

PASO PROUD

An Inside Look at Paso Schools • Issue 7 • Spring 2026



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Superintendent's Message

Dear Paso Schools Families and Community,

As we head into the final stretch of the school year, there is a great deal to celebrate across Paso Schools.

This issue of *Paso Proud* highlights students discovering their talents, supporting one another, stepping into leadership roles, and achieving impressive accomplishments both inside and outside the classroom. You'll read about Bearcats earning state honors through SkillsUSA competitions, elementary students being recognized for kindness and character, and campuses finding thoughtful ways to celebrate inclusion and belonging during Autism Awareness and Acceptance Month.

You'll also see the impact that caring adults continue to have on our schools and students every day. From volunteers like this year's Key to the District recipient, Vickie Werling, to our outstanding Employees of the Year, so many members of this community give generously of their time, energy and heart to support students across Paso Robles.

As summer approaches, I hope our students and families take pride in everything they have accomplished this year and take time to rest, recharge and enjoy time with family and friends. Whether students are continuing their learning through summer programs, participating in childcare and enrichment opportunities, or simply enjoying a well-earned break, we are grateful to continue serving and supporting our community throughout the summer months.

Thank you for your continued partnership, encouragement and support throughout the school year. It is a privilege to serve the students, families and staff of Paso Robles Joint Unified School District, and we look forward to finishing the year strong together.

With appreciation,
Jennifer Loftus
Superintendent, Paso Robles Joint Unified School District

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2026 KEY TO THE DISTRICT

VICKIE WERLING HONORED FOR YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE TO PRJUSD STUDENTS, FAMILIES AND ATHLETICS

Paso Schools honored longtime volunteer and community leader **Vickie Werling** with the District's highest volunteer recognition, the "Key to the District" award, during the Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner on May 13, 2026.

Established during the 2024-25 school year, the award recognizes individuals whose extraordinary service has made a lasting impact on students, schools and the broader Paso Robles community.

This year's recognition celebrated Werling's years of dedication to Paso Robles Joint Unified School District students, families and athletics programs through her leadership with Bearcat Boosters, her work as a volleyball coach and her involvement in numerous campus improvement efforts.

During the presentation, PRHS Principal, **Michael Susank** praised Werling's steady leadership and behind-the-scenes commitment to students and athletics programs. "In all that time, I have never encountered a leader more committed, professional, organized, or selfless than Vickie Werling," Susank said.

Over the years, Werling has helped support and lead projects including the PRHS baseball batting cages, the construction of the school's beach volleyball courts, and the inaugural Future Bearcat Festival — a TK-8 event designed to bring together students and families from across the district.

Susank also recognized her role in revitalizing the Bearcat Booster snack bar operation, helping transform it into a welcoming hub for families and community members during athletic events.

Werling's recognition also serves as a reminder of the vital role volunteers play throughout Paso Schools every day. From organizations like Bearcat Boosters, PTOs and PTAs, and Dads' Clubs, to classroom read-alouds, Career Day presentations, coaching, and mentorship opportunities through community partners like [Opening Doors For Youth](#)—volunteers strengthen the connection between schools and the Paso Robles community, cultivating a stronger sense of belonging and pride for students and community members alike.

Paso Schools extends its deepest appreciation to 2026 Key to the District recipient Vickie Werling, and to the many volunteers who generously share their time, energy and expertise in support of our students and schools each and every day.



THE POOL: DECADES IN THE MAKING

STUDENT FILMMAKER **KEELY SMITH** TELLS THE STORY BEHIND THE NEW PRHS AQUATICS CENTER.

For generations of Bearcats, an on-campus pool was something people hoped for, planned for and fought to make possible.

With the support of voters through Measure M, that vision finally became reality with the opening of the Paso Robles High School Aquatics Center this spring.

PRHS filmmaker **Keely Smith's** documentary, *The Pool*, honors the many people whose persistence, leadership and community support helped carry the project across the finish line.

