From: Michael C. Watkins  
County Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Superintendent’s Report  
March 20, 2008

Press Conference and Superintendents’ Lobby in Sacramento
District superintendents and I, joined by Assemblyperson John Laird, conducted a press conference on the steps of Santa Cruz High School at noon today. Santa Cruz City Schools District Superintendent and I addressed the State budget crisis and the impact of the Governor’s proposed funding cuts upon education in Santa Cruz County schools. Assemblyperson Laird also spoke in support and the need for a non-partisan legislative solution.

Some district superintendents and I will travel to Sacramento this coming Monday, March 24, to meet with legislators to lobby their support for funding education.

Meeting with Senator Abel Maldonado
Senator Maldonado met with the district superintendents and myself during our monthly superintendents council meeting. This afforded an opportunity for the superintendents and the Senator to informally discuss addressing the state budget and to elicit his support for funding education in a non-partisan manner.

AB 1200 Workshop
Approximately twenty district board trustees and superintendents attended the AB 1200 workshop presented by Barney Finlay last month. AB 1200 is a statewide plan for county offices of education and school districts to work together on the local level to improve fiscal procedures, standards and accountability notably in the role of county offices of education in monitoring districts and intervention.

Encinal Update
Associate Superintendents Alice Talnack and Barney Finlay provided the Board with an update on relocation activities.

Science Fair
I want to, first, both thank and congratulate Nancy Serigstad, Science Programs Coordinator, for coordinating the entire Science Fair event, a year-long process. The countywide Science Fair was conducted on March 7 and 8, at the Civic Center where 450 students from schools across the county entered projects. Students were honored at the awards ceremony last Monday evening at
the Civic Auditorium. Finalists advance to the state level and some will take their projects to
complete at the International Science Fair. One of those finalists, Shamik Mascharak, will make
a presentation to the board later in the meeting. Thank you also to those from the COE who
volunteered as judges and other for other duties at the fair and awards ceremony. They were
Arnie Levine, Ellen Hickey, Judy Walsh, Theresa Rouse, Traci Outtrim, Harley Robertson,
Bob Rieber, Bryan Wall, Frances Basich-Whitney, Heather MacDougall, Thom Dunks,
Mike and Mary Ann James.

Board Study Session
Board trustees will attend a Board Study Session on the topic of the board’s responsibilities and
authority relative to expulsion appeal hearings. The session is scheduled for next Monday,
March 24th at 8:00 a.m. in the superintendent’s conference room.

Special Education Students Arts Reception
An exhibit of the artwork of County Office of Education Special Education Programs students
was displayed in the lobby during February. Students, parents and teachers celebrated the
students’ achievements at a reception in the board room on the final day of the exhibit.

Special Parents Information Network (SPIN)
I attended the Special Parents Information Network annual Quiz Night fundraiser at Seascape
Resort. SPIN is a support group for parents of children with special needs. Lex Van den Burgh,
parent of a special needs child, hosted the event which raised over $25,000 for the organization.

Region V Arts Initiative Conference
Participating teachers, administrators, artists and arts advocates representing schools and districts
from throughout Region V attended a half-day forum this past Tuesday at the COE. Key topics
centered on why and how to bring the arts into every school for all students. Dr. Victoria
Stevens, a clinical psychologist, psychoanalyst, professor and researcher in the study of the
development and inhibition of creativity in children was the keynote speaker. Thank you to
Mary McLaughlin, Region V Arts Coordinator, COE, for organizing the forum.

Santa Cruz Youth Symphony Winter Family Concert
I attended the Youth Symphony performance with the Santa Cruz Symphony and ZunZun, a
husband and wife performing duo, who wrote the performance piece. ZunZun has long
collaborated with Alternative Education to provide musical performances to our students. Their
shows celebrate the environments and cultures of the Americas, are participatory, multilingual
and energetic.

Managers Meeting Speaker: Virginia Hamilton, CA Workforce Association
Virginia Hamilton, Executive Director, California Workforce Association, presented at the
monthly managers meeting on March 12. Her presentation centered on preparing our future
workforce through relationships that will develop the new knowledge, practices and commitment
that lead to broad-based change. She and COE managers considered such questions as what can
be done to more successfully integrate the future workforce into our schools and borrow design
ideas from the private sector as we deliver education and student services.
**New Teacher Project Steering Committee**
Discussion focused on the potential of future declining numbers of new teachers and the impact on the New Teacher Project.

**California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA)**
Topics of discussion focused on the state budget, integrated school district academic support and assistance, and the California longitudinal pupil achievement data system.

**CCBE/PTA/CCSESA Conference**
State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O’Connell and Education Secretary David Long were keynote speakers. Superintendent O’Connell primarily addressed closing the achievement gap. Among sessions I attended were *Accelerating Student Achievement by Changing the Organizational Culture* and a session addressing truancy.

**Spelling Bee**
The annual Santa Cruz County Spelling Bee, co-sponsored by the Santa Cruz Sentinel and the County Office of Education, was held Sunday, March 2, at UCSC. Two hundred and twenty-eight students competed in two groups, grades four through six and grades seven through nine. Viraj Shah, Georgiana Bruce-Kirby School, was the winner in the elementary division and Mia Thacker, Mission Hill Middle School, placed first in the secondary category. Winners will advance to the state competition.

District superintendents and I recognized Trustee Arnie Levine for his many years as coordinator of the Spelling Bee with the presentation of a proclamation signed by all district superintendents.

**Regularly Scheduled Meetings Attended**
- First 5
- Migrant Head Start Directors
- Special Ed. Coordinating Agency
- CCSESA Quarterly Meeting
- Childeren’s Network
- Superintendents Council
- PVPSA