Career Connected

Career Technical Education Program Spotlights

July-September 2026 – Issue No. 18

Tradition Takes the Field

Sunnyside High School

What happens when students use their creativity to market their own programs? At Sunnyside High School, students are learning to showcase their skills through authentic, real-world work.

The Sunnyside Danzantes folklórico program has long partnered with the school's Multimedia and Agriculture programs. Many students take part in more than one, and the partnership grew from students wanting to use their technical skills to support their other interests.

Multimedia students, the creative side of the team, have photographed the dancers for several years. Meanwhile, Agricultural Mechanics students fabricate many of the props and backdrops used in folklórico performances.

This year, the collaboration put the program's livestock in the spotlight, and Floral Design students created the floral accents and headpieces. The photos will promote the Danzantes' Winter and Spring Showcase events.

Game On for Vocabulary

Center for Advanced Research and Technology (CART)

Students at the Center for Advanced Research and Technology (CART) are putting their game design skills to work on a project that makes vocabulary more fun for elementary students.

Students in Robert DeLaRosa's Interactive Game Design class take weekly vocabulary words from Mr. Ortuno's fourth-grade class at Holland Elementary School and turn them into Mario-style video game levels. Each level is built around one word, so players learn its meaning as they play.

The goal is to expand the game each year until it covers the entire vocabulary curriculum, then offer it free to schools, tutoring centers and after-school programs.

Next, Mr. Ortuno's fourth graders will visit CART to beta test the game, give feedback to its high school developers and get their own introduction to game design. CART students gain experience building for real users, and younger students get a fun new way to learn vocabulary.

Watch the "desperately" level on YouTube

A Harvest of Hard Work

Phoenix Secondary Academy

Under the guidance of teacher Amber Donat, students from Phoenix Secondary Academy recently spent a day volunteering with Offer Kindness, harvesting fresh grapes from a local vineyard.

Before the harvest began, the farmer who donated the grapes shared his story. He attended a school similar to Phoenix as a young man and grew up working in the fields before becoming a successful farmer and business owner. His story of hard work and perseverance was especially meaningful to the students.

Students received hands-on harvesting experience and had plenty of fun sampling the fruit along the way. The day was a huge success, and Phoenix looks forward to continuing its partnership with Offer Kindness as more fruits and vegetables come into season throughout the year.

Our Guest Speaker Is the GOAT (Literally)

McLane High School

McLane High School recently welcomed a couple of furry visitors from Nova Farming. The visit is part of a partnership between the organization's founder, Rizpah Bellard, and Fresno Unified's Teacher Academy programs to expand career education around the agriculture industry.

Teacher Academy students and students from McLane's ALPs program took part in a lesson on ruminants and wool production, then got hands-on time with two goats, George and Annabelle. Arts, Media and Entertainment students also produced a feature for McLane's weekly news broadcast, Highlander Highlights.

Next, Teacher Academy students will join Bellard at several elementary schools to lead a similar presentation based on their own learning and research.

Watch the Highlander Highlights feature

Graduates Share Their CRMC Internship Stories

Roosevelt High School

Recent Roosevelt graduates were invited to share their success stories as interns at Community Regional Medical Center. The experience gave them insight into the careers and colleges they want to pursue, which turned out to be different from their original plans.

Watch the graduates' stories

Pathways of Medicine Students Visit CHSU

Roosevelt High School

Roosevelt Pathways of Medicine students visited California Health Sciences University, where they took part in hands-on activities and learned about the university's programs. Students checked vital signs on patient simulators, worked alongside CHSU staff in a hospital training room and stepped into virtual reality.

Construction Students Earn CPR Certification

Hoover High School

Students in Mr. Priest's Construction I class are building career and life skills. In training led by Fresno Unified with support from industry professionals, students completed hands-on CPR training and passed a skills test to earn their certification. The training connects classroom learning to real workplace expectations, building students' confidence, safety skills and career readiness.

Fresno State Army ROTC Visits Public Services

Hoover High School

Representatives from Fresno State's Army ROTC program visited Mr. Shelton's Public Services classes to share the opportunities available through ROTC. Students learned that Army ROTC is a college elective that builds leadership, teamwork, discipline and professional skills. The presentation covered college opportunities, military training, scholarships and career pathways. Students who complete the program and their degree may commission as officers in the U.S. Army.

Seniors Explore Their College Options

Patiño School of Entrepreneurship

With application season in full swing, Patiño seniors have met with representatives from Fresno City College, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and UC Berkeley's Haas School of Business. Students learned about each institution's unique opportunities and application process and picked up tips for navigating admissions. These conversations are helping seniors find the programs and pathways that best match their goals after graduation.

