

**EDUCATION FOR FOSTER YOUTH**

The Governing Board recognizes that foster youth may face significant barriers to achieving academic success due to their family circumstances, disruption to their educational program, and their emotional, social, and other health needs that may be addressed with the provision of a safe, positive learning environment that is free from discrimination and harassment and that promotes students' self-esteem and academic achievement. The Superintendent or designee shall provide foster youth with full access to the district's educational program and implement strategies necessary for the improvement of the academic achievement of foster youth as identified in the district's local control and accountability plan (LCAP). The Superintendent or designee shall also develop strategies to build a foster youth's feeling of connectedness with school, including, but not limited to, strategies that promote positive discipline and conflict resolution, the development of resiliency and interpersonal skills, and the involvement of foster parents, group home administrators, and/or other caretakers in school programs and activities.

*(cf. 0460 - Local Control and Accountability Plan)*  
*(cf. 3100 - Budget)*  
*(cf. 5131.6 - Alcohol and Other Drugs)*  
*(cf. 5147 - Dropout Prevention)*  
*(cf. 5149 - At-Risk Students)*  
*(cf. 6011- Academic Standards)*  
*(cf. 6145 - Extracurricular and Cocurricular Activities)*  
*(cf. 6145.2 - Athletic Competition)*  
*(cf. 6164.2 - Guidance/Counseling Services)*  
*(cf. 6173 - Education for Homeless Children)*  
*(cf. 6179 - Supplemental Instruction)*

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that placement decisions for foster youth are based on the students' best interests as defined in law and administrative regulation. To that end, he/she shall designate a staff person as the district liaison for foster youth to help facilitate the enrollment, placement, and transfer of foster youth.

The Superintendent or designee and district liaison shall ensure that all appropriate staff, including, but not limited to, each principal, school registrar, and attendance clerk, receive training on the enrollment, placement, and transfer of foster youth and other related rights.

*(cf. 4131 - Staff Development)*  
*(cf. 4231 - Staff Development)*  
*(cf. 4331 - Staff Development)*

At least annually and in accordance with the established timelines, the Superintendent or designee shall report to the Board on the outcomes for foster youth regarding the goals and specific actions identified in the LCAP, including, but not limited to, school attendance, student achievement test results, promotion and retention rates by grade level, graduation rates, and suspension/expulsion rates. As necessary, evaluation data shall be used to determine and recommend revisions to the LCAP for improving or increasing services for foster youth.

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Annually, the Superintendent or designee shall report to the California Department of Education, in accordance with Education Code 51225.1, the number of foster youth graduating from the fourth or fifth year of high school who, for the prior school year, graduated with an exemption from district-established graduation requirements that are in addition to statewide coursework requirements.

*(cf. 1020 - Youth Services)*

*Legal Reference: (see next page)*

**EDUCATION FOR FOSTER YOUTH** (continued)

*Legal Reference:*

**EDUCATION CODE**

32228-32228.5 *Student safety and violence prevention*  
42238.01-42238.07 *Local control funding formula*  
42920-42925 *Foster children educational services*  
48645-48646 *Juvenile court schools*  
48850-48859 *Educational placement of students residing in licensed children's institutions*  
48915.5 *Suspension and expulsion; students with disabilities, including foster youth*  
48918.1 *Notice of expulsion hearing for foster youth*  
49061 *Student records*  
49069.5 *Foster care students, transfer of records*  
49076 *Access to student records*  
51225.1 *Exemption from district graduation requirements*  
51225.2 *Pupil in foster care defined; acceptance of coursework, credits, retaking of course*  
51225.3 *High school graduation*

**EDUCATION CODE** (continued)

52060-52077 *Local control and accountability plan*  
56055 *Rights of foster parents in special education*  
60851 *High school exit examination*

**HEALTH AND SAFETY CODE**

1522.41 *Training and certification of group home administrators*  
1529.2 *Training of licensed foster parents*  
120341 *Foster youth: school placement: immunization records*

**WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE**

300 *Children subject to jurisdiction*  
309 *Investigation and release of child*  
317 *Appointment of legal counsel*  
361 *Limitations on parental or guardian control*  
366.27 *Educational decision by relative providing living arrangements*  
602 *Minors violating law; ward of court*  
726 *Limitations on parental or guardian control*  
727 *Order of care, ward of court*

16000-16014 *Foster care placement*

**UNITED STATES CODE, TITLE 20**

1415 *Procedural safeguards; placement in alternative educational setting*

**UNITED STATES CODE, TITLE 29**

794 *Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504*

**UNITED STATES CODE, TITLE 42**

670-679b *Federal assistance for foster care programs*  
11431-11435 *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act*

*Management Resources: (see next page)*

**EDUCATION FOR FOSTER YOUTH** (continued)

*Management Resources:*

**CSBA PUBLICATIONS**

*Educating Foster Youth: Best Practices and Board Considerations, Policy Brief, March 2008*

**AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION PUBLICATIONS**

*Mythbusting: Breaking Down Confidentiality and Decision-Making Barriers to Meet the Education Needs of Children in Foster Care, 2005*

**CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL**

*Partial Credit Model Policy and Practice Recommendations*

**CITIES, COUNTIES AND SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP PUBLICATIONS**

*Our Children: Emancipating Foster Youth, A Community Action Guide*

**WEB SITES**

*CSBA: <http://www.csba.org>*

*American Bar Association: <http://www.americanbar.org>*

*California Child Welfare Council: <http://www.chhs.ca.gov/Pages/CChildWelfareCouncil.aspx>*

*California Department of Education, Foster Youth Services: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/pf/fy>*

*California Department of Social Services, Foster Youth Ombudsman Office: <http://www.fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov>*

*California Youth Connection: <http://www.cal youthconn.org/site/cyc>*

*Cities, Counties and Schools Partnership: <http://www.ccspartnership.org>*

Policy  
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**VISALIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
Visalia, California

**EDUCATION FOR FOSTER YOUTH****Definitions**

Foster youth, foster child, or student in foster care means any of the following: (Education Code 42238.01, 48853.5)

1. A child who is the subject of a petition filed pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code 300, whether or not the child has been removed from the child's home by the juvenile court pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code 319 or 361
2. A child who is the subject of a petition filed pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code 602, whether or not the child has been removed from the child's home
3. A child who is the subject of a petition filed pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code 602, has been removed from the child's home by the juvenile court pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code 727, and is in foster care as defined by Welfare and Institutions Code 727.4(d)
4. A nonminor who is under the transition jurisdiction of a juvenile court, as described in Welfare and Institutions Code 450, and satisfies the criteria specified in Education Code 42238.01
5. A child who has been removed from the youth's home pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code 309
6. A dependent child of the court of an Indian tribe, consortium of tribes, or tribal organization who is the subject of a petition filed in the tribal court pursuant to the court's jurisdiction in accordance with the tribe's law
7. A child who is the subject of a voluntary placement agreement, as defined in Welfare and Institutions Code 11400(p)

Person holding the right to make educational decisions means a responsible adult appointed by a court pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code 361 or 726.

School of origin means the school that the foster youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the foster youth was last enrolled. If the school the foster youth attended when permanently housed is different from the school in which the foster youth was last enrolled, or if there is another school that the foster youth attended with which the foster youth is connected and that the foster youth attended within the preceding 15 months, the district liaison, in consultation with, and with the agreement of, the foster youth and the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the foster youth shall determine, in the best interests of the foster youth, the school that shall be deemed the school of origin. (Education Code 48853.5)

Best interests of a foster youth means that, in making educational and school placement decisions for a foster youth, consideration is given to, among other factors, the proximity to the

