

The Modesto Bee



Stanislaus K-1 students 'bounced back' after distance learning

BY EMILY ISAACMAN
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When school began in August, teacher Debra Thompson at Northmead Elementary School in Patterson said her kindergarten students couldn't recognize their names or hold a pencil. Most of them could identify only one or two letters.

"I usually have about a quarter of my class that's ready — that's really ready — for kindergarten," Thompson said in mid-September. "This year, I'm not seeing that at all."

As students missed school days due to the ongoing pandemic — quarantines caused one boy to join class on the 20th day — Thompson questioned whether she could get her stu-

dents where they needed to be. But once students could attend school every day, they learned school routines, expanded their attention spans and connected with the lessons Thompson reviewed.

Six weeks later, she said, about half of her class meets or exceeds standards. Everyone can hold a pencil. "They really surprised me,"

Thompson said.

After a year and a half of distance learning, many of the youngest learners entered classrooms in August having never attended traditional school. Though some children thrived during online learning, likely owing to parental support and access to technology, other children struggled to grasp basic concepts or didn't enroll in

school at all.

This created a potentially wider divide in kindergarten and first-grade readiness than usual, said Jamie Garner, math director at the Stanislaus County Office of Education.

EDUCATORS BRACED FOR A STRUGGLE

Garner said she and her colleagues expected children would struggle this year. During distance learning, younger students couldn't engage with the small groups and the physical teaching tools their teachers normally rely on.

Sometimes, though, the data

SEE K-1 STUDENTS, 4A



Chartreuse Muse art gallery on 10th Street in Modesto, Calif., on Wednesday.

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Supreme Court questions Texas law banning most abortions

BY MARK SHERMAN
AND JESSICA GRESKO
Associated Press

WASHINGTON

A majority of the Supreme Court signaled Monday they would allow abortion providers to pursue a court challenge to a Texas law that has virtually ended abortion in the nation's second-largest state after six weeks of pregnancy.

But it was unclear how quickly the court would rule and whether it would issue an order blocking the law that has been in effect for two months, or require providers to ask a lower court to put the law on hold.

Two conservative justices, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett, voted in September to allow the law to take effect, but they raised questions Monday about its novel structure. The law was written to make it difficult to mount legal challenges, and it subjects clinics, doctors and others who facilitate an abortion to large financial penalties.

"There's a loophole that's been exploited here, or used here," Kavanaugh said, explaining that the question for the court is whether to "close that loophole." Kavanaugh suggested that the "principle" and "whole sweep" of a 1908 Supreme Court case would "suggest extending the principle here, arguably" and closing the loophole.

The justices heard three hours of arguments Monday in two cases over whether abortion providers or the Justice Department can mount federal court challenges to the law, which has an unusual enforcement scheme its defenders argue shields it from federal administration.

The Biden administration filed its lawsuit after the justices voted 5-4 to refuse a request by providers to keep the law on hold. Three other conservative justices joined Barrett and Kavanaugh in the majority to let the law take effect. Chief Justice John Roberts joined the court's three liberal justices in dissent. The justices sounded less convinced that the Justice Department lawsuit should go forward, and Justice Elena Kagan suggested that a ruling

SEE TEXAS LAW, 4A

Downtown businesses revamp window displays, storefronts with new program

BY KRISTINA BARISICH
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First impressions make all the difference, and downtown Modesto businesses now have the option of revamping theirs with a new window improvement initiative.

The program, a partnership between the Downtown Improvement District (DID) and the Downtown Modesto Partnership, will provide downtown businesses with advice on how to spruce up their windows and storefront displays, as well as fund matching grants to cover the costs of the remodeling.

The Chartreuse Muse, an art school and gallery on 10th Street, was the first business to have its windows redecorated as part of the program. A team of experts in urban design, retail merchandising and lighting spent a day taking down the gallery's existing window displays, installing new light fixtures and making space for new product displays.

Leading the effort was Michele Reeves, an economic strategist and the founder of Civills Consultants, based out



Chartreuse Muse art gallery on 10th Street in Modesto, Calif., on Thursday.

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of Portland. Reeves has helped businesses in various communities spruce up their exteriors to attract more clients, and she said window displays are one of the most cost-effective ways to bring new life into an old storefront and attract shoppers.

In downtowns, Reeves said, businesses rely on cross-pollination to be successful, or the idea that shoppers will naturally be drawn to visit multiple stores

on one trip.

"If people can't look (at your business) for about a second and a half and understand what experience you offer, what you sell and what you do, they will never walk through your door," Reeves said. "The hardest thing to do to get someone to come into a new business is to cross a threshold."

