To: County Board of Education

From: Michael C. Watkins
County Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Superintendent’s Monthly Report to the Board
March 18, 2010

The following matters and events have occurred since the report of February 18, 2010:

**Support to Districts**
In our effort to expand support to school districts throughout Santa Cruz County, which is our primary mission, I have been and will continue to meet with district superintendents President King of Cabrillo College, and County Office of Education administrative staff to explore how we can increase support under current programs and branch out into areas that heretofore were delivered by each district directly to their students. President King and I are spearheading a task force to study what programs are being cut at the district level, what capabilities there are to fill the gaps, prioritize, and determine how the County Office of Education can either backfill or expand educational opportunities in those areas. Adult education programs are being severely affected by budget cuts and we are focusing right now on General Educational Development (GED) preparation, English as a Second Language, and parental programs and career opportunities in preschool education.

**Pajaro Valley Unified School District Dropout Initiative**
I have been meeting with district superintendent Dorma Baker, Watsonville Mayor Luis Alejo, and district board members to address solutions to the high dropout rate in PVUSD schools. In addition to the Alternative Education partnership with Second Opportunity School (SOS), we are investigating possible programs where the COE can provide additional support to at-risk youth as well as to those who have dropped out or are on the fringe.

**Together for Kindergarten Forum**
More than 200 early educators, kindergarten teachers and administrators from across the county gathered on Wednesday, February 24th, for the “Together for Kindergarten” community forum. Organized by the Santa Cruz County Office of Education with the assistance of a grant from the David and Lucille Packard Foundation, the forum presented an opportunity for early educators to come together to exchange ideas and propose activities that support kindergarten readiness. Delaine Eastin, former California State Superintendent of Public Instruction delivered the keynote address.
Sp Ed Arts Show
The County Office of Education Special Education Department, for the second year, hosted an open house and art show for students, parents and the public to observe Special Education students’ artwork. The event, under the direction of teacher Wendy Harrison, is establishing a model arts-in-education tradition.

Regional Occupational Program WASC Review
The Santa Cruz COE ROP recently completed a mid-term Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) review. The WASC determination is that ROP has, in three years, successfully completed all goals established in the primary review for completion over a six year period.

Outdoor Science Education Program Marketing Innovation
Heather MacDougall, Director, Outdoor Science Education Program, and I met with Kelly Wood, principal and partner of For Benefit, a marketing and fundraising consultant whom Heather, from funding awarded under a COE Innovation Grant, contracted with to launch an innovative corporate sponsorship campaign to close the funding gap, improve access for lower-income students, while offering corporate partners an alternative way to support public schools by sponsoring the Outdoor Science Program.

SLV Read Across America
I was invited by the San Lorenzo Valley Unified School District to participate in Read Across America, a national day of reading. At schools nationwide, volunteers spent time reading to children. I read The True Story of the Three Little Pigs to second-graders at San Lorenzo Elementary.

Inside Ed
Inside Education participants yesterday spent the morning exploring education in local high schools. The session was titled What Does it Mean to be Well Educated?. Visits were made to both Watsonville and Aptos High Schools. The April session will focus on Special Education.

Costanoa Continuation School
I spent time with Curt Coleman, principal, Costanoa Schools, observing both their elementary and continuation programs. I would recommend that trustees visit Costanoa and will see if perhaps it can be included in an Inside Education session.

Special Education San Andreas Regional Center (SARC)
I met with Gina Fiollos, SARC Director, to discuss how we can collaborate to bridge the gap by better articulating the infant and toddler special needs children that are served by SARC into the COE preschool program. Currently, SARC educates two year old autistic infants.

March 3rd Press Conference and March 4th Day of Action
Thank you to trustees who attended the March 3rd press conference on the steps of the county courthouse in support of school funding and as a prelude to the March 4th Day of
Action which culminated with a rally at the Santa Cruz town clock. I believe the March 3rd appearance, organized in collaboration with the Santa Cruz County School Boards Association, was an effective means of getting the K-12 message to the media and public separate from the March 4th rally which brought greater press attention to college and university students’ challenges. I did attend the rally at the Town Clock which was well organized and attended by local teachers.

