

MERCED COUNTY SCHOOLS

2023 ANNUAL EDUCATION REPORT

Supporting Small School Districts



— MERCED COUNTY —
**Office of
Education**

NURTURE • SERVE • LEAD

Steve M. Tietjen, Ed.D.
County Superintendent of Schools

SUPPORT AND COLLABORATION

Welcome to the Merced County Schools Annual Education Report and thank you for taking the time to learn more about our educational landscape. As County Superintendent of Schools, it is my privilege to serve school communities across Merced County.

This year's annual report highlights one of the primary responsibilities of a County Office of Education – to support our local school districts. During the past two decades, the support a COE offers has evolved from compliance, report, and budget monitoring to an ever-growing list of services that many school districts cannot perform themselves due to size, location, or other constraints.

COEs have a long history of serving as a backstop for local school districts through fiscal assistance, curriculum, and special education programs. In Merced County, our work supports a wide range of services to all our school districts, but goes even further for smaller school districts which can range from just over 50 students to those with as many as 2,500. These services include supporting WASC accreditation cycles, cybersecurity services, school safety emergency services, and, perhaps most importantly, connecting school districts with other agencies here in Merced County and at the State level that can provide assistance in times of need.

The County Superintendent's role has also evolved in the past 20 years. Today, the California County Superintendent's organization has mobilized to ensure all school districts are considered when legislation that expands school district obligations is proposed in Sacramento. Advocating for smaller school districts and helping the legislature see the difference between an isolated school district of 2,000 students and how it differs from a school district of 10,000 or more students is a common cause among county superintendents.

State government relies on the County Office of Education to link more services to schools and children than ever before. You will find that this report not only highlights many of the services, programs, and initiatives that showcase how we as a county office support small school districts, but is also representative of the important role the county office plays in Merced County's educational landscape. We are excited to share this work with the public and I thank you again for your interest and support.



Steve M. Tietjen, Ed.D.
County Superintendent of Schools



Hilmar
Unified

Gustine
Unified

Los Banos
Unified

A HISTORY OF MERCED SCHOOLS

Merced County schools were incorporated nearly 170 years ago in 1856 when the first County Superintendent of Schools William Nelson petitioned the Board of Supervisors to divide the county into three school districts. The 1860 census reported a population of 1,141 in Merced County, and in 1863, the County Superintendent reported an enrollment of 267 children and a county school budget of \$1,000. The first high school was established

in 1895 with 27 students and two teachers under the administration of the County Board of Education. In 1897, a new high school was completed on the corner of 22nd and M Streets in Courthouse Square. Today, there are 20 school districts with their own Board of Trustees and Superintendents who serve nearly 60,000 K-12 grade students, with Steve M. Tietjen, Ed.D. serving as the 29th County Superintendent of Schools.

ROLE OF SCHOOL BOARD TRUSTEES

Each of the 20 school districts in Merced County are governed by a board of locally elected trustees who ensure that school districts are responsive to the values, beliefs, and priorities of their communities. Responsibilities of school board members include hiring and evaluating the superintendent, adopting district policies, approving Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs), adopting and monitoring budgets, evaluating district performance and student achievement, and actively listening to public comments.

