



NEWS RELEASE

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Santa Clara County Board, Office of Education commemorate Head Start milestone

SAN JOSE, CA – A commitment to a half-century of providing educational services to preschool children from low-income families and a resolve to continue serving our youngest learners was on full display at the [July 15 meeting](#) of the Santa Clara County Board of Education (SCCBOE).

Beginning in 1965, Head Start has been the premier national model for providing the whole child an opportunity for success in school and in life. For 45 of those 50 years, the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) has served as the local Head Start grantee providing tens of thousands of children and families with high-quality, developmentally appropriate preschool services.

SCCOE Head Start staff members were recognized at the meeting, along with former students and parents who testified about the success of the program in their lives. One student, Rachelle Linda Escamilla, came through the SCCOE program in 1986, became a college professor in China, and recently published an award-winning book. Escamilla shared her inspiring story of being raised by a teen mother and how Head Start established a foundation for her life that she still draws upon to this day.

“For years, our dedicated staff, our Board, and our many partners have been unwavering champions for our earliest learners,” said Jon R. Gundry, Superintendent of Schools. “We know from years of data and research that one of the best, most cost-effective ways to level the academic playing field is to make sure that children have access to high quality preschool classrooms.”

The event included recognition of the members of the Head Start Policy Council, and representatives from the offices of Santa Clara County Supervisor Dave Cortese, State Senator Jim Beall, and San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo were on-hand to provide commendations. The celebration was capped off by current Head Start students performing several songs.

Currently, Head Start of Santa Clara County provides services to more than 2,000 preschool-age children in Santa Clara and San Benito Counties each year. Head Start centers, which offer comprehensive preschool program designed to meet the needs of children and their families, are located in most cities in the two-county area, including San Jose, Santa Clara, Campbell, Mountain View, Milpitas, Gilroy, and Hollister.

The Early Head Start Program enrolls eligible infants and toddlers and provides services in collaboration with East Side Union High School District, San Jose Unified School District, Kidango, Inc., and the SCCOE State Preschool Program.

For nearly a decade, the SCCOE Head Start program has been a standard bearer for excellent early learning. Last year, under the direction of long-time director Anna Trujillo, the program achieved 100-

percent compliance in its triennial federal reviews for the third consecutive time, a very rare occurrence according to the National Head Start Association.

“The most important investment we can make is the investment in early learning,” said Board President Darcie Green. “I am proud to be part of a Board whose members have played a critical role in the success of our Head Start program by ensuring the necessary funds were allocated year-in and year-out, and especially during lean times to stave off cuts that would have severely damaged the program’s ability to provide essential services to our children and families.”

[\[Attached is the resolution unanimously adopted by the Board of Education on July 15.\]](#)

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