (559) 457-3733 or email Communications@FresnoUnified.org.

SUPERINTENDENT'S Message

Learn More about Early Learning Opportunities

Hello #FUSD

Family! Our March issue is filled with great information about our early learning options. Early learning is one of my main priorities as superintendent, as we know how incredibly valuable these early years are to our



Robert G. Nelson, Ed.D.
Superintendent

students' success. Folks often talk about how students fall behind once in school, when in fact many of our students start kindergarten already far behind because they did not have access to high-quality preschool and transitional kindergarten. At Fresno Unified, we have some great options for your children to start their education early and get ahead!

Starting March 1, enrollment for transitional kindergarten and kindergarten opened! For children who turn 5 years old by Sept. 1, 2022 you will enroll your child in kindergarten. For children who turn 5 years old

between Sept. 2 and Feb. 2, 2023 you can enroll your child in transitional kindergarten. If your child turns 3 or 4 years old on or before Dec. 1, 2022 you can enroll your child in our preschool programs. To learn more and enroll online, you can head to fresnounified.org/enroll/.

We also have amazing dual immersion early learning opportunities at several

See **SUPT. MESSAGE SPANISH AND HMONG**
Continued on page 14

Message from Matilda T. Soria, Ed.D., Senior Director, Early Care and Education, Office of Fresno County Superintendent of Schools

A Shared Vision of High-Quality Early Learning

There's a saying about reaching across the aisle and extending a hand to help a friend. The same principle applies here, but substitute N Street for any aisle to describe the proximity of the Early Learning Department of Fresno Unified School District (FUSD) and the Early Care and Education (ECE) Department of the Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools (FCSS). Over the past six years, FUSD and FCSS have worked collaboratively on several projects to ensure our youngest learners and their families have access to quality early learning experiences. Two such efforts are The Starting Smart and Strong Initiative and Fresno County Early Stars.



Matilda T. Soria, Ed.D.
Senior Director of Early Care and Education

Launched in 2015, the aim of the 10-year Starting Smart and Strong Initiative is to identify universal best practices in early learning to benefit child, parent, caregiver, and educator. This ambitious, multipronged approach includes concentrated work in three California communities, one of which is Fresno. Employing a collaborative

approach, FUSD co-designed and implemented this initiative in partnership with FCSS, Central Valley Children's Services Network, and Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission-Head Start.

One focus area of the initiative is identifying best practices for supporting dual language learners through innovative professional development opportunities for early educators to learn personalized oral language learning strategies via the Language Learning Project. Linking arms with the FUSD Language Learning Project towards this shared goal elevated the importance of preserving all children's home language(s) in the early years to ensure children have a strong home language foundation at kindergarten entry. The Language Learning Project provided training and technical assistance for teachers at the Lighthouse for Children Child Development Center, which is operated by FCSS-ECE in partnership with First 5 Fresno County. The Lighthouse for Children serves as a demonstration site that opened its doors to others wanting to implement personalized oral language learning strategies in their respective districts. It was quickly recognized as a destination for viewing the theory in practice.

FCSS is also collaborating with FUSD and other community partners to align coaching efforts for early care and education professionals. The

goal is to create a systematic effort to coach teachers towards higher quality implementation, leading to better outcomes for young children. This strength-based approach is operationalized by the work of the Fresno County Early Stars Program, a county wide quality improvement initiative that supports early learning environments towards continuous quality improvement. The collaboration is aimed towards aligning the districts' coaching efforts with the Early Stars rating matrix. Fresno Unified's early learning coaches, along with coaches from a variety of agencies countywide, are equipped with the tools needed to support teachers and paraprofessionals in the district's early learning classrooms. This could be training to fidelity on any of several evaluative tools used in an early learning classroom, participation in a community of practice, or training to address a specific need or gap.

The Early Care and Education Department of the Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools looks forward to our continued partnership with the Early Learning Department of Fresno Unified. Together, we are working towards increasing school readiness, a well-documented and researched solution to children exiting high school with a diploma in hand, choices for their future and a higher likelihood of self-sufficiency. When this goal is achieved, the entirety of the county reaps the benefits.



FOCUS ON EARLY LEARNING

Fresno Unified Expands Inclusion Classrooms for Preschool

The district has significantly increased inclusion opportunities for preschool students to receive special education services in the general education setting.

This aligns with the district’s belief that each child is a general education student first. Each student who receives special education services should be served in the least restrictive environment with access to the best instruction in the Common Core State Standards.



"We nurture and cultivate the interests, intellect, and leadership of our students by providing an excellent, equitable education in a culturally proficient environment."

Prior to the 2019-20 school year, the district had one inclusion preschool class through a FUSD and Fresno State partnership. Sixteen district preschool

classrooms now offer one of two models of inclusion, in addition to the Fresno State partnership.

The district increased its inclusion preschool classrooms through a \$10 million grant from the California Department of Education through the [Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program](#).

The grant was used for facilities, adaptive materials and equipment and professional development for teachers. Funding supports the expansion of inclusive settings for children 0-5 years and has increased collaboration between the Early Learning and Special Education departments.

“This is such an important opportunity for our district’s young learners to have opportunities in the least restrictive environment amongst like peers,” said Leah Diaz, project manager in the preschool office.



Teacher Alex Arenas leads her inclusion preschool class at Holland Elementary School. Arenas partners with teacher Angela Cruz in the co-teach model of including students receiving special education services in the general education setting. The model is in its third year at Holland.

Learning Centers Support Family, Friend and Neighbor Caregivers

Extended family members, friends and neighbors play a pivotal role in providing childcare for families in the Fresno Unified community.