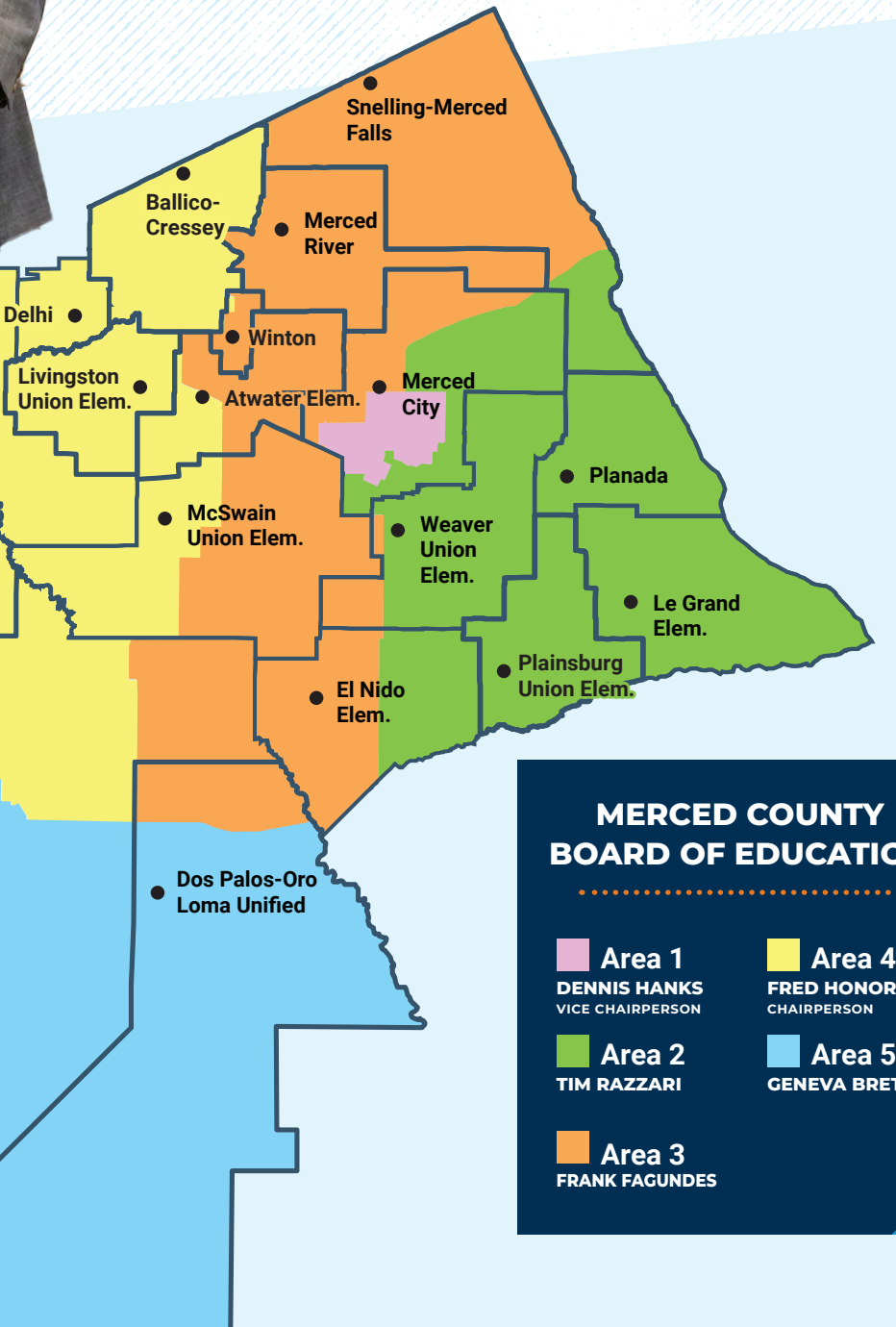
Delhi, Dos Palos, Gustine, Hilmar, and Los Banos are unified school districts that include their own high school and serve TK-12 students

Le Grand Union High School District encompasses three elementary school districts

- Planada ESD
- Le Grand ESD
- Plainsburg ESD

Merced Union High School District encompasses 10 elementary school districts

- Atwater ESD
- Ballico-Cressey ESD
- El Nido ESD
- Livingston Union ESD
- McSwain Union ESD
- Merced City SD
- Merced River Union ESD
- Snelling-Merced Falls UESD
- Weaver Union SD
- Winton SD



MERCED COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Area 1
DENNIS HANKS
VICE CHAIRPERSON

Area 2
TIM RAZZARI

Area 3
FRANK FAGUNDES

Area 4
FRED HONORÉ
CHAIRPERSON

Area 5
GENEVA BRETT

THE ROLE OF THE COUNTY OFFICE

County Offices of Education (COEs) act as a support system for local school districts and offer valuable services, leadership, and oversight.

In California, the public education system consists of three different levels: state, county, and local. The state level establishes regulations, funding, and policies through the California Department of Education and the State Board of Education; the county level is where COEs operate to support school districts in their mission to deliver quality education to students; and the local level is where individual school districts oversee day-to-day education of students.

Some services of a COE include assisting districts with academic performance initiatives, providing professional development for staff, and ensuring school districts are fiscally responsible and secure.

COEs actively support student events, arts, and outdoor education as well as initiate programs that directly serve non-traditional students – for example, students who were expelled, incarcerated or on probation, students with significant special needs, and early learners.

STATE

The California Department of Education (CDE), State Board of Education (SBE) and state legislature make up the state level and are responsible for regulations, funding, and policies.



COUNTY

The 58 County Offices of Education make up the county level and serve as support systems for school districts as well as liaisons for the state.



LOCAL

There are more than 1,000 individual school districts throughout the state that make up the local level and are responsible for the day-to-day education of students.



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DID YOU KNOW

✗ Merced COE does not...



...directly oversee or govern local school districts

Merced County Office of Education serves as an oversight and support agency for school district budgets and Local Control and Accountability Plans, coordinates teacher credentialing and the county-wide substitute teacher list, and hears student expulsion appeals from school districts.

✓ Merced COE does...



