



Seniors to graduate together

CUSD Today

Let the pomp and circumstance begin! Graduation ceremonies will be held for the Class of 2021 in Lamonica and Veterans stadiums complete with caps, gowns, classmates, families, music, speeches and diplomas.

"I'm thrilled to announce we will be holding in-person, traditional graduation ceremonies for our Class of 2021," said Superintendent Eimear O'Farrell, Ed.D. "While there will still be health and safety and some distancing requirements in place, along with capacity limits determined by Fresno County's tier conditions in late May, traditional ceremonies attended by graduates and members of their household, and held in the evenings at our stadiums, can now be a reality."

Last year, group graduations could not be held under then-mandated state closures during the pandemic. Instead, Clovis Unified high school principals spent an entire week meeting with

students in their caps and gowns at their school stadium for individual presentations of diplomas on stage in front of their families.

This year with increasing vaccinations and improving COVID conditions, the resulting changes to county and state restrictions have allowed for ceremonies closer to non-COVID times.

"Listening to our students' requests to come together to celebrate with classmates, under the lights in our beautiful stadiums, and to have their families there to see them cross the stage was a driving force behind our work with public health officials," O'Farrell said.

Additional senior activities such as prom and award presentations are also moving forward.

Schools are finalizing details to meet the needed guidelines and will be providing seniors and their families with updates about graduation and senior activities.

In-person secondary expands

■ Planning underway for 2021-22 school year

CUSD Today

Improving COVID conditions and recently revised state and county guidelines allowed Clovis Unified to increase in-person instruction days for intermediate and high school students. Now, those opting for in-person instruction are on campus four days a week, Tuesdays through Fridays. All students continue to Zoom on Mondays.

The CDC and state and county health departments' recent decrease to the social distancing requirement in classrooms from 6 to 3 feet of spacing enabled the district's secondary schools to combine their two hybrid tracks that were alternating days of attendance.

The return to nearly a full week of instruction for in-person students marked a pivotal shift since the COVID pandemic began a year ago and was in place by April 20.

At elementary sites, school schedules continued with their al-

ready four-day-a-week in-person offering. The spacing change did allow students who were on a wait list for in-person instruction to join classmates. Other school-specific adaptations were made where possible to continue meeting the needs of the school community.

For the 2021-22 school year, Clovis Unified administrators are developing plans for a traditional five-day-a-week schedule of in-person instruction at all schools. An online option for families opting to have their child remain in online-only instruction is also planned.

Clovis Unified will host a virtual Community Forum at 5 p.m. April 29 to share details of the fall plan, and parents will be asked soon after to affirm their plans for fall to establish priority and schedules.

Visit cUSD.com for the forum link. Questions will be received in advance at cUSD.com/2021-22Year.

2021-22 School Year Instruction Options

- Virtual Community Forum
- Learn about fall plans for in-person and online instruction.
- 5 p.m.
- April 29
- For link: cUSD.com
- Submit questions in advance: cUSD.com/CUSD2021-22Year

Bronco band to perform in NYC

■ Clovis North among nine chosen for Macy's Parade

By Patti J. Lippert
CUSD Today

There will be a stampede in New York City in November 2022 when the Clovis North Educational Center Bronco Band performs in the 96th Annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade!

Band members were stunned with the big news by Macy's Creative Producer Wesley Whatley during a surprise appearance in a routine CN virtual band meeting April 6.

"Next year your band will represent your school, community and state in front of our entire country on Thanksgiving morning!" said Whatley as he stood in front of Macy's flagship store on the corner of 34th Street and Broadway. "We can't wait to see you right here!"

The band is one of only nine in the nation chosen to perform in 2022 out of more than 100 bands to be considered from across the United States. The Broncos will have about 18

months to raise funds for the trip, and Whatley surprised the group even further with a \$10,000 donation to kick off their efforts.

The famous parade is the traditional start of the holiday season for many, with its famous giant character-shaped balloons, floats and of course, incredible marching bands.

"I'm so excited to be with my band and in New York," said CN band member Savannah Wightman who plays the flute. "Like that's crazy!"

For CN Band Director David Lesser, the opportunity is a dream come true.

"To get to be a part of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, I get a bit choked up just thinking about it. I can't wait for the experience. My favorite part of Thanksgiving has always been watching the parade ... not the turkey," he said.

Lesser submitted the band for consideration more than a year and a half ago, which included providing video clips and a resume of the band's awards and performances. He actually learned in February 2020 that the Broncos had been selected, but only days before the

► Please see *Parade*, Page 8



“Next year your band will represent your school, community and state in front of our entire country on Thanksgiving morning!”

Wesley Whatley
Macy's Creative Producer

Pictured above: Wesley Whatley, Macy's Creative Producer, in front of Macy's flagship store in New York. Left: Clovis North's Bronco Band.

Tarantulas, pandas invade Riverview



Photo special to CUSD Today.
Riverview Elementary student Stella McCarty journeys on a field trip using a virtual reality headset.

By Melissa Culver
Instructional Technology Coach,
Clovis North Area

Riverview Elementary fourth-grade teacher Mary Carol Johnson's class recently traveled to Amazonia, Asia and Africa thanks to Clovis Unified's Lenovo virtual reality headsets.

While many students have returned to campuses for in-person learning, experiences through field trips have not been possible. That hasn't stopped Johnson or others in the district from taking children to some far away places for learning.

The virtual reality headset experience had Johnson's students feeling like they were inches away from walrus giraffes, pandas and a tarantula.

"This is soooooo cool," said fourth-

grader Lucas Karki.

"The animals looked so real," said classmate Elise Seyler.

Some students gasped for air with wild amazement as the animals swung in to explore their faces or sniff their ear. Others tucked their feet in close as they soared above wild animals in an airplane-like feel. Still others squeezed their arms in close as the dung beetle moved a pile of waste from one spot to another.

"Students felt as if they were actually in these different parts of the world," said Johnson about her students' experience with this dynamic learning tool. "It was fun to listen to the students' reactions."

► Please see *Riverview*, Page 9

Students of Promise



Photo special to CUSD Today.
Brielle Aguilar is surprised to learn she is a 2021 Student of Promise scholarship winner. Funded by the Foundation for Clovis Schools, the program celebrates juniors who have persevered through challenging circumstances.