The district understands the necessity and importance of family, friends and neighbors (FFN) as caregivers, and

their impact in the community. These caregivers, however, often do not have access to resources and supports. To help fill this void, Fresno Unified has established [Play and Learn Centers](#).

The centers reflect the district’s commitment to serve all children in the

community, including those who may not yet be connected to formal early learning and care settings. The Play and Learn Centers create opportunities for Fresno Unified to ensure that all children in the community are valued and empowered to achieve their greatest potential.

The Play and Learn Centers provide a setting for FFN caregivers to come together to interact with the children in their care in a planned learning environment. Through the Play and Learn Centers, FFN caregivers have access to tools and resources that support the development of the young children they are caring for.

The centers offer play and learn groups, parent and caregiver workshops and toy and book lending libraries. They are free and open to anyone, including parents and caregivers caring for children of all abilities ages 6 weeks to 5 years.

The district’s first Play and Learn Center opened in the restored Helm Home in November 2016. As understanding has grown around the key role of FFN caregivers in the lives of young children and families in the community, the district added two more locations: Storey Elementary School and Lori Ann

Infant Center. Play and Learn Center sessions are offered weekly, with district facilitators helping FFN caregivers connect with community resources and transition to formal early learning settings in Fresno Unified programs. The facilitators also help implement universal developmental screenings and connect caregivers to services for children with special needs.



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“Work with FFN caregivers through the centers has had a highly positive impact on our community, showing promising results in increasing the quality of adult and child interactions in a highly underserved area,” said Maria Ceballos, director in the Early Learning Department. “Fresno Unified’s work with FFN caregivers is essential in supporting the development of all young children in our community.”



Nanny Diana Meyncke works with Tanner and Kieran Christensen at the Helm Home Play and Learn Center.



FOCUS ON EARLY LEARNING

Early Learning Educators Support Dual Language Acquisition

Fresno Unified is leading the way in helping students acquire two languages and is seen as a bilingualism model throughout the state.

A key reason for this is the Language Learning Project (LLP), launched in 2015 as part of a David and Lucile Packard Foundation grant. Since then, the district has collaborated with multiple agencies in the community on how to best support young dual language learners and their families.

The fundamental goal of the LLP is to better equip early childhood educators to support dual language acquisition – ensuring that students maintain their

home language while acquiring English.

The district has also partnered with nationally renowned dual language learner experts to provide professional development training for early learning educators focused on personalized oral language learning (POLL) strategies.

 For video, go to vimeo.com/fresnounified/languagelearningproject

The POLL strategies are based on the understanding that all early childhood educators cannot instruct in all languages, but they can support all languages of their children and families.

POLL strategies are innovative practices for supporting language learning that are not based on any one curriculum, age group, or learning setting, but instead enhance what teachers are already doing with a focus on intentionality, repetition and strategic planning.

POLL strategies focus on family supports, environmental supports and instructional supports.

- Family supports: Early learning educators emphasize families' invaluable role in their child's learning, spending time getting to know the family and their language goals for their child.
- Environmental support: Teachers create an environment conducive to learning by selecting materials that are engaging and interactive and that support learning in all languages.
- Instructional supports: Teachers strategically plan opportunities for oral language development through an integrated approach, utilizing strategies like songs and chants and visuals to help children make

meaning and form connections between home language and English.

A common sentiment among teachers who have participated in the LLP is that POLL strategies become integral to their approach to teaching. While created to support dual language acquisition for young learners, POLL strategies are intentional practices that support all children in all settings.

The work of the LLP has expanded far beyond the Fresno community. With additional funding, Fresno Unified's Early Learning Department is able to provide a toolkit for implementing the project and training of trainers for programs throughout California.

"The continued statewide interest in the project is a testament to the LLP's positive impact on early childhood educators, and young dual language learners and their families. Through the ongoing impactful work in the LLP, Fresno Unified is leading the way in supporting bilingualism for our youngest learners," said Maria Ceballos, director in the Early Learning Department.



From the front and going clockwise at Sunset Elementary School are Arya Martinez, transitional kindergarten paraprofessional Maricela Lopez, Ava Ibarra and Jonah Sevilla in October. Sunset is one of 14 campuses in the district with dual language immersion programs. District teachers are tapping into the latest strategies for teaching two languages through the Language Learning Project.

KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT Continued from page 2

ua tau hauv huab cua. [Cuv Npe Saum Huab Cua](#)

Nqua hu cov yim neeg kom tso npe tam sim no rau lawv cov tub ntxhais kawm qib kindergarten rau xyoo kawm ntawv 2022-23 kom tsis txhob muaj kev ncu ntwam cov tub ntxhais kawm thawj hnuv Monday, Lub Yim Hli Hnuv Tim 15 yuav pib kawm ntawm thawj hnuv rau xyoo kawm tshiab. Los ntawm kev paub txog kev cuv npe tam sim no, cov niam txiv tuaj yeem npaj rau kev tso npe kawm thiab muaj sijhawm los ua kom tiav.

Transitional kindergarten (TK) qhib rau txhua tus menyuum kawm ntawv uas muaj hnuv nyooog 5 xyoos thaum lub Cuaj Hlis Tim 2 txog Lub Ob Hlis Tim 2. Cov menyuum uas muaj hnuv nyooog 5 xyoos lub Cuaj Hlis Hnuv Tim 1 lossis ua ntej ntawd, tsim nyog tso rau qib kindergarten.

