



Spotlight: Lakeside Elementary – Improving Together Every Day

Lakeside Elementary School in Hanford, CA, is one of our CCSPP Cohort 4 Community Schools grantees. Under the leadership of Superintendent/Principal Cindi Marshall, the school has embraced its motto, **“Improving Together Every Day”**, by creating learning spaces that build connection, purpose, and pride among students and staff.

Growing Responsibility in the Garden

Students in Lakeside’s after-school program have launched a hands-on garden project where they plan, plant, and care for vegetables throughout the season. The project gives students a sense of responsibility and teamwork while exploring what it takes to sustain a living organism. It’s a simple idea with deep lessons: patience, care, and commitment.



A Mural that Tells Their Story

Lakeside also brought its community together for the Lakeside Leopards Community Mural Event. Partnering with Urbanist Collective, students, families, and staff painted a vibrant mural that represents the many cultures within the Lakeside community. The mural now stands as a daily reminder of what’s possible when creativity and collaboration come together — a celebration of shared identity and belonging.



The Leopard’s Den: A Space to Recharge

Community School strategies are also taking shape in the Leopard’s Den; a welcoming space where students can connect with caring adults, take a break when they need it, or enjoy some earned “fun time.” Whether making art, starting a new project, or challenging a friend to a Nintendo Switch game, students use the Den to recharge and reset. It’s become a favorite spot on campus; a place where relationships grow and students feel supported.

Leadership in Action

To help bring the Community Schools strategies to life, Lakeside welcomed Chassidy Pereira, Community and Student Services Coordinator. Chassidy is leading the development of a Community Schools Steering Committee that brings together students, families, and staff to guide implementation and ensure every voice is heard. Her work is helping create the collaborative structures needed for lasting, meaningful change.

Looking Ahead

Lakeside Elementary is bringing the Community Schools vision to life where learning, wellness, and community come together with purpose. It’s clear something special is growing here, rooted in connection and shared commitment.



REIMAGINING RECESS IN MADERA UNIFIED

At Madera Unified, one of the most powerful shifts is happening where students need it most; on the playground. In 2022–2023, the district logged more than 1,300 office referrals tied to recess behavior. Families, educators, and administrators all shared the same concern: unstructured recess was leading to conflict, leaving disputes unresolved, and disrupting learning well into the classroom.



In response, the district used California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP) funding to support a new approach to recess. Sean Kelly was hired and has developed the Positive Recess Engagement Program (PREP). Drawing from research, PBIS best practices, and years of coaching experience, Kelly refined PREP as a sustainable model—one that would improve recess in the moment and endure long after grant funding ends. PREP has grown under the support of Carsten Christensen, CCSPP Coordinator, and Karen DeOrion, Director of Culture and Climate, becoming a cornerstone of the district's culture work.

Each break is now filled with greetings, high-fives, and encouragement woven into both structured games and free play. PREP zones host core games such as Four Square, Blockerball, Castleball, and Switch, while open areas remain available for open-ended play such as soccer and basketball. The program's guiding formula is straightforward: **Fun + Fairness = Engagement.**



Sportsmanship is built in as well. Students and staff use the phrase “Good job, nice try!” to acknowledge effort and keep games positive, fair, and moving forward. Instead of arguments over who is “out,” students also learn quick and fair conflict resolution strategies through tools like Ro-Sham-Bo. The result is a safe, positive, and engaging environment that supports learning across the school day.

The impact is clear. In just one year, playground-related office referrals dropped by 33%. Adults feel more connected, students feel supported, and schools are experiencing a cultural shift rooted in relationships and belonging. PREP demonstrates what is possible when a teacher-developed solution is supported through community investment. It reflects the CCSPP pillars of Integrated Student Supports and Positive School Climate, while also embodying a core CCSPP goal: building sustainable practices. PREP shows how a locally grown idea, refined through best practices and designed for long-term success, can transform school culture and serve as a model for others to follow.

Contact Us: cvrtac@fcoe.org

Fresno

- [Gina Amaro-McNamara](#), Director
- David Castro
- Dr. Angelica Reynosa
- Marisa Gamboa
- Charles Clancy

Kern

- [Anita Cruz](#), Senior Director
- Angie Ranches
- Dr. Octavio Patiño
- Ericka Pineda

Stanislaus

- Eric Ranes
- Warren Scott

Keep Your Team Connected!

CCSPP grantees and community partners, help us keep everyone informed. If your team has new members, changes in staff, or updated emails, please share your current contact list so no one misses our weekly updates.

✉ **Email updates to cvrtac@fcoe.org**