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INSIDE:

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Summer school registration underway

Summer school in Clovis Unified will look a little different this year, with the district preparing for potentially larger amounts of students. *Page 2*

EMPLOYEES

State award for CHS music teacher

Clovis High music teacher Esmeralda Rocha Lozano was awarded the 2021 Richard L. Levin Orchestra Educator of the Year. *Page 3*

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Thanks to a dedicated team

Every day brings new opportunities, challenges and successes for our students and the incredible team of educators. *Page 5*

➤ Announcements

Environmental sustainability award

Clovis Unified is receiving a Leadership in Greener Purchasing Award from Office Depot for the district's purchases in 2020. Nineteen awards were given out among the company's largest 1,000 clients as a way to acknowledge efforts to use green, environmentally minded items.

"Even during this difficult year, [Clovis Unified] decided to drive the market for eco-conscious products and help make a more positive impact on the planet," said Charles Neidenbach, manager of Office Depot's Sustainable Solutions.

Some of the high-volume items purchased by the district that are made of recyclable materials include paper products, shipping boxes, file folders, pens, pencils and plastic accessories.

With the cost of green products coming down in the past few years, not only is buying green good for the environment, but also it creates a cost savings to the district, said CUSD Director of Purchasing Leeann Errotabere.

New student 2021-22 registration underway

Registration has begun for the 2021-22 school year for students who will be new to the district. Instructions and online pre-registration forms for enrollment from preschool to 12th grade is available on cusd.com or at school sites.

In cooperation with the State Department of Health Services and the Fresno County Health Services Agency, Clovis Unified's Sierra Vista Children's Health Center offers immunizations and CHDP physicals for eligible children.

The center is located at 510 Barstow Ave., Clovis, and is open 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday. The Sierra Vista Children's Health Center phone number is 327-7976.

Summer school options expanded this year

CUSD Today

Summer school in Clovis Unified will look a little different this year, with the district preparing for potentially larger amounts of students attending programs in order to fortify their learning experience or do recovery work.

"We know this year has been challenging with COVID conditions and the resulting online and hybrid classes. We want to do all we can for students who may need help to master standards from this past school year at the elementary level and, for the secondary level students, to provide credit recovery or original credit for impacted schedules," said CUSD Summer School Director Chuck Sandoval.

Elementary grade levels (K-6)

Instead of having six elementary school sites conducting summer school as in typical years, this year there will be 11 sites and one for an accelerated English learning academy for students mastering their English skills. The program also has been expanded from four weeks to six weeks.

Sandoval said the focus area for elementary summer school will be on this current year of curriculum, in order to help solidify concepts from the 2020-21 school year; previously, the study area was on the upcoming school year's curriculum.

"We want to review and reteach key concepts



to help students be ready for next year. Also, for some students who have been online only, it will benefit them to experience in-person instruction and how to re-engage," Sandoval said.

Space at each site is limited. Students with at-risk grades will receive priority enrollment. Parents may contact their school regarding availability and site location for their area.

Secondary grade levels (7-12)

In-person credit recovery classes will occur at all five high schools instead of just two sites as in previous years. The expansion is due in part to social distancing requirements necessitating more space and also a higher number of students expected to attend. Classes will be in-person for six weeks from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

For the first time, recovery summer school will be offered for intermediate students as well.

Secondary students who qualify for the summer recovery program will be contacted by their school counselor.

Original credit summer school for high school students who will have an impacted schedule in the fall will continue to be available both in-person and through independent study class for those who meet requirements. Counselors can provide those courses offered for original credit.

Career Technical Education (9-12)

New this summer, Clovis Unified's CTE program will offer a sampling of its courses in two three-week sessions held at all high schools. At each site, up to three pathway subjects will make up the daily curriculum. Courses will be site specific and may include subjects like construction, agriculture, computer science and education. Students do not have to attend their home school.

Sandoval, who is also the CTE director for Clovis Unified, said the CTE Summer Academy will give students a chance to know more about the CTE pathways and high school classes available to them. "This may lead to students participating in these classes later in high school and it will definitely give them ideas about future career opportunities," he said.

For complete details about the CTE Summer Academy or to register, see cusd.com/CTE-Summer.

Student conference videos online

Clovis Unified hosted four virtual student leadership conferences held in February and March that are now available for viewing online. The conferences feature keynote speakers, local professionals and information about post high school college and career opportunities. For recordings of the CUSD Asian Student Success Conference, the CUSD Latino High School & Middle School Conference, CUSD African American Middle School Conference and Black History Month Student Celebration: cusd.com/idac.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Special Ed advisory meeting

Clovis Unified's Special Education Community Advisory Committee will meet through Zoom at 11:30 a.m. May 26, and community members are welcome to attend. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/CACMay21> and a Zoom link will be sent to you. For more information, call 327-8455.

Special Ed Teacher Residency Program accepting applications

If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a special

education teacher, Clovis Unified's Special Education Teacher Residency Program is a great way to achieve your goal while learning from caring, dedicated mentors.

Residents receive a tuition stipend, earn their specialist credential, complete student teaching in CUSD, and have ongoing professional development. They also receive priority hiring in Clovis Unified upon completion of the program.

Applications are now being accepted for CUSD's Fall 2021 Special Education Residency Program. Zoom information sessions are available for interested candidates through April.

Sessions are one hour and will be held at 3 p.m. on April 22 and 29.

For more information and to access the Zoom sessions, go to www.cusd.com/teach.

Setting an example

The California Early Childhood Online (CECO), an organization that supports early childhood teachers, has included several videos of Clovis Unified inclusive preschool classes as learning modules on its site.

The videos demonstrate ways teachers can provide instruction with general ed and special ed students together.



Join the "Crush" family! Details at cloviscollege.edu

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Bus driver awards

School Bus Driver Appreciation Day will be April 27 in Clovis Unified, and also this month, several district drivers were recognized with safe driving awards from the California Highway Patrol.

With the many challenges of the COVID pandemic this past year, the district's transportation team has continued to be a dedicated group ready to meet the needs and respond as necessary, said Transportation Manager Steven Mirelez. They have helped Campus Catering distribute meals to families; assisted the American Red Cross with lunch and dinner deliveries to Creek Fire evacuees; and taken extra safety precautions to ensure school buses are disinfected to create a healthy, clean and safe environment.