Hauv paus tsev kawm ntawv kuj zoo siab muaj [kawm ob hom lus](#) nyob rau qee lub tsev kawm ntawv. Kev kawm ob hom lus yuav pab tau rau peb cov tub ntxhais kawm paub hais lus, nyeem thiab sau ob hom lus. Cov kev kawm no

muaj lus Mev thiab lus Hmoob.

Fresno Unified muaj kawm thaum ntxov (preschool) rau cov menyuum muaj 3-thiab 4-xyoos. Sijhawm qhib cuv npe yog Lub Plaub Hlis Hnuv Tim 4 rau Fresno Unified cov kev qhia ntawv zoo tshaj rau cov menyuum me me thaum ntxov. Hu rau Early Learning Department ntawm (559) 457-3416 los sis mus xyuas ntawm [Early Learning web page](#) yog xab paub ntxiv.

Cov menyuum yaus lub hlwb thiab lub cev loj hlob sai sai thawj 5 xyoos ntawm lub neej. Qhov no txhais tau tias thaum yau yog lub sijhawm zoo tshaj plaws los pib lub hauv paus zoo rau txoj kev kawm.

Lub Early Learning Department ntawm Fresno Unified School District paub tias txhua tus neeg laus hauv menyuum yaus lub neej yeej pab tau hais txog kev txhawb nqa thiab kev qhia muaj nuj nqis uas cov menyuum yuav tsum tau muaj. Lub tuam tsev txhawb nqa qhov no nrog rau cov kev taw qhia rau menyuum yaus thiab muaj cov kev kawm zoo tshaj plaws uas muaj txiaj ntsig thiab hwm txog cov lus, kab lis kev cai, thiab kev xav tau ntawm txhua tus tub ntxhais kawm, tsev neeg, cov neeg ua haujlwm thiab cov zej zog.

EIE OVERVIEW

Continued from page 1

work sites to ensure they could participate in the Fresno County Educator of the Year process.

Despite this wrinkle, the Excellence in Education dinner scheduled for May 25 will be an opportunity to celebrate all finalists. It will be a night of commemorating finalists' enthusiasm, resilience and unwavering dedication to positively impacting the lives of students. All finalists will receive an award, be

greeted by district leaders, and will be part of a fun video compilation filled with portraits and quotes from our finalists.

Tickets will go on sale on April 25 on Eventbrite. The dinner will be held at the Hoover High School Event Center, with doors opening at 5:30 p.m.



CONNECTION TO DISTRICT GOALS

"Fresno Unified School District – Where students, families, and staff are valued and empowered to achieve their greatest potential."



EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION WINNERS 2022

ADMINISTRATOR WINNER **Eugene Reinor** Scandinavian Middle School



Eugene Reinor, vice principal at Scandinavian Middle School, encourages a spirit of service among staff and is unwavering in his efforts to deliver the highest quality education to students. He is data driven in his decision making, empathetic in his relationships and passionate as a leader. He has helped the Climate and Culture Team to grow and initiate schoolwide structures to support students, families and staff. He is committed to both student and adult learning at Scandinavian, including leading teachers in data chats, goal setting and progress-monitoring with each student. His efforts also include securing funding for and leading book studies for the staff. He is a member of Men of Color in Educational Leadership.

Reinor, previously an educator in San Bernardino County, has been with Fresno Unified for five years, all at Scandinavian as a guidance and learning advisor and for the past two years as vice principal. He is married with two dogs. Reinor enjoys watching sports and movies, exercising, reading, listening to podcasts, spending time with family and friends.

Scandinavian Middle School teacher Cheyenne Walvatne: “He truly models the hard work, dedication and commitment to personal growth necessary for our school to achieve the staggering mission set before us.”

Reinor: “The more you show [students] you care, the better they’ll respond.”



At right, Scandinavian Middle School vice principal Eugene Reinor is congratulated Feb. 15 by Fresno Unified Superintendent Bob Nelson. Reinor was surprised with the news that he was selected as the Excellence in Education winner in the administrator category.

CERTIFICATED HIGH SCHOOL WINNER **Liz Torres**



Nurse at Rata High School
working as the interim manager
for Health Services

Liz Torres, a registered nurse, has been serving as interim manager for the Health Services Department since September to provide much needed support for a department inundated with new tasks because of COVID-19. Torres oversees scheduling, ensuring that all sites are able to provide the proper care for students. Students with complex medical needs are attending school in greater numbers than ever before, making it essential that highly trained staff are available on campuses. Her years working with some of the district’s most medically fragile students gives her a deep understanding of students’ needs.

Torres began working for the district in 2017 at Powers-Ginsburg Elementary School, followed by Rata High School before becoming interim manager last fall. She is married with a daughter, a teacher at Del Mar Elementary School, and a son who will graduate from the Air Force Academy in May. Torres loves to read, travel to historical places and spend time with family. She said her reaction to being named the Excellence in Education winner in the high school certificated category was “disbelief.”

Nurse Robyn Harvey: “Not content to sit back and point out the deficits, she wanted to be part of the solution. She stepped into a new role because she knew that her expertise was needed and would make school safer for students and nurses.”

Torres: “Every single kid is so unique; we need to meet them where they are at.”



Liz Torres, a nurse, learned on Feb. 14 at the Health Services Department that she has been selected as the Excellence in Education winner in the certificated high school category.



EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION WINNERS 2022

CERTIFICATED ELEMENTARY WINNER

Isabel Mayoral

Wilson Elementary School



Isabel Mayoral, a teacher on special assignment, starts her day at Wilson Elementary School with heart-to-heart talks with numerous students before they walk to their classrooms. She believes that showing love and acceptance to students is the foundation for academic progress. She herself is a voracious learner, constantly honing her teaching skills and understanding of how students learn so that she can share this information with colleagues. In 2020, Mayoral launched her own YouTube program, [“The Book Adventure with Mrs. Mayoral.”](#)

Mayoral began working for Fresno Unified in 2016 and is in her second year at Wilson. She is married with two adult daughters. Her oldest daughter is also a teacher at Wilson. Mayoral’s favorite hobby is reading college textbooks on teaching practices. She also enjoys spending time with her family, including Bible journaling together.

