Welcome Dr. Xavier De La Torre, Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools

Xavier De La Torre, Ed.D., became Santa Clara County’s Superintendent of Schools this month.

Dr. De La Torre officially took the helm of the Santa Clara County Office of Education on July 1.

Learn more about Dr. De La Torre [here].

Formerly superintendent of Socorro Independent School District in El Paso, Texas, Dr. De La Torre had an opportunity to meet with the Santa Clara County community late last month. See photographs from that event [here].

Dr. De La Torre also met with COE staff early this month, and offered a brief address to the group.

"The Santa Clara County Office of Education enjoys a great reputation for best practices, for being innovative, for looking around corners," he told staff, "and I hope at the very least to preserve that and learn from you about how we can go to the next level."

He concluded: "I'm student-centered, and as long as we can do good things for kids, I'll be thrilled to be here as long as you'll have me."

County Office names new leaders

The COE will soon welcome two new executive team members.

Micaela Ochoa has been named Chief Business Officer, and Angelica Ramsey has been named Chief Academic Officer.

Ochoa is the Assistant Superintendent for Business Services in the Fremont Unified School District. Ramsey is principal of Eastlake High School in the Socorro Independent School District in El Paso, Texas.
and resources to help eliminate the academic achievement gap.

In studying the educational climate of the region, and the work of the COE, I was attracted by the ambitious and aggressive agenda in SJ/SV 2020. If the achievement gap cannot be eliminated in the Silicon Valley of California, then it can't be eliminated -- and that is something I simply refuse to believe. But it won't be easy. It will require resolve, resilience, and the reengineering of how we educate our children. It will require vision, leadership and courageous conversations aimed at the efficacy of current pedagogy and practices in our schools and in our classrooms.

In articulating a vision for the COE, it will first be critical to understand the context of the work, including the interests and the expected outcomes from the County Board of Education and from all entities supported and served.

It is important to recognize that this vision cannot be that of a single individual. A compelling vision requires a consensus of conviction and commitment -- both from educators and from the community -- about our expectations for our schools, and about our hopes for the future of our children.

My leadership style is collaborative and inclusive. As one who strongly believes that ongoing, two-way, communication in a climate and culture of mutual respect is vital to this work, I value and will solicit the interests, opinions and ideas of all stakeholders.

As we prepare for the upcoming school year, I look forward to meeting and speaking with as many of those stakeholders as possible. We cannot succeed without the support of our community -- especially the higher education, corporate and high-technology sectors, which rely on our school districts to provide a capable work force to sustain our place as a world leader, and to protect our economic prosperity.

With the dedication, commitment, expertise and unyielding resolve of team members throughout the COE and the county, we can partner with each of the 31 districts and our charter schools to ensure that all students graduate ready for college and careers.

"We're very fortunate to bring two such high-quality educators to the County Office," Dr. De La Torre said. "I know that they will step in and not miss a beat in bringing the critical services that we deliver from our Office to the schools and students in our county."

As Chief Business Officer, Ochoa will lead the COE's Business Services Branch. The branch is the office's financial and assets manager and the county school districts' business support office.

As Chief Academic Officer, Ramsey will lead the COE's Educational Services Branch. The branch supports the county's public school districts through professional development, curriculum and instruction development, assessment and accountability, and district and school improvement services.

Learn more about Ochoa and Ramsey here.

COE announces 2012 Santa Clara County Teachers of the Year

The COE is proud to announce Santa Clara County's 2012 Teachers of the Year.

See the full list here.

These accomplished educators will be recognized at the 43rd annual Teacher Recognition Celebration on Sept. 27.

School districts selected their honorees based on each teacher's dedication to students, classroom skill and commitment to life-long learning. This year's recipients of the most prestigious local teaching award include public school teachers of nearly every grade and subject matter.

View the Teacher Recognition Celebration website to learn more about the event and its history, and to view photos and videos of previous ceremonies.

COE celebrates community school graduates

Family, friends and educators recently celebrated the accomplishments of five students who graduated from COE community schools.

View a photo gallery of the ceremony here.
I look forward to forming those partnerships, and to accomplishing great things together.

The students got the extra push to graduation thanks to a new summertime credit recovery program offered to students enrolled in the COE’s Alternative Education Department.

While other students enjoyed summer vacation, the graduates participated in the voluntary, 20-day program that began just after regular classes ended in June.

“Our programs give students an opportunity to believe in themselves,” Principal Angela Haick told the crowd gathered to celebrate the graduates. “Our kids have taken this opportunity and turned their lives around.”

At the ceremony, graduates thanked their family and friends from the podium, and gave a rose to a loved one who supported their success.

Dr. De La Torre helped award diplomas at the event, and Sonja House, coordinator of the COE’s Foster Youth Services, sang the national anthem.

“We want to congratulate you and acknowledge you and encourage you to move forward in whatever college or career goals you have,” Chief Academic Officer Linda Aceves told the graduates.

Board approves charter petition revision

Here’s a summary of actions taken by the Santa Clara County Board of Education at its July 18 meeting:

- approved a revision to the Rocketship 8 charter petition seeking to delay opening by one year
- approved revisions to the charter school annual report template

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.

English learners’ graduation rates improve

Santa Clara County students classified as English learners showed the biggest improvement among subgroups in graduation and dropout rates released late last month by the California Department of Education.
The rate among other subgroups and county students as a whole otherwise changed little from a year ago, according to an analysis of 2010-11 graduation data completed by the COE’s Assessment and Accountability Department.

See the full analysis here.

Among English learners, the graduation rate for students in the class of 2011 was 60.7 percent, which is 3.9 percentage points higher than last year. This mirrored a statewide trend in which the rate among English learners increased by 3.8 percentage points.

**Teacher leaders LEAP closer to administration**

Thirty-six credentialed educators recently celebrated their graduation from a COE program that helps develop educators into administrators.

Curriculum under the Leaders in Education Administration Program, or LEAP, helps potential administrators learn skills and knowledge to become strong instructional leaders, and effectively support teachers and increase student achievement.

Participants in the 10-month Tier 1 credentialing program receive 154 hours of face-to-face instruction, 77 hours of online learning and support, and 77 hours of guided fieldwork experience. The first tier credential leads to a certificate of eligibility or preliminary administrative services credential.

In their second year, graduates can continue with National University to obtain a master’s degree in applied school management.

**Breakfast event covers education budget cuts**

Learn more about the impact of state budget cuts to education and enjoy some pancakes with your neighbors at an upcoming event presented by Assemblyman Jim Beall.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson will discuss the budget’s effects on Aug. 25 from 9 to 10:30 a.m. at the Orchard City Banquet Hall inside the Campbell Community Center, 1 W. Campbell Ave. in Campbell.
Breakfast will be served on a first-come, first-served basis.

Call (408) 282-8920 to register or receive more information.

**Federal Reserve Chairman speaks to educators**

Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke will address educators nationwide on the increased need for personal finance education in an Aug. 7 video conference.

Afterward, Bernanke will answer questions from K-12 and post-secondary educators on economics, personal finance and related disciplines.

The video conference will run from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., and can be viewed [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._