These are in addition to operating numerous routes bringing eligible students to school, providing transportation to sporting activities and even waxing the entire bus fleet.

"Our transportation staff members are phenomenal and always make district students and families a priority," said Transportation Director Sheryl Boe.

The transportation team will be celebrated April 27 with breakfast and in special ways by their school sites.

The CHP Driver Safety Award recognizes bus drivers for safety records for different increments of time. Clovis Unified recipients this year are: **Clorinda Savedra** (30 years); **Marla Saldana** (20 years); **Greg Barnett**, **Fabian Jauregui**, **Angel Perez** and **Mark Romero** (15 years); **Tamara Edwards**, **Randy Gonzales**, **Monica Murray** and **Richard Thaxton** (10 years); and **Scott Burns**, **Mike Clarno**, **Cathy French**, **Veronica Gonzalez**, **Debbi Martin**, **Alejandro Silva-Ledesma**, **Jacquelyn Valdez**, **Jack VanBindsbergen** and **Trisha Yamagata** (5 years).

Loomis named a Community Champion

Clovis Unified employee **Karen Loomis**, who is an orientation and mobility teacher for the visually impaired, was awarded as one of the Big Fresno Fair's Community Champions in 2020. The award recognizes those who have demonstrated extraordinary passion for making Fresno County a better place to live. Due to the pandemic and cancellation of the Fresno Fair in 2020,

CHS music teacher wins state award



Photo special to CUSD Today. Seen here in pre-COVID times, Clovis High band and orchestra teacher Esmeralda Rocha-Lozano instructs her students.

Clovis High music teacher **Esmeralda Rocha Lozano** was awarded the 2021 Richard L. Levin Orchestra Educator of the Year through the California Music Educators Association in February. The prestigious state award honors one person each year for his or her excellence in orchestra education and performance.

"Never in my wildest dreams would I have ever thought that a recognition like this would happen to me. This award is dedicated to all of my students, mentors, family, co-workers and friends who guided and shaped me into the person I am today," said Lozano, who is in her 19th year teaching music at Clovis High.

The award was presented in a virtual format during the California All-State Music Education Conference (CASMEC).

Loomis will be honored with other recipients at the 2021 Big Fresno Fair if health guidelines allow.

Two CLS state finalists

Two Clovis Unified teachers are state finalists in the California League of School's educator of the year contest.

Clovis High math teacher **Tosh Demsey** and Young Elementary second-grade teacher **Melissa Tanaleon** were named the Region 7 (from Kern to Merced counties) winners April 10 and will now be celebrated in the CLS state event at the end of the month.

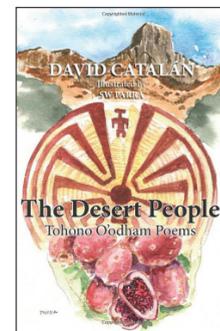
Congratulations to all district Region 7 finalists who are:

High School: **Andrew Austin** (Buchanan), **Tosh Demsey** (Clovis), **Steve Gambril** (Clovis East), **Sally Howe** (Clovis North) and **Vance Walberg** (Clovis West).

Intermediate School: **Erin Roberts** (Alta Sierra), **Jill Mele** (Clark), **LisaMarie Slater** (Granite Ridge), **Barbara Bethel** (Kastner) and **Caren Burgess** (Reyburn).

Elementary School: **Joseph Donat** (Fugman), **Diana Rey** (Liberty), **Vanessa Avitabile** (Mountain View), **Kristin Lofgren** (Oraze) and **Melissa Tanaleon** (Young).

CE teacher's art in book



S.W. Parra, a visual arts teacher at Clovis East High, illustrated a book, "The Desert People," and he recently signed copies for the school's library. The writings are reflective of the Tohono O'odham people, Native Americans of southern Arizona and Mexico.

Parra is an award-winning graphic artist, illustrator, designer and also cartoonist for a newspaper. The book is available through Amazon.

Gateway's Fisher recognized

Gateway High English teacher **Chris Fisher** was KSEE 24's Educator of the Week recently. In the segment, Fisher said what surprised and thrilled him most during the pandemic is that some of his students are getting ahead in their work, and when he gave them assignments, they said it was already done.

His mantra is "stay strong, stay focused."

Gateway Principal **Steve Pagani** nominated Fisher for the honor. "He helps kids be the best versions of themselves," Pagani said.

Kudos to Purchasing

March was National Procurement Month and the district commends its purchasing/warehouse team of 20 employees and their director, **Leann Errotabere**. They have worked tirelessly during the pandemic to secure PPE and other necessities, especially when these commodities were scarce nationwide due to high demand. Some of the highlights of this team's annual work includes:

- Processing about 11,000 purchase orders.
- Receiving in the warehouse more than 1 million items to be distributed to sites and departments.
- Saving the district funds by searching for best prices while maintaining CUSD standards. This year they have saved \$2.5 million.

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Historically 21.1%	Today 15.9%

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House hunting is best done with a professional by your side. Find the bargains buried in the current market, the properties that set you apart from your neighbors. Stop saying next year and act today.

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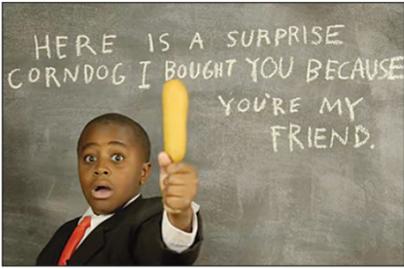
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*The Campus Preschool has been deemed essential and issued permission for safe reopening of business operations by Fresno County Department of Health. All facilities are under safety guidelines set forth by the CDC and local authorities.



KETCHUP OR MUSTARD? Once a month for the past five years, teachers at Mountain View Elementary have been surprised with a corn dog from Principal Monica Everson and GIS Melissa Holdener. Recently, the duo stepped up their tasty tradition by dressing as Mustard and Ketchup when making the unexpected deliveries. Why a corn dog, you ask? Well, those who watched child YouTube sensation Kid President, a young boy who offered sage advice on how to make the world a better place, may remember his Top 20 lists. Among them was “20 Things We Should Say More Often,” and No. 18 was “Here is a surprise corn dog I bought you because you’re my friend. There’ll be more corn dogs and more happy people. This is a good idea! Corn dog for you, corn dog for you, corn dog for you!” Mountain View teacher Heather Rice agrees with Kid President: “Corn dogs make everything better!”