Click the video to watch the documentary.



Congratulations

COLLEGE-BOUND ATHLETES

14 college-bound Bearcats were recognized at the 2026 College Athlete Signing Ceremony on May 19, honoring students who have committed to continuing their academic and athletic careers at the collegiate level.

"We are incredibly proud of the way they have represented Paso Robles High School and Bearcat Athletics. This achievement reflects their hard work, the guidance of their coaches and teachers, and the unwavering support of their families and community."

"For these student-athletes, signing to compete at the collegiate level represents years of dedication, sacrifice, and commitment both academically and athletically," said Paso Robles High School Principal and Athletic Director **Mike Susank**.

Congratulations to our stellar scholar-athletes!

CHEER

ANAIH PRADO — WILLIAM JESSUP UNIVERSITY

CROSS COUNTRY

BRIAN ARNDT — COLORADO SCHOOL OF MINES

FOOTBALL

TRE CLARK — BETHEL COLLEGE

ETHAN RICKERD — AZUSA PACIFIC UNIVERSITY

SOCCER

BRISEIDA GUARDADO — CUESTA COLLEGE

KIMBERLY HERNANDEZ — CUESTA COLLEGE

STUNT

TEAGAN BORLA — WILLIAM JESSUP UNIVERSITY

TAYLOR GIGNOUX — UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC

TENNIS

JOHN DAWSON BLANEY — WHITTIER COLLEGE

TRACK AND FIELD

BRIAN ARNDT — COLORADO SCHOOL OF MINES

AMELIA LOBO — GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

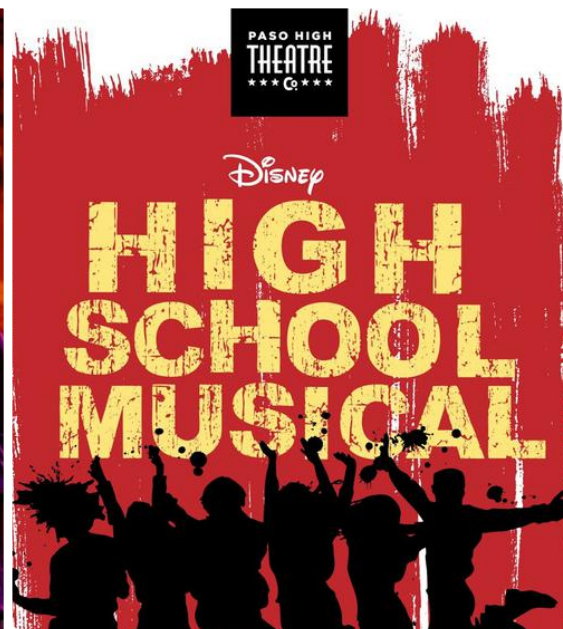
JUSTIN WILSHUSEN — CUESTA COLLEGE

VOLLEYBALL

COLIN DAUGHERTY — WILLIAM JESSUP UNIVERSITY

JOSEPH DE LIEMA — FULLERTON COLLEGE

SAWYER STONG — EMMANUEL COLLEGE (MA)



PRHS SPRING MUSICAL

IMAGES BY PRHS CRIMSON PHOTOGRAPHER JESUS URSULO





Paso High Theatre Company delighted audiences with their April production of Disney's *High School Musical*.



Follow [@pasohightheatreco](https://www.instagram.com/pasohightheatreco) on Instagram to learn about upcoming performances and their 2026-27 season.



BUILDING BELONGING

PRJUSD CAMPUSES CELEBRATE AUTISM AWARENESS AND ACCEPTANCE MONTH

Emily Pale, Geoffrey Gross, Shannon Fontes, Kathy Ganberutti, Precious Norwood, Yanelly Ramirez, Rae Borges, Letisha Anducho. Photo credit: Monica Pafumi

Schools across Paso Robles Joint Unified School District recognized Autism Awareness and Acceptance Month in April through classroom lessons, campus activities and community-building efforts focused on kindness, inclusion and celebrating neurodiversity.