Ensure school districts are fiscally accountable and solvent



Provide high-quality outdoor education programs for 6th graders



Serve Migrant Education students and families in Merced, Madera, and Stanislaus Counties



Approve school district Local Control and Accountability Plans



Manage Head Start and Child Care Subsidy Programs



Host events and academic competitions for elementary through high school students



Assist districts with before and after school student programs



Provide professional development for educators across the region

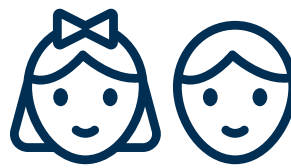


Operate Wired Café and serve students with special needs in all 20 school districts



MERCED COUNTY FAST FACTS

Located in California's Central Valley, Merced County neighbors the Sierra Nevada foothills to the east with both rural and urban counties to the west. An agricultural epicenter that is nearly 2,000 square miles, grossing \$4.56 billion in agricultural commodities in 2022. The county serves nearly 60,000 students in 20 school districts and is home to California's tenth research university, UC Merced.



59,676
STUDENTS



107
SCHOOLS



92.5%
GRAD RATE



290,461[†]
POPULATION

BY THE NUMBERS

12.5%

STUDENTS WITH
DISABILITIES

24.6%

ENGLISH LEARNER
STUDENTS

13,768^{*}

SCHOOL
EMPLOYEES

2,729

CREDENTIALLED
TEACHERS (2021-22)

78.4%

SOCIOECONOMICALLY
DISADVANTAGE STUDENTS

2.6%

HOMELESS STUDENTS
AND FOSTER YOUTH

\$64,772[†]

COUNTY MEDIAN
HOUSEHOLD INCOME

51.4%

4-YEAR AND COMMUNITY
COLLEGE-GOING RATE
(2020-21)



SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

California's accountability system is based on a multiple-measure system that assesses how local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools meet the needs of students. Performance on these measures is reported through the California School Dashboard. In a recent update, the accountability system returned from status to performance level. Status refers to the current year's performance, while performance level takes into account the growth or change in performance from 2022 to 2023. This change was made to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how districts progress over time.

CA DASHBOARD



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California Department of Education student data for 2022-23 school year.

** This reflects the number of Merced County school employees at any given time in 2023.*

† United States Census Bureau (July 1, 2022).

SCHOOLS BY TYPE

Merced COE, along with Merced County's 20 school districts, serve a diverse population of students from Transitional Kindergarten to adult learners at 107 different school programs across the region.

49

Elementary
Schools

19

Alternative/
Continuations*

16

Middle
Schools

13

High
Schools

6

TK-8

2

TK/K

2

Special
Education

SCHOOL DISTRICT ENROLLMENT

4,930	ATWATER ELEMENTARY
369	BALLICO-CRESSEY ELEMENTARY
2,392	DELHI UNIFIED
2,283	DOS PALOS-ORO LOMA JOINT UNIFIED
148	EL NIDO ELEMENTARY
1,746	GUSTINE UNIFIED
2,313	HILMAR UNIFIED
337	LE GRAND UNION ELEMENTARY
505	LE GRAND UNION HIGH
2,504	LIVINGSTON UNION
11,020	LOS BANOS UNIFIED
883	MCSWAIN UNION ELEMENTARY
10,973	MERCED CITY ELEMENTARY
1,709	MERCED COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION
275	MERCED RIVER UNION ELEMENTARY
11,226	MERCED UNION HIGH
108	PLAINSBURG UNION ELEMENTARY
871	PLANADA ELEMENTARY
53	SNELLING-MERCED FALLS UNION ELEMENTARY
3,130	WEAVER UNION
1,904	WINTON ELEMENTARY

ENROLLMENT BY ETHNICITY

76.1%	HISPANIC/LATINO
12.8%	WHITE
5.2%	ASIAN
2.5%	AFRICAN AMERICAN
1.5%	TWO OR MORE RACES
0.5%	FILIPINO
0.4%	AMERICAN INDIAN
0.3%	PACIFIC ISLANDER
0.7%	NOT REPORTED



California Department of Education student data for 2022-23 school year.

* The alternative/continuation number represents programs that may be collocated at the same school site.

