

Principal's Board Report

May 29, 2026

Fusion continues to demonstrate growth, innovation, and student-centered success through expanded opportunities and strong community partnerships. Fusion leads Stanislaus County in restorative and trauma-informed approaches that prioritize relationships, accountability, emotional regulation, and student voice, reinforcing a supportive environment where students can thrive academically and personally.

This quarter, Fusion was awarded the **California Serves** grant, a two-year investment that will support service-learning opportunities, student leadership development, and community engagement initiatives. This achievement reflects recognition of Fusion's ongoing commitment to empowering students through meaningful experiences, connection, and civic involvement. Students who participate in service projects will receive an official State Seal of Civic Engagement on their diplomas.



Fusion participated in several enriching educational field trips, including visits to Paul Mitchell The School Modesto, the Carnegie Arts Center, the Gallo Center for the Arts, and a Sacramento State Capitol tour. These experiences provided students with hands-on exposure to career pathways, the arts, and civic education beyond the classroom curriculum.

A. Student Services and Information

Fusion strengthens the student-centered onboarding process through a welcoming and restorative approach led by Assistant Principal Christine Frost and Teacher's Aide Veronica Morales. New students and families are provided with a personalized school tour to help them become familiar with the campus, staff, and available support, creating a sense of comfort and belonging from the very beginning.

As part of the orientation process, Christine and Veronica also facilitate a Restorative Talking Circle with each student and their family. This practice provides an opportunity to build trust, establish open communication, and better understand the student's

strengths, goals, and support needs. The process reflects Fusion's ongoing commitment to relationship-building, family partnership, and creating a safe and supportive learning environment for every student.

For the 2025-26 school year, Fusion has served 282 students, a 4.8% increase from 269 students during 2024-25, with a peak enrollment of 190 students currently enrolled. This increase is due to both district referrals and open inquiries from parents and students and is substantial compared to 184 students served in 2022-23, 201 students in 2021-22, and 185 in 2020-21.



Of the students served this year, 219 had Turlock Unified as their district of residence (77.66%), with 63 students from outside of Turlock, mostly from Merced County (N=41, or 14.54%). Enrollment from outside the TUSD district has remained steady recently, with only 22.34% in the current year and 22.2% in 2024-25 from outside TUSD, compared to 18.61% in 2023-24, 26% in 2022-23 and 39% in 2021-22.

Student Groups

In 2025-26, 46 students left the school for reasons other than graduation, including transfer to another school or juvenile detention; 30 were referred back to local districts due to chronic low attendance and did not return to Fusion during the school year.

In addition, 24 students (8.51%) had some type of Juvenile Justice contact, compared to (9.7%) in 2024-25. These numbers show a decline from 2022-23 when Fusion began tracking this subgroup of 30 students (16.3%) with Juvenile Justice contact.

On August 12 Fusion expects 140 to 150 new or returning students to launch 2026-27.

Graduation Congratulations

Hats off to our newest grads who belong to a group of 449 Fusion alumni after an outdoor ceremony on May 27; a total of 51 students completed graduation requirements for 2026. Two days later on May 29 in the Fusion multi-purpose room, 22 Grade 8 students were promoted to high school in front of proud family members.



Please enjoy the 2026 Fusion graduation photos on our website at fusioncharter.org and Fusion's YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/@fusioncharterschool/videos

Fusion Historic Enrollment	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
First Day	92	95	105	118	144	102	114	118	139	147
October Census	108	97	118	125	143	110	126	144	142	170
Cumulative	283	248	257	256	185	201	184	231	269	282
Graduates	23	46	38	38	43	57	28	45	53	51
Grad Rate	55.60%	74.40%	79.60%	73.90%	73.30%	83.3%	55.30%	77.20%	78.8%	NA*

*The official graduation rate will be released in October after all records are submitted statewide.

Thirteen other seniors require more support and will be enrolled in **Summer School** to earn credits toward graduation at the next Mid-Year Graduation in January 2027. Summer School begins June 3 for an optional four-week period. Students are supported via individual appointments both remotely and on-campus to help them earn an additional 10 credits during the summer. This is the third year of interest by the Turlock Unified School District (TUSD) in collaborating with Fusion to meet summer school needs. Because Fusion does not receive funding for these summer school students, we must limit the number of TUSD students who participate to the 40 TUSD students who have registered and are working on elective credits for graduation. The Fusion students who are participating are served by funding from federal sources for school improvement and working on core courses with credit deficiencies.

