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

Here’s cause for celebration: We recently received some great news about our schools and students.

Earlier this month, the California Department of Education released scores from the 2011 California Standards Tests. As reported in this newsletter, scores went up across the board for Santa Clara County students. Even better, the scores indicated we are gaining ground in our efforts to close the achievement gap.

Both in math and English tests, our Hispanic and African American youth narrowed the distance between their scores and the scores of their white and Asian fellow students -- even as the latter students' scores also rose. Also, the results revealed that more

Data shows academic gains, college readiness

Results of the 2011 California Standards Tests indicate progress in efforts to close the achievement gap.

According to 2011 CST results released by the California Department of Education earlier this month, county students continued to show steady improvement over time, and also continue to outperform statewide peers.

Sixty-five percent of students scored as proficient or above in the English Language Arts portion of the examination, compared with 54 percent of students statewide. In mathematics, 71 percent of county students scored as proficient or above, compared with 62 percent statewide.

Also, the county's Hispanic subgroup demonstrated academic growth on all four academic areas assessed by the CST between 2010 and 2011. Further, Hispanic students reduced the achievement gap with their white peers, who also showed academic growth.

A full analysis of the results by the COE's Assessment and Accountability Department is also available.

The state this month also released adjusted graduation and dropout rates for the 2009-10 school year. Santa Clara County's overall high school graduation rate is 78.3 percent. Figures also show that more than half of students graduate having completed the a-g coursework necessary to attend the state university system.

Check out the COE's full analysis of the data.

Mourtos named Chief Academic Officer

Edith Mourtos, director of Curriculum and Instruction at the Santa Clara
Hispanic and African American students are taking on tougher courses, such as algebra, that pave the way to higher education. And even though the number of students taking the test is much greater, the scores still slightly rose.

I think this tells us several things. Our efforts at combating the gap -- for example, our SJ2020 initiative -- are working. A community working together wisely really can help to ensure that all of our students, from cradle to career, receive the education and support they need for success.

Also, the algebra results might challenge our beliefs about students' abilities. They show us that we need to be extra careful not to underestimate the capabilities of any group. When given the opportunity and support to take tougher courses, all students can succeed.

Congratulations to our students, teachers and administrators for their great accomplishment.

County Office of Education, has been named Chief Academic Officer at the COE.

In her new role, Mourtos will lead the COE's Educational Services branch, which supports the county's public school districts through professional development, curriculum and instruction development, assessment and accountability, and district and school improvement services.

"I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to lead the Educational Services branch, which is so essential to the success of our schools, and ultimately, our students," said Mourtos, who joined the COE in 2003.

She succeeds Linda Aceves, who recently was named the COE's Chief Schools Officer, overseeing the Student Services branch.

News program spotlights 'A Look at Learning'

"A Look at Learning" is a comprehensive professional development system that helps teachers improve their instruction of English learners, said Dr. Yee Wan in the latest episode of "Head of the Class."

Watch the video here.

In the latest episode, Wan, the COE's coordinator of Multilingual Programs, sat down with Dr. Weis to talk about the specifics of a program that is revolutionizing how English learners receive instruction throughout the state.

"Head of the Class" showcases programs and initiatives at the SCCOE and in school districts throughout the county.

Algebra program pays off in CST results

While the COE cheers local students' excellent showings on the last round of California Standards Tests, at least one staffer is wowed by scores in a neighboring county.

A program manager for the COE's Migrant Education program, Gerry Lopez sees Pescadero High School's CST test improvements as empirical evidence that his recent work with teens at the 108-
Register online. The $35 fee covers materials, breakfast and lunch.

For more information, contact CTE Director Alyssa Lynch by email or (408) 453-4329.

Links of Interest

Pertussis immunization requirements

This online resource guide can help parents, teachers and school districts understand legislation that requires all students entering seventh through 12th grade this coming school year to be immunized against pertussis, an illness more commonly known as whooping cough.

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Student school in neighboring San Mateo County has paid off.

“We got through to them,” he said of his participation in a two-week summertime pre-algebra institute for about two dozen students there.

CST results released earlier this month by the state show gains: In 2011, 35 percent of Pescadero test-takers scored as proficient or higher on the Algebra I portion of the exam. In 2010, 29 percent of students scored as proficient or higher on the same section.

It’s a notable improvement for low-achieving students who often don’t respond well in a traditional classroom setting, Lopez said.

Read more about Lopez’s work here.

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Board OKs budget revisions, grant application

Here’s a summary of the Santa Clara County Board of Education’s actions at its August 10 meeting:

- Approved a 2011-12 COE operating budget reflecting revisions following the state’s budget adoption
- Approved an application to receive a donation of playground equipment valued at $65,000 for a state preschool site
- Approved submission of a $14,000 grant application to San Jose Smart Start, the city’s childhood 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.

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Teacher nominations sought for award

Do you credit your success to the guidance, mentoring and academic skills provided by a specific high school teacher?

Former students who are either attending or recently graduated from four-year institutions of higher learning can nominate exceptional secondary school teachers for the Carlston Family Foundation’s 2012 Outstanding Teacher Award.

Teacher honorees each receive a $15,000 cash award, and their school receives a $5,000 cash award. To date, the Foundation has honored 31 exceptional California secondary teachers.

A teacher from Santa Clara County is among the five 2011 honorees set for recognition in October: Paul Kick teaches English at Oak Grove High School in the East Side Union High School District.
To nominate a teacher and learn more about the foundation, visit the Carlston Family Foundation [website](#).

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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