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

This is a month when California "officially" honors teachers, with the Day of the Teacher. And yet, as I wrote in a recent op-ed in the San Jose Mercury News, it seems today that we appreciate our teachers less than any time I can remember in my long career in education. (Click here to read the entire piece.)

Among many who are not directly connected to today's classrooms, there is a growing tendency toward teacher-bashing. And yet, in my many visits to classrooms in Santa Clara County, I have encountered many dedicated, competent and nurturing teachers ... and very few bad ones.

Arson-destroyed Special Ed facility re-opens

The COE's Gateway School is a perfect place for learning and celebration, Principal Laurene Beto told a crowd of about 75 people gathered at the Gilroy school's recent grand opening.

"Gateway is full of color and light and energy," Laurene said.

Educators, students, community members and parents indeed celebrated April 27, when the school for students with severe disabilities and medical fragilities reopened after a year of construction following two devastating 2008 arsons.

"What a difference a year makes," said County Superintendent of Schools Charles Weis, Ph.D. "Today is truly one of celebration for the County Office of Education, our teachers here, and above all, the students of Gateway."

The new building features four classrooms and a therapy room, and serves about 50 students. Insurance covered the $4.4 million construction cost.

Head Start celebrates successful review

A rigorous federal review has found the COE's Head Start/Early Start Program fully compliant with more than 2,000 regulations, and also identified many areas of program strengths.
The only way our schools and teachers are going to get better is if we invest in their improvement. California ranks 47th nationally in spending on education, at $7,500 per student per year. New York and New Jersey spend more than twice that amount. Shame on us.

In a climate where teachers are often criticized and rarely honored, who can blame the best and brightest of our youth if they eschew teaching? We are fortunate to have the core of excellent teachers who work in our schools today. My worry is, who will want to replace them tomorrow? Teaching is becoming a thankless job.

Please join me in changing that. The next chance you get, thank a teacher or teachers for all they do -- for their dedication, caring and belief that their hard work today will pay off down the road, not just for the children they teach, but for all of us. Thank them, and pray that they keep teaching.

The program and its partners meet all standards, laws, regulations and policy requirements, stated a report from the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Head Start.

Among the program's many areas of strength is its use of technology to file, track and meet maintenance requests; manage Human Resources records; and track student applications.

The review included thorough inspections of environments, classroom observation, intense file reviews, and interviews with parents, staff, policy council and governing board members, as well as community partners.

The outstanding review follows the program's last showing in 2008, when the Head Start/Early Start programs received a gold certificate for being judged in compliance with all regulations.

The county's Head Start program was also selected as a model program that will be used in trainings as an example for best practices.

Videotaping took place last month, focusing on four areas: how teachers plan for observation, conduct and document observations, analyze data that's been collected, and use data during classroom instruction.

Panel discusses state budget effects on K-12

As part of a forum sponsored by the Silicon Valley Education Foundation, education, business and labor leaders gathered earlier this month at the COE to discuss the proposed 2011-12 state budget's potential effects on education.

Watch “Education Forum: State Budget Update” here.

Panelists included Dr. Weis; Tony Garcia, Oak Grove School District Superintendent; Dean Vogel, vice president of the California Teachers Association; Marshall "Mike" Smith, a former senior adviser to the U.S. Secretary of Education; and Burton Goldfield, CEO of TriNet, a human resources outsourcing company.

Dr. Weis also provided the event's keynote address.

John Fensterwald, who writes the SVEF blog, "The Educated Guess," moderated the discussion.

Donations send incarcerated youth to camp

Excitement was evident on the faces of the Blue Ridge School...
Blue Ridge School students make their way through Walden West National Semiconductor and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation are partners in this 40-hour professional development opportunity.

For more information about the session, contact COE Science Coordinator Sandi Yellenberg at (408) 453-6692.

Links of Interest

The State of Education

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

students as they confronted a high-ropes course and zip line at the COE's outdoor science camp.

Read more about the students' trip.

Made possible by donations from COE employees, a recent spring day spent at Walden West gave 30 students incarcerated at William F. James Boys Ranch an opportunity to enjoy nature and develop teamwork skills, Principal Todd Farr said.

"Students were challenged, faced their fears and gained confidence," he said. "It was about community building and having a great day outdoors."

An informal fundraising drive last summer amassed about $1,350 from COE employees to cover the cost for 30 students to spend a day with nature.

"You get students into an environment like that, and it gives them a different perspective on things," Farr said. "You get them into the fresh air, wilderness and trees -- they were so excited to be out there."

Board honors employees, accepts grant

Here's a summary of the Santa Clara County Board of Education's actions at its May 4 and 18 meetings:

- Recognized Mike Bromberg as May's Employee of the Month
- Recognized the county nominees for the state Classified Employee of the Year program
- Approved a $138,960 purchase order to upgrade play areas that will maximize instruction and learning time at several Head Start sites.
- Accepted a $22,240 grant for Artspiration, the COE's arts education initiative.

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 recognizes Volunteers of the Year

The Tzu Chi Foundation of San Jose was recently named the COE's Volunteer of the Year for its longstanding and generous contributions to the office's Alternative Education Department.
Tzu Chi volunteers address the County Board of Education

Chapter CEO Minjhing Hsieh, Brother A.T. Wee, Brother Steve Hsu and Sister Irene Chen were among the volunteers recognized at a COE ceremony last month in conjunction with National Public Schools Volunteer Week.

The recognition honors individuals or groups that have volunteered time, knowledge and skills, and provided an outstanding contribution to the COE’s student programs. Tzu Chi has worked with community schools by providing assistance in various ways for more than 15 years.

District praised for English Learners focus

The COE recently presented the Campbell Union School District with special recognition for its commitment to ensuring English learner students have full access and success.

The Equity and Access for English Learners District Partner Award recognizes the district’s commitment to A Look at Learning (ALL), a professional development program that helps educators increase academic achievement of English learners.

The district has utilized ALL in many ways, including building a system-wide approach with regular and clear communication with stakeholders, and being open and willing to sharing its practices with other districts.

Campbell Union was one of 15 districts and county offices of education that received recognition for its implementation of the program at last month’s A Look at Learning Showcase at the COE.

Visit ALL’s website to view the event’s keynote, presentations and all honorees’ storyboards, as well as a photo gallery of the festivities.

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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