B. Student Activities



The Student Council, led by advisor Abraham Zuniga, organized a packed Spring schedule of activities, starting with a March 19 Mardi-Gras event in memory of Fusion teacher Bekah Remkiewicz, and a weekend beach retreat in April to plan for the upcoming Prom on May 15.



Fusion students visited Paul Mitchell The School in Modesto on March 27 to explore career pathways in the cosmetology and beauty industry. During the visit, students learned about training programs, licensing requirements, and a range of professional opportunities in hairstyling, esthetics, and salon management. The experience provided valuable exposure to post-secondary career options while helping students connect their interests to real-world skills and potential future employment.



On Friday, May 1, Fusion students participated in an educational field trip to the California State Capitol Museum in Sacramento, where they gained firsthand exposure to our government and legislative process. Students explored the historic Capitol building, learned about civic leadership and public service, and engaged in discussions about how state decisions impact local communities. The experience provided valuable real-world connections to classroom learning while encouraging civic awareness and student engagement.



Four Fusion students attended Modesto Junior College early college Dual Enrollment opportunities and vocational pathways through Career Technical Education (CTE) programs. These experiences allow students to earn college credit while still in high school and gain hands-on exposure to fields such as healthcare, skilled trades, business, and technology. By engaging in both academic and

technical coursework, students are able to begin building clear post-secondary career pathways aligned with their interests and long-term goals.

On Friday, May 15 the Student Council rolled out the red carpet for the Prom theme “Enchanted Forest” with dinner and dancing in Fusion’s beautifully decorated multi-purpose room. This year was the third time that Fusion has held a Prom on campus, with the first Fusion Prom three years ago in 2023, after participating as guests at other area Proms.



For Fusion’s final attendance reward, 37 students and five adults will visit **Island Water Park** in Fresno on May 28.

C. Community Involvement



The year's final *Lunch and Learn* career-related event was held on April 16 with a presentation from **Turlock Animal Services**. More than 40 staff and students attended and explored a new local partnership. The officers remembered Fusion's emotional support dog Pablo from a brief visit to the shelter in 2019 before he joined Fusion as a four-legged member of the counseling staff.

Fusion staff members Josiah Hudson and Kim Gmachowski represented the school at the **Aspiranet Family Resource Fair** on April 18, where they assisted with community outreach and engagement efforts. Their participation provided an opportunity to develop leadership and communication skills while supporting families in accessing local resources and services. The event reflected Fusion's ongoing commitment to student involvement, community partnership, and service-oriented learning experiences. The Fusion table had more than 100 visitors.



Fusion's **Free Family Film Night** for the community was attended by 47 people on April 24. Families enjoyed watching the movie *Zootopia 2* and having dinner together in Fusion's multi-purpose room.



For a fourth year, Fusion participated in **Love Turlock Day** on April 25, with garden and greenhouse planting and outdoor clean up tasks on campus. Nineteen students, friends and family participated. Thank you to Biology Teacher Ashley Maderr, who organized the event.



Fusion family members are currently responding to the Fusion Spring telephone survey. Feedback indicates strong parent support for classroom cell phone restrictions for the 2026–27 school year, reflecting alignment between families and Fusion’s focus on student engagement and learning.

Fusion continues to receive technical assistance from both Community Schools and Seity Health. The resources of the CCSP Implementation Grant and CEI activities will build partnerships to increase community engagement for the next four years, including “A Community School” logo update for the launch of the new school year. New staff logo shirts will help families to identify Fusion’s staff at Fall Round Up on August 11 and will offer promotional items for increased family engagement such as new cloth grocery bags and Fusion branded games. We seek Board approval for the modified logo below.



D. Personnel



Fusion Charter is proud to recognize Mr. Casey Hammond for being honored by the Rotary Club of Turlock as Fusion's Teacher of the Year. Mr. Hammond was recognized for his dedication to student success, his ability to build strong relationships with students, and his commitment to creating a supportive and engaging learning environment. His passion for education and consistent positive impact on the Fusion community continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of students and families.



Fusion is pleased to report that all teaching staff will be returning for the upcoming school year, with all credentials and compliance requirements current and up to date. This level of staff consistency provides important stability for students and families, helping to strengthen relationships, maintain continuity in instruction and support services, and reinforce the trusting environment that is essential to Fusion's restorative and trauma-informed approach. Consistent staffing remains one of the key factors in promoting student engagement, emotional safety, and long-term academic success.