She said being named an Excellence in Education winner was a thrilling moment: “There are no words to effectively and wholly communicate the plethora of emotions that flooded my entire senses upon seeing and hearing Superintendent Nelson wonderfully boom out that I had been named the Excellence in Education winner. I did not know whether to cry or laugh so I did both...”

Wilson Principal Meegan Grant: “When I think of a person whose passion is their job, it’s Isabel. She is always rolling up her sleeves to best support teachers, students and parents at Wilson. There is no job she will turn away from if it’s about creating the best environment for kids.”

Mayoral: “I believe I am a missionary of student learning.”



Isabel Mayoral, a teacher on special assignment at Wilson Elementary School, is shocked to learn on Feb. 14 that she is the certificated elementary school winner for Excellence in Education.

CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEE WINNER

Dawn Gardner

Educational Resource Center/
J.E. Young Academic Center



Dawn Gardner is the office manager for the J.E. Young Academic Center and Alternative Education Department. She demonstrates leadership, commitment, honesty and integrity in support of students and families. She handles challenges by listening, being resourceful and identifying a team to support what needs to get done. She started with the district as a substitute in the Workers Compensation Department and has been at J.E. Young Academic Center since September 2018.

Gardner is married with three grown children. She said she loves laughing with close friends, spending time with family and reading a good book. Her volunteer work has included Valley Children’s Hospital, where she and son Cameron helped patients transition to life in a wheelchair (Cameron suffered a spinal cord injury at age 13). She said she was “humbled and speechless” at being named the classified winner.

Alternative education administrator Yolanda Jimenez-Ruiz: “There are few ... as committed, flexible and charismatic as Dawn. She moves into the uncomfortable spaces with grace. She is a leader who is trusted and shares her knowledge with all.”

Gardner: “It’s about making them understand their greatest potential – the students and the parents. We are teaching students how to be better citizens and better human beings.”



Dawn Gardner received a swag bag and balloons during a surprise visit Feb. 14 to let her know she is the classified employee Excellence in Education winner.



EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION WINNERS 2022

**CERTIFICATED
MIDDLE SCHOOL WINNER
Kristin Cosentino**
Sequoia Middle School



Kristin Cosentino, an English teacher at Sequoia Middle School, is described as having “the heart of a servant” and constantly advocates for students. She challenges her students with high standards and engages them with current and socially relevant topics. She strives to make all students feel connected, and created the Gay Student Alliance at Sequoia and leads the Battle of the Book Club. Cosentino has worked for Fresno Unified for 17 years, the past seven at Sequoia. She has four sons, ages 16 to 31. Her youngest is a junior at Roosevelt High School. Cosentino loves to play video games, read, cook and knit and crochet.

She said being selected as the top middle school teacher was a shock: “I have been around some of the most amazing educators in my career, and I have never counted myself among them. I’m extremely honored and I’ll continue to strive to better myself.”

Sequoia teacher Esmeralda Lara: “She will not waver on what she knows is best for our students. Her spirit and positivity easily show how much she values learning, and it is evident in the way she plans and carries out her lessons.”

Cosentino: “My school for sure is the hub of our community and I’m really proud of that.”



Second from right, Sequoia Middle School teacher Kristin Cosentino gathers with Sequoia principal Matt Ward (far left) and deputy superintendent Misty Her (second from left) and Superintendent Bob Nelson, far right on Feb. 14. The group surprised Cosentino with the news that she is the Excellence in Education certificated middle school winner.

**Excellence
in Education
Finalists**

Administrators

- Angela Balliet
- Dan Bordona
- Kimberly dela Concepcion
- Beth Doyle
- Timona Martin
- Jose Perez
- Debra Ryland
- Maiiv Thao
- Paula Zamorski

Classified Employees

- Anthony Aboularage
- Christine Certain
- Andrew Gomez
- Samantha Gonzalez-Lopez
- Lubia Leyva
- Yesenia Lopez
- Amber Neulinger
- Maiyia Vang
- Peter Yang

**Elementary School
Certificated**

- Tiffany Castillo
- Melody Compton
- Tonia Dubberke
- Brenda McLain
- Carlanda Miller
- Peter Montoya
- Allison Lott
- Mary Rueda
- Carolyn Winnett-Hanlon

Middle School Certificated

- Jessica Cisneros
- Hasmik Khalachyan-Cañas
- Annamarie Herrick
- Amanda Horvath
- Gavino Morales
- Nancy Pellegrini
- Charles Rocha
- Aaron Wall
- Cheyenne Walvatne

High School Certificated

- Lauren Beal
- Cheryl Catanzarite
- Matt Jordan
- Sheri Mauro
- Gary Mrkaich
- Kevin Ochs
- Michael Tittle
- Denise Valdez
- Kristiana Wallwork



Roosevelth Health Pathway Students take part in Mock Heart Surgery

Juniors in Jean Nakaguchi’s Physiology Health pathway class at Roosevelt High School were able to experience a live open-heart surgery via streaming from a Chicago hospital, and ask questions of the surgery team members. Students then conducted mock heart surgeries in class.

King Elementary Principal Honored by City Council

The Fresno City Council and Mayor Jerry Dyer proclaimed Feb. 17 “Summer Gaston-Gehris Day” in honor of the King Elementary School principal’s longtime service to the district and community.