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school at the time of placement, appropriateness of the educational setting, educational stability, the opportunity to be educated in the least restrictive educational setting necessary to achieve academic progress, and the foster youth's access to academic resources, services, and extracurricular and enrichment activities that are available to all district students. (Education Code 48850, 48853; 20 USC 6311)

### **District Liaison**

The Superintendent designates the following position as the district's liaison for foster youth: (Education Code 48853.5)

Manager, Family and Community Services  
Visalia Unified School District  
5000 W. Cypress Avenue  
Visalia, CA 93277  
(559) 730-7579

*(cf. 6173 - Education for Homeless Children)*

The liaison for foster youth shall:

1. Ensure and facilitate the proper educational placement, enrollment in school, and checkout from school of students in foster care (Education Code 48853.5)
2. Ensure proper transfer of credits, records, and grades when students in foster care transfer from one school to another or from one district to another (Education Code 48645.5, 48853.5)

When a student in foster care is enrolling in a district school, the liaison shall contact the school last attended by the student to obtain, within two business days, all academic and other records. When a foster youth is transferring to a new school, the liaison shall provide the student's records to the new school within two business days of receiving the new school's request. (Education Code 48853.5)

*(cf. 5125 - Student Records)*

*(cf. 6146.3 - Reciprocity of Academic Credit)*

3. Notify a foster youth's educational rights holder, attorney, and county social worker when a foster youth is undergoing any expulsion or other disciplinary proceeding including a manifestation determination for a foster youth who is a student with a disability, prior to a change in the foster youth's placement. (Education Code 48853.5, 48911, 48915.5, 48918.1)

*(cf. 5144.1 - Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process)*

*(cf. 5144.2 - Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process (Students with Disabilities))*

*(cf. 6159.4 - Behavioral Interventions for Special Education Students)*

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4. As needed, make appropriate referrals to ensure that students in foster care receive necessary special education services and services under Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973

*(cf. 6164.4 - Identification and Evaluation of Individuals for Special Education)*

*(cf. 6164.6 - Identification and Education Under Section 504)*

5. As needed, ensure that students in foster care receive appropriate school-based services, such as counseling and health services, supplemental instruction, and after-school services

*(cf. 5141.6 - School Health Services)*

*(cf. 5148.2 - Before/After School Programs)*

*(cf. 6164.2 - Guidance/Counseling Services)*

*(cf. 6172 - Gifted and Talented Student Program)*

*(cf. 6174 - Education for English Learners)*

*(cf. 6177 - Summer Learning Programs)*

*(cf. 6179 - Supplemental Instruction)*

6. Develop protocols and procedures for creating awareness for district staff, including principals, school registrars, and attendance clerks, of the requirements for the proper enrollment, placement, and transfer of foster youth

*(cf. 4131 - Staff Development)*

*(cf. 4231 - Staff Development)*

*(cf. 4331 - Staff Development)*

7. Collaborate with the county office of education, county placing agency, county child welfare agency, county probation department, juvenile court, and other appropriate agencies to help coordinate services for the district's foster youth

*(cf. 1020 - Youth Services)*

*(cf. 5113.1 - Chronic Absence and Truancy)*

8. Monitor the educational progress of foster youth and provide reports to the Superintendent or designee and the Governing Board based on indicators identified in the district's local control and accountability plan

*(cf. 0460 - Local Control and Accountability Plan)*

The Superintendent or designee shall regularly monitor the caseload of the liaison, as well as his/her additional duties outside of the foster youth program, to determine whether adequate time and resources are available to meet the needs of foster youth in the district.

### **Enrollment**

A student placed in a licensed children's institution or foster family home within the district shall attend programs operated by the district unless one of the following circumstances applies: (Education Code 48853, 48853.5)

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1. The student has an individualized education program requiring placement in a nonpublic, nonsectarian school or agency or in another local educational agency.

