CJUSD Newsletter

Upcoming events/ reminders

Organizational/Regular Board Meeting December 14, 2022 6 PM - Board Room

NO SCHOOL
December 19, 2022 January 6, 2023
Winter Break
(School resumes
January 9, 2023)

Keeping Students Safe

Corcoran Joint Unified places a high priority on the mental health and well-being of students. Mental health encompasses wellness promotion, social, emotional, and behavioral health, and the ability to cope with life's challenges. According to the National Association of School Psychologists, research shows that students who receive mental and behavioral health support and social-emotional support achieve better academic results. School climate, classroom behavior, student engagement in learning, and students' sense of connectedness and well-being improve. If left unsupported, mental health problems are linked to academic and behavior problems,

dropping out, and delinquency. Mental and behavioral health problems not only affect students' short-term classroom engagement but also interfere with the long-term development of positive relationships and work-related skills.

As our student population's mental and behavioral health needs grow, CJUSD has also been developing the staff and district practices to support these needs. The District now employs three School Psychologists, a Mental Health Counselor, a School Counselor at every school site, two Mental Health Clinicians, and a Director of Special Services who coordinates the District's mental, behavioral, and health services.

Schools are an ideal place to provide mental and behavioral health services to children. Student needs can vary with their mental health affected by stress, anxiety, bullying, family problems, depression, learning disabilities, substance abuse, and self-injurious behaviors. The mental and behavioral health services provided by CJUSD support the District's goals to provide students with a safe learning environment and to assist with student learning.

District personnel is doing an incredible job of identifying and helping the varied needs of our students. In this newsletter and the next one, we will introduce you to the staff members whose expertise is in supporting these critical areas of need. You will also learn more about their functions and roles in supporting our students' mental and behavioral health.



CJUSD Counselors

Corcoran Joint Unified School District currently employs five full-time School Counselors. School Counselors are trained to help students succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally. They work directly with students to address academic and social-emotional needs as addressed by parents, school personnel, and other key stakeholders. They also collaborate with educators, parents, and other professionals to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments that strengthen connections between home, school, and the community for all students.

Our school counselors' primary role is to support the social and emotional needs of students from TK to 12th grade in the school setting. The school counselor assists teachers by providing and modeling strategies for addressing student learning barriers. They also offer in-class support to assist students with learning to use coping skills to help them respond appropriately to negative feelings such as anger, frustration, hurt feelings, and fear.

Our counselors provide social, friendship, and restorative circles to help students make and build connections with their peers and staff. These connections are critical to a student feeling as though they belong and matter to their peer groups and school staff. Our counselors are an integral part of our school community and are essential in supporting our students' overall growth and development.

Mental Health Services Department

Helen Copeland, Director of Special Services

What is your work history, including your current position with CJUSD?

I was a Special Education teacher in the high school setting for 15 years. I served as a middle school Assistant Principal for three years at Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District. I briefly served as a Curriculum Consultant with KCOE before becoming a principal at Shelly Baird, where I served for eight years. The director position brings a lot of new learning opportunities for me. I am fortunate to have a strong background in Special Education to lean on and even luckier to have a fantastic team here at CJUSD to assist me with learning the "ropes" of this exciting new adventure.

What is most rewarding to you when working with students and/or in your position?

The most rewarding part of working with students is when they realize that you genuinely believe in them so much that they, in turn, begin to believe in themselves as well.

What special project(s) are you working on with the students or staff in your position?

Our Special Services team is working on creating a uniform process for all of our schools to follow when assisting students in Tier 2 and 3 academic and behavior intervention. This streamlined approach will help each site serve students more comprehensively.

Who has been the biggest inspiration in your life?

My mom is the biggest inspiration in my life. Her unwavering faith in God and humanity has always been a guidepost in my life. To this day, my mom will send me inspirational words, notes of encouragement, and positive affirmations in a voicemail, text message, or a note on my kitchen table. She is the kindest human being I have ever met, and I hope to emulate some of that in my daily interactions.