Gaston-Gehris was recognized for her 22 years as a Fresno Unified educator, continuing the legacy of several generations of Gastons serving in the district. She was also honored for her work championing African American youth, including being a Black Student Union advisor.

Information Technology Leader Named a Top Dog

Phil Neufeld, executive officer in the Information Technology Department, has been named an Outstanding Alumni for Fresno State’s Top Dog awards. Neufeld was honored from the Division of Research and Graduate Studies. The honorees will be celebrated with a one-hour television special on ABC30 at 7 p.m. on May 1.





High Schools Encouraging Students to Pursue Civic Engagement Honor

Fresno Unified is one of the early proponents of a new [Seal of Civic Engagement for students](#), encouraging service to others, having a voice in the decision-making process, and becoming problem solvers in their community.

The seal is affixed to students' diplomas.

The California Board of Education approved the Seal of Civic Engagement in September 2020, making California just the fifth state to implement a civic learning diploma program. To earn the seal, students must:

- Be on track to graduate
- Demonstrate an understanding of the United States Constitution, the California Constitution, and the American democratic system
- Undertake a civic engagement project on a real-world issue, including research, a plan to address the problem or raise awareness of it, engage with decision-makers and reflect on the process



“The Seal of Civic Engagement could not have greater relevancy than it does now, in our current reality as a community, a nation and in the world,” said Superintendent Bob Nelson. “Through students’ work toward this seal, and in other efforts in our district, students are learning to advocate in productive ways.”

Fresno Unified and six other districts’ inaugural efforts to encourage students to pursue the Seal of Civic Engagement were profiled in a [study](#) looking at Year 1 of the seal. The study identified Fresno High as the “epicenter” of civic learning in the district. Fresno High is an [International Baccalaureate Programme](#) school that places a high value on service learning and community projects.



High schools across the district are working on implementing the guidelines

for the Seal of Civic Engagement.

Information about Special School Board Election

A special election will be held April 12 for the Area 5 (Fresno High region) Fresno Unified trustee seat.

Key dates from the [county elections office website](#):

- March 3-March 14: County Voter Information Guides in Mail
- March 14-April 5: Mail Ballots in Mail
- March 14: First Day of early Voting – County Clerk’s Office, 2221 Kern St., Fresno, CA 93721
- March 28: Close of Registration for This Election
- March 29-April 12: Conditional Voter Registration – In Person at County Clerk’s Office, 2221 Kern St., Fresno, CA 93721; and Vote Centers Beginning April 2, 2022
- April 2-April 12: Eleven-Day Vote Centers open through Election Day; 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
- April 9-April 12: All Voter Centers open through Election Day; 9 a.m.- 5 p.m.
- April 12: Election Day; 7 a.m.-8 p.m.
- April 19: Last Day to Receive Vote-by-Mail Ballot Postmarked no Later Than April 12, 2022



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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Bullard Cultivates Student's Interests, Including Gardening



Sophomore Vartan Frnzlyan keeps busy with his classes at Bullard High School, playing on the Special Olympics basketball team and helping create and maintain a garden outside his classroom.

Vartan, 16, is part of the Alternative Learning Pathways (ALPs) program at Bullard. ALPs is among the range of services provided to students receiving support from Special Education. Along with academic subjects, students in ALPs learn life skills, including cooking and doing laundry. Schools across the district have ALPs programs.

The district has a strong focus on inclusion, believing that each child is a general education student first. To realize this vision, each student who receives special education services should be served in the least restrictive environment with access to the best first instruction in the Common Core State Standards.

Vartan said he enjoys his ceramics class, which he takes alongside students in general education. Cars are his favorite ceramic pieces that he has created.

His passion, however, is playing basketball. On Feb. 11 during a Special Olympics basketball tournament at Bullard, he scored eight points, with his sister and parents there to watch. He said his favorite part about basketball is "shooting baskets."

CONNECTION TO DISTRICT GOALS

"We nurture and cultivate the interests, intellect, and leadership of our students by providing an excellent, equitable education in a culturally proficient environment."

Vartan is also part of a group of students, led by special education teacher Patrick Gerrits, who has created a flower garden outside the Southwest Academic Building. He enjoyed leveling the soil to prepare for planting and now has some favorite rose varieties – Big Momma, All American Magic, Smokin' Hot and Doris Day.

"He really enjoys working in our garden at school and he is eager to help, even on the weekends," Gerrits said.

"Vartan has a great personality. He likes school and does his best in everything that he does. He is well liked by staff and his peers. He is always ready to help with jobs in the classroom."

Vartan Frnzlyan has helped with a garden project at Bullard High School, even on the weekends.

Mayor Reads at Addams Elementary School



Fresno Mayor Jerry Dyer read to a class of third grade students at Addams Elementary School on Feb. 22 in anticipation of Read Across America Day, an annual celebration to encourage children to read. Read Across America Day is March 2. March is also National Reading Month. The mayor is with Addams Principal Beth Doyle and third grade students.

Bullard TALENT Student in Local TV Commercial



Bullard TALENT K-8 School third grader Vincent Lai is featured in a TV commercial for Patrick's Music. Although the commercial humorously features him selecting a tuba, Vincent actually plays the piano and has participated in school talent shows.

[Commercial with Bullard TALENT Student](#)



Bullard High School Coffee Cart, Garden Growing Inclusivity

Bullard High School has two new projects that are promoting inclusion for students of all abilities.