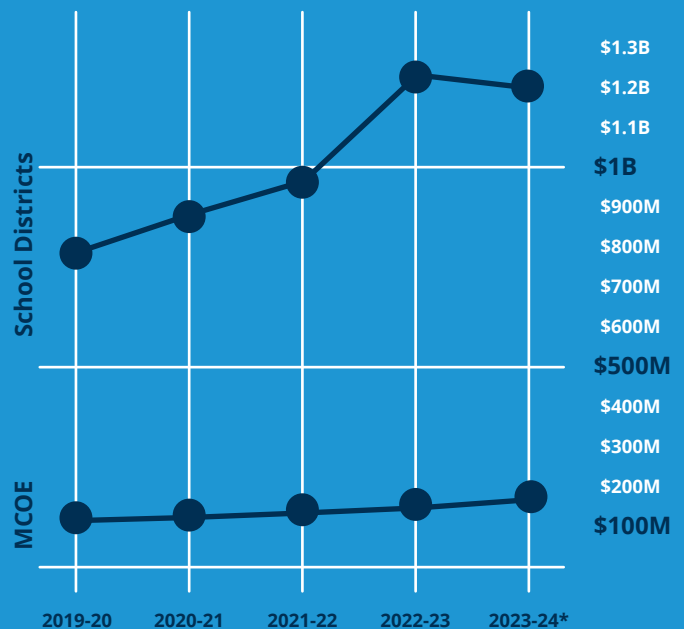


FUNDING OUR SCHOOLS

The main source of funding for Merced County school districts is the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). Established in 2013, the LCFF works by allocating a base grant for each Average Daily Attendance (ADA) and a grade span adjustment is added to the base grant for TK-3 and 9-12 grades. Districts may receive an additional 20% supplemental grant and 65% concentration grant per student for those with higher needs, including children in poverty, English learners, and foster youth. In addition, other add-ons to the formula include Home-to-School Transportation and Transitional Kindergarten. Starting in 2023-24, the LCFF Equity Multiplier provides additional funding to local educational agencies to provide evidence-based services and supports for students. Included in the LCFF formula is a mix of local property taxes, Education Protection Act funds, and state aid. There are no school districts that are exclusively community funded in Merced County. Community funded districts means funding comes directly from local property taxes and does not include state aid.

MERCED COUNTY SCHOOLS BUDGET

SCHOOL YEAR	DISTRICTS	MCOE
2019-20	\$760,606,297	\$130,713,005
2020-21	\$860,988,383	\$139,901,037
2021-22	\$941,004,348	\$152,674,560
2022-23	\$1,228,447,728	\$166,860,841
2023-24*	\$1,167,141,883	\$190,520,374



*The 2023-24 school year is based on projections. Estimates are finalized at the end of the school year and are determined by daily attendance.

ABOVE STATE AVERAGE

Merced County public high school graduation rates rose in 2023, with 4,257 high school seniors donning caps and gowns.

The Merced County five-year high school graduation rate average is 92.5%. This data includes special education students who received a certificate of completion, students that opted for a fifth year, and students who dropped out of school.

Merced COE's graduation rate is lower than the traditional school districts based on the student demographic served, which includes incarcerated students and county and community school students, which tend to have lower graduation rates. Despite this, the Merced County high school graduation rate remains 6.8% above the state average of 88.7%.

2022-23 GRAD RATES

92.5%

MERCED COUNTY
AVERAGE



88.7%

CALIFORNIA STATE
AVERAGE



Data collected from the California Department of Education reflects the five-year cohort graduation rates for the 2022-23 school year.

2022-23 GRADUATION RATES

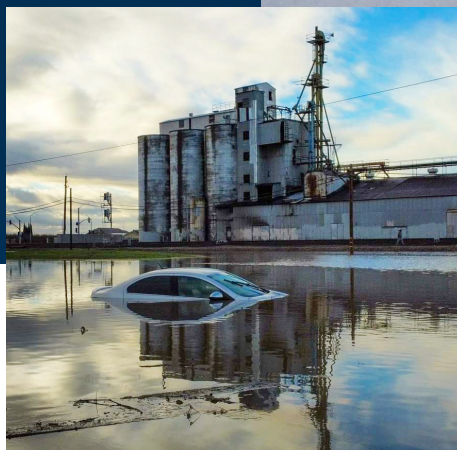
SCHOOL DISTRICT	RATE
Delhi Unified	97.8%
Dos Palos-Oro Loma Joint Unified	91.2%
Gustine Unified	91.9%
Hilmar Unified	97.1%
Le Grand Union High	97.8%
Los Banos Unified	96.7%
Merced County Office of Ed.	56.8%
Merced Union High	94.7%
Merced County Average	92.5%
California Average	88.7%



SEVERE WEATHER RESPONSE

From natural disasters to public health crises and other unforeseen events, Merced COE helps facilitate messaging in the wake of public emergencies and ensures that students, staff, and school communities remain informed in times of crisis.

In January 2023, Merced County experienced a severe weather event which led to several school closures and dangerous flooding. Merced COE worked closely with local emergency management agencies, school districts, and community partners to disseminate instructions, coordinate responses, and craft cohesive communications.



SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGING

KEEPING RESIDENTS INFORMED IN TIMES OF CRISIS

On January 10, 2023, phone calls, emails, and text messages began around 2 a.m. from city, county, and education leaders assessing the damage from an atmospheric river that lingered over the city of Merced and moved east into the Sierra Nevada. Bear Creek had crested in parts of Merced, portions of Planada began to flood, including schools, and the area surrounding McSwain School was flooded. By 8 a.m., Merced COE's social media had a list of school districts that would close due to adverse weather conditions and road closures, and continued throughout that week and the next to update school communities on which schools had sustained damage and would remain closed.