Window displays — especially those that are well-lit and high-

light the products offered — can make all the difference, she said. They're relatively inexpensive to upgrade and can change the whole look of a business, drawing the customer's eye away from the building and toward what's inside.

Heidi Savage, DID's executive director, said she and her team realized window improvement is "the cheapest, easiest, quickest way to improve sales per square foot in a downtown area or a Main Street" by making displays "compelling and transparent."

Reeves said that by updating window displays across downtown Modesto, residents will be able to see the variety of local retail and dining options available to them.

"People think (that) in downtown Modesto, there's no retail," she said. "There's actually a lot of retail downtown. It feels like there's not because you can't see it."

A GALLERY PILOT

That's what the Window Improvement Program is looking to counteract — by investing

SEE DOWNTOWN, 4A



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INDEX

AA Classified AB

Mostly cloudy



FROM PAGE 1A

TEXAS LAW

instead in favor of the providers would allow the court to avoid difficult issues of federal power.

In either case Monday is the right to an abortion directly at issue. But the motivation for the lawsuits is that the Texas law conflicts with landmark Supreme Court rulings that prevent a state from banning abortion early in pregnancy.

Arguing for the United States, Solicitor General Elizabeth Prelogar told the justices that Texas' law was enacted in "open defiance" of Supreme Court precedent. "It enacted a law that clearly violates this court's precedents," she said.

Under the Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision and 1992 *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* decision, states are prevented from banning abortion before viability, the point at which a fetus can survive outside the womb, around 24 weeks of pregnancy.

The justices will hear a separate challenge to those decisions in a case over Mississippi's ban on abortion after 15 weeks. Those arguments are set for Dec. 1.

Kagan told Just E. Stone II, arguing for Texas, that until Texas passed its law, "no state



JACQUELINE MARTIN/AP

Groups of pro-choice and anti-abortion activists rally outside the Supreme Court on Monday as arguments are set to begin in two cases over whether abortion providers or the Justice Department can mount federal court challenges to a Texas law restricting abortion.

dreamed" of trying to make an end-run around Supreme Court precedent in the same way.

If the Supreme Court

doesn't do anything about that, she said, it would be inviting states to try to flout precedent: "Guns. Same-sex marriage. Reli-

gious rights. Whatever you don't like: go ahead," she said. Kagan, who disagreed with her colleagues' decision to let the law take effect, said Texas' law has prevented women in Texas "from exercising a constitutional right."

Kavanaugh also raised concerns about laws that might affect other constitutional rights.

The Texas law has been in effect since September when the Supreme Court declined to intervene, except for a 48-hour period in early October when it was blocked by a lower court. The high court got involved again less than two weeks ago, moving at extraordinary speed. The court offered no explanation for its decision to hear the cases so quickly.

If the court allows the providers to continue their lawsuit, it would still take a separate order from the justices or a lower court to put the law on hold.

The Texas ban, signed into law by Gov. Greg Abbott in May, prohibits abortion after cardiac activity is detected in a fetus, usually around six weeks and before some women know they are pregnant.

The law makes exceptions for medical emergencies but not for rape or incest.

During arguments Monday, Roberts at one point asked whether the law could be challenged if Texas had made the entitlement much higher, \$1 million. Texas' lawyer told him no.

FROM PAGE 1A

DOWNTOWN

smaller amounts of money into a larger number of projects. DID and the Downtown Partnership are hoping to reach as many businesses as possible and transform the overall look and feel of Modesto's downtown core, one storefront at a time.

Sandra Veneman, owner of The Chartrouse Muse, said she was excited about the design team that came in to revamp her gallery's front area and window display. New lighting fixtures and movable hooks now give her more options to showcase products.

Veneman said the team's fresh perspective led them to displaying products in ways she hadn't considered herself. "It's nice to have that outside perspective come

in and see what your products are and then re-market them in a different way," she said.

Other business owners were invited to attend the program's kickoff event Thursday evening in front of The Chartrouse Muse's newly renovated window, where representatives from DID and the Downtown Partnership passed out information about the initiative.

Interested business owners can sign up for a Zoom session Nov. 4 by contacting Savant at heidi@modestodid.com. Reeves will walk owners through a step-by-step guide for reworking their window displays. Attendees also can apply for the program's matching grants, which will reimburse 50% of remodeling costs, up to \$1,000.

Savant said she's heard from over 20 interested businesses, and she hopes more contact her in the coming months.

Josh Bridgroom, president of the Downtown Partnership, said that through 2022, businesses will be able to sign up for grants and receive a detailed guide for their remodel based on Reeves' presentation. He expects a gradual change in the landscape of downtown businesses, and that once one window display is remodeled, others will follow.