Special education teachers Kelsey Dizney and Shamara Garcia brainstormed with students across campus and decided to form Teaching*Learning*Community (TLC). The group's first project is a coffee cart, staffed by students with and without disabilities, offering drinks, sweets and snacks to teachers across campus.

Students are gaining experience in marketing, budgeting and money management, customer service, advertising, social and other critical business skills required in local and global business.

Also at Bullard, special education teacher Patrick Gerrits led students in his Alternative Learning Pathways (ALPs) program in creating a beautiful garden in front of the school's Southwest Academic Building.

They then challenged clubs on campus to take on other planters on campus in

need of reviving. Clubs and athletic teams have adopted nine areas they have agreed to beautify and maintain. Each club or group will be recognized with a sign in their planter promoting their club and fostering school pride and student ownership of their campus.

Home Depot, Gazebo Gardens and Lowes have donated plants to the project, and Riverside Nursery provides a 25% discount.

The ALPs students took on the garden project as part of their employability class, known on campus as Knightworks. As part of the class, students adopt various jobs around campus, including working in the main office, landscaping, doing laundry and food preparation.

Gerrits said the planter project has been a big success, and fostered inclusion.

"It's exciting. It's life-changing. It's getting students involved and taking ownership of their campus," Gerrits said.



From left, teacher Bullard High School teacher Patrick Gerrits works with students Brianna Falcon and Simon Bellar on a garden at Bullard High School.



Senior Simon Bellar delivers coffee to paraprofessional Michelle Sharpe on Feb. 25. Teaching*Learning*Community is a new group at Bullard High School for students of all abilities. It sells drinks, sweets and snacks to teachers from a coffee cart.



Students from the Blue Nation Student Store work on the planting area at Bullard High School they have adopted on a recent Saturday morning. Teacher Peter Chaney is seated near the center.



No Strings Attached: Just Beautiful Music



Jaden Joven, left, and Isaias Rivera from Terronez Middle School are among the 250 musicians who gathered on Feb. 8 for the Sunnyside Regional String Day at the Sunnyside High School gym. String players from all 11 schools in the Sunnyside region came together for practice and then a performance. The event is a way to promote regional pride and encourage younger students to continue pursuing music through orchestra, all the way through high school.

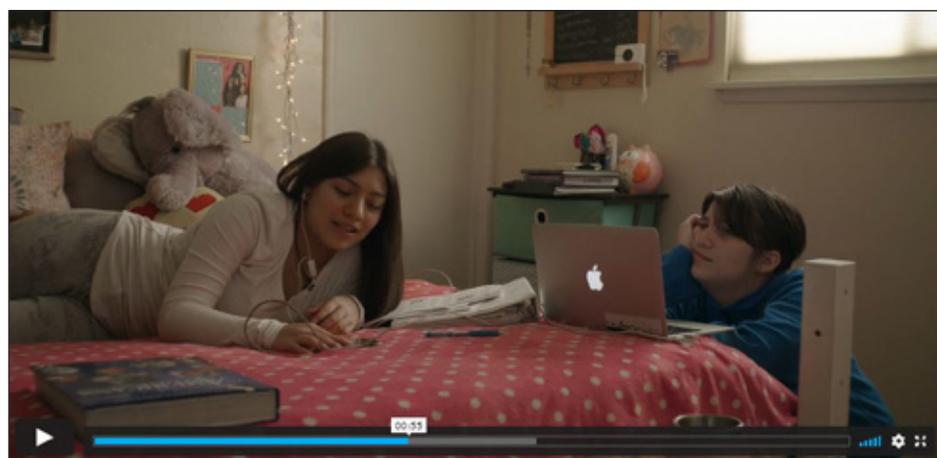
District Students in Documentary

A Fresno Unified family revisiting their roots in Oaxaca is featured in the new documentary, "[Oaxacalifornia: The Return.](#)"

Third-grader Arianna Miguel, Bullard TALENT K-8 School, and senior Nicolette Miguel, Roosevelt High School, are members of the Mejia family chronicled in the documentary, which premiered at the New York Latino Film Festival in 2021. The director is working

with Arte Americas on a Fresno premier this spring.

The 90-minute documentary explores the lives of a family of Mexican immigrants living in Fresno. It is a follow-up to the 1994 "Oaxacalifornia" about the Mejia family from the Mixteca, Oaxaca. "Oaxacalifornia: The Return" introduces the Mejias 23 years later.



A trailer preview is available of a new documentary, "Oaxacalifornia: The Return," which features a Fresno Unified family. Find the trailer at youtube.com/watch?v=izuziTj7WIM



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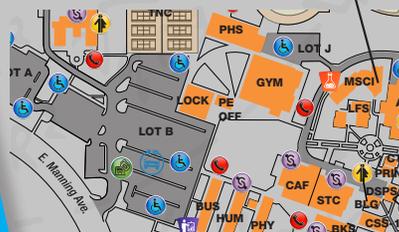
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District Awarded \$2M for Career Technical Education Pathways Students

The district has been awarded a \$2 million K12 Strong Workforce Program grant to improve equity and access for disproportionately impacted students in CTE pathways.

Career Readiness director Kristen Boroski, who led the work on the district's application, said the funding would be used to increase industry-recognized certifications for students, to provide more internships and work-based learning, boost the number of non-traditional student representation in high need industry sectors, and increase the number of students taking college courses while still in high school.

Funding will also be used to further market the high quality CTE opportunities available to students.

The award comes from the California Community Colleges

Chancellor's Office, Division of Workforce and Economic Development, in partnership with the California Department of Education.

The district was also awarded a CTE Incentive Grant of \$3.86 million. The funds are used to develop new CTE programs and strengthen existing CTE programs in alignment to the California CTE Model Curriculum Standards.