At **Pat Butler Elementary School**, students created colorful “Individually Unique” displays highlighting what makes each person special, while daily announcements shared facts about neurodiversity and notable figures with autism. **Virginia Peterson Elementary School** hosted a schoolwide “Wear Blue” day promoting kindness and understanding, and **Winifred Pifer Elementary School** staff created a colorful campus

display encouraging students to “Celebrate minds of all kinds,” reinforcing the message that every student brings unique strengths and perspectives to the school community.

Glen Speck Elementary School brought families together for a Family Paint Night centered around the children’s book “Different Is a Great Thing to Be!” Families listened to the story in both English and Spanish before creating Kindness Butterfly paintings together. In classrooms, teachers also led lessons focused on acceptance and inclusion.

For **Lewis Flamson Junior High School** Principal **Dr. Brandon Duncan**, one of the most meaningful examples of inclusion this month happened outside of school.

Dr. Duncan shared the story of **Hector Chavez Cabrera**, a Lewis Flamson student known for his friendly and kind nature, who recently made a lasting impression on a local family while visiting a community park. While other students headed off to play soccer, Hector noticed a young boy with special needs and chose to include him—talking with him, playing soccer and helping him feel welcomed and valued. (Contd.)



Hector Chavez Cabrera



(Contd.) The boy's grandmother later reached out to the school to share how meaningful the interaction had been for both of them.

"Hector's actions exemplify kindness and inclusion, and show what it means to lead by example," Dr. Duncan said.

Throughout the month, schools across PRJUSD used both large and small moments to help students better understand one another and recognize the importance of compassion, empathy and inclusion.

By combining classroom conversations, schoolwide participation, family engagement and everyday acts of kindness, campuses worked to reinforce the message that every student deserves to feel seen, respected and valued for exactly who they are.



Standing: Brittany Oravets, Holly Moore, Jake Marca, Lyndy Duncan, Allison Root, Makayla Michaels, Candice Robertson, Claudia Mejia, Rosanna Morales, Ric Rodriguez
Sitting: Geneva Perez, Jen Moore, Caitlyn Montano, Trinity Lopez, Naya Rosado, Michelle Ruiz. Photo Credit: Jennifer Moore



LITTLE BEARCATS, BIG LEADERSHIP

RECOGNIZING BEARCAT PRIDE FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT

A new initiative led by **Paso Robles High School's** Leadership class is helping strengthen connections between some of the district's oldest and youngest students – one Bearcat visit at a time.

This spring, under the guidance of Leadership teacher **Jennifer Martinez**, PRHS Leadership students launched a program that brings the Bearcat mascot to elementary campuses to recognize young students who demonstrate positive character and leadership values in their daily lives.

The program began with kindergarten and first-grade classrooms, where teachers selected students who stood out for qualities such as kindness,

responsibility, perseverance and leadership. PRHS Leadership students created personalized certificates and short write-ups for each student before surprising them with a campus visit from the Bearcat and a PRHS T-shirt.

The first visits took place at **Winifred Pifer** and **Virginia Peterson** elementary schools, where students were greeted with high-fives, cheers and a little extra excitement from seeing the high school mascot walk onto campus just for them.

What makes the program especially meaningful is the connection it creates between students across grade levels. For many of the younger children, the visit from high school students

and the Bearcat turned what could have been a simple recognition into a moment they are likely to remember for a long time. At the same time, PRHS Leadership students are getting the opportunity to encourage and celebrate younger students in a direct, personal way.

While the program is still new, it is already helping create connections between students who might otherwise never meet. By celebrating positive behavior early and building relationships across campuses, PRHS Leadership students are helping younger Bearcats feel seen, encouraged and connected to the larger school community long before they reach high school.



