



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release
June 2, 2016

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The Santa Clara County Office of Education celebrates the class of 2016

SAN JOSE, CA – As school comes to a close for the Class of 2016, educators, families, and friends gathered to celebrate the [Alternative Education Department Graduation](#) and the [Special Education Department Completion Ceremony](#) from the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE).

“Graduations are a moment for educators, families, and friends to gather and celebrate student achievements,” County Superintendent of Schools Jon R. Gundry said. “Students from both the Alternative Education and Special Education programs have persevered to arrive at this moment. Their accomplishments are to be applauded and are significant milestones on their path toward future opportunities.”

The AED Graduation was held Tuesday at the SCCOE’s Ridder Park location. The evening’s festivities included an opening address by Mr. Gundry, a keynote address by the Honorable Margaret Johnson of the Juvenile Justice Court and guest speaker Angel Mora, a former AED student. Scholarships were also awarded by representatives from the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) and California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators (CALSA). Graduates participated in a rose ceremony, during which they had the opportunity to share their rose with someone that had helped them to achieve their personal goals.

This year, the AED graduation honored 70 students from Blue Ridge, EDGE/PEAK, Odyssey, Osborne, Snell, Terra Bella, Opportunity Youth Academy (OYA), and Independent Study. This ceremony included the first 13 OYA graduates for the program that launched last November. With now four sites around the county, OYA is a high school diploma completion opportunity for 16- to 24-year-olds, which focuses on paths to college or career training.

The SCCOE AED Program serves approximately 325 students and provides educational programs for students under court supervision, and who are expelled or who are deficient in credits and have experienced challenges in matriculation in the traditional school settings. The program emphasizes improving students' literacy, numeracy, and social skills. AED also provides opportunities for preparation for future employment through job development, Career and Technical Education courses and the High School Equivalency Test.

A completion ceremony was held for students served through the SCCOE's Special Education program on Wednesday at the Robert W. Quinlan Community Center in Cupertino. The evening's festivities honored 37 students, including valedictorians Kaelyn Silva, Jennifer Susan Grant, and Holden Pence. Diplomas were awarded by Norma Del Rio, Director of Special Education, and Nancy Guerrero, Director of Special Projects.

More than 1,500 students with disabilities from birth to age 22 are served directly by the SCCOE in this program. It provides a variety of services for children and students with severe or low-incidence disabilities through instructional programs divided into Early Education (birth to age 3), preschool, elementary, secondary and post-senior.

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