**KSCO Radio Interview**
I also was interviewed by Rosemary Chalmers on KSCO Radio in relationship to the March 3rd and 4th Day of Action in support of education.

**San Lorenzo Valley Rotary Club**
I was invited to address the San Lorenzo Valley Rotary Club yesterday morning at which the focus was on the state of schools nationally, in California, and locally in Santa Cruz County. I appreciate the opportunity provided by these organizations to raise awareness of the challenges facing our schools and students.

**SPIN Awards**
I attended the tenth anniversary fundraiser for the Special Parents Information Network (SPIN) recently. SPIN is a volunteer organization that networks parents of special education students. The network provides parent support groups for English and Spanish speakers and offers educational materials, referrals, supports special education teachers and runs a mentor program with volunteer parents who help other parents navigate the challenges that accompany having special needs children. Supervisor Mark Stone, Assemblyman Monning, and representatives of Senator Simitian provided public acknowledgements.

**FCMAT**
At the request of the Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA), a Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) has been visiting Santa Cruz special education programs for the past four days. They have been meeting with district superintendents, special education directors, teachers and parents to analyze the delivery of services to students, the relationship between the County Office of Education and district programs, and to make recommendations to improve cost efficiency and quality of programs. The team provided an exit report just prior to our Board meeting, and will issue a formal report including recommendations in the near future.

**California Distinguished Schools**
Congratulations to Boulder Creek Elementary School and Mar Vista Elementary School both of which were recognized as California Distinguished Schools a validation of their efforts to close the achievement gap.

**Santa Cruz County Youth Symphony**
I attended the recent Youth Symphony presentation at the Civic Center. The Symphony youth program is well worth supporting. The education program is provided free to 4th and 5th grade students throughout the county and provides four concerts throughout the
year that are affordable for family attendance. Students also have the opportunity to meet
the symphony musicians and learn about their instruments.

**DUI in Schools**
The COE Law Related Education Programs presented another in the series of Real DUI
Court in Schools on March 9th. The assembly was presented to students of Cypress High
School, Live Oak School District. Thank you to our partners, the County Sheriff’s
Department, the County Defender’s Office and the District Attorney’s Office for making
this contribution to this educational experience.

**County Spelling Bee**
A big thanks to Trustee Arnie Levine for again organizing the County Spelling Bee as well as to Trustees and staff who volunteered time to be judges, registrars, timekeepers and other duties that make the event successful. The Spelling Bee is a highlight of the school year for the many participating students and their parents and we will continue to support this event. Congratulations to all participating students.

**County Science Fair**
Congratulations are also extended to Nancy Serigstad, Program Coordinator, Educational Services, for her continuing success in expanding outreach to students countywide to participate in yearlong science programs which culminate at the Science Fair. Our outreach into south county schools has been highly successful. It would be extremely difficult to maintain this success without the sponsorship of Seagate Technology our partner and financial benefactor. Our gratitude is expressed on behalf of all staff, students and parents. The Science Fair awards ceremony will be conducted this coming Monday evening, 7:00 p.m., at the County Fair Grounds.

**ROP Retail Merchandising Fashion Show**
At your seat are announcements, received too late to include in your calendar of events enclosed with your board packet, of the ROP Fashion Show. This annual event is scheduled for 8:40 a.m., 11:15 a.m. and 7:30 p.m., next Friday March 26. I encourage you to attend one of the shows if at all possible.

**Mock Trial State Competition**
Santa Cruz High School, winner of the recent County Mock Trial competition, will compete at the state level May 19-21. Competitions will be held at the Fairmont Hotel, San Jose.

**Summer Youth Employment Program**
The Student Support Services Department is preparing for the Summer Youth Employment Program. SYEP will be recruiting 450 employers. If trustees have recommendations of potential employers, please contact JoAnn Allen, Student Support Services. This year, SYEP has added a job fair to the services provided. The Job Fair will be held at the County Fair Grounds, Saturday, May 1, at 10:00 a.m.

**Regularly scheduled monthly meetings attended:**
United Way Executive Board  PCS Liaison Meeting  First Five Commission
TAC 6  Tannery Arts Board  Children’s Network