HATCHING A GREAT IDEA: Students learning the science of chicks hatching from

Diamonds

SPARKLING GEMS IN THE DISTRICT

Clovis Unified’s 60th anniversary year is unlike any other with the challenges resulting from the COVID pandemic. But in this, our Diamond Anniversary year, there are many ways students, staff and families are shining brighter than ever as they make the best out of difficult situations. We salute these diamonds that illustrate the strength and character of Clovis Unified.

eggs didn’t miss a crack thanks to Clovis East High ag teachers who set up a livestream monitoring student eggs being kept warm in incubators on campus. The eggs were numbered so students could know whose egg was whose, and they began to take guesses at whose would hatch first. Before long, the Wolfpack Chicken Hatch took flight and the project went out on the Timberwolves’ social media inviting all students and staff to take a guess. For the record, No. 10 was the first chick to arrive!



GRATEFUL HEARTS: Four Clovis North friends decided they wanted to do something special to let hospital workers know that they are appreciated so the girls baked 500 cookies. The tasty homemade treats were put in bags – two at a time – with notes saying “Thank you for your sacrifices, courage and dedication – and for taking care of our families!” Ava Serrato, Alexis Villegas, Lola Poerzgen and Valeria Suarez then delivered them to Community Regional Medical Center and Clovis Community Hospital.

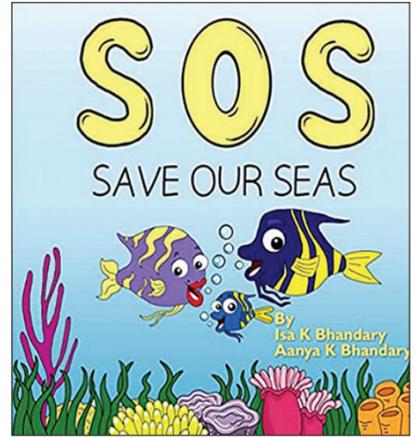
SIDE BY SIDE: Clovis Unified bus drivers care for our students beyond transporting them, and driver John Phanvongkham is an example of that. He recently joined in running by the side of a cross country runner who he noticed was a bit behind others at a meet at Clark Intermediate.

KIND LEPRECHAUN: Mickey Cox Elementary fourth-grader Tessa Bernardo wanted to do something kind for senior citizens, many of whom have been homebound during the pandemic. She handmade 20 unique St. Patrick’s Day cards and gave them to the Clovis Senior Center to share with seniors in the community.



WELCOME HOME: Members of Buchanan High’s Junior Habitat for Humanity Club showed up with handmade signs and balloons on a recent weekend to welcome a family to their newly constructed Habitat for Humanity home. Students had previously helped out with landscaping – helping to install drip irrigation, leveling the ground, rolling out sod and planting trees and bushes. They’ve also volunteered time to paint and do clean up work. “Our BHS group is hard working and loves helping others in our community,” said Club Advisor Irene Teraoka. Great job Bears!

SAVE OUR SEAS! Two sisters, one a Clovis North graduate and the other a current Clovis North student, made the



most of their extra time during the COVID pandemic by fulfilling a shared dream – they wrote and published a children’s book. “Quarantine seemed like the perfect opportunity to put our heads together and finally take on the task,” said CN junior Aanya Bhandary who co-authored “SOS – Save Our Seas” with her sister Isa Bhandary, a senior at Loyola Marymount University. Their book tells the story of Little Lu, a fish who lives in the sea by a glorious reef that is now dying due to pollution and global warming. She is determined to save her home, and with the help of Captain J and Jason the Octopus, Little Lu puts her plan into action. It’s an inspiring tale about how each person (or fish), no matter how small, can do great things when working together with others. “We know ocean pollution is a worldwide problem and thought that by maybe writing a children’s book about it, we may plant a seed into the next generation of impressionable minds,” Aanya said. The book is available on Amazon, and the Bhandary sisters are donating a portion of sales to The Ocean Cleanup project.

Do you have a “Diamond” you’d like to share? Submissions will be considered for publication in CUSD Today or CUSD’s digital/ social media. Email your gem to cusdtoday@cusd.com and put “Diamonds” on the subject line. Include full names, school names, grade level, a quote or brief description of your uplifting experience. If sending photos, please do not copy and paste, but attach the file in its original or largest size and include identifying caption information.

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Openings, activities thanks to dedicated team

By Eimear O'Farrell, Ed.D.
Superintendent

EVERY day brings new opportunities, challenges and successes for our students and the incredible team of educators working to navigate what (I fervently hope) are the waning days of a once-in-a-century pandemic, and I want to use this opportunity to share and comment on just a few.



Eimear O'Farrell, Ed.D.

While the topics covered over the next few paragraphs are wide and varied, they carry with them a common theme, our students. We are living through a time that has demanded courageous leadership and the wisdom of Solomon to navigate sharply divided opinions about what is the right (and wrong) response to protect the mind, body and spirit of our students, staff and community as a whole.

Have we been perfect? No, unfortunately not. Have we tried to be? Absolutely.

Meeting the needs of our students and the dedicated people who serve them has always been our overriding purpose, and in each of the following short updates it is their needs that drive us. Our efforts to expedite vaccination opportunities for all of our employees in the days immediately following eligibility for educators is one example of resources allocated to support this purpose.

Another is the timing of announcements about graduations and the opening of the school year. For decisions that impact future events and activities, like these, we have intentionally delayed finalizing plans so that we could take advantage of the lessening of restrictions that come with improving vaccination rates and COVID conditions throughout the state.

Had we finalized some of these plans even a few weeks ago, we would not have been able to offer the same breadth of opportunities to our students and their families. Thank you for your patience in understanding that we are working toward providing our students at every grade level the greatest access to their classrooms, co-curricular activities, and celebrations as possible.

At the same time, we are balancing the academic impact of numerous changes to our students and relying on our instructional experts, our teachers, to navigate the final few weeks of the current school year to ensure students are prepared to advance to the next grade level.

Every step of every day since March 13, 2020, has been a journey to regain what was lost when the onset of the pandemic forced California's school buildings to close. While we have come a long way in this journey, and between September and February were able to open all of our campuses grades K-12 for a hybrid form of in-person instruction, we haven't yet returned to a complete, pre-COVID schedule, and we miss our kids!