PRHS Student Tori Holbrook and students from Winifred Pifer and Virginia Peterson Elementary Schools enjoy their visit with the PRHS Bearcat Mascot. Photo credit: Jenny Martinez

BIG SKILLS, BIG STAGE: BEARCATS EARN STATE HONORS



Paso Robles High School

students recently returned from the 2026 SkillsUSA California State Leadership and Skills Conference with 12 state medals – and two students are now preparing to compete at the national championships this summer.

From April 9-12, 66 Bearcats traveled to Ontario, California, to compete against students from across the state in events tied directly to career and technical education pathways. SkillsUSA is one of the largest career and technical student organizations in the country, giving students opportunities to test their skills in hands-on, industry-based competitions.

Students compete in fields ranging from culinary arts and computer programming to telecommunications cabling, construction trades and early childhood education. Events are designed and judged with input from industry professionals, meaning students are often completing the kinds of tasks they could encounter in real careers.

Two Bearcats earned gold medals and qualified for the national SkillsUSA Championships in June:

Ty Brown – Gold Medal, Telecommunications Cabling
Rowan Yakush – Gold Medal, Early Childhood Education

Brown and Yakush will travel to nationals during the first week of June alongside advisors **Brenda Matthyse** and **Bartt Frey**, where they will compete against top student finalists from across the country. (Contd.)



Additional PRHS medalists included:

Silver Medalists

Jayleen Arroyo – Telecommunications Cabling

David Karp – Power Equipment Technology

Kailea Stoltzfus – Early Childhood Education

Frida Bejar Rico – Career and Technical Educator

Aryana Morales – Culinary Arts

Carlos Rendon – Commercial Roofing

Bronze Medalists

Patrick Malufau – Computer Programming

Logan Parent – Internetworking

Christopher Jewett – Power Equipment Technology

Ian Guittierez – Commercial Roofing

The Bearcats' impressive results at the 2026 SkillsUSA state competition highlight the strength of Career Technical Education programs available at Paso Robles High School. Whether students plan to attend college, enter the workforce or pursue technical training after graduation, programs like

SkillsUSA provide students with further opportunities to apply what they've learned in class, work alongside peers who share similar interests and gain experience in professional settings before graduating high school.

Join us in wishing good luck to our Gold Medalists Ty Brown and Rowan Yakush as they take the next step on the national stage to compete in SkillsUSA Nationals in June!



Champion
YOUR FUTURE
2025-2026

CELEBRATING OUR CHAMPION!
TY BROWN
PASO ROBLES HIGH SCHOOL
CALIFORNIA STATE GOLD MEDALIST
TELECOMMUNICATIONS CABLING 2026
59th ANNUAL SKILLSUSA
CALIFORNIA STATE CONFERENCE

Champion
YOUR FUTURE
2025-2026

CELEBRATING OUR CHAMPION!
ROWAN YAKUSH
PASO ROBLES HIGH SCHOOL
CALIFORNIA STATE GOLD MEDALIST
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION 2026
59th ANNUAL SKILLSUSA
CALIFORNIA STATE CONFERENCE

CTE STUDENTS OF THE WEEK

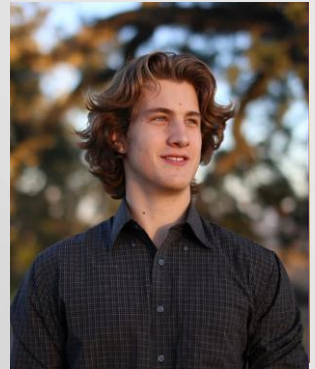
ALEX CISNEROS, CLASS OF 2027 **CULINARY ARTS PATHWAY**

Diligence is one of the most important qualities in the kitchen—whether it's tackling routine tasks or cleaning up after a long, busy day. Alex shows up every day ready to do both, consistently putting in the effort and taking pride in the work. Congratulations, Alex!



