Despite widespread agreement about the crucial importance of universally accessible, high-quality early learning, the California education community has heard for years that it will be available "any day now."

So, why in 2010 do we still not have it?

I think it’s partly because of our language. “Preschool” subtly suggests that this takes place before real school, which starts at kindergarten. So, “preschool” must not really be necessary.

It’s time that early learning advocates change the language. At a recent event’s keynote address, I urged a new and consistent dialogue in the

The road to graduation

When he walked across the stage at the recent SCCOE Alternative Schools graduation, Joey Martinez proved that even the toughest journey can be completed with perseverance.

Joey, 17, went through several alternative schools after getting kicked out of an East Side Union district high school for fighting. Eventually, he ended up at Novo Community School, and connected with teacher Mark Shadduck, who helped Joey stay on track even as he moved on to Alternative Placement Academy.

He joined about 70 other ASD students June 17 at the Alternative Schools graduation ceremony in San Jose. Joey is now enrolled at Evergreen Community College and is studying to be a registered nurse.

Read more about Joey’s journey here.

Board approves charter operation contracts, new computers

Here’s a summary of the Santa Clara County Board of Education’s actions at its June 16 meeting:

- Approved contracts for the operation of ACE, Bullis, Discovery, Leadership, University Preparatory Academy, Magnolia and Rocketship Charter Schools

- Approved 2010-2012 Single Plans for Student Achievement for Alternative Placement Academy, County Community School, Juvenile Hall and Special Education

- Approved purchase orders for 140 new computers for Alternative Education classrooms, and construction of
education community, and beyond. (You can read text of the address here.) If we can change the dialogue, I'm hopeful that "any day now" will come sooner rather than later.

- Charles Weis, Ph.D.

Migrant Ed initiative focuses on algebra

As part of an ambitious new SCCOE initiative, more than 300 migrant students in the region this summer will participate in algebra preparation classes.

The Migrant Education Program wants to ensure that all migrant students in Region 1 - which includes Santa Clara, San Mateo, San Francisco, Alameda and Santa Cruz counties - pass algebra by the end of eighth grade.

The classes for incoming seventh- and eighth-grade students are among many incremental steps in the overall initiative, partially prompted by research that indicates algebra is a gatekeeper to high school graduation and college/career opportunities.

SCCOE launches Facebook, Twitter presence

The SCCOE has emerged as an electronic social butterfly!

We are now posting the latest news, events and happenings at the SCCOE and larger education community on Facebook and Twitter.

Join the Facebook conversation by visiting www.facebook.com/sccoe and clicking the "Like" button.

Find us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/sccoe, and click the "Follow" button.

Use these powerful tools to get news updates in real time, view photographs and video, and connect with colleagues, educators, business leaders and other community members.

Help San Jose school recover from fire

The community can help support students, teachers and administrators of fire-ravaged Trace Elementary School by donating money or library materials.

Send tax-deductible donations to San Jose Unified School District's Fiscal Department, 855 Lenzen Ave., San Jose, CA 95126. Write "Trace Fund" in the check's memo line.

The school also needs new and gently used books for classroom and library use. Drop off materials at the district office.

Later in the summer, volunteers will also be needed to help prepare Trace for the beginning of the school year, Aug. 16.

More than a dozen classrooms, the library and media center were among the casualties of a fire earlier this month at the San Jose school.

County schools excel in fitness contest

Four county schools have been named finalists in a statewide, government-sponsored contest that promotes increased physical activity and improved nutrition in California youth.

San Jose's Piedmont Middle
School, Ruskin Elementary and Tom Matsumoto Elementary, as well as Los Altos High School are among 127 finalists in the California Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports 2010 Challenge Competition.

They were selected from nearly 2,650 schools based on the amount of students who were active between 30 and 60 minutes a day, at least three days a week.

Finalists now compete for prizes including 11 fitness centers valued at $100,000 each, and 11 regional $5,000 awards.

Local principal earns top honors

A San Jose school administrator has been named California’s 2010 National Distinguished Elementary School Principal by a national organization.

Dorsa Elementary School Principal Norma Rodriguez last month earned top honors from the National Association for Elementary School Principals.

Since Norma took Dorsa's helm in 2004, the Alum Rock Unified School District school gained 174 API points, and improved language arts and mathematics proficiency rates.

District Superintendent José L. Manzo called Norma an “inspiring educational force” who “turned around a failing school, making it a school full of pride and determination.”

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 SCCOE 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 SCCOE takes pride in being a premier employer and a champion for children, schools, and community.