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From the desk of  
**Charles Weis, Ph.D.**  
 County Superintendent of  
 Schools

I will have the pleasure this week of joining San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed in honoring 22 schools in Santa Clara County with "2020 Vision" Awards. The schools are being honored for noteworthy accomplishments in closing the achievement gap, which is the goal of our collaborative initiative, SJ2020.

When we notified the schools of their awards, we asked them to list the practices that they credited with helping to close the gap. In reviewing these signature practices, we found some common threads. In fact, four practices showed up most often:

- Focus on individual student need
- Data-driven decisions
- Parent/community involvement

## Awards to honor schools' progress in closing the achievement gap

Twenty-two schools in Santa Clara County this week will become inaugural recipients of "2020 Vision" awards of the SJ2020 initiative, a collaborative effort to eliminate the achievement gap within the decade.

The awards recognize the schools' noteworthy accomplishments in closing the achievement gap, and will be presented Jan. 19 at the SJ2020 Annual Report event at the Santa Clara County Office of Education.



Review the award's selection criteria, and learn more about the techniques and programs that led these schools to success.

The schools span all K-12 grades and hail from a handful of districts in the county, as well as one COE-authorized charter school.

Schools that were 2011 recipients of the state's Title I Academic Achievement Awards program will also be acknowledged at the event.

## Program gives community school students college experience

For some COE community school students, a day spent at a local university can be much more than a typical field trip.

"It inspired me to go to college," says one student. "I just want to finish high school and try to get there



- Regular teacher collaboration

This reinforces our notions from the very beginning. We know what to do. Closing the achievement gap is all about doing it. There is nothing stopping us -- but every day, we have to be mindful of our goal, and renew our effort to get there.

In October 2009 at the SJ2020 launch, I said these words: "We know what needs to be done; we know how to do it. And the time to do it is now."

I believed it then; I believe it more than ever today.



## Tennis tourney teaches sportsmanship

Local students will have a chance at an upcoming professional tennis tournament to learn about fitness and good sportsmanship.

The [2012 SAP Open Kids Day](#) runs from 8:30 a.m. to noon Feb. 17 at the HP Pavilion in San Jose. The event is open to second- through eighth-grade students, teachers and chaperones. See [registration information](#).

Now in its 17th year, the free event includes a demonstration by professional tennis players, and information about health and fitness.

For more information about the event, contact [Lynley Takaki](#) at (408) 977-4758.

The top men's tennis tournament in the region runs Feb. 13 to 19, and will feature players like Milos Raonic, Gael Monfils, Andy Roddick and James Blake.

## Links of Interest

to San Jose State University."

The student participated in the College Leadership Institute, a program that gives a taste of university life to students served by the COE's [Alternative Education Department](#), which assists students who have been unsuccessful in other educational settings for a variety of reasons.

Read more about the College Leadership Institute [here](#).

Under the program, a changing group of about 10 students spend a day a week at SJSU, attending classes and interacting with professors in the university's Justice Studies Department. The program serves middle and high school students. Later this month, college students will begin mentoring COE students.

"That's a big message that we're trying to tell," says Oscar Lamas, a COE academic guidance counselor who helped develop the program. "They can be there at a university. They can be at a higher institutions and break away from negative pathways."

## Board honors employee, hears annual reports

Here's a summary of the Santa Clara County Board of Education's actions at its Jan. 11 meeting:

- Recognized Dollie Forney as the January Employee of the Month
- Heard annual reports from ACE and University Preparatory Academy Charter Schools

The Board of Education is the elected governing body of the COE. Its seven members serve four-year terms and are elected by different regions of the county. [Learn more](#) about the members, and view their meeting schedule, agendas and minutes.

## Forum covers school district consolidation

Educators discussed the realities of school district consolidation at a forum hosted this week by the [Silicon Valley Education Foundation](#).

Dr. Weis was among the panelists of the Jan. 17 [event](#). The others were Emmett Carson, Silicon Valley Community Foundation chief executive officer; Dr. Jackie Horejs, Union Elementary School District superintendent; Rachel Ehlers, Principal Fiscal & Policy Analyst of the Legislative Analyst Office; and Josephine Lucey, Cupertino Union School District Board of Education member and [Santa Clara County Committee on School District Organization](#) member.

Topics included the costs of consolidation, ideal district size and who determines what is best for a community. Dr. Weis' presentation from the event is available under the Events section of the COE [website](#) homepage.

A grand jury [report](#) published in June 2010 recommended consolidating school districts in Santa Clara County as a cost-savings measure.

## Silicon Valley Reads begins this month

### Who We Are

Watch a video that details the essential services that the COE provides students, teachers, districts and the community of Santa Clara County.



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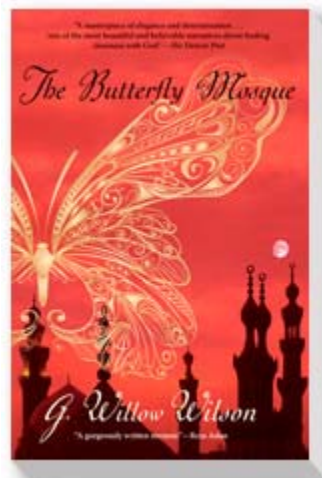
Panel discussions, films and art exhibits are just a few of the activities and events that begin this month and run through April as part of the 2012 Silicon Valley Reads program.

A complete [schedule](#) of programming is now available for the annual event co-presented by the COE to inspire community reading.

Book selections for the 10th edition of the [community literacy](#) project are *The Muslim Next Door* and *The Butterfly Mosque*, which provide two perspectives of American Muslim women.

An interview with the two authors at 7:30 p.m. Jan. 25 at the Campbell Heritage Theatre kicks off the programming.

Silicon Valley Reads is presented by the COE, Santa Clara County Library and San Jose Public Library Foundation, with funding from community groups, corporate and individuals donors.



*Since 1852, the Santa Clara County Office of Education has provided vital services and resources to the county's 31 K-12 public school districts and more than 250,000 students. The COE strives to provide advocacy and leadership on education issues, student programs that are models of excellence, and indispensable services to schools and community partners. The COE takes pride in being a premier employer and a champion for children, schools, and community.*

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