It is our intent to pass that milestone with the opening of the 2021-22 school year this August, and plans have been processed through parent meetings at each school site this month. Before the end of April, families will receive

details of the upcoming school year, and an April 29 webinar will provide families an opportunity to pose questions on the subject to me and our leadership team.

If you are a member or parent of the Class of 2021, by the time this paper publishes you should have received news of our in-person grad-

Details of what our graduation ceremonies will look like will be shared directly with seniors and their families by their school sites in the coming days, with final schedules determined by the number of graduates choosing to join in these ceremonies.

We have also received approval from health officials on our plans to

govern high school sports had canceled their season.

Though travel and overnight stays at Sierra Outdoor School are not yet possible, our sixth-grade Sonora science experiences are being recreated at schools. These day camp lessons are giving students elements of this treasured rite of passage trip.

What has taken some school districts months to achieve, your Clovis Unified team worked together to accomplish as early as last August, and for all students opting for in-person instruction by the end of February. These early decisions to bring students back on campus under extremely strict health and safety requirements reflected our belief that in-person learning is the optimal environment for our students. I am proud to report that we have done so safely and successfully.

Recent changes in the state's distancing guidelines in classroom from 6 feet to 3 feet have allowed our secondary schools (grades 7-12) to collapse schedule tracks A and B to return students four days a week. At the elementary level, we have been able to accommodate existing wait lists for students choosing to move from online to in-person instruction. At each of our schools we have sought to balance the academic and social-emotional value of avoiding changes to a student's teacher at this point of the school year, with finding opportunities possible in these guidance changes.

We are moving forward, and the end of this unusual and unforeseen journey is nearing. Though we may feel bruised and battered by the experiences of the past 13 months, we continue to operate best as a team. On behalf of our governing board and district administration, I want to thank every member of that team - our employees, parents, students and community - for engaging with us, for sharing your ideas and needs, for staying invested in the Clovis Unified School District and our shared goals of serving our kids and community.

Together, we've got this!

LESSONS

Inspirations by, for and from our CUSD students



Photo special to CUSD Today.

Pinedale Elementary second-grader Emily Lancaster watches as one of the butterflies that grew from a chrysalis in class is set free.

"Can words describe the fragrance of the very breath of spring?"

NELTJE BLANCHAN, SCIENTIST AND NATURE WRITER

uation ceremonies planned for the end of the school year. Listening to our students' and parents' requests to convene together to celebrate, we have received approval to hold our traditional events in our stadiums with household members present.

to provide every high school sport except gymnastics the opportunity to compete. Even our girls' volleyball teams were able to hold indoor senior night games along with some outdoor competitions, though the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) that

It's time to revisit screen time limits with your kids

Editor's note: Physician and filmmaker Delaney Ruston has created "Screenagers - Growing Up in the Digital Age," which has been shown in Clovis Unified high schools. Further discussion from Dr. Ruston is offered occasionally in CUSD Today. To sign up for her blog, "Tech Talk Tuesday," visit www.screenagersmovie.com.

By Delaney Ruston, M.D.
Screenagers moviemaker



Research has shown that having some defined screen limits in a home is associated with positive outcomes with academics as well as with emotional and physical health.

Okay, but that's way easier said than done. And yes, with the pandemic, everything has gotten topsy turvy with screen time limits.

Screen time needs to be divided into two main categories. There is screen time as a tool, i.e., school, work, learning, conversations, etc. Then there is screen time around consuming, i.e., watching shows, scrolling social media, playing games, etc.

I am referring today to screen limits around the consuming aspect of screen time. And yes, the same device does both things, so your child may well claim that limitations will limit their tool use. True, AND, getting some breaks from screens is healthy and learning to manage screen time is vital so that when there are breaks from screens, you were prepared not to need it as a tool.

Sorting out time off screens is an art, and it is all about working with our kids in doing so. Spring is a good time for "spring cleaning" and a "spring reset" ... a time to reevaluate and reset screen-time limits. I am not talking about some gigantic reset; just one or two small tweaks may be in order.

Creating limits is super challenging

... My initial foray into having clearly defined rules by

creating a contract was a major fail. [We gave our daughter an iPhone for her 13th birthday, followed by a four-page contract with expectations, goals and rules. My intention was she would work with us to refine the contract and feel at least some buy-in to the rules. But that is not what happened. Other than wanting to screenshot the long document to send to her friends, she was not interested in talking about it; instead she clammed up.]

One of the lessons I learned is that it would have been better to start with steps - doing prep work like spending time talking about all the positives of screen time and shared values rather than presenting a written document to start. From there, we could have discussed with her the elements that might go into a contract without even getting into the details.

Two ways that can help

First, I recommend the "Family Media Plan" on the American Academy of Pediatrics website. Here, you can see the components suggested for a contract. You don't necessarily have to make these rules binding with your child.

Another approach is to read over the key components I offer below to get the conversation going. It can be helpful to have this discussion over a couple of days so that you ease into it - first discussing ideas in general. Eventually, these conversations can build toward deciding the specifics.

It is key to have clearly defined rules. A study surveying 7,415 children ages nine to 15 and 5,685 of their parents about rules regarding screen time found, "Rules that were consistent and that were reported by both parents and children were associated with the lowest prevalence of children exceeding recommended screen-time limits."

Developing a plan

1. Define your family's general values

What are the core values we have - each of us individually and as a family? Consider points such as internet safety, privacy, time management, plagiarism, inappropriate posts, cyberbullying, and kindness. Parents, discuss why you care how much time

your kids spend on screens? Kids, what are the main reasons people want to have balance in their lives regarding screen time and other activities?

2. Talk about types of family rules

Translate your values into ideas for your plan. The main focus is to determine times when screens should be put away, such as during meals, in bedrooms, and in cars. Discuss:

■ **Bedtime:** Is there a time when devices go off? Can devices be in the bedroom? Where do they go in the house if not in the bedroom?

■ **Homework:** Can the child have a computer out while doing homework? Can they have a phone out? Can they respond to texts, messages, or Snapchats while doing homework?

■ **Gaming:** Are there rules about the amount of time spent on and/or type of gaming? How about where they can game?