*(cf. 6159 - Individualized Education Program)*

*(cf. 6159.2 - Nonpublic, Nonsectarian School and Agency Services for Special Education)*

2. The parent/guardian or other person holding the right to make educational decisions for the student determines that it is in the best interest of the student to be placed in another education program and submits a written statement to the district indicating that determination and that he/she is aware of the following:
  - a. The student has a right to attend a regular public school in the least restrictive environment.
  - b. The alternate education program is a special education program, if applicable.
  - c. The decision to unilaterally remove the student from the district school and to place him/her in an alternate education program may not be financed by the district.
  - d. Any attempt to seek reimbursement for the alternate education program may be at the expense of the parent/guardian or other person holding the right to make educational decisions for the student.

*(cf. 5116.1 - Intradistrict Open Enrollment)*

*(cf. 5117 - Interdistrict Attendance)*

*(cf. 6159.3 - Appointment of Surrogate Parent for Special Education Students)*

3. At the initial placement or any subsequent change in placement, the student exercises his/her right to continue in his/her school of origin, as defined above.
  - a. The student may continue in the school of origin for the duration of the court's jurisdiction.
  - b. If the court's jurisdiction over a grade K-8 student is terminated prior to the end of a school year, the student may continue in his/her school of origin for the remainder of the school year.
  - c. If the court's jurisdiction is terminated while the student is in high school, the student may continue in his/her school of origin until he/she graduates.
  - d. If the student is transitioning between school grade levels, he/she shall be allowed to continue in the district of origin in the same attendance area to provide him/her the benefit of matriculating with his/her peers in accordance with the established feeder patterns of school districts. A student who is transitioning to a middle school or high school shall be allowed to enroll in the school designated for matriculation in another school district.



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The role of the liaison shall be advisory with respect to placement decisions and determination of the school of origin. (Education Code 48853.5)

If the liaison, in consultation with the foster youth and the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the foster youth, agrees that the best interests of the youth would be served by his/her transfer to a school other than the school of origin, the principal or designee of the new school shall immediately enroll the foster youth. The foster youth shall be immediately enrolled even if he/she: (Education Code 48853.5)

1. Has outstanding fees, fines, textbooks, or other items or monies due to the school last attended

*(cf. 5125.2 - Withholding Grades, Diploma or Transcripts)*

2. Does not have clothing normally required by the school, such as school uniforms

*(cf. 5132 - Dress and Grooming)*

3. Is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, proof of residency, and medical records, including, but not limited to, immunization records or other documentation

*(cf. 5111.1 - District Residency)*

*(cf. 5141.26 - Tuberculosis Testing)*

*(cf. 5141.31 - Immunizations)*

*(cf. 5141.32 - Health Screening for School Entry)*

If the foster youth or a person holding the right to make educational decisions for the foster youth disagrees with the liaison's enrollment recommendation, he/she may appeal to the Superintendent. The Superintendent shall make a determination within 30 calendar days of receipt of the appeal. Within 30 calendar days of receipt of the Superintendent's decision, the parent/guardian or foster youth may appeal that decision to the Board. The Board shall consider the issue at its next regularly scheduled meeting. The Board's decision shall be final.

*(cf. 9320 - Meetings and Notices)*

If any dispute arises regarding the request of a foster youth to remain in the school of origin, the youth has the right to remain in the school of origin pending resolution of the dispute. (Education Code 48853.5)

**Transportation**

The Superintendent or designee shall collaborate with the local child welfare agency to determine how transportation will be provided, arranged, and funded in a cost-effective manner to enable foster youth to remain in their school of origin, for the duration of their time in foster care, when

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it is in their best interest to do so. Such transportation costs may be paid by either the child welfare agency or the district, or shared by both. (20 USC 6312)

*(cf. 3540 - Transportation)*

*(cf. 3541 - Transportation Routes and Services)*

**Effect of Absences on Grades**

The grades of a student in foster care shall not be lowered for any absence from school that is due to either of the following circumstances: (Education Code 49069.5)

1. A decision by a court or placement agency to change the student's placement, in which case the student's grades shall be calculated as of the date he/she left school
2. A verified court appearance or related court-ordered activity

