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

Earlier this month, I participated in an event titled "A Conversation with San Jose about Education." The event was presented by an organization called StudentsFirst and the California Mayors Education Roundtable. The founder of StudentsFirst is Michelle Rhee, former chancellor of the Washington, D.C. school system.

Speakers at the event were Ms. Rhee, San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed, Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson, and myself.

My message was simple: We hear a lot about what's wrong with schools today...how the education system is "broken."

But there is much that is right with our public schools here in Santa Clara County, despite the major obstacle of inadequate funding.

For example: Of the top five schools statewide in the Academic Performance index, four are in our county. And the percentage of

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Prospect High wins county Mock Trial event

Aspiring legal eagles from Prospect High School have been named champions of the Santa Clara County Mock Trial competition.

The COE will honor the Prospect legal eagles next month.

State group honors Dr. Weis, COE staffers

Dr. Charles Weis, County Superintendent of Schools, has received the prestigious Marcus Foster Memorial Award for Administrator Excellence from the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA).

This award, which recognizes outstanding leadership and significant contributions to education by a school administrator, was established to honor the memory of Marcus Foster, a former superintendent of the Oakland Unified School District.

Three other COE administrators have been named regional finalists for awards recognizing their contributions to their fields:
county elementary schools meeting their target score of 800 is 75 percent, compared to 57 percent statewide.

Some amazing innovation is taking place in our schools. The "stepping up" programs of the Silicon Valley Education Foundation help to prepare middle school students for math and science in high school and beyond.

A "blended learning" program at Rocketship Mateo Sheedy Elementary allows students to rotate through classes the way high schoolers do. They also spend 100 minutes each day in Rocketship's computer lab.

And at San Antonio Elementary in Alum Rock, which is situated in one of the Valley's poorest neighborhoods, students are exposed to an amazing array of technological devices supporting their learning.

Our challenge is to enable all our students to receive the opportunities and tools they need to succeed at the same high level. The 22 schools we honored at the Santa Clara County Office of Education earlier this year, at the SJ/SV2020 Annual Report Event, showed we can close the achievement gap.

We know what to do. The accomplishments of schools right here in our community show that the system is far from broken. Our focus should be on replicating our success stories.

- Karen Bacica, Administrative Services Supervisor: Classified Administrator of the Year
- Mary-Anne Bosward, Special Education Director: Special Education Administrator of the Year
- Martha Martinez, District & School Support Services Director: Central Office Administrator of the Year

Also, the Tzu Chi Foundation of San Jose was named a regional finalist for ACSA's Partners in Educational Excellence, and Robert Salas was named a finalist for the Every Student Succeeding Award.

Honorees will be recognized locally at a May awards dinner.

Related, Lisa Gonzales, the COE's visual and performing arts coordinator, was named a recipient of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) 2012 Women in School Leadership Award.

COE preschool honored by City of San Jose

A COE preschool has been recognized by the City of San Jose for its service to young children.

McKinley State Preschool is a recent recipient of the 2012 Outstanding Contributor to Child Care Award from the city's Early Care and Education Commission.

Staff will be recognized by the city in April, which is designated as the Month of the Young Child. McKinley will also be recognized at the April 21 Children's Faire, a 24-year San Jose tradition that draws nearly 5,000 families annually.

In operation since 1971, the COE's state-funded preschool programs provide full- and half-day preschool services to about 700 low-income children between the ages of 18 months and 5 years old at five locations in San Jose.

Board honors employee, approves contract
programs in Santa Clara County. Selected artwork will be added into the COE's permanent student art collection.

Student artists responsible for the selected pieces will be honored next fall at the COE. For inspiration, check out a gallery of the 2011 student artwork, as well as pictures of last year's recognition ceremony.

An information packet -- including registration information and selection criteria -- is available online.

Here's a summary of the Santa Clara County Board of Education's actions at its March 7 and 21 meetings:

- Recognized Randy Klein as the March Employee of the Month
- Honored the accomplishments of Lyza Harried, a Sobrato High School student enrolled in the COE's Regional Occupational Program
- Approved the contract of newly appointed County Superintendent of Schools Xavier De La Torre
- Approved the commission of a revenue impact analysis study of school district realignment

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.

COE students hone public speaking skills

A recent collaboration with Toastmasters International helped a group of students served by a COE Special Education program improve their public speaking skills and develop confidence.

Nine pupils enrolled in the program for emotionally disturbed students at Boeger Middle School in San Jose recently completed a 10-week run with Toastmasters' Youth Leadership and Gavel Club program, says Principal Carolina Lluria.

The students, ages 11 through 13, learned to prepare and deliver a speech, boosted their self-esteem, and bonded with their classmates, Carolina says.

"Mostly, the program gave them a voice and helped to improve their self-worth," says Carolina, who hopes to continue the program next school year.

Young scientists advance in competition

Budding scientists will advance to steeper competition after prevailing earlier this month in Santa Clara County's regional science fair.

Check out a list of the top performers at the Synopsys Silicon Valley Science and Technology Championship.

Some winners are invited to compete in May at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair and the California State Science Fair. They'll also be recognized next month at California's Great America amusement park in Santa Clara.

Held March 7 at the San Jose Convention Center, Synopsys is open to
all students in grades six through 12 from public and private schools to throughout the county.

The fair is organized by the Santa Clara Valley Science and Engineering Fair Association.

COE joins voter outreach campaign

The COE this month joined forces with the Santa Clara County Registrar of Voters and various other organizations to launch a campaign to inform underrepresented groups about their stake in upcoming elections.

"My Vote Our Future" hopes to boost voter participation among traditionally low-turnout groups, such as new citizens, low-income communities, 18 to 24 year-olds and parents.

Leading the effort are the parent education activist group Parents for Great Education, regional community college De Anza College and the County Registrar.

The Santa Clara County Board of Education on March 7 adopted a resolution that endorses the project and encourages local school districts to develop their own outreach activities.

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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