One Fusion teacher, Gabrielle Bennett, is currently undergoing Beginning Teacher Induction with TUSD. Another teacher, Ryan Gatch, is completing an out-of-state transfer of credential, which requires Board approval with a Declaration of Need Statement. Fusion is submitting a Declaration of Need for Ryan Gatch to allow him to continue serving students while completing California-specific credentialing requirements in accordance with California Commission on Teacher Credentialing regulations. The Declaration of Need confirms that the school has made a diligent effort to recruit fully credentialed teachers and identifies the necessity of employing an educator on an emergency permit or waiver to ensure continuity of instruction and maintain stable educational services for students.

Fusion has hired several tutors and teacher aides during Spring 2026 in compliance with our California Serves (SSCE) grant plan and will seek additional interns from CSUS. During the Spring semester, Fusion had a CSUS intern, Lindsay Her, who observed teachers and participated in staff training. Fusion would like to express sincere gratitude to Jennifer Andersen for her work in updating Aspiranet's Educational Intern Policy. Her efforts to strengthen and clarify the policy help ensure compliance, support professional growth opportunities for educators, and maintain high-quality instructional services for students. Jennifer's leadership and attention to detail continue to be greatly appreciated.

Fusion is currently seeking a Program Supervisor to oversee the State Seal of Civic Engagement (SSCE) and California Community School Partnership Program (CCSPP) grants, with Aspiranet Human Resources leading the initial candidate screening process. Following this review, Fusion will begin conducting interviews to identify a strong candidate to support program implementation and ensure continued alignment with grant goals and student services. The anticipated start date for the position is August 1, supporting a timely transition into the upcoming program year.

The Program Supervisor provides administrative leadership and direct oversight for the California Serves grant and supports the implementation of the Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP) initiative at Fusion Charter School. Responsibilities include supervising staff, coordinating integrated student supports, developing community partnerships, overseeing service-learning and civic engagement opportunities, monitoring grant compliance and reporting requirements, and ensuring alignment with program goals and agency standards. The Program Supervisor collaborates closely with school staff, community organizations, and families to expand student access to academic, social-emotional, and civic engagement opportunities, including support for students pursuing the State Seal of Civic Engagement (SSCE).

E. Professional Development

Skills Training for Emotional Problem Solving for Adolescents (STEPS-A) will be a key focus of the August 10, 2026 staff in-service training, with a strong emphasis on improving student attendance through proactive, skills-based support. STEPS-A equips staff with practical strategies to help students recognize emotional triggers, develop coping skills, and navigate challenges that often contribute to absenteeism. By strengthening students' ability to manage stress and stay engaged in school, the curriculum directly supports improved attendance, increased classroom participation, and stronger long-term school connectedness.

Fusion's entire staff will receive academic and social-emotional skills training to support **Civic Engagement** efforts through the SSCE grant. The team will focus on providing students with meaningful opportunities to participate in their communities and develop a deeper understanding of civic responsibility. Through service-learning projects, community partnerships, and experiential learning activities, students will connect classroom learning with real-world issues, build leadership skills, strengthen their sense of agency, and foster a commitment to contributing positively to their communities.



Fusion continues to engage in academic professional development both in house and at conferences, with regular updates and training from our curriculum providers. Other events included Community Engagement Initiative Profession Learning Network sessions, the California Activities Directors, California Charter School Association and the federal "All Titles" conferences, (Fusion Registrar Alicia Mendes is pictured left with State Superintendent Tony Thurmond).

By invitation, David Ashby and a Fusion team will host a breakout session in June at the PSC Summer Learning Institute in Morro Bay on the new topic of **Compassionate Dialog using Restorative Talking Circles**.

Fusion teams will attend the June National Charter School Conference and the July California Student Leadership event for the first time through California Serves.

F. Facility

Fusion continues to make progress in developing its behavioral health and clinical support infrastructure in alignment with CYBHI and Aspiranet clinical standards. During Mental Health Awareness Month, Fusion families received communication promoting emotional wellness, normalizing support for stress and anxiety, and informing families about available counseling and wellness services. Cynthia Thomas has continued strengthening clinical



supervision systems and coordination procedures, while leadership schedules were adjusted to support consistent participation in weekly supervision meetings. Fusion also reached an important milestone with the scheduling of its first two student assessments, representing the transition from planning into direct service delivery. Following assessments, Cynthia Thomas will help determine student needs and appropriate provider assignments.

