



NEWS RELEASE

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New SCCOE initiative will provide resources to support civic education and engagement

SAN JOSE, CA – As part of its commitment to support civic education and engagement, the Santa Clara County Office of Education is partnering with key community stakeholders to help students “learn, engage, and take action” to increase civic literacy.

“When the focus shifted to high-stakes testing several years ago schools got away from emphasizing social sciences, but this year’s presidential election provides a great opportunity to capitalize on the heightened interest in the civic process,” said County Superintendent of Schools Jon Gundry. “We want to provide educators and students with tools and resources to help utilize critical thinking skills to build a more engaged democratic society.”

The goals include incorporating the recommendations of the California Task Force on K-12 Civic Learning and provide professional development and share best practices with educators; provide hands-on learning opportunities for students to participate in the upcoming November 2016 elections by coordinating age appropriate contests in multiple languages; and engage key stakeholders, including parents and community members, in the democratic process.

Partners of the initiative include the Santa Clara County Registrar of Voters, the Santa Clara County School Boards Association, the Eastside Alliance, and the County of Santa Clara. Partnerships with other local community based organizations are also being developed.

A committee from the partner organizations has been meeting since the spring to steer the initiative and develop resources to provide to schools and stakeholders. A webpage is being developed and will be available in time for the new school year where these resources, including a toolkit for all teachers in the county, will be posted for download.

Research shows that robust civic learning helps students beyond the classroom – giving them opportunities to analyze, address, and ultimately have a hand in solving complex issues that are important to them and those around them. Furthermore, research findings correlate high-quality civic learning to increased academic achievement, student engagement and reduced dropout rates.

“It is critical for each of our citizens to have a good understanding of civic education and the constitutional workings of our government,” said Joseph Di Salvo, a Santa Clara County Board of

Education Trustee. “Everyone should be concerned when only 35 percent of those registered in our county voted in the June 7 primary. Through robust civic education, I believe we can help democracy thrive by deepening students' understanding and greatly increasing those who register to vote when they turn 18 so they can participate in the electoral process.”

This initiative directly supports the goal from the Framework for California Public Schools that, by high school graduation, students will have developed the readiness for college, careers, and civic life. To act as informed voters, serve as responsible jurors, and participate in policy making decisions, students need the knowledge and skills to interpret and communicate ideas and negotiate and collaborate in ways that positively impact democratic policies, practices, and other people’s lives.

Future updates will be provided on this initiative as they are developed.

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