*(cf. 5121 - Grades/Evaluation of Student Achievement)*

**Transfer of Coursework and Credits**

When a foster youth transfers into a district school, the district shall accept and issue full credit for any coursework that the foster youth has satisfactorily completed while attending another public school, a juvenile court school, or a nonpublic, nonsectarian school or agency and shall not require the foster youth to retake the course. (Education Code 51225.2)

1. A determination of the days of enrollment and/or seat time, if applicable for all full and partial credits earned based on any measure of full or partial coursework being satisfactorily completed Partial coursework satisfactorily completed includes any portion of an individual course, even if the student did not complete the entire course
2. Separate listings for credits and grades earned at each school and local educational agency so it is clear where credits and grades were earned
3. A complete record of the student's seat time, including both period attendance and days of enrollment The district shall transfer the credits and grades from the transferring school's transcript onto an official district transcript in the same manner as described in Item #2, above. (Education Code 51225.2) If the Principal or designee has knowledge that the transcript from the transferring school may not include certain credits or grades, the Principal or designee shall contact the prior school within two business days to request that the full or partial credits be issued, which shall then be issued and provided by the prior school within two business days of the request. (Education Code 51225.2)

The district shall accept and issue full or partial credit for any coursework that the foster youth has satisfactorily completed while attending another public school, a juvenile court school, a charter school, a school in a country other than the United States, or a nonpublic, nonsectarian school or agency. (Education Code 51225.2)

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If the entire course was not completed at the previous school, the foster youth shall be issued partial credit for the coursework completed and shall be required to take the uncompleted portion of the course. However, the district may require the foster youth to retake the portion of the course completed if, in consultation with the holder of educational rights for the foster youth, the district finds that the foster youth is reasonably able to complete the requirements in time to graduate from high school. Whenever partial credit is issued to a foster youth in any particular course, the foster youth shall be enrolled in the same or equivalent course, if applicable, to enable the completion of the entire course. (Education Code 51225.2)

Partial credits shall be awarded on the basis of 0.5 credits for every seven class periods attended per subject. If the school is on a block schedule, each block schedule class period attended shall be equal to two regular class periods per subject. Partial credits and grades earned by a student shall be included on the student's official transcript within two business days of the district's notification of the student's transfer, as required under Education Code 49069.5.

In no event shall the district prevent a foster youth from taking or retaking a course to meet the eligibility requirements for admission to the California State University or the University of California. (Education Code 51225.2)

**Applicability of Graduation Requirements**

To obtain a high school diploma, a foster youth shall complete all courses required by Education Code 51225.3 and fulfill any additional graduation requirements prescribed by the Board.

*(cf. 6146.1 - High School Graduation Requirements)*

However, when a foster youth who has completed the second year of high school transfers into the district from another school district or transfers between high schools within the district, the foster youth shall be exempted from all district-established coursework and other district-established graduation requirements, unless the district makes a finding that the student is reasonably able to complete the additional requirements in time to graduate from high school by the end of the fourth year of high school. Within 30 calendar days of the foster youth's transfer, the Superintendent or designee shall notify the foster youth, the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the foster youth, and the foster youth's social worker of the availability of the exemption and whether the foster youth qualifies for it. If the Superintendent or designee fails to provide this notification, the student shall be eligible for the exemption once notified, even if the notification occurs after the student is no longer a foster youth. (Education Code 51225.1)

To determine whether a foster youth is in the third or fourth year of high school, the district shall use either the number of credits the foster youth has earned as of the date of the transfer, the length of school enrollment, or for a foster youth with significant gaps in school attendance, the foster youth's age as compared to the average age of students in the third or fourth year of high school, whichever qualifies the foster youth for the exemption. (Education Code 51225.1)

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If a foster youth was not properly notified of an exemption, declined the exemption, or was not previously exempted, the foster youth or the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the foster youth may request the exemption and the Superintendent or designee shall exempt the foster youth within 30 days of the request. A student who at one time qualified for the exemption may request the exemption even if the student is no longer eligible. (Education Code 51225.1)