In times of crisis, Merced COE communications helps inform school communities by creating timely and accurate information.

WORKFORCE

PROVIDING REAL-WORLD SKILLS

Through Career Technical Education (CTE) and partnerships with local institutions, the College and Career department at Merced COE provides work experience and hands-on job training for high school students, out-of-school youth, and adult learners.

Career development programs include the Regional Occupational Program (ROP), Empower, Rise to Higher Grounds, and the Phoenix Project.

Traditional classroom settings, although considered the norm, are not the only pathway to success and may not be an option for many community members. Through partnerships with Merced County Probation, Merced COE provides adult learners and out-of-school youth with opportunities for work experience and skill development.



PHOENIX PROJECT

In partnership with the Merced County Probation Department, the Phoenix Project helps adults re-entering society find successful employment through education and job training. Every year, the program honors participants who successfully completed a CTE training and earned an industry-recognized certificate.

EMPOWER

The Empower Program provides educational assistance and job training to help out-of-school youth ages 16-24 succeed in school and transition into college or a career.

HIGH SCHOOL/ADULT ROP

The Regional Occupational Program (ROP) offers job training and experience in

several industries, including automotive, construction, and medical, among others. High school ROP helps students build an employability portfolio, develop skills, and identify sources of employment, while Adult ROP provides adult learners with hands-on occupational training in their chosen industry.

RISE TO HIGHER GROUNDS

The mobile coffee trailer, a collaborative project between Merced COE and Merced County Probation, acts as a platform for youth from juvenile hall to earn employment skills and work experience on a fully functional mobile café. The trailer travels to selected sites around Merced County where youth from juvenile hall, along with staff from Merced COE, craft and sell coffee, beverages, and light menu items to the community.

HIGH SCHOOL & ADULT ROP

2022-23 SCHOOL YEAR



1,655
STUDENTS
ENROLLED



35
CTE COURSES
OFFERED



1,033
CERTIFICATIONS
EARNED



318
COLLEGE UNITS
EARNED



276
COMMUNITY
PARTNERS



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SUPPORTING MIGRANT FAMILIES

The Region III Migrant Education Program, operated by Merced COE, serves eligible migrant students and their families in Madera, Merced, and Stanislaus Counties. The federally-funded program is designed to ensure that migrant children fully benefit from high-quality and comprehensive educational programs, that also includes health services, tutoring, and summer programs.

Through participation in school districts and regional advisory committees, migrant parents can directly assist in planning and implementing educational programs. Parents are also provided leadership training to strengthen their advocacy roles and parenting skills.

REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCILS

Merced COE's Migrant Education Program staff receive guidance from Regional Parent Advisory Councils on the needs of migrant families. Each council holds a minimum of six meetings per year, where parents evaluate migrant programs as well as participate in staff onboarding.

