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

Most of us in public education breathed a sigh of relief when Gov. Jerry Brown signed the 2011-12 budget into law June 30. In the past, education has borne a disproportionate share of cuts made during the budget process. This year, the harm was much less severe.

One aspect of the budget process, however, had many of us wondering what it all meant. The budget trailer bill, Assembly Bill 114, says that districts should project the same revenue level per student as the previous year, and maintain staffing commensurate with that level.

The bill also limits the county superintendent’s authority for district budget approval to only 2011-12, suspending for

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Fold by fold, crease by crease, a flock of colorful paper birds hatched from the hands of students enrolled in the COE’s Special Education deaf and hard of hearing program.

The students used origami, the Japanese art of paper folding, to construct 1,000 paper cranes that will serve as a handmade message of hope, love and support for deaf students affected by an earthquake and tsunami earlier this year in Japan.

Read more about the students’ project.

Aceves named Chief Schools Officer
A longtime top COE leader began a new challenge this month.

Linda Aceves assumed leadership July 1 of the Student Services Branch, a move that follows her six-year run as the COE’s Chief Academic Officer who oversaw the Educational Services Branch.

Aceves now leads a branch that provides schools and classrooms for severely disabled youth and adults, schools for incarcerated youth, alternative schools, and services for early learning. The branch also provides environmental education; helps districts run their special education programs; and provides education for children of migrant families.

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this year the budget approval requirement that districts must demonstrate they can meet financial obligations for the two subsequent fiscal years.

Fiscal oversight is one of the essential duties of the County Offices of Education in California. At the Santa Clara County Office of Education, we will continue to recommend to districts that they carefully consider all aspects of long-term fiscal planning. To that end, we still will provide individualized recommendations in our budget-approval correspondence that are tailored for each district’s fiscal stability.

We will follow the letter of the law, but at the same time, we will not surrender our existing fiscal oversight responsibilities. In that spirit, we are continuing to encourage districts to think more than one year out as they consider their 2011-12 budget revisions. This is just sound and sensible financial practice.

Each of the 31 districts in our county will need to address its own specific fiscal situation. As always, the County Office of Education stands ready to assist our districts in any way possible.

Aceves joined the COE in 2001, and became what is now titled Chief Academic Officer in 2005. She will serve in that capacity on an interim basis until a replacement is hired.

Also, under a recent reorganization at the COE, the Human Resources Branch has been absorbed into the Office of the Superintendent.

Philip Gordillo will serve as Executive Director of Personnel Services. He will report both to the Personnel Commission and to Deputy Superintendent Dr. Cary Dritz, who will have overall responsibility for Human Resources within the Office of the Superintendent.

Survey shows increased COE customer service

The majority of Santa Clara County school districts believe that the COE has undergone a positive shift in its focus on customer service, according to results of the 2011 District Customer Service Interviews.

Review the complete results of the survey.

Surveys were conducted by Office of the Superintendent staff at 32 school districts between December 2010 and May 2011. Nearly 140 district employees were interviewed to assess the COE’s strengths and weaknesses, potential changes and improvements, and overall usefulness.

School districts on average ranked the COE’s usefulness as 4.2 on a scale of one (dispensable) to five (indispensable). Districts in 2007 ranked the COE as a 3.7 on this scale.

Renowned early learning model headed to area

Nearly $4 million in seed money has been raised to build a state-of-the-art early learning facility that will serve children in families in Santa Clara County using a renowned model for early education that is closely aligned with several COE initiatives.

The Educare of California at Silicon Valley facility will house an early learning center, a professional development institute and a community Family Resource Center adjacent to Santee Elementary School in the Franklin-McKinley School District in southeast San Jose.

Educare is a renowned, national network of full-day, year-round schools that serve at-risk children from birth to age five. The schools provide the highest quality programming and instructional support that develop early skills and nurture parent-child relationships, creating the foundation for learning. View a video about Educare.

Board hears budget update, accepts donation
productivity and efficiency, observe classroom instruction for at least two full days weekly, and employ best practices for working with school secretaries.

The sessions will be held from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Aug. 8 for administrators only, and Aug. 9 for administrators and administrative assistants at the COE, 1290 Ridder Park Drive, San Jose, CA 95131.

Registration costs are $525 for a team of two, and $788 for a team of three. Register online, and contact Melisa Torrez at 408-453-6688 for more information.

Here's a summary of the Santa Clara County Board of Education's actions at its July 20 meeting:

- Heard an update on the COE's 2011-12 spending plan following the state budget's recent adoption.
- Accepted a $25,000 donation from the Silicon Valley Leadership Group to the COE's fit for learning program.
- Heard an update on A Look at Learning, the COE's professional development program for teachers of English learners.

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.

Porter named to state charter schools panel

John Porter, superintendent of Franklin-McKinley School District in San Jose, was appointed earlier this month to the state Advisory Commission on Charter Schools.

Porter's service as a member of the nine-person commission begins July 28 in Sacramento. He will assist in advising the State Board of Education on charter school issues. The commission's priorities include selective granting of charters; taking action related to the revocation of charters; and establishing appropriate funding levels for non-classroom based charter schools.

Porter came to Franklin-McKinley in July 2006, after having served as superintendent of schools in Ridgewood, N.J. At Franklin-McKinley he has co-designed the Franklin-McKinley Children's Initiative, a comprehensive educational reform and wrap-around service model within a cluster of schools in the highest poverty area in the district.

Porter said he sought to join the commission to help facilitate a “more collaborative design model that would allow California districts and charters to work together.”

What do you think about this newsletter?

There's still more time to tell the COE what you think about the Education Bulletin.

Results from this brief, anonymous survey will be used to improve future issues of the monthly electronic newsletter.

Your feedback and time are greatly appreciated.
Eleven districts see new superintendents

About a third of the county's school districts will begin the 2011-12 school year under new top leadership.

New superintendents take the helm at 11 districts. Here's a list of the new leaders and their districts:

- Will Ector, Berryessa Union
- Kathy Gomez, Evergreen
- Elizabeth Bozzo, Lakeside Joint Union
- Patricia Lamson (interim), Loma Prieta Joint Union
- Bob Mistele (interim), Los Gatos-Saratoga Union High
- Diana Abbati, Los Gatos Union
- Jan Kaay, Luther Burbank
- Cary Matsuoka, Milpitas Unified
- Mariann Engle, Mount Pleasant
- Mark Barmore, Moreland
- Bobbie Plough, Santa Clara Unified

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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