Funds are also utilized to develop quality career exploration and guidance so that students are better prepared to make career and post-secondary decisions. College and Career Readiness Department looks forward to expanding industry-recognized certifications from the 8,310 earned in the 2020-21 school year.



Roosevelt High School teacher Krishnna Reyes helps student Mia Leza learn CPR in a Public Service Pathway CTE class.



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SUPT. MESSAGE
Continued from page 3

of our schools in Spanish and Hmong. We just highlighted our language learning project last month. [Check out the video here](#). Take a look at our [website to learn more about our dual immersion programs](#) and locations and how to apply. Preschool registration will begin on April 4 and you can [learn more to prepare on our website](#).

I also want to remind all of our families living in the Fresno High School region that the special election to fill the trustee Area 5 seat is coming up in April. This is to elect a new trustee for the Fresno High region as the seat has been left vacant since [trustee Carol Mills](#)' passing last year. Voters can register until March 28, 2022 for this election. Voter information guides will be mailed out to voters between March 3 and March 14 and vote by mail ballots will be sent out between March 14 and April 5. Early voting begins at the County Clerk's Office downtown on March 14 and all voting centers, including at Williams Elementary School and Fresno High School, will be open April 9-April 11 from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. and on election day, April 12 from 7 a.m.-8 p.m. Mail in ballots need to be postmarked by April 12 at the latest. If you live in the Fresno High region, please make your voice heard by voting!

As always, our #FUSDFamily can always find the latest information and protocols regarding COVID-19 at [www.fresnounified.org/covid19/](#). Don't forget to follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#) to see daily highlights of amazing work happening across the district as we highlight every school campus and every department throughout the school year. Thank you #FUSDFamily!

Obtenga más Información Sobre el Aprendizaje Temprano

¡Hola Familia FUSD #FUSDFamily! Nuestra edición de marzo está llena de excelente información sobre nuestras opciones de aprendizaje temprano. El aprendizaje temprano es una de mis principales prioridades como superintendente, ya que sabemos lo increíblemente valiosos que son estos primeros años para el éxito de nuestros estudiantes. La gente a menudo habla de cómo los estudiantes se atrasan una vez en la escuela, cuando en realidad muchos de nuestros estudiantes comienzan el kínder ya muy atrasados porque no tenían acceso a un preescolar y kínder de transición de alta calidad. ¡En el Distrito

Escolar Unificado de Fresno, tenemos excelentes opciones para que sus hijos comiencen su educación temprano y salgan adelante!

¡A partir del 1 de marzo, se abren las inscripciones para kínder de transición y kínder! Para los niños que cumplan 5 años antes del 1 de septiembre de 2022, inscribirá a su hijo en el kínder. Para los niños que cumplan 5 años entre el 2 de septiembre y el 2 de febrero de 2023, puede inscribir a su hijo en el kínder de transición. Si su hijo cumple 3 o 4 años el 1 de diciembre de 2022 o antes, puede inscribir a su hijo en nuestros programas preescolares. Para obtener más información e inscribirse en línea, puede dirigirse a [fresnounified.org/enroll/](#).

También tenemos increíbles oportunidades de aprendizaje temprano de doble inmersión en varias de nuestras escuelas en español y hmong. Acabamos de destacar nuestro proyecto de aprendizaje de idiomas el mes pasado. Mire el video aquí: [Check out the video here](#). Eche un vistazo a nuestro sitio web para obtener más información sobre nuestros programas: [website to learn more about our dual immersion programs](#) y ubicaciones de doble inmersión y cómo presentar una solicitud. La inscripción para preescolar comenzará el 4 de abril y puede obtener más información sobre cómo prepararse en nuestro sitio web: [learn more to prepare on our website](#).

También quiero recordarles a todas nuestras familias que viven en la región de la Escuela Preparatoria Fresno (Fresno High School) que la elección especial para ocupar el puesto de fideicomisario del Área 5 se acerca en abril. Esto es para elegir un nuevo fideicomisario para la región de La Escuela Preparatoria Fresno (Fresno High), ya que el puesto ha quedado vacante desde el fallecimiento de la fideicomisaria Carol Mills el año pasado [trustee Carol Mills](#)'. Los votantes pueden registrarse hasta el 28 de marzo de 2022 para esta elección. Las guías de información para votantes se enviarán por correo a los votantes entre el 3 y el 14 de marzo y las boletas de votación por correo se enviarán entre el 14 de marzo y el 5 de abril. La votación anticipada comienza en la Oficina del Secretario del Condado (County Clerk's Office) en el centro de Fresno el 14 de marzo y todos los centros de votación, incluso en la Escuela Primaria Williams y la Escuela Preparatoria Fresno (Fresno High), estarán abiertos del 9 al 11 de abril de 9 a.m. a 5 p.m. y el día de las elecciones, 12 de abril, de 7 a. m. a 8 p. m. Las boletas por correo deben tener el

sellado del correo del 12 de abril a más tardar. Si vive en la región de la Escuela Preparatoria Fresno (Fresno High), ¡haga oír su voz votando!

Como siempre, nuestra Familia FUSD #FUSDFamily siempre puede encontrar la información y los protocolos más recientes sobre COVID-19 en [www.fresnounified.org/covid19/](#). No olvide seguirnos en [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) y [LinkedIn](#) para ver los aspectos destacados diarios del increíble trabajo que se lleva a cabo en todo el distrito a medida que destacamos cada plantel escolar y cada departamento durante el año escolar. ¡Gracias Familia FUSD #FUSDFamily!