Tell us a little about yourself:

I enjoy gardening and reading. I read many motivational and inspirational books to keep my soul and spirit healthy. I share my home and life with my amazing husband, my two sons, 2 fur babies, Boomer and Ouisie, and a perpetually disappointed cat named Becky. We have four grand-babies (who live much too far away.) I believe that my profession is a calling and not simply a career. I am passionate about doing the right thing daily for the kids we serve.

What is a good mental health message you would like to give to students, staff, and or parents?

Start your day off with a positive thought and end your day by acknowledging one good thing about the day. Those two bookends can contain amazing stories.



Maria Sanchez, District Mental Health Counselor



What is your work history, including your current position with CJUSD?

After graduating from CSU Fresno in 2001, the Kings County Office of Education hired me as a Primary Prevention Counselor traveling to schools in Hanford, Corcoran, and Avenal, implementing the Second Step program in the classroom setting. In 2004, I was hired at Corcoran High School as the Migrant Counselor. I transitioned to Learning Director and then to Assistant Principal. After eight years at CHS, I transferred to the District Office as the District Mental Health Counselor and Nurse Coordinator. I work primarily with students that receive Special Education Services individually and in the classroom setting, working on social skills and social-emotional needs. I have recently moved from Nurse Coordinator to overseeing counseling services for the district.

What is most rewarding to you when working with students and/or in your position?

It is most rewarding when I see a student using the skills they have learned in class or on the playground. The goal is that they learn the skills so they won't need me anymore. Building positive relationships with staff, students and parents.

What special project(s) are you working on with the students or staff in your position?

This is the second year we have had a full counseling staff in the K-8 setting. We also have two Mental Health Clinicians that cover K-12. The counseling staff and Mental Health Clinicians have implemented mindfulness at the school sites and supported PBIS. We are also planning stages on implementing a district-wide social skills curriculum. Putting these proactive strategies into place will help our students develop the social skills they need to help them be more successful.

Who has been the biggest inspiration in your life?

There are two. First, my parents. They have always encouraged me to get an education. They are my biggest supporters. Second, the teachers that always encouraged me when I didn't always believe in myself. They are the reason I am in education.

Tell us a little about yourself:

I enjoy traveling and going to museums. I try to explore new places when I travel.

What is a good mental health message you would like to give to students, staff, and or parents?

Take care of yourself first, then help others.

Tifani Carlsen, Bret Harte Counselor



What is your work history, including your current position with CJUSD?

This is my 8th year as an elementary school counselor and my second year in CJUSD at Bret Harte Elementary. Before coming to CJUSD, I worked up in the East Bay Area of Antioch, where I was an elementary school counselor for six years at a TK-5th grade school. I always knew that I wanted to go into the education field and work with students, but before deciding to go to school to get my M.S. and PPS credentials, I provided therapeutic behavioral services to foster children in Fresno County.

What is most rewarding when working with students and/or in your position?

The most rewarding part of working with students is getting the opportunity to build meaningful connections with every single student that I meet. I am very proud of and accomplished at my last school site because I knew the name of every student (there were 459 students). I am currently learning every student's name at Bret Harte, and it has been exciting and fun getting to know all of

my students and staff. I also feel that spending time working with students and teaching them essential social-emotional learning skills such as; coping skills, self-management, and emotional autonomy is so rewarding because these are the tools they will need and use as they journey through school and through life.

What special project(s) are you working on with the students or staff in your position?

I am currently finishing up mindful school courses so that next school year, I can assist and provide mindfulness lessons to classes at Bret Harte alongside our district's outstanding mental health clinician, Mindy. This school year, I have provided small group counseling to students who need extra support with social skills, emotional regulation, and self-management.

Who has been the biggest inspiration in your life?

My immediate and extended family would have to be my biggest inspiration. I feel like I have learned some wise, important, or life-changing lessons from each of my family members, that have touched my life in one way or another and led me to be the person and school counselor I am today.

Tell us a little about yourself:

I currently live in Fresno, but I was born and raised in Tulare, where all my family now reside. I live with my husband, my 20-month-old daughter, our three dogs, and a pet turtle, and we are adding a new family member (a baby boy) in early March 2023. I am the biggest Golden State Warriors Basketball fan. I absolutely love coffee! One of my favorite things is trying new coffee shops up and down California, especially when my family travels.

What is a good mental health message you would like to give students, staff, and/or parents?