■ **Social Media:** Are there rules about where time is spent? Specific apps they can or can't use? Are there times they can't use social media?

■ **Passwords:** Do parents have passwords to every device and every account? For how long? Until the child demonstrates a certain maturity? Or after a certain period of time?

■ **Meals:** Can they have their device out at meals?

Other specific times: Can tech be used when guests come over? How about out in the world - such as grocery shopping or pre, post, and during school?

3. Touch on incentives and consequences

Raising this topic with kids can be a good way to get their brains thinking about this area without choosing specifics right away.

4. Wiggle room is part of plan

It's important to think ahead about circumstances in which someone will need to use their device despite a rule prohibiting it. Given that the phone is a device with so many functions, there are often very legitimate reasons for these slippages. What might be some exceptions?

— ABOUT US —

CUSD Today, Clovis Unified's good news publication, is sent directly to the homes of all CUSD parents and staff, as well as district supporters. In an effort to unify the CUSD community, the newspaper highlights the achievements of Clovis Unified students and staff; profiles new and updated Governing Board policies; and shares general news and information happening within the district.

Circulation: 34,000.

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Story submissions: Please submit all ideas to the Site Coordinator at your school. Please contact your school to find out who your Site Coordinator is. Editorial deadlines are two weeks before the publication date. We do our best to include as many submissions in each issue as our editorial space will allow.

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Board hears COVID-19 update, fill administrator positions

By Kelly Avants
Chief Communications Officer

► BOARD BRIEFS

April 7

The Clovis Unified Governing Board heard details of work underway to return to a full-time, five-day-a-week on-campus schedule for the opening of the 2021-22 school year, prepare for end-of-year and graduation activities during the current school year, and opportunities provided by improving COVID conditions.

During Closed Session, the board approved two administrative appointments and later approved the associated employment contracts for two open positions.

■ Erin Waer, current principal at Boris Elementary, will move to the open position of Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction and Accountability, effective July 1

■ Richard Sarkisian, current principal at Clovis West High, will move to the open position of Administrator, Assessment and Accountability, effective July 1.

In other action, the board:

■ Held a hearing to allow for public comment from members of the community regarding a proposed revision to the Clovis

Online School charter to expand its offerings from grades K-12, and later approved the addition of grades K-6 to the current grade 7-12 Clovis Online School.

■ Revised the joint powers authority agreement for the Educational Technology Joint Powers Agreement to include all seven founding districts (Capistrano Unified School District, Clovis Unified School District, El Dorado County Office of Education, Fullerton School District, Irvine Unified School District, San Juan Unified School District, San Ramon Valley Unified School District).

■ Approved the appointment of Darden Architects to provide design services for a new elementary school.

■ Approved a pre-construction management services agreement with Bush Construction for the new elementary school project.

■ Adopted amended board policies 1312.3 – Uniform Complaint Procedures and 1312.4 – Williams Uniform Complaint Procedures to reflect recent updates to Education Code.

■ Adopted an amendment to the district's

existing COVID-19 Safety Plan to reflect recent updates to physical distancing guidance requirements for schools.

March 17

The celebration of Music in Our Schools month continued at the March 17 Governing Board meeting with virtual performances by the Clovis High and Clark Intermediate Combined String Orchestra, under the direction of Esmeralda Rocha Lozano, and by Buchanan High School Chamber Orchestra, under the direction of John Lack. Throughout March, vocal, instrumental, dance and drama performances by Clovis Unified students were shared around the district and community to promote the value of arts education.

In other action, the board:

■ Recognized this year's 2021-22 Budget Cover Art Contest finalists. Five student artists were selected as finalists from among 376 submissions in the 13th annual contest. Finalists recognized were Jaquelyn Aguirre, a seventh-grade student from Reyburn Intermediate; Macy Howland, a sixth-grade student from Copper Hills Elementary;

Lauren Malimban, a sixth-grade student from Copper Hills Elementary; Evelyn Hanson, a second-grade student from Valley Oak Elementary; and Naisha Ge, a sophomore from Clovis High. Ge was the overall winner and her artwork will appear on the cover of the 2021-22 Budget Book. Finalists receive a \$50 gift certificate and the winner a \$250 (winner) gift certificate sponsored by Xerox Corporation.

■ Approved all conference, fundraiser, student trip and voluntary community recreation programs requested.

■ Held a public hearing related to the proposed material revision to the charter of the Clovis Online School that would expand Clovis Unified's dependent online charter to serve grades K-6 in addition to its current 7-12 grade curriculum.

■ Approved the annual second interim financial report certifying that the district will meet all of its financial obligations in the current fiscal year.

The Governing Board meets next at 6:30 p.m. April 21 at 1680 David E. Cook Way, Clovis. The meeting will be preceded by a workshop on facilities planning. Complete minutes and agendas for all meetings are at www.cusd.com.

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Smooth sailing at Sierra Vista

Third graders at Sierra Vista Elementary built their own sailing vessels and tested them on a water-filled rain gutter, with wind powered by a fan. The STEM activity came from CUSD's Math Camp and was adapted to follow current COVID protocols. Students studied the history of sails and how they worked, and then were tasked to design and build their own small sail boat using items like foil, felt, wax paper, coffee stirrers and a lunch tray. The problem-solving lesson culminated with each student's boat being launched by a fan down a piece of rain gutter filled with water. A recent Positivity Project lesson on encouraging others then came to life as students in fifth and second grade classes at Sierra Vista made signs and cheered for the young captains as the boats were tested.



Kids Day Ambassador from Freedom

Freedom Elementary kindergartener Elise Hales served this year as Valley Children's Hospital Kids Day Ambassador. Kids Day is a Valley-wide fundraising event for the hospital to aid in the care and programs for its young patients. Elise was diagnosed with a heart condition a year ago, and her mom, Jennifer Hales who is a teacher at Freedom Elementary, credits the hospital with helping the family stay strong and keep positive. She said because of the kind, special ways VCH staff treated her daughter, Elise always looked forward to her appointments at the hospital. As ambassador, Elise was featured in local news articles and on the hospital's media.



Photo special to CUSD Today.

Wearing their aprons and chef hats are Mountain View students who participated in the schools MV Master Chef Jr. Competition.