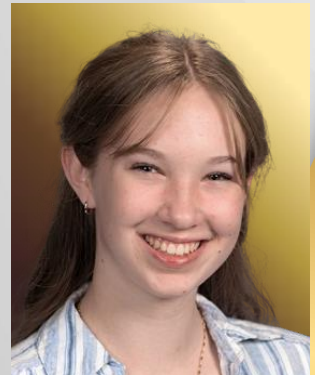
THERON CHASE, CLASS OF 2026 **ENGINEERING PATHWAY**

Theron stands out as a true mechanical thinker, with an impressive ability to visualize complex systems and bring them to life through thoughtful design and precise construction. He combines strong technical knowledge with patience, kindness, and a collaborative mindset, making him a valuable teammate in any project. He has been selected for consistently demonstrating both exceptional skill and character, embodying what a CTE engineering student should be.



ELLIOTT GODSEY, CLASS OF 2028 **PERFORMING ARTS PATHWAY**

Elliott is a passionate, talented and diligent actor. She has stepped up as a Co-President of the Drama Club, started an Improvisation Troupe, performed in both Shakespeare In Love and High School Musical and is an incredible representative of Paso High Theatre Company. She was selected for the high standards she holds herself to. She strives to be the best version of herself while being kind and supportive to everyone around her. We can't wait to see what else she can do!



JENNIFER MARES SANTIAGO, CLASS OF 2026 **TRANSPORTATION PATHWAY**

Along with her willingness to do the best she can, Jennifer has always been an absolute joy to have in class. She works well alone or in a group setting and has proven to be a positive model for her teammates. Jennifer exhibits honesty in her efforts and strives to do the best job she can, which results in her performing consistently at or near the top of her class in Automotive Technology.

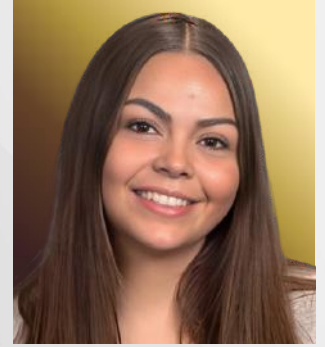


SECONDARY SCHOLARS OF THE WEEK

CLOVER GONZALEZ

PASO ROBLES HIGH SCHOOL

Clover exemplifies what it means to be a model Bearcat through her outstanding academic prowess and consistently positive attitude. As a Peer Communicator she serves as a dependable role model—listening with empathy, supporting classmates, and helping to create an inclusive classroom culture. Her recent acceptance to CSUN is a well-earned milestone that reflects her hard work and commitment; she should be very proud of this accomplishment.



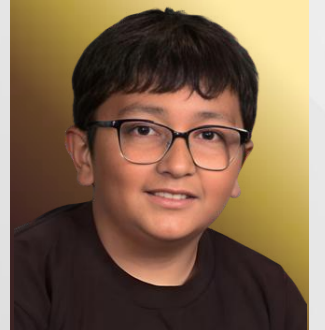
HECTOR CHAVEZ CABRERA

LEWIS FLAMSON MIDDLE SCHOOL

Hector is known for his friendly, kind nature, and recently he demonstrated just how meaningful those qualities can be beyond the classroom. During Autism Awareness Month, we are proud to recognize the quiet compassion he showed in our community.

While at a local park, a community member was visiting with her grandson, who has special needs. When a group of students arrived to play soccer, most continued on without noticing him—but Hector chose differently. He took the time to engage with the young boy, talking with him, playing soccer, and making him feel included and valued.

The interaction may have seemed small in the moment, but it made a lasting impact. The boy's grandmother was so touched that she reached out to share how much it meant to both of them. Hector's actions exemplify kindness and inclusion, and show what it means to lead by example.



MACI SCOGGINS

PASO ROBLES HOMESCHOOL

Maci is not only a high achiever academically, but she approaches everything she does with passion, determination, and hard work. She consistently demonstrates an exceptional work ethic while also being kind, thoughtful, and considerate toward others. Maci intentionally chooses classes that challenge her and takes pride in putting in the effort needed to master difficult content.

