



NEWS RELEASE

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SCCOE students getting to the root of dental care

SAN JOSE, CA – February is National Children’s Dental Health Month, and the California Department of Education and the California Department of Public Health are raising awareness about the importance of good oral health for all students.

“Schools are ideal settings to encourage children and adolescents to adopt healthy habits and equip them with skills to make healthy decisions,” State Superintendent of Instruction Tom Torlakson and State Dental Director Jayanth Kumar wrote in a letter released February 23.

The Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) is getting to the root of this issue year-round through the [Alternative Education Department Dental Assisting Program](#) located in Gilroy – which serves 14 to 25 students a semester.

“The SCCOE provides a quality program for individuals interested in a career as a dental assistant,” said Yvette Irving, Director of Alternative Education. “The knowledge and expertise acquired through hands-on learning has enabled our students to enter into state of the art dental offices with both the technical skills to support a patient’s health as well as with a demeanor to be a calm reassuring presence for those of us who experience a certain amount of anxiety in going to the dentist.”

SCCOE’s 440-hour program includes a 175-hour internship at local dental offices, radiation safety certification and intensive classwork covering dental terminology and materials, basic anatomy, lab procedures, tray set ups and dental office procedures. At the completion of the course, students are approved to take and process dental films and work as a chair-side assistant.

“The program helps lead students to a rewarding career in the dental profession,” teacher Donna Lizardo said.

Principal Tara Strong said the last three classes have had a 75 percent employment rate by graduation day.

“The SCCOE CTE Dental Program design approach allows students to obtain employment skills in less than six months,” Strong added, citing statistics from the Bureau of Labor Statistics that there should be more than 58,000 new openings for dental assistants up to the year 2024. “This

is a wonderful opportunity for students to gain entrance into a career that allows future growth in skills and employment advancement.”

For more information about SCCOE’s Dental Assisting Program, visit the [website](#).

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