Self-care is the most important thing that you can do for yourself today and every day. Make sure to be kind to yourself and give yourself grace, especially in tough moments.

Melissa Juarez, John C. Fremont Counselor

What is your work history, including your current position with CJUSD?

I am a school counselor at Fremont Elementary. This is my 8th year working for CJUSD. For the first 7.5 years of my career, I worked as a school counselor at all elementary sites and Kings Lake. Before working with CJUSD, I worked for the Tulare County Office of Education. Throughout my years at TCOE, I worked in many classrooms and home services with students..

What is most rewarding when working with students and/or in your position?

Working with students at CJUSD has been most rewarding. I often feel that I am planting seeds, I may not always see the flower bloom my current year, but I can continue to support and be a resource to students. I always hope to make a difference in a student's life by supporting and being a resource to the student and their family. I recognize I will not always see immediate growth, but I will always strive towards building a rapport and creating a positive school climate to promote student success. I work closely with admin,



clinicians, teachers, school staff, and parents, all with the students at the heart of who we serve. We have a great team here at CJUSD. Our special services team has grown over the last few years. I am both grateful to be a part of it and grateful that we have a counselor at every site to meet the needs of our students.

What special project(s) are you working on with the students or staff in your position?

This is my second-semester teaching mindfulness to students. My focus is working with students in the area of social and emotional to promote academic success. I'm working with students individually, in small groups, and with the whole class. I am facilitating mindfulness lessons for the entire class at each elementary site. I have seen first-hand the benefits of teaching mindfulness to students. Students love it and look forward to weekly lessons. This year, I am also learning and adding restorative practices to my work with students this semester.

Who has been the biggest inspiration in your life?

My family! My dad, mom, and sister all continue to inspire me and provide me with unconditional love. Through the years of working with students, many have inspired me to continue growing in my profession.

Tell us a little about yourself:

I was born and raised in Visalia and attended Fresno State. I live in Visalia with my boyfriend, daughter, and our dog. I am a mother to a beautiful almost 2-year-old who means the world to me. I value family time and watching our daughter grow and learn from the environment. I have also grown to be a plant lady and am working on keeping my plants healthy. I enjoy traveling and experiences with people that I love, as well as learning about other cultures.

What is a good mental health message you would like to give students, staff, and/or parents?

The Generosity lesson I facilitated for the Mindfulness class this semester stood out. I share with students that generosity doesn't have to be gifts or big things. We can be generous in very small ways. Acts of generosity, such as smiling at one another, sharing kind words, or showing appreciation while expecting nothing in return, contribute to being good for our health and community.

Alfredo Alcantar Jr., Mark Twain Counselor

What is your work history, including your current position with CJUSD?

I began my state service with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation in Corcoran, California, as an Office Technician for the Dental Department. I served as a Medical Department Liaison to the American Correctional Association Compliance Coordinator. Also, I served as the Administrative Office Technician to the Health Program Manager III/Quality Management Services Unit. While working for CDCR, I completed my practicum and internship with CJUSD, where I was fortunate enough to become a School Counselor for Mark Twain Elementary.

What is most rewarding when working with students and/or in your position?

The most rewarding part about being a School Counselor is the opportunity to positively impact a student's life in or out of the classroom. We can work individually or as a team to foster the growth of students toward academic or social-emotional success.



What special project(s) are you working on with the students or staff in your position?

Currently, we are working on providing teachers with Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, such as interventions, tools, and resources to assist teachers with students in the classrooms. Also, I am hopeful to begin working with students on a project that will let everyone know they are appreciated for National Thank You month in January.

Who has been the biggest inspiration in your life?

My mother raised four great children with a "CAN DO" attitude. She faces each day with a growth mindset. Even when confronted with limitations, obstacles, or difficult choices, she strives to do her best and continue forward. She might not know it, but I am eternally grateful for the gifts she passed on to me.

Tell us a little about yourself:

I grew up in Salinas, California, until my wife and I moved our little family to the valley. We have been together for 13 years. I have an amazing son and daughter. I enjoy spending time with family on trips, watching movies, playing games, and building LEGO.

What is a good mental health message you would like to give students, staff, and/or parents?

