



Santa Barbara County Education Office

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Susan C. Salcido, Superintendent of Schools

Being thankful

By Dr. Susan Salcido, Santa Barbara County Superintendent of Schools

I've always loved Thanksgiving for its focus on the positive, on being thankful.

Those of us at the County Education Office are truly grateful for the trust placed in us and the honor we feel in supporting youth and educators countywide.

We are grateful for educators and those in schools who work every day to make classrooms inclusive and ready for learning — teachers, administrators, maintenance personnel, cafeteria staff, and specialists of all disciplines.

We are also particularly thankful for parents and volunteers, for our first responders, members of the business community, nonprofits, and government agencies who all make a difference for our young people. And thank you to our neighbors, grandparents, and relatives who help take care of our children — your support means the world. We feel this gratitude every day and are thankful for a time of year that gives us the chance to say so publicly.

But what about the people we serve? The students themselves? The teachers and administrators? What are they thankful for?

At this time of thanksgiving, we asked students and educators from schools across the county to express their thanks and share what's on their mind.

Below is a representative sampling of student responses:

I am thankful for my cat, Twig, because she snuggles with me every night. —Macey, 4th grade, Cold Spring School

I'm thankful for no evacuations for about six months. —Ben, 6th grade, Montecito Union School

I am thankful for having a safe school to get my education from and having great teachers. —Kiele, 11th grade, Santa Ynez Valley Union High School

I'm thankful for hugs. —Kaianna, 5th grade, Montecito Union School

I'm thankful for my family and how much they have done for me because they work so hard to give the things we want and to put food on the table every day. —Christian, 8th Grade, Kermit McKenzie Intermediate School

I'm thankful for the police and firefighters who keep us safe. —Amelia, 5th grade, Montecito Union School

I am thankful for the nice teachers I have and the bond I have created with them. —Mark, 11th grade, Santa Ynez Valley Union High School

I am most thankful for the opportunity to be able to live my life, come to school without fear of rejection, and enjoy my time in the basketball practices after school. I am thankful that I wake up every day and am able to pursue my future goals with assistance from the leaders of Cuyama Valley High School. —Manuel, 12th grade, Cuyama Valley High School

I am thankful that my mom got here in the United States of America. I'm also thankful for my house for giving me shelter, so I don't have to live outside. —Henry, 4th grade, Mary Buren Elementary

I give thanks for my family this year. My family is a huge part of my life, and we all work together to make our household function, so all of us are equally as important. Having my family around for Thanksgiving and through the holiday season is a blessing. —Leonel, 12th grade, Cuyama Valley High School

Here's a representative sampling of what teachers had to say:

I'm thankful for having a job that I truly love. I work at a beautiful school that is filled with compassionate and understanding educators, whom I am so lucky to call my colleagues. I am beyond grateful for my students; they inspire me. Their challenges, successes, perspectives, and desires drive me to become a better educator. I am thankful for the relationships we build, for the memories we share, and for those moments in life that we need each other, good or bad. That is what it is all about: we are here for each other. —Stephanie Gogonis, Santa Ynez Valley Union High School, 2019 Santa Barbara County Distinguished Mentor

I am so grateful to have a rewarding job, friends that are like family, and incredibly supportive family members. —Ashley Thompson, Mary Buren Elementary, Guadalupe Union School District

I am extremely thankful for the simple things in life, such as a healthy family, a heavenly place to live, and a rewarding place to teach within a supportive community. —Amy Campbell, Cold Spring School

I am thankful for the wonderful and diverse students I get to work with every day. I have worked in other schools, districts, and classes; but there is something different about being able to work and live at Cuyama Valley High School. I appreciate the opportunity to be working in such a supportive district and school. —Kevin Lebsack, Cuyama Valley High School

My family is a huge part of my life, and we all work together to make our household function, so all of us are equally as important. Having my family around for Thanksgiving and through the holiday season is a blessing. —Vidal Aguilera, Cuyama Valley High School

What I'm most thankful for is both my family and friends who I'm able to share any dilemma with, be it personal or professional, in order to seek answers that keep me grounded and provide me the perspective I need in order to strive forward in life. —Robin Ilac, Guadalupe Union School District AVID director, 2019 Santa Barbara County Distinguished Mentor

From a sampling of district superintendents/principals:

I am grateful for all the hard-working people who make it their lives' work to ensure that each and every one of our students has a bright future. —Dr. Emilio Handall, Guadalupe Union School District

The Cory family is thankful for blessings of faith: In a year of sickness, healing; in a year of struggle, perseverance; in a year of sadness, joy; in a year of frustration, peace; in a year of need, generosity; in a year of isolation, friendship; in a year of doubt, assurance. —Scott Cory, Santa Ynez Valley Union High School District

I'm grateful for my family and friends, and the opportunity to serve the wonderful CUSD colleagues, students, families, and communities! —Diana Rigby, Carpinteria Unified School District

I am thankful I get the opportunity to work with an extraordinary team of teachers, staff, parents, community, and school board who are committed to ensuring the success of every student. I am also thankful for my supportive husband, Jim, and energetic children, Malia and Jack, who inspire me each and every day to be the very best leader, wife, and mother. —Dr. Amy Alzina, Cold Spring School District

I am truly thankful for my amazing wife and my three healthy, happy kids. I'm also grateful to have a job where every day I get to come to a place where adults and kids are united in an effort to nurture a place of true magic: where everyone cares about one another; where kindness, respect, and integrity are bedrock values; where learning is cool; and where everyone strives to do their best. —Anthony Ranii, Montecito Union School District

I am graciously thankful for the opportunity to be living and working in the heart of such an amazing community. Our community is full of homegrown and legacy families who understand that success comes as no accident, and that perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice, and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do is the key. There are people in the Cuyama Valley that raise goats, drive cattle, and pick eggs from their chickens in the morning. The atmosphere here is as close to Americana as you can get without being transported back in time. Being a part of the Cuyama Valley has been very gratifying, and I am thankful for being warmly welcomed to the area and the opportunity to work with such amazing young minds. —Dr. Stephen Bluestein, Cuyama Valley Joint Unified School District

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