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This year, the usual refreshing back-to-school energy I feel every year is particularly happy, given the wonderful things happening in county public schools.

So, it was particularly disheartening to read that an education think tank ranked San Jose as one of the worst U.S. cities for school reform. No one likes a bad grade, especially when it's undeserved.

First, this report focuses only on one school district, while ignoring the other 18 districts in the city. It also ignores reform efforts already under way in our districts, and instead emphasizes non-traditional efforts.

Roundtable to focus on charter-district collaboration

An upcoming SCCOE event aims to foster collaboration and understanding between traditional schools and charter schools.

The Sept. 22 event, which runs from 2:45 to 8 p.m., will focus specifically on how the community can work together to improve the Prop. 39 process for charters and districts.

Stakeholders and policy-makers who have experience with Prop. 39 are invited to participate in the presentations, as well as focused and facilitated roundtable discussions on the legislation's implications.

Registration costs $25, and the event will be held at the SCCOE, 1290 Ridder Park Drive, San Jose, CA 95131. For more information, call 408-453-3601 or email.

County students score 'hat trick' on test scores

A trio of recently released statewide standardized test scores shows improvements among Santa Clara County students, as well as ongoing progress in narrowing the achievement gap.

The 2010 Accountability Progress Report, released earlier this month, shows county students are continuing a long-running trend of steady and significant gains in testing scores, as well as outperforming their peers. The county's average Growth Academic Performance Index is higher than the state's target of 800.

County students again outperformed their statewide peers on the
The report also disregards the rich involvement of local business and philanthropies - like the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Silicon Valley Education Foundation and Silicon Valley Leadership Group - in improving student outcomes.

Also ignored in the report are San Jose's many city-school partnerships, most notably SJ2020, the SCCOE's joint initiative with the city of San Jose to close the achievement gap in city schools within the decade.

This groundbreaking initiative aims for a lofty goal, but I am convinced we will meet the challenge because San Jose is teeming with high-achieving pupils, nationally recognized teachers and administrators, and neighborhoods rallying around their schools.

The County Office of Education and I couldn't be more proud of schools in San Jose, and throughout the county.

- Charles Weis, Ph.D.

2009-10 California High School Exit Exam, results released in late August showed.

Results of the 2010 California Standards Test showed several signs of improvement among county students, particularly in Hispanic pupils. Released in August, the results also showed that more students are taking and succeeding in tough math and science classes.

SCCOE hires new Chief Business Officer

The SCCOE will welcome a new executive team member next month.

Effective Oct. 1, Donald Kenneth Shelton, assistant superintendent for Business Services at the Los Angeles County Office of Education, will become the SCCOE's Chief Business Officer.

Shelton will lead the Business Services Branch, the SCCOE's financial and assets manager and school districts' business support office. The branch is responsible for oversight of about $3.4 billion of taxpayer funds that support about 390 public schools in Santa Clara County. Shelton replaces Cathy Grovenburg, who is retiring after about 14 years with the SCCOE.

In Los Angeles, Shelton has served a dual role: chief business and financial officer for the county office; and chief business official for the county superintendent.

SCCOE selects county nominee to state Teachers of the Year program

Eve Lindsay of the Campbell Union School District will represent Santa Clara County in the 2011 state Teachers of the Year Program.

Lindsay teaches English learners at Monroe Middle School, where she provides high-quality instruction, imposes high classroom standards and also strives to reach her students on a personal level.

Lindsay's colleagues praised her ability to connect with her students, and also provide guidance and instruction to fellow teachers.

The California Department of Education chooses five Teachers of the Year from a statewide pool, and identifies one educator to represent California in the National Teacher of the Year program. State winners will be announced in November.

Board honors employees, revokes charter

Here's a summary of the Santa Clara County Board of Education's actions at its Sept. 1 and Sept. 15 meetings:

- Honored Steve Sinclair as September's Employee of the Month
ARUSD teachers participate in a professional development session to infuse arts into instruction

The Board of Education is the elected governing body of the Office of Education. 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.

Arts abound in Alum Rock schools

Alum Rock Union School District now has a trio of elementary schools systematically infusing the visual and performing arts into traditional subject instruction.

Beginning this school year, Cureton and Lyndale schools join Linda Vista School in the practice. All three schools feed into Joseph George Middle School, which is also an arts hub. This year marks Linda Vista's third as an arts hub, and the school enjoys a full-time music teacher, choir and band.

At Linda Vista, choir time is offered four days a week, and students performing below basic levels alternate between choir and intensive intervention with their classroom teacher. Administrators believe this factored into the percentage of second graders scoring as proficient or higher in the mathematics portion of the 2010 California Standards Test doubling from 2009 levels.

Arts are now integrated in all subject areas at Joseph George Middle School, which this year widened its electives to include band, choir, drum corps, art, dance, drama, digital photography and guitar.

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.
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