Finding Their "Golden Thread"

Patiño School of Entrepreneurship

Patiño students attended the Pay It Forward guest speaker and networking luncheon at Fresno State, featuring Adrianne Hillman, founder and CEO of Salt + Light. Hillman encouraged students to find their "golden thread," the passion and purpose that guide their work and help them persevere. Drawing on her work with people experiencing homelessness, she challenged students to lead with empathy and to understand people whose voices are often overlooked. Students left inspired by her career journey and purpose-driven leadership.

Got the Job? Get the Permit.

College and Career Readiness

Under 18 and just got hired? You need a work permit before your first shift.

- Get hired first. The permit comes after the job offer.
- New school year, new permit. Summer permits have expired.
- Grades and attendance count.

No permit, no paycheck. See your school's counseling office or CTE Coordinator to get started. Processes vary by school.

On winter, spring, or summer break? Visit the College & Career Readiness Office, 3240 N Millbrook Ave, Fresno, CA 93726.

District work permit information

Kern County Educators Tour Fresno Unified CTE

Edison High School and Duncan Polytechnical High School

Fresno Unified welcomed Kierstin Webb and Hillary Wolfe, administrators with the Kern County Superintendent of Schools and members of the GSPP support team, for a tour of several CTE programs. Business Engagement Coordinator Juan Aldape and Work-Based Learning Coordinator Jeff DeLong hosted the visitors at Edison and Duncan.

The tour included Edison's CTE building, Duncan's MASH facility and the IDATA program. Along the way, the group visited classrooms, discussed student opportunities and traded ideas about CTE and work-based learning, building connections that can strengthen CTE for students across the region.

Sowing Seeds for Healthier Students

Bullard High School

Bullard High School's Law & Social Justice Pathway, in partnership with Valley Children's Hospital, has received a $5,000 grant from the Sprouts Healthy Communities Foundation. The grant will provide additional nutrition options for Bullard students. Together, the partners are sowing the seeds for a healthier future and connecting generations to a healthier, more fulfilling way of life.

We Don't Talk to Them

CTE Ambassador Training

Student ambassadors from across Fresno Unified came to Farber to learn how to tell their CTE story. First, they had to break an unwritten rule.

Story by Garrett Main

On the morning of CTE Ambassador Training at the Farber Professional Learning Center, students arrived the way high schoolers usually do: with backpacks, breakfast and school pride. Duncan Polytechnical students came in scrubs and work shirts. Fresno High students were easy to spot in purple and yellow. Ambassadors from Bullard, Edison, Hoover, McLane, Farber and other campuses filled the room.

And then they sat with their schools.

Nobody announced it, but there seemed to be a rule: We don't talk to them.

Program manager Yer Lee built the day around the opposite idea. "My goal was to bring ambassadors from different high schools so they can network, collaborate with other students from other high

schools," she said. Duncan has programs another campus doesn't, and the reverse is true too. Put everyone in one room, and those separate maps of Fresno Unified start to overlap.

Step Into the Circle

Facilitator Dave Viotti of Smallify started by asking students to form a circle, no small request before 10 a.m. Tables and friends make good hiding places. A circle leaves everyone visible. After some shuffling (an oval, briefly an egg), the shape held, and Viotti started improv.

The extroverts went first. Then they started pulling in the introverts. More than one face said "absolutely not" for a split second. Then they stepped in anyway. Sometimes it was awkward, sometimes brilliant, and every time the room laughed with them, not at them.

The activity was less about theater than permission: to look a little silly, to volunteer, to admit you're having fun.

"We thought it would be like a classroom where we come and we sit and just learn." — Ambassadors, as remembered by program manager Yer Lee

By midmorning, Duncan students were working with Fresno High, and the tidy school groupings had scrambled. Assistant Superintendent Jeremy Ward and CTE Director Kristen Boroski stopped by to meet the ambassadors. "I love to see different groups of students come together and share their experience," Lee said.

From Catalog to Story

Ambassadors field one question constantly: So what do you guys do? The easy answer is a catalog of programs, certifications and careers. That information matters. But the next question is harder: Which one did you choose, and why?

Viotti, who lives in Modena, Italy, photographs whatever catches his eye on long walks. He taught students that stories work the same way. Most days, things just happen. A story begins when you look back and say, "Wait. That mattered."

Kevin, a sophomore in the business pathway and DECA, has never been shy about "speaking to people and representing what I believed in." But ask him enough questions and he stops explaining business and starts explaining Kevin. His middle school GPA was barely over a 2.0. Then came a moment of asking himself, "What am I doing?" and deciding he didn't want to spend his life in a job he hated just for the money. That's not a program description. It's a story.

A Fresno High senior in the video and photography pathway came at it from the other direction. He's "not really, like, the most talkative person" and wasn't sure what he was "getting myself into." What made it worth it was "being able to interact with all these people from other schools."