Mountain View has tasty lessons

Recently Mountain View Elementary students were challenged to cook their favorite dish from their cultural background and make a short video showing how to make it. In the MV Master Chef Jr. Competition, participants had to demonstrate how to make their dish, provide a list of ingredients and make a sample.

The young culinary competitors' creations were judged by Mountain View's Kid Nation Multicultural Club on creativity and presentation. Among the samplings were Chorizo Burritos, Ukrainian Waffle Cakes, Swedish Pancakes, Italian Baked Eggs, and Vermicelli from Bangladesh. (Videos can be viewed on Mountain View's Instagram account.)

"The event afforded our students the opportunity to share a piece of their culture through food with our beautifully diverse community," said Principal Monica Everson.

Congratulations to the selected winners: Alina Doctolero, Evan Gonzalez, Luke Patla and Declan Cribari. Each participant received a Square Hearts Shop customized Master Chef Jr. apron and chef hat.

Lincoln meets the challenge

For the fourth year in a row, Lincoln Elementary has been recognized as a Kindness Certified School by the Kids for Peace organization that hosts the Great Kindness Challenge. For the challenge, Lincoln students made cards of encouragement for healthcare workers at Saint Agnes Medical Center, Kaiser Permanente and Valley Children's Hospital. "The cards



Photo special to CUSD Today.

Red Bank Elementary students enjoy a story walk on their school campus. Story boards were spaced about for kids to follow as they read the story.

Story Walk at Red Bank

Red Bank Elementary celebrated the Lunar Year in February with a story walk, which is a picture book mounted on signs and spaced apart outside for readers to meander through as they read the story. Both hybrid and online students were provided story walk day and times, and the walk featured stories that highlighted the diverse cultures in the Red Bank community. QR codes were added to signs with words that may not have been familiar to readers so they could access pronunciation and meanings.

Colorful paper lantern craft kits were also distributed. The kits had the materials and instructions to make a

paper lantern to help light the way for the new Lunar Year. The fun and educational event, organized by school librarian April Lencioni, is a tradition at the school and is usually held in the library. The outdoor version provided a way for the event to carry on and help families and students feel connected.

"Our story walk was an opportunity for all students and families to participate safely in an activity that promotes reading, learning, and diversity. Our Clovis Connect and Accelerate Education students, in particular, were extremely excited to be on campus and participate in a school activity," said Red Bank Principal Pa Vue.

were received with much appreciation," said Lincoln GIS Ann Castro.

Budding artists

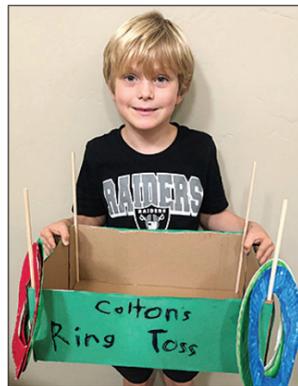
Winners of the annual Clovis Unified Budget Book Art Contest were announced. Clovis High sophomore Naisha Ge won the top prize, and Naisha's drawing will be featured on the cover of the district's 2021-22 budget book. Runners-up, whose work will be printed as section covers within the book, are: Jaquelyn Aguirre (Reyburn Intermediate, seventh grade); Evelyn Hanson (Valley Oak Elementary, second grade); Macy Howland (Copper Hills, sixth grade); and Lauren Malimban (Copper Hills, sixth grade).



More than a game at Cedarwood

Cedarwood kindergartners in Elizabeth Aniotzbehere's class put their imaginations to work and built their own arcade games out of cardboard after watching a documentary video on Zoom called, "Caine's Arcade." The video discussed what it's like to create something with your hands compared to on a computer.

"The students were so excited," said Aniotzbehere of the one-week project to use cardboard and creativity to make their game. "The presenter was required to tell us how the game worked, how much it cost to play, and what the prize would be if there was a winner. The students lis-



tening offered compliments about what they liked about the presenter's arcade game."

The games included "Colton's Ring Toss," "Spencer's Skee Ball" and "Thomas' Ball Toss."

Aniotzbehere said the lesson provided different learning skills including fine and large motor skills, thought process, cause and effect, critical thinking, listening skills and speaking skills.

Girls gift Garfield Elementary water bottle filling station, video

Some former Garfield Elementary students worked together to bring a water bottle refilling station to the school as well as created a video to teach students the importance of using a reusable water bottle. Grace Persons, Soffia Lucckesi, Natalie Ross and Scarlett Hules earned their Silver Award in the Girl Scouts with their educational project, "The Solution to Plastic Pollution." They created a five minute video about plastic pollution and its effect on the environment and developed a pledge for their fellow Cubs to take showing they'd use refillable water bottles and find ways to take care of the Earth. The girls also donated stickers to Garfield that would be available to students who take the pledge to place on their reusable bottle as a way to encourage others. The video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/B2SnKXue-yg>.



CN club cares

Clovis North Key Club members are doing their part to help others. This school year they have held a drive-thru parade for Bella Care Facility, made masks for local medical personnel and made large birthday posters for senior citizens. One was even written in Japanese for the recipient who reads that language.

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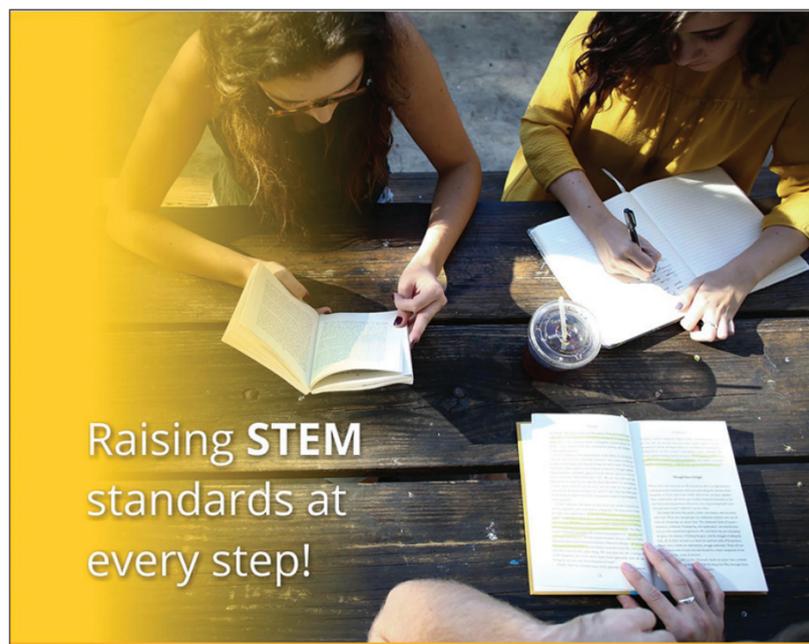
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Parade:

FROM PAGE ONE
planned surprise announcement last March, the pandemic shutdown forced everything to be postponed. "I've never kept a secret that long," Lesser said about his year-long wait.

