



DTSC is helping lay the foundation for a unique school in Visalia

The California [Department of Toxic Substances Control](#) (DTSC) is helping Visalia school officials combine two sites to create a unique program where students train for careers in agriculture, veterinary medicine and animal husbandry.

The Visalia (Tulare County) Unified School District is phasing in the consolidation, and worked with DTSC to remove and dispose of 30 truckloads of contaminated soil – remnants of its agriculture history - and replace it with clean soil so the vision could be fully realized. The district acquired a former farm from College of the Sequoias (COS), and is expanding the nearby Visalia Technical Early College, a charter school. The college has moved its farm to Tulare.

Visalia is in Tulare County, one of the nation’s largest farming centers. Agriculture was a \$7.8 billion business there in 2013, and this program is designed to help its graduates gain a foothold in that industry. “It definitely is a different type of program, and it has received lots of positive feedback,” said Jeff Ramsay, director of facilities for the school district. “Students get more exposure to agriculture and can get COS college credits.”

An irrigation ditch separates the technical center and the former farm. The technical center offers courses in veterinary studies and food technology, and requires students to concurrently enroll at College of the Sequoias. COS formerly had classes in large animal studies, farming and agribusiness, and nursery/landscape programs. Interestingly, the school district owned the COS site until 1964, when the community college district bought it. The district repurchased the property in 2013, intending to expand the school’s programs – and DTSC is overseeing cleanup of a portion of it.

The district is excited about the expansion of the technical school – and students like the program ([Check out this video](#)). Students receive career direction and high school and college credits at the same time. Enrollment has increased from 55 sophomores in 2010, its first year of operation, to 157 10th-through 12th- graders this year. The expansion will increase capacity to about 243.

When finished, students, parents and teachers will have first-class educational facilities. And DTSC will have fulfilled its mission of converting unproductive or underproductive land into a better use, and protecting public health and the environment

