

NEWS RELEASE

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**SCCOE insists that Spark Charter School suspend operations
until safeguards and hiring procedures are in place**

SAN JOSE, CA – The disclosure last week that Spark Charter School’s governing board and management failed to conduct required criminal background checks or tuberculosis immunization verification for its staff prompted Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools Jon Gundry to call for its temporary closure. These actions are not in conformity with the charter agreement, prompting the letter from Mr. Gundry on Friday, September 18, saying failure to comply with the requirements set forth by the SCCOE will make the school’s charter immediately subject to revocation per California Education Code.

“The County Office insists that all requirements be met before Spark reopens,” explained Superintendent Gundry. “These serious oversights represent a violation of State Law and the terms of their charter, which was granted by the County Board of Education.”

Mr. Gundry addressed the media at a news conference this morning at the County Office of Education.

“We have an obligation to the families of this county to ensure that regulations are followed regarding the screening of personnel. In this case, Spark Charter School failed to obtain the required TB clearances and background checks for its employees,” said Gundry. “There is no excuse for not following this basic personnel and safety policy.”

Oversights were first brought to light during the SCCOE’s investigation of the Spark Charter School after learning about the arrest of an 18 year-old part-time employee on charges of sexual misconduct. The County Office immediately responded by having staff visit the school. When Spark staff could not confirm that they had followed procedures required by law and contained in their charter, the SCCOE acted swiftly to seek the suspension.

Spark is independently operated and governed by a nonprofit board of directors. They opened this year serving grades K-6. Under the charter law, the SCCOE doesn’t oversee daily operations or the hiring or supervision of Spark employees. The County Board of Education’s authority was to approve the charter, which empowered the Spark board and management to make those decisions and take necessary actions to comply with all state and federal laws governing schools.

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