MIGRANT EDUCATION PROGRAM

2022-23 SCHOOL YEAR



About 6,000 migrant students are served in Region 3



Hosted 8 Family Enrichment Nights focused on Math and Literacy



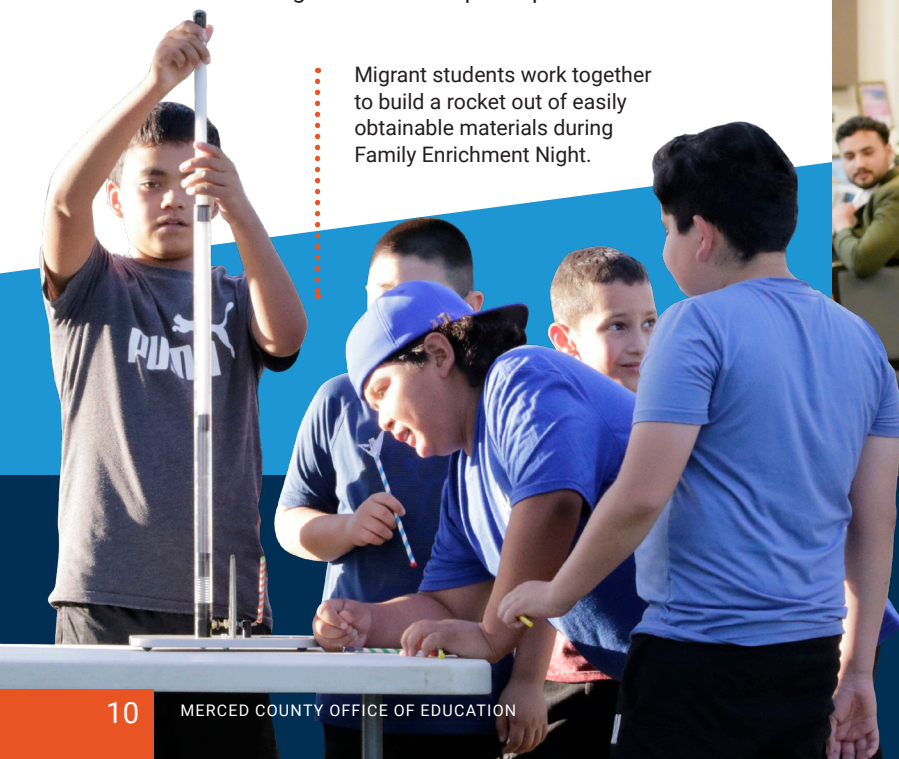
Migrant student graduation rate 88.80%



FAMILY ENRICHMENT NIGHTS

Family Enrichment Nights are hosted at migrant camps throughout the Region and give migrant families an opportunity to participate in challenges that promote math, literacy, and teamwork. Each night hosts 20-60 participants.

Migrant students work together to build a rocket out of easily obtainable materials during Family Enrichment Night.



Priscila Regalado Salcido sings at the 2023 Migrant Scholarship Night, where high school seniors Jolette Torres-Alvarez, Fernanda Orozco Jimenez, and Alondra Gomez received \$1,000 scholarships.

OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Located just outside of Yosemite National Park, Camp Green Meadows Outdoor School provides experiences that combine science education and outdoor adventure for thousands of Central California students each year.

The school operates a multiday residential environmental education program along with weeklong summer camp. Through the outdoor education program, students gain hands-on experience in the outdoors while engaging with curriculum based on Next Generation Science Standards.

DID YOU KNOW



The outdoor school will celebrate 60 years in Spring 2024



Attendance increased by 600 students in the last school year



A monthly average of 372 students visited during the 2022-23 school year



The outdoor school served students from Merced, Fresno, San Joaquin, and Madera counties



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SMALL BUT MIGHTY

OVERCOMING UNIQUE BARRIERS

Merced County is an agricultural hub in California, providing fruits and vegetables for the state, nation, and world. Since agriculture is a large commodity in the county, grossing \$4.5 billion in 2022, and crops take up a large percentage of land, many of the school districts are rural and serve a smaller, unique student population. California's Small School District Association defines a small school district as less than 5,000 students; however, given the size and demographics of Merced County, less than 2,500 students best reflects the county's educational landscape. As you can see in the chart on page 13, this includes 14 school districts in Merced County.

Merced COE offers resources and support to all school districts within the county, but for some small school districts, the county office's layer of support is essential.

LEADERSHIP

Small school districts often do not have the same resources as their larger counterparts because of funding based on student population, which is referred to as Average Daily Attendance (ADA). At some of the smallest school districts, the Superintendent may serve as principal while also overseeing classroom instruction, acting as a coach, and performing in many other roles. Merced COE helps mitigate limited resources in small school districts by offering services in areas where these districts lack internal support. Services range from financial and technical assistance to specialized curriculum like English Language Development (ELD).

Collaborative work with Ballico-Cressey Elementary School District on school and student culture systems, Le Grand Elementary School District's focus on professional development for teachers in Mathematics, and emergency support at Planada Elementary School showcases not only conventional, but innovative support many small school districts need in Merced County.



Planada Elementary School District Superintendent José L. González participates in a class activity with students during a class visit at Planada Elementary School.



With help from staff and local organizations, the Special Education Department at Merced COE hosts engaging events such as the Shelby School Olympics and a day in Kiddieland at Applegate Park for students and their families.



MERCED COUNTY SMALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Small School Districts	14
Number of Students	14,184
School District Funding	\$280 M
Geographic Area	1320 Sq Mi**

California Department of Education (2022-23)

*Collected from Merced County Office of Education

** Collected from Merced County

DID YOU KNOW

67%

Small school districts encompass 67% of the geographic area in Merced County

Small school districts receive 24% of school funding in Merced County

24%



During a visit to Washington D.C., Merced County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Steve Tietjen sits across from former Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy to advocate for issues specific to the Central Valley.



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Merced COE Math Coordinator Katie Koehn works with teachers and students at Ballico School.

LOGISTICS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

LCAP & STATE/FEDERAL COMPLIANCE

The Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) is the Local Control Funding Formula's (LCFF) vehicle for transparency and engagement. It is one of the ways that Merced COE and other local educational agencies share performance data, needs, actions, and anticipated outcomes that guide the use of LCFF funding. The LCAP is a 3-year district plan that must be updated annually. Merced COE helps small school districts with LCAPs and ensures they meet state and federal compliance.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Merced COE provides internet services to all school districts in Merced County and technical support, internet service, connectivity programs for rural communities (Affordable Connectivity Program), financial operations, and cybersecurity.

