In This Issue

· Districts honored for exceptional programs
· Students in Special Ed cultivate skills at new garden
· ‘Head of the Class’ spotlights SJ2020
· Board honors employee, student
· Whooping cough immunization now required
· New scholarship launched for county students

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

Last September, a bill was passed in Sacramento to change the age requirements for children entering kindergarten. Previously, a child could be admitted to kindergarten in the fall if he or she turned 5 by Dec. 2. But at that crucial stage of development, many youngsters are not quite ready for school -- which may have long-lasting effects throughout the child's entire K-12 education experience.

The bill, by Sen. Joe Simitian (D-Palo Alto), phases in a requirement that children be 5 years old when they start kindergarten. This new system will benefit not only the children whose birthdays happen to fall within that window, but every child, and their teachers, too.

Districts honored for exceptional programs

Evergreen School District has been named a top finisher in the Santa Clara County School Board Association's annual awards program that recognizes educational endeavors that significantly affect student success.

The district joins Campbell Union, Cupertino Union, Los Gatos Saratoga Joint Union High, and Moreland school districts as recipients of the 27th annual Glenn W. Hoffmann Awards. The award is named for the former county Superintendent of Schools who believed leadership was a key factor in educational reform.

A committee of school administrators and board members scored entries from county school programs. Awards were given to only those programs that received the highest scores, and 13 districts submitted entries this year.

The districts will receive their awards at an April 27 banquet and program, co-hosted by NBC Bay Area News anchor Jessica Aguirre.

The event also will feature recognition of recipients of the California Distinguished School Awards.

The award -- which honors schools that have demonstrated educational excellence for all students, as well as progress in narrowing the achievement gap -- was earned by Chaboya Middle School in the Evergreen School District, Dartmouth Middle School in the Union Elementary School District, and Moreland Middle School in the Moreland Elementary School District.

Dr. Charles Weis, Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools, will pay tribute to the three schools at the event.

Students in Special Ed cultivate skills at new garden

A new organic garden sprouting at the Santa Clara County Office of Education will help students enrolled in the Special Education Post-Senior program develop their green thumbs -- but also
On April 15, a Transitional Kindergarten (TK) Regional Conference was held at the Santa Clara County Office of Education. I was there to welcome district superintendents and board members, administrators, and teachers. The goal of the conference was to provide information on developmentally-appropriate TK learning opportunities, and on the latest practices and lessons learned from current TK implementers.

This is just one more step in the effort by the COE and our partners to eliminate the achievement gap. When we enable all students -- whatever their age, demographic group or socioeconomic status -- to take full advantage of the classroom experience, we all benefit.

Training focuses on positive school climate

Attendees of an upcoming COE training will learn strategies to enhance a positive school climate.

Presenters at “The Power of Positive Thinking -- Asset Development” will share effective interventions, as well as local programs, initiatives and data that can assist schools.

Co-presented with Project Cornerstone, the training will be from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. May 20 at the COE, 1290 Ridder Park Drive, San Jose 95131.

The free training is geared toward teachers, administrators, and other professionals who work with students in school settings.

learn valuable skills applicable outside the garden.

About 20 students will be responsible for the care and maintenance of the garden’s vegetables and flowers, said Special Education teacher Randy Klein, who helped spearhead the project.

A garden is the latest incarnation of a space that has seen several uses through the years at the COE’s San Jose headquarters. The garden will be made of 12 raised beds, each 8-by-8 feet in dimension. Soil and other materials were donated by local businesses.

The garden’s educational possibilities are broad, Randy said. For example, students use math to design and build the beds. Buying the plants and materials, and later possibly selling any produce incorporates a commerce component.

“This could be so much more than a garden,” Randy said. “You could build a whole class around it.”

Read the full story to learn more about the COE garden.

'Head of the Class' spotlights SJ2020

The disparity in academic achievement among San Jose students has dramatic effects on the economic and social health of the entire region, County Superintendent of Schools Charles Weis, Ph.D. said in the latest episode of “Head of the Class.”

Watch the video here.

This month’s episode of the online COE news program highlights SJ2020, the COE’s joint effort with the city of San Jose to eliminate the achievement gap in city schools within the decade.

‘Head of the Class’ showcases programs and initiatives at the COE and in school districts throughout the county.

Board honors employee, student, volunteers

Here’s a summary of the Santa Clara County Board of Education’s actions at its April 6 and 20 meetings:

- Recognized Ann Redd-Oyedele as April’s Employee of the Month
- Honored Migrant Education student Yadira M. Guerrero Garcia for her accomplishments
- Recognized the Tzu Chi Foundation of San Jose as the COE’s Volunteer of the Year
Register online, and contact Armida Alvarez at (408) 453-6529 for more information.

Links of Interest

The State of Education
Check out data of vital interest to education planning efforts in Santa Clara County.

Pertussis immunization is now required

Under recently enacted state legislation, all students entering seventh through 12th grade in the 2011-12 school year must be immunized against pertussis, more commonly known as whooping cough.

Prompted by a recent uptick in pertussis cases in California, A.B. 354 requires these students to show proof of a Tdap booster before starting school. Beginning July 1, 2011 and beyond, all students entering seventh grade must show proof of the booster.

The COE has created an online resource guide to help parents, teachers and school districts understand the provisions of A.B. 354. More information is also available about whooping cough, a disease that causes coughing fits which make breathing difficult, spreads easily, and can be fatal to infants.

New scholarship launched for county students

A Northern California grocer specializing in Latino food has launched a scholarship program for Santa Clara County youth.

Recipients of the Mi Pueblo Food Center scholarships must be graduating seniors with at least a 3.0 cumulative grade point average who can demonstrate financial need.

Award amounts vary between $500 and $2,500, depending on the recipient's academic achievement.

Scholarship applications must be postmarked by May 13, and the awards will be distributed at a June 25 ceremony.

More information about the scholarship program, as well as a downloadable application, is available online.

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.