When the Superintendent or designee determines that a foster youth who transferred into a district school is reasonably able to complete district-established graduation requirements by the end of the foster youth's fourth year of high school, the foster youth shall not be exempted from those requirements. Within 30 calendar days of the following academic year, the foster youth shall be reevaluated based on the foster youth's course completion status at the time, to determine if the student continues to be reasonably able to complete the district-established graduation requirements in time to graduate by the end of the foster youth's fourth year of high school. Written notice as to whether the foster youth then qualifies for the exemption shall be provided to the foster youth, the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the foster youth, and if applicable, to the foster youth's social worker or probation officer. (Education Code 51225.1)

If, upon reevaluation, it is determined that the foster youth is not reasonably able to complete the district established graduation requirements in time to graduate from high school by the end of the foster youth's fourth year of high school, the Superintendent or designee shall provide the foster youth with the option to receive an exemption from district-established graduation requirements or stay in school for a fifth year to complete the district-established graduation requirements upon agreement with the foster youth, or if under 18 years of age, the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the foster youth, and provide notifications in accordance with Education Code 51225.1. (Education Code 51225.1)

When a foster youth is exempted from district-established graduation requirements, the Superintendent or designee shall consult with the foster youth and the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the foster youth about the following: (Education Code 51225.1.)

1. Discussion of how any requirements that are waived may affect the foster youth's postsecondary education or vocation plans, including the ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution
2. Discussion and information about other options available to the student, including, but not limited to, a fifth year of high school, possible credit recovery, and any transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges
3. Consideration of the foster youth's academic data and any other information relevant to making an informed decision on whether to accept the exemption

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The district shall not require or request a foster youth to transfer schools in order to qualify for an exemption and shall not grant any request made by a foster youth or any person acting on behalf of a foster youth for a transfer solely to qualify the foster youth for an exemption. (Education Code 51225.1)

When a foster youth who has completed the second year of high school transfers into the district from another school district or transfers between high schools within the district, and is not reasonably able to complete the district-established graduation requirements within the foster youth's fifth year of high school but is reasonably able to complete the statewide coursework requirements within the fifth year of high school, the foster youth shall be exempted from all district-established graduation requirements and provided with the option to remain in school for a fifth year to complete the statewide requirements. In such situations, the Superintendent or designee shall consult with the foster youth and the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the foster youth, regarding the following: (Education Code 51225.1)

**Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities**

A foster youth whose residence changes pursuant to a court order or decision of a child welfare worker shall be immediately deemed to meet all residency requirements for participation in interscholastic sports or other extracurricular activities. (Education Code 48850)

*(cf. 6145 - Extracurricular and Cocurricular Activities)*

*(cf. 6145.2 - Athletic Competition)*

**Notification and Complaints**

Information regarding the educational rights of foster youth shall be included in the annual uniform complaint procedures notification distributed to students, parents/guardians, employees, and other interested parties pursuant to 5 CCR 4622. (Education Code 48853, 48853.5, 49069.5, 51225.1, 51225.2)

*(cf. 5145.6 - Parental Notifications)*

Any complaint alleging that the district has not complied with requirements regarding the education of foster youth may be filed in accordance with the district's procedures in AR 1312.3 - Uniform Complaint Procedures. If the district finds merit in a complaint, the district shall provide a remedy to the affected student. A complainant not satisfied with the district's decision may appeal the decision to the California Department of Education (CDE) and shall receive a

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written decision regarding the appeal within 60 days of CDE's receipt of the appeal. If the CDE finds merit in an appeal, the district shall provide a remedy to the affected student. (Education Code 48853, 48853.5, 49069.5, 51225.1, 51225.2)

*(cf. 1312.3 - Uniform Complaint Procedures)*

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**VISALIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Visalia, California