MCOE IT SERVICES INCLUDE:

- **Intrusion detection and advanced threat protection**
- **Address potential vulnerabilities in networks and systems**
- **Remediation guidance and support**
- **Cybersecurity awareness training with KnowBe4 through simulated phishing and interactive modules**
- **Event remediation support for uninterrupted financial operations**



BUDGET

While COEs serve as the fiscal oversight agency for all school districts in the county, small school districts in Merced County often contract with Merced COE to provide fiscal support and ensure the budget is sound and meets state and federal guidelines and requirements.

Merced County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Steve Tietjen observes an anatomy table during a tour of the new CTE Medical Building at Le Grand High School.



STUDENT PROGRAMS

Merced COE not only assists small school districts with technical and professional support but also operates a variety of countywide programs for students, including after school, early education, and Special Education.

AFTERSCHOOL

Child care before and after the school day is essential for working families. Merced COE operates after-school programs at 47 school sites countywide at no cost to families. These programs offer enrichment opportunities like visual and performing arts and recreation, along with homework assistance and skill development beyond regular school hours.

HEAD START

The county office oversees 27 Head Start locations throughout Merced County and provides resources for families with young children, training for educators, and oversight for childcare providers. Many of these classrooms for the county's youngest learners are collocated on small school district campuses.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Merced COE provides Special Education services for small school districts. Special Education staff work with the school districts on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to identify student needs and place them in appropriate programs.



Ballico Elementary School is located in a rural part of north Merced County, surrounded by farmland and open space. The school district incorporates agriculture into its lessons at all grade levels.





UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

FULFILLING THE PROMISE

The Virginia Smith Trust, established in 1975 from the will of Merced-native Virginia Smith, was established to provide scholarships for students in the City of Merced. Since its inception, the Trust has supported more than 3,000 students through \$6 million in scholarships and grants. In a stride towards a broader impact, a Merced County Court ruling in early 2023 expanded the scholarship's capacity to benefit not only students in the City of Merced, but students countywide.

Plans to develop the University Community on remaining VST land near the campus continues through local government approval and state review processes. The proposed project will not only generate revenue to support even more students as they pursue higher education, but also honor the promise made years ago by Virginia Smith to help students in Merced reach academic excellence.

AWARD SUMMARY

2022-23 SCHOOL YEAR



\$613K
AWARDED



336
GRANTS



73
SCHOLARSHIPS

A brief timeline of the VIRGINIA SMITH TRUST

* Projected timeframe

Past

1975 - After Virginia's death, the remainder of her estate was left to the Merced County Board of Education to provide scholarships

2005 - UC Merced opens on land donated from VST

2017 - University Community Land Commission divides land south of UC Merced creating VST Community Development footprint

Current

2021 - VST offers grants to high school seniors in Merced

2023 (March) - Merced County Superior Court expands VST to serve students countywide

2023 (Oct) - Merced County Board of Supervisors entitles the VST land for development

2024 - City of Merced takes first action to annex VST property

Future

2025* - Groundbreaking for VST development and section of Campus Parkway

2026* - VST scholarship expands to serve students countywide



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SHELBY SCHOOL MARKS 50TH YEAR

Merced COE's Special Education Program operates countywide initiatives and services that support students of all abilities. These services include school-based occupational therapy, deaf and hard of hearing services, adapted physical education, orthopedically impaired services, and visually impaired services, among others.

Between Merced County's 20 school districts and Merced COE, the Special Education Department served approximately 7,460 students for the 2022-23 school year.

Schelby School celebrated 50 years since it was renamed after former Merced County Superintendent of Schools Floyd A. Schelby, signifying a half-century commitment to support students with special needs. More than 170 students were enrolled at Schelby last school year.



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STUDENTS CELEBRATE MILESTONE



In a testament to the effectiveness of inclusive education, 12 students enrolled in Merced COE's Special Education Program were reclassified as Fluent English Proficient after taking the Alternative English Language Proficiency Assessment of California (Alt ELPAC) in place of the English Language Proficiency Assessment.



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MERCED COUNTY CENTERS

EARLY EDUCATION SITES

142 SMALL FAMILY CHILD CARE LICENSE

93 LARGE FAMILY CHILD CARE LICENSE

82 LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTERS

AWARD WINNING

BLUE RIBBON AFFILIATE

The Early Education Department at Merced COE achieved Blue Ribbon Affiliate status as part of the Parents As Teachers Quality Endorsement and Improvement Process. Awarded by the National Parents As Teachers office, the recognition is the highest standard of excellence in the field of home visitation and parent education.



YOUNGEST LEARNERS



The Early Education Department at Merced COE is a foundation of support for Merced County's youngest learners. Not only does the department support preschool students from across the county, but also provides resources for educators, childcare providers, and home-based preschool centers.