Beyond the classroom, Maci is deeply committed to Creston 4-H Club, where she actively participates in community service, fundraisers, and contributions to the local fair. Her dedication has led to recognition at multiple competitions, including earning gold-level honors, reflecting her strong work ethic and passion.

Maci's commitment, character, and drive make her truly deserving of this recognition.



STEPHANIE RENDON

LIBERTY HIGH SCHOOL

Since joining Liberty High School in January, Stephanie Rendon has demonstrated remarkable determination and focus in working toward her goal of graduation. She approaches her academic work with dedication and consistently strives to do her very best in the classroom. Stephanie is kind and supportive toward her peers, maintains excellent attendance, and brings a positive presence to campus each day. Her perseverance, strong work ethic, and uplifting attitude make her a valued member of the Liberty High School community.



Standout Staff

Every spring, each PRJUSD school site selects its certificated and classified Employees of the Year. Those honorees then move forward as candidates for the districtwide awards, which were announced during a celebration held May 5, 2026.



Congratulations to our 2026 Districtwide Employees of the Year Honorees!



Summer care

Paso Schools is proud to offer weekday summer childcare for ages TK-8 **at no cost to Paso Schools families.**

Paso Schools + YMCA

Dates: June 15 - July 28
(Closed June 19 & July 3)
Hours: 7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Locations: Winifred Pifer,
Glen Speck, Virginia
Peterson
Ages: TK - 6th Grade

For more information, call
(805) 769-1500

Paso Schools + Boys & Girls Club

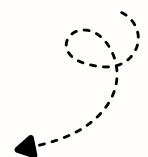
Dates: June 15 - July 31
(Closed June 19 & July 3)
Hours: 7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Location: Tom Maas
Clubhouse, 3301 Oak Street,
Paso Robles, 93446
Ages: TK - 8th Grade

For more information, call
(805) 226-5536

Register Today!

Click or scan the QR code to register for summer childcare, or add yourself to the waitlist.

Or visit:
ezchildtrack.com/prjud/parent





Secondary Summer School

From original credit and credit recovery courses, to driver's training and the Summer Algebra Institute, there are summer learning opportunities for every student grades 9-12.

Summer School

Dates: June 10 – July 10.
(Closed June 19 & July 3)

Location: Lewis Flamson
Junior High

Schedule: 2 sessions per
day, 3 hours each session

- 8:00 – 11:00 a.m.
- 11:30 – 2:30 p.m.

Subjects Offered

- Original Credit Courses:
 - Government
 - Economics
 - World History
 - US History
- Credit Recovery Courses
- Driver's Training
- Newcomers Grades 7 and 8
- [CSU Algebra Summer Institute](#) (click for information and waitlist)

Register Today!

Contact your school
counselor to register for
summer school:

Paso Robles High School
main office: 805-769-1500

Georgia Brown main office:
805-769-1200

Lewis Flamson main office:
805-769-1400

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Joel Peterson, Board President
Laurene D. McCoy, Board Clerk
Leo Castillo, Trustee
Jim Cogan, Trustee
Kenney E. Enney, Trustee
Nathan Williams, Trustee
Sondra Williams, Trustee
Grant Acevedo, Student Board Member

OUR PROMISE

We promise to provide a safe, supportive environment where every student feels valued and empowered to discover their strengths, build resilience, and develop the knowledge, character, and confidence to thrive in their future.

CORE VALUES

PRJUSD's Core Values describe how we do business or go about making decisions. The following values were defined by the Strategic Planning Committee as being the foundational rules of engagement for staff and the Board of Trustees of PRJUSD.

Integrity: We uphold integrity and ethical responsibility by being trustworthy in all our actions, ensuring that every decision is made with honesty, fairness, and respect for our students, families, staff, and community.

Accountability: We hold ourselves accountable and act with reliability, ensuring that every commitment we make to students, families, and one another is met with consistency, transparency, and follow-through.