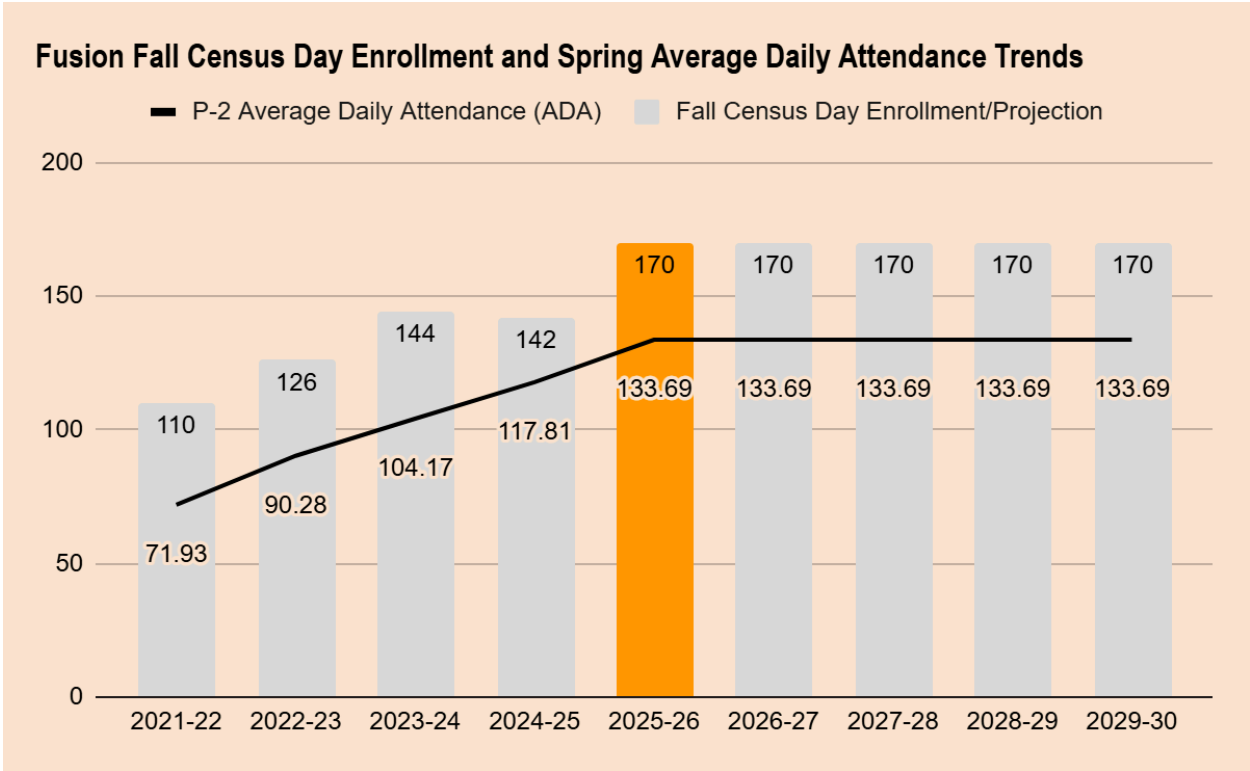
Weekly supervision continues to focus on practical intervention development using psychoeducational and DBT-informed approaches, while also strengthening crisis response procedures, documentation practices, and internal escalation protocols. Planning for summer behavioral health services is underway with several potential providers identified; however, Veronica Morales will not independently provide CYBHI services until completion of her CHW training anticipated in mid-June. Additional clinical clarification is still being finalized regarding suicide risk assessment responsibilities, scope-of-practice boundaries, and provider role assignments. Fusion remains focused on ensuring strong clinical oversight, role clarity, and safe implementation procedures before expanding services further.

Fusion seeks Aspiranet Board of Directors' approval of the state **Education Protection Account (EPA)**. More details about the EPA are provided in the attached agenda item. The Education Protection Account (EPA) is a state funding source that provides financial support for public education programs in California. EPA funds are used to support instructional purposes, including teacher salaries, academic programs, and classroom-related services that directly benefit students.

G. Accountability

Attendance has improved at Fusion! The Spring 2026 P2 Average Daily Attendance (ADA) is 133.69, compared to 117.81 one year ago. Additional state funds will be paid out in July to reflect the higher numbers. We believe that the increase is a direct result of daily phone calls and text messages, frequent incentives such as meal cards and engaging activities.