Take a mindful moment for yourself throughout each day. Inhale through your nose, exhale through your mouth and listen to what your body is telling you. It is alright to take a break, go on a walk, listen to your favorite song, eat something delicious, and experience all the wonders life has to offer.

Ashley Ann Williams-Spraggins, John Muir Counselor

What is your work history, including your current position with CJUSD?

I began working for CJUSD in 2007 as a substitute teacher and became a counselor at John Muir in 2013.

What is most rewarding when working with students and/or in your position?

The most rewarding part of my job is seeing an improvement in the students I work with and watching them transform in the three years they are here. I am proud to give back to the community I grew up and enjoy seeing students later in life and all they have accomplished.

What special project(s) are you working on with the students or staff in your position?

Something special to me is increasing regular access to mental health services in our community and providing information to parents so they know the different supports their students and families have available to them and forming partnerships and reaching out to outside providers to bring in as many resources to



our area as possible for our students and schools to utilize to improve the overall climate of our schools and community.

Who has been the biggest inspiration in your life?

My children would be the greatest inspiration in my life. They are our future and help remind me every day how important the work we do in education is to our society. They inspire me always to try my best and help me empathize with the needs of our students and families.

Tell us a little about yourself:

I grew up in Corcoran and am a third-generation Corcoran High School graduate. I attended Fresno Pacific University and have a bachelor's in Liberal Arts focusing on Conflict and Peacemaking and a Masters's degree in school counseling. I am married and have two kids and a few animals. We are active in FFA and enjoy anything outdoors. I love spending time with my family and relaxing when I have a chance.

What is a good mental health message you would like to give students, staff, and/or parents?

Every day is a new day to start fresh. Clear your mind and focus on what you can accomplish and control.



Gracie Flores, John Muir and Kings Lake Education Counselor



What is your work history, including your current position with CJUSD?

I have been in the education setting for the past six years. My journey began at CSU Fresno in the Advising and Career Development Center and later in Lindsay Unified, where I served as a Learning Facilitator and Advisor. Today, I have the pleasure of serving the Corcoran community as a school counselor at John Muir Middle School and Kings Lake Education Center.

What is most rewarding when working with students and/or in your position?

The most rewarding part of my position is the positive relationships I develop with students and families.

What special project(s) are you working on with the students or staff in your position?

I am currently working on creating groups at John Muir, field trips to colleges, senior projects, restorative practice circles within the classroom, and PBIS.

Who has been the biggest inspiration in your life?

The biggest inspiration in my life has been my mother. The hardships that she endured taught me resilience.

Tell us a little about yourself:

When I am not at work, you can find me running marathons, at the beach, and at Disneyland. I enjoy camping, hiking, dancing, and playing soccer.

What is a good mental health message you would like to give students, staff, and/or parents?

A mental health message for all is to practice self-care and give yourself grace. Find something you enjoy and dedicate time during the day to practice it. Most importantly, maintain a growth mindset and always be in a constant state of improvement.



- The TLC audio issues have been resolved and are back up and in place!
- Classroom technology is ready for new portables at the High School and Bret Harte.
- Winter Maintenance We will have a chance to walk rooms and perform updates if needed.

Important news or announcements for staff or parents:

Just a reminder to keep your devices updated!

Mark Twain Elementary

Parent conferences were held and the school had a great turnout. Teachers were eager to share with the parents the growth made by each student. The school will have its 4th and 5th-grade spelling bee Monday, December 12th, for 4th grade and Thursday, December 15th, for 5th grade. Students are also preparing for WinterFest on Friday, December 16th, to showcase their excellent skills and abilities. Mark Twain is patiently awaiting the arrival of our new digital marquee.

Everyone here at Mark Twain would like to wish everyone a safe and restful holiday break!

Cororan High School

We are coming to the end of another semester. This week was the review for final exams. Next week the school will be on the finals schedule. School starts at 8:00 a.m. all next week, including our usual late start Wednesday. Please encourage students to study and check with teachers on any work due. The grade that posts this month is permanent.