Kawm Paub Ntau Ntxiv txog Kev Kawm Thaum Ntxov (Early Learning)

Nyob zoo #FUSDFamily! Peb tsab ntawv xov xwm Lub Peb Hlis muaj cov ntaub ntawv zoo txog peb cov kev kawm thaum ntxov. Kev kawm thaum ntxov yog ib qho ntawm kuv qhov kuv xav tias tseem ceeb tshaj plaws ua tus thawj saib xyuas kev kawm, raws li peb yeej paub tias cov xyoo ntxov no tseem ceeb npaum li cas rau peb cov menyuum kawm txoj kev kawm tau zoo. Cov neeg feem ntau tham txog tias cov menyuum kawm poob qab thaum lawv tuaj pib kawm rau hauv tsev kawm ntawv, tab sis qhov tseeb tiag peb cov menyuum kawm feem ntau thaum pib kawm qib kindergarten xwb lawv twb poob qab lawm vim yog tsis muaj kev kawm preschool thab transitional kindergarten zoo rau cov menyuum. Nyob rau hauv Fresno Unified, peb muaj cov kev xaiv zoo rau koj cov menyuum tuaj pib lawv txoj kev kawm ntawv ntxov thab ua luag ntej!

Pib Lub Peb Hlis Tim1, kev tso npe rau qib transitional kindergarten thab kindergarten qhib! Rau cov menyuum yaus uas muaj hnuv nyoog 5 xyoos thaum Lub Cuaj Hli Tim 1, 2022 koj yuav tso koj tus menyuum npe tau rau hauv kindergarten. Rau cov menyuum yaus uas muaj hnuv nyoog 5 xyoos nruab nraw ntawm lub Cuaj Hlis Tim 2 txog Lub Ob Hlis Tim 2, 2023, koj tuaj yeem tso npe rau koj tus menyuum hauv transitional kindergarten. Yog tias koj tus menyuum muaj hnuv nyoog 3 los 4 xyoos hnuv Tim 1 lossis ua ntej Lub Kaum Ob Hlis Tim 1, 2022 koj tuaj yeem tso npe rau koj tus menyuum hauv peb qhov preschool. Yog xav paub ntxiv thab cuv npe online, koj tuaj yeem mus rau ntawm [fresnounified.org/enroll/](#).

Peb kuj muaj cov kev kawm thaum ntxov zoo kawg uas ua ob hom lus nyob rau hauv peb cov tsev kawm ntawv uas yog muaj lus Mev thab lus Hmoob.

Peb nyuam qhuav hais txog peb cov haujlwm kev kawm lus lub hli tas los. [Mus saib peb daim video ntawm no](#). Ua tib zoo saib ntawm peb [lub website kom paub ntau ntxiv txog peb cov kev pabcuam kawm ob hom lus](#) thab qhov chaw thab yuav thov li cas. Kev tso npe kawm rau menyuum yaus yuav pib rau lub Plaub Hlis Tim 4 thab koj tuaj yeem [kawm ntxiv los npaj tau rau ntawm peb lub website](#).

Kuv kuj xav ceeb toom rau peb txhua yim neeg uas nyob hauv Fresno High School cheeb tsam tias kev xaiv tsa tshwj xeeb los ua tus neeg sawv cev hauv Cheeb Tsam 5 yuav muaj rau lub Plaub Hlis. Qhov no yog los xaiv tus neeg saib xyuas tshab rau thaj tsam Fresno High vim tias lub rooj zaum tau qhib txij li [trustee Carol Mills](#) tau ncaim mus xyoo tas los no. Cov neeg pov npav tuaj yeem tso npe kom txog thaum Lub Peb Hlis Tim 28, 2022 rau qhov kev xaiv tsa no. Cov ntaub ntawv qhia kev pov npav yuav xa mus rau cov neeg thaum lub Peb Hlis Tim 3 txog Lub Peb Hlis Tim 14 thab cov ntawv pov npav hauv kev xa ntawv (vote by mail) yuav rau xa taum thaum Lub Peb Hlis Tim 14 txog Lub Plaub Hlis Tim 5. Kev pov npav ntxov muaj pib rau ntawm County Clerk's Office *downtown* rau lub Peb Hlis Tim 14 thab txhua lub chaw pov npav, suav nrog ntawm Williams Elementary School thab Fresno High School, yuav qhib rau lub Plaub Hlis Tim 9 txog rau lub Plaub Hlis Tim 11 thaum 9 teev sawv ntxov txog rau 5 teev tsaus ntuj thab hnuv xaiv tsa, Lub Plaub Hlis Tim 12 thaum 7 teev sawv ntxov txog 8 teev tsaus ntuj. Kev xa ntawv xaiv tsa, hauv cov ntawv pov npav yuav tsum tau xa tsis pub dhau lub Plaub Hlis Tim 12 yog qhov lig kawg. Yog tias koj nyob hauv cheeb tsam Fresno High, thov tawm koj lub suab los ntawm kev pov npav!

Raws li txhua zaus, peb #FUSDFamily tuaj yeem nrhiav cov ntaub ntawv tshab thab cov txheej txheem hais txog kab mob COVID-19 ntawm [www.fresnounified.org/covid19/](#). Tsis txhob hnov qab caum peb hauv [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) thab [LinkedIn](#) kom pom cov ntsiab lus tseem ceeb ntawm kev ua haujlwm zoo kawg nkaus tshwm sim thoob plaws hauv cheeb tsam thaum peb hais txog txhua lub tsev kawm ntawv thab txhua qhov chaw ua haujlwm ntawm lub xyoo kawm ntawv. Ua tsaug #FUSDFamily!