The roll-out of Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) marked a significant milestone in the pursuit of accessible and high-quality early education. UPK is a statewide initiative which expands Transitional Kindergarten to include younger children in order to meet the early education needs of families.

The initiative phases in California's four-year-olds in 2022-23 and will reach full implementation by 2025-26.



TRANSITIONAL KINDERGARTNER ELIGIBILITY

 School Year	 Turns 5 Between
2022-23	Sept. 2 – Feb. 2
2023-24	Sept. 2 – April 2
2024-25	Sept. 2 – June 2
2025-26	Turns 4 by Sept. 1

ENHANCING ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES

Merced COE provides a wide range of enrichment opportunities for students throughout the school year. These opportunities extend beyond academic competitions like the Spelling Bee, History Day or Academic Decathlon to encompass events that help students develop their creativity, such as Speech Festival, Merced Symphony Children's Concerts, and the Father of the Year Essay Contest.

The UC Merced Children's Opera performed for more than 2,600 students including students from the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community, and the Merced Symphony performed for more than 3,200 students in both Merced and Los Banos.

Events contribute to both the personal and academic development of students' academic journeys and not only offer students the chance to explore their interests and develop leadership skills, but also provide them with a sense of unity and belonging.



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STUDENT EVENTS

2022-23 SCHOOL YEAR

13



STUDENTS
EVENTS

7,750



STUDENTS
ATTENDEES

2,161



CONTEST
ENTREES

2,018



TOTAL
AWARDS



EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION



CELEBRATING EDUCATION STAFF ACROSS MERCED COUNTY

From formal recognition and awards to opportunities for professional development, Merced COE recognizes staff for their dedication and exceptional service to the students, families, and communities of Merced County.

2023 AWARD WINNERS

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

The Merced County Excellence in Education program began in 2006 from a partnership between Educational Employees Credit Union (EECU) and the Merced County Office of Education. Originally, the program started as Teacher of the Year, designed to spotlight the outstanding contributions of educators in Merced County, but soon evolved into a platform of appreciation for all school personnel. The program honors the county's most notable teachers, administrators, and school employees. Winners from 2023 hail from all corners of the county, with Merced COE's very own Special Education Director earning Administrator of the Year.



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Employee of the Year

YOLANDA TUALLA

Gustine High School
Gustine Unified School District



Administrator of the Year

MARIA DURAN-BARAJAS

Special Education Department
Merced County Office of Education



Teacher of the Year

YER LAWSON

Merced High School
Merced Union High School District



STEVE M. TIETJEN, Ed.D.

COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT
OF SCHOOLS



JANET RILEY

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT
BUSINESS SERVICES



ROSA BARRAGAN

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
EARLY EDUCATION



MARTÍN MACÍAS

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT
EDUCATIONAL SERVICES



PAT ATKINS

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT
HUMAN RESOURCES



LAURA FONG, Ed.D.

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT
SPECIAL EDUCATION

MERCED COE DEPARTMENTS

Merced County Office of Education has six departments that provide educational support and resources to the county's 20 school districts. Department responsibilities include oversight of curriculum and instruction, career and alternative education, business services, early childcare and education, technology, migrant education, special education, and teacher credentialing, among others.

The Superintendent's department oversees the overall operations of Merced COE and ensures that all departments and programs run effectively and efficiently; Business Services

manages finances and budgeting for Merced COE and surrounding school districts, among other business functions; Human Resources manages employee recruitment, benefits, payroll and more; Special Education is responsible for providing services to student with special needs, including Individualized Education Plans and other necessary support; Educational Services manages a range of programs and resources to improve student achievement, including professional development opportunities for educators, career and technical training, and managing educational programs for students; and Early Education supports early childhood education programs, services for students and families, along with childcare subsidies for families and providers. Each department plays a role to ensure that Merced COE provides accessible and equitable education and support for students and educators throughout Merced County.



DENNIS HANKS

AREA 1
VICE CHAIRPERSON



TIM RAZZARI

AREA 2



FRANK FAGUNDES

AREA 3



FRED HONORÉ

AREA 4
CHAIRPERSON



GENEVA BRETT

AREA 5

BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Merced County Board of Education consists of five members elected by voters in their trustee area. The four-year terms are staggered to allow for continuity. The board operates under the authority of the California Constitution,

the State Legislature, California Education Code, and the California State Board of Education. Trustees are responsible for adopting the annual County Office of Education Local Control and Accountability Plan and budget, adopting policies governing the operation of the board; and acting as the appeals board for student expulsions, interdistrict transfers and charter school petitions. Members of the Merced County Board of Education also serve as trustees to the Virginia Smith Trust.



209.381.6600



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MERCED, CA



— MERCED COUNTY —
**Office of
Education**
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Steve M. Tietjen, Ed.D.
County Superintendent of Schools



CONNECT
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