"The way that downtown districts are successful, both in terms of community standpoint, a business owner standpoint and a property owner standpoint is through improving the quantity and quality of experiences that are offered," Bridgroom said. "When people go through and businesses are more well lit, and their windows draw people in, that trans-



ANDY ALVARO/andysphotos.com

The afternoon sun spotlights the new window treatment at the Chartrouse Muse art gallery on 10th Street in Modesto on Thursday.

lates into a better social experience for people ... but also into cash registers ringing and more sales."

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FROM PAGE 1A

K-1 STUDENTS

"looks surprisingly good." "They blow us away with the things that they know and are able to do," Garner said.

At Northmead, first-grade teacher Diana Gregory said she's teaching "very similarly" to prepandemic years. "We expected more dips than we're seeing," she said.

The isolation of learning from home affected children socially, as well. Some students treat their peers more akin to siblings, Gregory said. They're less thoughtful before they act.

First-grade teacher Nancy Mendoza said she's spending time teaching Ceres Singular Elementary students how to behave in a school environment. The pandemic meant that many children who would have learned "school etiquette" in preschool or kindergarten didn't get that chance. Enrollment in those grades declined across the country, and Stanislaus County was no different.

HEAD START ENROLLMENT FLUCTUATES

SCOPE Child and Family Services Director Tony

Jordan said enrollment in Head Start, a federally funded early learning program for low-income families, dropped from its standard 100% capacity to 54% in September 2020. By September of this year, enrollment increased to 75%.

In the Modesto City Schools district, about 140 more first-graders enrolled in 2021 than enrolled in kindergarten in 2020, according to September enrollment counts. (By comparison, first-grade to second-grade enrollment from 2020 to 2021 dropped by 18.) Kindergarten enrollment from 2019 to 2020 dropped by 5.6%.

Modesto City Schools teachers said for comment in this article declined to be interviewed.

In addition to lower enrollments, school closures and hybrid learning models meant children didn't reap the full benefits of their early education. In Head Start, 86% of 4-year-olds assessed in the spring scored ready for kindergarten, compared to 91% in the 2018-19 school year.

Out of 13 areas of assessment, Jordan said

letter recognition was "significantly lower than what we've seen in the past." Children scored next lowest in self-regulation and attention to task and impulse control, and strongest in name recognition, colors and shapes, he said.

"Our kindergarten, first-, second- and third-grade teachers will have their work cut out for them," Jordan said.

Teacher Kristina Hart at Hidayah Elementary in Ceres said her first-grade students began the year needing additional practice with letter names and sounds, which is something they usually enter first grade knowing.

"We have quite a few needs this year that are different than a typical year," Hart said in September.

READING AND MATH FINDINGS

At the beginning of October, Hidayah first-grade teachers posed students into three groups depending on their reading level. Hart's group includes students who know their sounds but can't blend them into words. Another teacher focuses solely on sounds, and a third teacher pushes students who can read.

After just three weeks, Hart said she moved three

of her students into the higher-level group, and the other teacher moved three students up, too. "That was really nice to see," she said.

In math, Hart said she's moving a lot more slowly than usual and focusing on foundations.

"I feel like it's better worth my while with these kids to make sure they really have that strong

foundation in addition and subtraction before I try to do those more difficult concepts," Hart said.

Garner and Stanislaus County Office of Education literacy director Lori Dougherty said they're advising teachers across the county to take a similar approach. Teachers might not cover as much ground as usual, but the most important founda-

tions will prepare children for the learning they'll experience to come.

Thompson, the Northmead teacher, said she feels hopeful when looking to the rest of the school year. "They've really bounced back," she said.

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Obituaries

OBITUARY INDEX

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Contact our obituary staff at 209-572-2326 or notices@modbee.com

NAME	AGE	CITY	DEATH	ARRANGEMENTS
Butler, June, 87		Gustine	Oct 27	Hilview Funeral Chapel
Cabrera, Enrique, 74	Folsom	Oct 13	Lakewood Memorial Park & FH	
Silveira, Mario Duarte, 68	Hanford	Oct 14	Oakdale Memorial Chapel	

Bold listings indicate expanded obituaries

Mario Duarte Silveira
January 10, 1953 -
October 14, 2021



Hanford, California - Mario Duarte Silveira passed away peacefully on Oct. 14th 2021. He was born January 10th 1953, in Cedros, Jalisco, Mexico.

Enrique Cabrera
May 28, 1947 - September 13, 2021



Folsom, California - On September 13th, 2021 Enrique Cabrera left to be with our Jesus Christ. Enrique Cabrera had been given to God on May 28th, 1947 and was born in Brawley, Cali-