Corcoran High School Finals begin Monday, December 12, 2022

Finals Schedule-December 2022

Monday, Dec. 12t	r
------------------	---

Period	Start Time	Finish Time	Minutes
1	8:00	9:30	90
Break	9:30	9:38	8 min.
Passing	9:38	9:43	5
2	9:43	10:28	45
Passing	10:28	10:33	5
3	10:33	11:18	45
Passing	11:18	11:23	5
5	11:23	12:08	45
Lunch	12:08	12:48	40 min
Passing	12:48	12:53	5
6	12:53	1:38	45
Passing	1:38	1:43	5
7	1:43	2:28	45
Passing	2:28	2:33	5
8	2:33	3:15	42
		Total	287

Tuesday, Dec. 13th

Period	Start Time	Finish Time	Minutes
2	8:00	9:30	90
Break	9:30	9:38	8 min.
Passing	9:38	9:43	5
3	9:43	11:13	90
Lunch	11:13	11:53	40 min.
Passing	11:53	11:58	5
5	11:58	12:48	50
Passing	12:48	12:53	5
6	12:53	1:42	49

Total

294

Wednesday, Dec. 14th

Period	Start Time	Minutes	
5	8:00	9:30	90
Break	9:30	9:38	8 min.
Passing	9:38	9:43	5
6	9:43	11:13	90
Lunch	11:13	11:53	40 min.
Passing	11:53	11:58	5
7	11:58	12:48	50
Passing	12:48	12:53	5
8	12:53	1:42	49

Total 294

Thursday, Dec. 15th

Period	Start Time	Finish Time	Minutes
7	8:00	9:30	90
Break	9:30	9:38	8 min.
Passing	9:38	9:43	5
8	9:43	11:13	90
Lunch	11:13	11:53	40 min.
Passing	11:53	11:58	5
1	11:58	12:48	50
Passing	12:48	12:53	5
2	12:53	1:42	49
		Total	294

Friday, Dec. 16th

	i ilday, Dec. Total			
Period	Start Time	Finish Time	Minutes	
1	8:00 AM	8:35 AM	0:35	
PASSING	8:35 AM	8:40 AM	0:05	
2	8:40 AM	9:13 AM	0:33	
BREAK	9:13 AM	9:21 AM		
PASSING	9:21 AM	9:26 AM	0:05	
3	9:26 AM	9:59 AM	0:33	
PASSING	9:59 AM	10:04 AM	0:05	
5	10:04 AM	10:37 AM	0:33	
PASSING	10:37 AM	10:42 AM	0:05	
6	10:42 AM	11:16 AM	0:34	
PASSING	11:16 AM	11:21 AM	0:05	
7	11:21 AM	11:54 AM	0:33	
PASSING	11:54 AM	11:59 AM	0:05	
8	11:59 AM	12:32 PM	0:33	
PASSING	12:32 PM	12:37 PM		
		Total	4:24	

Minimum Day for students & teachers

**Staff dismissed when campus is clear (Friday only)

**No Intervention during finals week

CORCORAN HIGH SCHOOL & JOHN MUIR MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENT ENGAGEMENT NIGHT

READY FOR COLLEGE?

January 26, 2022

Technology Learning Center

(S) 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Topics

- *Roles of Pathways
- *State Tests & College Tests
- *'a-g' Requirements

 *Dual Enrollment with COS and WHCL
- *High School Diploma

Learn and receive information to help your child navigate their high school academic plan and create long term educational goals

- Refreshments & Snacks Available
- Child Care Available
- Prizes to be Raffled Off

FOR MORE INFORMATION: (559) 992-8884



Bret Harte Winter Program
Friday, December 16th, 2022
TK/K 8:30 a.m.
First Grade 10:00 a.m.
CHS Auditorium

John C. Fremont Winter Program
Thursday, December 15, 2022
2nd grade 8:30 a.m.
3rd Grade 9:30 a.m.
Cafeteria

Mark Twain Winter Fest Friday, December 16, 2022 8:30 a.m. Blacktop

A special message from the Superintendent

As we head into the Winter Break, I hope you enjoy this time with your families. I want to thank our students, employees, parents, and guardians for how hard you have worked this year! Enjoy your break, rest, and rejuvenate, and we will see you next year!

Wishing you and your families Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year!

Eduardo Ochoa
CJUSD Superintendent