The graph below shows the ADA increase over the last five years, with a steep increase in ADA from a Pandemic-related low Spring 2022 P-2 ADA of 71.93. As we move past the recovery period from the Pandemic, it is unlikely that Fusion will sustain such a high rate of increase. A conservative approach to budgeting for ADA over the next four years is to assume a leveling off without continued increases each year; instead Fusion is budgeting for a constant ADA of 133.69 with stable Fall Census Day enrollments of 170 students each year, daily attendance of about 79% of enrollment, and a small annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA).



H. Mandatory Testing

Fusion is focusing on the state requirement that 95% of students in Grades 7, 8 and 11 complete the **California Standards (CAASPP)** tests for English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. Students in all grades take the Spring administration of **NWEA MAP** tests in Math and Reading so that Fusion can identify growth goals for each student.

English Learner Proficiency (ELPAC) exams are being administered to 100% of the 34 students classified as English Learners. Students who are Long-Term English Learners will need additional support to meet grade level English proficiency on other standardized assessments.

Students in Grades 7 and 9 are currently completing state physical fitness testing and all students are invited to take the confidential **California Healthy Kids Survey**, which Fusion must administer as a federally-funded Title I school serving low-income students.

I. Strategic Planning for 2026-27

Fusion continues to work closely with **Aspiranet** on long-term strategic plans that reflect our shared Mission and Vision. Fusion leadership participated in Aspiranet planning sessions in March and will continue to collaborate with other Aspiranet divisions for the benefit of children and families throughout the state. Fusion works closely with the Residential and Family Resource Divisions as members of our Community Engagement Initiative team; we are developing closer relationships with Transitional Age and Behavioral Health as we jointly support the most vulnerable youth in our community.



Mission Statement: Fusion Charter will use a trauma-responsive approach that puts social and emotional needs first, followed by practical, flexible, individualized learning to engage students and provide a pathway to college or career.

Vision Statement: We envision trauma-responsive schools in which all students are loved and respected as individuals and all graduates enter the adult community with the resources to thrive.

J. Financial Developments (The Financial Report contains additional information.)

Fusion has four state grants and four federal funding sources to supplement the academic and social-emotional learning experience for our students:

- The new **California Serves** grant supports student participation in the State Seal of Civic Engagement (SSCE) from May, 2026 through June, 2028. Funds will help prepare students to persist in completing service projects and paid jobs.
- Fusion's **Community Schools Implementation (CCSPP) Implementation** is completing the first year of the five-year grant period. The CCSPP engages the community in partnerships to provide an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement. CCSPP priorities are integrated with schoolwide student behavioral health and wellness activities supported by mental health and Medi-Cal funds.
- The **Community Engagement Initiative (CEI)** is also completing the first year with the support of a collaborative community team to improve student attendance by teaching students strategies when they face challenges at school, at work, and in the community. CEI funds are already providing incentives that have increased school attendance this year.
- During the second year of the **College and Career Access Pathways (CCAP)** grant, Fusion has supported four students with tutoring and materials for the completion of Modesto Junior College (MJC) courses prior to high school graduation. Next year will be the final year for Fusion to establish systems of support for an ongoing partnership with MJC.
- Fusion will complete the **Comprehensive School Improvement (CSI)** in September of 2026. Fusion successfully used federal CSI funding to increase the **Dashboard Graduation Rate Indicator** and Math and English Language test scores. We continue to implement "evidence-based" interventions to improve student outcomes for the **Dashboard College and Career Indicator**.
- Other federal **Title I, II, and IV** funds provide supplementary funds for academic skills improvement, family engagement, and student enrichment activities.

The **State Board of Education** monitors all flexible, non-classroom-based schools like Fusion to limit certain "non-instructional costs to no more than 20% of the annual budget. This includes facilities costs and mandatory district oversight, reserve and audit fees. The **Proposed Budget** for 2026-27 has been developed with these restrictions in mind. The budget is attached for Aspiranet Board review and must be approved with the 2026-27 **Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP)** in June.

K. Advocacy Update

Fusion and all charter schools continue to monitor new legislation. The charter association is currently focusing on the inclusion of independent study flex-based schools in new ongoing Community Schools funding after the conclusion of Fusion's current grant in 2031.

AB 3216- Smartphone Use in Schools requires governing board approval prior to July 1, 2026. The finalized policy will be presented to the Board in June with the LCAP.

Assembly Bill 3216, known as the **Phone-Free Schools Act**, requires school districts, county offices of education, and charter schools in California to adopt a policy that limits or prohibits student smartphone use while students are on campus or under school supervision. This policy must be developed and adopted by July 1, 2026, with regular updates every five years thereafter. The law gives local educational agencies (LEAs) the authority to tailor the policy to their community's needs while aligning with statewide goals to reduce distractions and support student focus and wellbeing.