Cross the Room First

By afternoon, the room was louder. Students laughed across the spaces that had divided them that morning, and phone numbers were exchanged. The student from another school was now the one who said that funny thing in improv, or knew about a program you'd never heard of.

That's the real job of an ambassador: not to tell younger students what to become, but to make their world a little larger. Here's something you didn't know existed. Here's what I tried. What about you?

Six days later, two ambassadors in black shirts were helping run Hoover's Public Service Day, hauling ice chests, organizing snacks, walkie-talkies on their belts. They had gone from being brought into an experience to creating one for someone else.

The rule was broken for them. Now they can break it for somebody else.

Watch the CTE Ambassador Training video

Leading From the Sidelines

Coaching & Officiating Leadership Academy (COLA)

The first Coaching & Officiating Leadership Academy (COLA) gave 18 students hands-on experience building leadership, communication, coaching and officiating skills while serving young athletes in their community. Students earned industry-recognized certifications, learned from coaches and officials, and gained real-world experience at youth camps and live sports activities.

Their feedback was overwhelmingly positive: more confidence, meaningful mentorship, new friendships and career-ready skills to use on and off the field.

Junior Teachers Take the Lead

Wild About Teaching Leadership Academy

This summer, Fresno Unified CTE's Wild About Teaching Leadership Academy partnered with the Fresno Chaffee Zoo to give high school students a chance to explore teaching, leadership and service. Nineteen Junior Teachers supported five camp groups totaling 100 Fresno Unified elementary students, keeping campers safe, leading lessons and activities, and supporting Zoo educators and staff.

Along the way, the Junior Teachers grew in confidence and learned what it means to be responsible role models, thoughtful communicators and supportive leaders.

One Million and Counting

Work-Based Learning Milestone

Four school years. One big milestone: more than 1,000,000 Work-Based Learning experiences logged since 2022–23.

Fresno Unified CTE has reached a major milestone: more than one million Work-Based Learning student experiences recorded in TitanWBL since the district began using the platform in the 2022–23 school year.

Every one of those experiences is a student moment. A guest speaker who sparked an idea. An industry visit, a mock interview or a job shadow. A mentorship, an internship or an industry certification earned.

Thank you to every teacher, counselor, coordinator and industry partner who made each experience possible. The next million starts now.

A Record Year for Work-Based Learning

2025–26 District Highlights

Fresno Unified CTE students logged more Work-Based Learning experiences than ever before in 2025–26, from guest speakers and industry visits to mentorships, internships and industry certifications.

- 311,434 Work-Based Learning experiences, 28,230 more than last year (up 10%)
- 96.2% of CTE students had at least one Work-Based Learning experience (11,333 of 11,779 students), up from 93.5% last year
- 45,637 industry certifications, up 38% from 32,998 last year
- 8,106 industry visits, up 53% from 5,292 last year
- 2,416 internships, up 12% from 2,158 last year
- 957 mentorships, up 20% from 794 last year

It's a Tie — Again!

2025–26 Work-Based Learning Champion Award

Edison and Patiño share this year's Work-Based Learning Champion Award as Co-Champions.

Co-Champion: Edison High School

- 35,300 Work-Based Learning experiences, #1 in the district
- Up 119% from 16,127 last year, a jump from 14th place
- 12,013 guest speakers (8,334 last year)
- 3,516 certifications (1,843 last year)

Co-Champion: Patiño School of Entrepreneurship

- 11,527 Work-Based Learning experiences (9,260 last year)
- 1,573 certifications (1,179 last year)
- 106 internships (81 last year)
- 99 simulated Work-Based Learning experiences (0 last year)

Congratulations to Our Finalists

- Duncan Polytechnical High School: 657 internships, #1 in the district; 26,681 Work-Based Learning experiences, 3rd in the district
- Bullard High School: 21,858 Work-Based Learning experiences, double last year's 10,933; up from 11th place; 6,485 guest speakers
- DeWolf High School: 39 internships (0 last year); 1,601 IMAGO lessons; 444 certifications
- Sunnyside High School: 28,852 Work-Based Learning experiences, 2nd in the district; up from 8th place; 6,776 guest speakers; 1,564 simulated experiences

Congratulations to everyone! Looking forward to an amazing 2026–27.

High School Intersession Internships

College and Career Readiness

Coming June 2027. High school intersession internships let students:

- Earn elective credit towards graduation
- Get hands-on work experience
- Learn real-world technical skills

For more information, contact Jeff DeLong, Work-Based Learning Coordinator, at (559) 248-7468 or jeffery.delong@fresnounified.org.

Internship interest form

Share Your Story

Have a CTE story to share? Submissions for the next issue (October–December 2026) are due December 16, 2026. Please include:

- Multiple photos (vertical and horizontal)
- Student and teacher quotes
- Dates and details

Submit your story through the Career Connected form

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