Collaboration: We believe collaboration is essential to student success, and we are committed to working together—with students, families, staff, and community partners—to achieve shared goals and create a lasting, positive impact for all learners

Innovation: We embrace innovation by encouraging creativity, responsible risk-taking, and adaptability—encouraging new ideas and forward-thinking solutions that prepare students to prosper in a rapidly changing world

Compassion: We cultivate empathy and kindness in all our interactions, striving to understand and support one another while creating an environment where every student, family, and staff member feels valued and cared for.

Belonging: We promote inclusion and belonging by embracing differences and ensuring that every student, family, and staff member feels respected, valued, and connected to our school community.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

PASO PROUD ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Do you know a Bearcat grad doing great things in the world? We want to hear from you!

Our upcoming Paso Proud Alumni feature will celebrate former students who are thriving in their careers, trades, or community life—whether they stayed local or ventured beyond Paso Robles.

From small business owners and skilled tradespeople to community leaders, artists, and educators, we want to showcase the many paths our alumni take after graduation.

Nominate yourself or a fellow Bearcat!

Submit a short description and tell us why your nominee makes #PasoProud.

Click or scan the QR code to submit your nomination.



PASO PROUD MAGAZINE

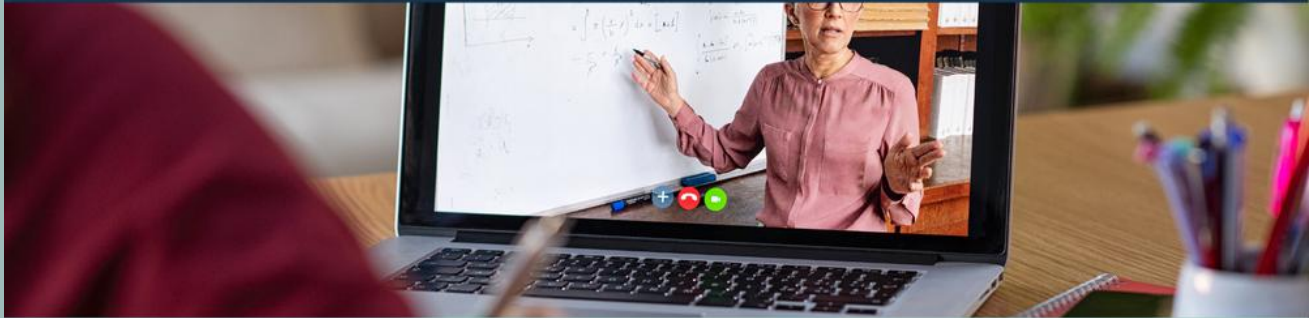
Paso Proud is a publication of Paso Robles Joint Unified School District, 800 Niblick Road
Paso Robles, CA 93446
Phone: (805) 769-1000
pasoschools.org

Editor, Content, Photography,
Layout: Melissa Godsey
mjgodsey@pasoschools.org

Cover Image: PRHS Theatre's **Elliott Godsey** and **Kaia Cross** as Ryan and Sharpay Evans, photography by **Jesus Ursulo**

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24/7 for 200+ subjects



Essay Drop-Off Review



Homework Help



Test Prep, Including
SAT and ACT

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Open Clever on your child's device, then click on the tutor.com logo



UPCOMING DATES

5/21	Open House - Winifred Pifer/Georgia Brown
5/25	Memorial Day, No School
5/26	Early Release Schedule
5/26	Board of Trustees Meeting
5/27	Open House - Glen Speck/Pat Butler
6/2	Senior Awards Night
6/3	6th Grade Ravine Trip
6/4	Last Day of School, Minimum Day Schedule

6/4	Lewis Flamson Junior High 8th Grade Promotion
6/4	Liberty & Independence High School Graduation
6/5	District Annual Retirement Breakfast
6/5	PRHS Graduation
6/9	Board of Trustees Meeting
6/10	First Day of Secondary Summer School
6/15	First Day of Summer Childcare

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