Here are two concise policy options the Board and School Site Council may consider:

Option 1: No Personal Cell Phone Use During Instructional Time

Students are required to keep personal cell phones powered off and stored away during all instructional periods. Phones may only be used before school and after school. Any unauthorized use during class will result in progressive restorative and disciplinary responses designed to reteach expectations and maintain a focused learning environment. Initial responses may include a verbal reminder, restorative conversation, or teacher redirection. Continued violations may result in temporary phone confiscation by administration during the school day, parent/guardian contact, restorative reflection activities, behavior support meetings, or loss of phone privileges on campus.

Option 2: Limited and Structured Cell Phone Use Policy

Students must keep cell phones stored during instructional time unless explicitly permitted by staff for instructional purposes. Limited use may be allowed during designated breaks or with teacher approval for academic activities. Repeated or inappropriate use will result in progressive restorative and disciplinary responses that emphasize accountability and skill-building. Interventions may include restorative check-ins, classroom redirection, reflective assignments, parent conferences, temporary phone confiscation by administration, or individualized behavior support plans when necessary. This approach balances flexibility with clear expectations for responsible technology use.

To comply with AB 3216, Fusion Charter will use the Turlock Unified School District (TUSD) cell phone policy for guidance, adapting it as needed to meet the needs of Fusion students and staff while ensuring a safe and focused learning environment.

The TUSD cell phone policy generally allows students to possess cell phones on campus, but requires that devices be turned off and stored out of sight during the school day, including instructional time. Use of phones is not permitted in classrooms unless specifically authorized by a teacher for instructional purposes, and unauthorized use may result in the device being confiscated and/or disciplinary action. The policy emphasizes minimizing distractions to protect instructional time, supporting student engagement, and maintaining a focused learning environment, while allowing limited access outside of class periods or under approved conditions.

L. Fusion 2025-2026 Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) Goals

The LCAP goals, WASC Accreditation Action Plan and Title I School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) are entering the third year of a 3-year plan.

1. Proficient English Literacy Skills for All Students

To equip our students with writing skills

2. Applied Math Skills for College and Career Readiness

To fill gaps in learning and prepare our students for the future

3. Program Alignment with Trauma-Responsive Mission/Vision

To improve well-being and graduation outcomes for all our students, including through grant activities for low income, homeless and foster youth

4. Schoolwide Improvement in College and Career Indicator and Graduation Rates

To demonstrate growth on the California Dashboard for College and Career Indicator and Graduation Rate for all measurable subgroups each year (Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, Hispanic) Fusion is no longer identified by the state as in need of school improvement, however, career readiness is still a high priority for Fusion activities and this goal will be continued for the 2026-27 LCAP.

The LCAP plan for 2026-2027 requires Aspiranet Board approval prior to June 21 in order to submit the final plan to the Turlock Unified School District.

M. Summary

Fusion continues to demonstrate strong progress in student engagement, restorative practices, community partnerships, and program development. Highlights this quarter include the awarding of the California Serves Grant, expanded civic engagement opportunities through the State Seal of Civic Engagement, student participation in college and career exploration experiences, and continued implementation of trauma-informed and restorative approaches that support student success. Students benefited from educational field trips, leadership opportunities, Dual Enrollment programs, and Career Technical Education pathways, while parent survey results reflected overall satisfaction with Fusion's program and strong support for structured classroom cell phone policies.

Fusion also remains committed to maintaining a stable and supportive learning environment through consistent staffing, updated credentials, enhanced onboarding and restorative orientation practices, and ongoing professional development opportunities such as STEPS-A training focused on improving student attendance and emotional problem-solving skills.

The final day of the 2025–2026 school year was May 29, 2026, with Summer School continuing through June and the first day of the new school year scheduled for August 12, 2026. As Fusion prepares for the upcoming academic year, priorities remain centered on student well-being, academic engagement, campus safety, civic responsibility, and strengthening partnerships with families, staff, Aspiranet leadership, and the broader community.

On the May agenda, Fusion respectfully requests approval of the following items:



1. New Fusion Community School Logo
2. Declaration of Need for Certificated Teacher
3. The annual Education Protection Account (EPA) Fund
4. Proposed Budget for 2026-2027 (Discussion)

Your Obedient Servant,

David Ashby, Fusion Principal