Clovis North will have around 175 students – currently seventh through 10th graders – who will make the trip. Lesser was sure to give a big thanks to current juniors and seniors who helped make this possible. A band is family, he explained, and the current upper classmen's leadership, efforts and achievements created this opportunity and legacy for the younger band students.

"I'm so proud of our students' hard work and dedication to their craft," Lesser said.

Whatley said Macy's chose Clovis North in part because of the band's tenacity and many accomplishments. "They deliver an exciting sound and ambitious creative vision each fall season, consistently winning the state title and often placing higher than bands double their size," he said.

For Savannah and percussionist Cameron Black



Top: Students and parents react as they learn Clovis North's band has earned a spot in Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Below: CN Band Director David Lesser receives a \$10,000 check from Macy's from local store manager Raul Diaz.

who will both be seniors in 2022, they are glad they will have their band family to share the experience and to provide support.

Being a part of band, Cameron explained, is being a part of a group of friends that represent a lot of differences but who all come together and care for one another.

"I do band because of the family, because of the connection," he said.

"You can go to anyone in band and talk with them. You are around them almost every single day besides Sun-

days, and you just get to hang out with them and play music," Savannah said. "We are family."

Cameron will count on that family to help keep him calm when the group marches in New York and are watched by millions, both in person and on TV.

"I do sports and band, but I get more nervous for band – and that's a huge venue!" he said, still shaking his head in disbelief.

The 2022 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade will be Nov. 24, 2022, and be aired live on NBC.





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Foundation honors juniors for tenacity

By Sara Almaraz
Foundation for Clovis Schools

The Students of Promise Scholarship and Awards Gala – the Foundation for Clovis Schools’ annual springtime dinner celebration of 16 high school juniors who have demonstrated incredible grit and determination – was put on hold for 2021, but thanks to the generosity of several steadfast community supporters, a group of extraordinary students were still awarded \$2,000 scholarships for post-secondary education.

“Some of our foundation’s most rewarding work lies in honoring our Students of Promise scholarship recipients. We learn valuable lessons from the ways our awardees have faced seemingly insurmountable challenges head on,” said Mike Fennacy, Foundation for Clovis Schools chairperson. “While COVID restrictions have created barriers to hosting our annual gathering, we’re still committed to awarding scholarships to these very deserving students.”

Each honoree has a compelling story – loss of or abandonment by a parent, chronic medical conditions, unusually difficult upbringings or numerous other difficulties – but they all have one thing in common: they are thriving despite the odds. They are nomi-

nated by CUSD educators and later selected by the Foundation for their tenacity and courage.

In non-COVID times, recipients are honored at an Academy Awards-style celebration. This year, the students were surprised at their homes or via Zoom with the announcement; had portrait sessions with a professional photographer; and are the focus of a video showcasing some of the admiration and words of encouragement from school counselors and teachers who nominated them.

The 2021 Students of Promise will receive in-person accolades during their senior year, together with the 2022 Students of Promise.

The 2021 Students of Promise Premier sponsors are: Educational Employees Credit Union, Elite Landscape Construction, Fresno First Bank, Golden State Steel and Granville Homes. Contributing sponsors to this year’s scholarship program are: Bernards, California Health Sciences University, Hoffman Security, Jared Martin and Associates – Keller Williams Realty, Lingenfelter Land Communications, Mirelez Revitalize Dental Implant Center, Paul Halajian Architects, SmartCare Medical Group and Wm. B. Saleh Co.

To see a video preview of the 2021 recipients’ stories or to learn more about the Foundation: FoundationForClovisSchools.com.



Brielle Aguilar
Clovis East



Taryn Anderson
Clovis High



Dennis Cardenas
Clovis East



Dakota Dean
Clovis High



Donovan Dean
Clovis High



Logan Earheart
Clovis West



Crispine Garcia Espinosa
Buchanan



Robert Flath
Clovis East



Knox Folsom
Buchanan



Alexis Foshee
Clovis North



Victor Guerrero
Clovis West



Serenity Jones
Clovis East



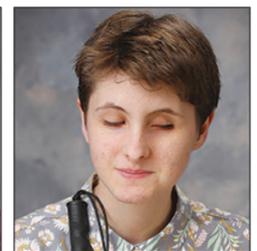
Arijana Laird
Clovis East



Micaela Villa Sanchez
Gateway



Montray Skinner
Clovis High



Heaven Vallejos
Clovis North

Riverview: Virtual reality is a dynamic learning tool for students

FROM PAGE ONE

Riverview Principal Marci Panoo is grateful for students to have this virtual learning experience. “Resources like this continue to shape concrete understanding for our student,” she said.

There are currently about

1,000 learning opportunities available on the headsets that were funded by a Foundation for Clovis Schools grant. Beyond the video content, viewers can travel to the Great Wall of China, explore the organ systems of the human body or head to the Inter-

national Space Station.

Looking at pictures in a text or trying to watch a video on a computer screen does not compare to the dynamic experience that virtual reality offers. These ‘field trips’ can either be a starting point for a lesson or can

function as a culminating activity wrapping up a lesson where key concepts and ideas were explored. In the latter example, students feel like experts and not novices.

Virtual reality headsets are currently being used at Stanford to help pediatric

patients with pain management. Nursing home residents use this tool to decrease the impact of loneliness and depression.

This learning tool not only helps students understand the world around them, but it also can prepare

them for fields of study in architecture, science, medicine, and patient care. And, students are excited to learn and use them.

“It’s fun because it was like you were traveling through the world,” said fourth-grader Stella McCarty.



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- Summer school registration dates will be emailed April 21.
- Check your community college email account for more information on April 21st or ask your College Outreach Specialist for more information.

Clovis Community College Outreach Specialists



David-Anthony Navarro

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