From: Michael C. Watkins  
County Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Superintendent’s Report  
April 17, 2008

**Education Funding Advocacy:**

**March 31 Santa Cruz Delegation in Sacramento:** Spring Break provided an opportunity for Interim Superintendent Mary Anne Mays, teachers, administrators, PVUSD trustees and myself to travel to Sacramento to express concern about the proposed cuts in education funding. PVUSD students made a symbolic 4,000 foot paper chain which was taken to the State Capitol Building. We later met individually with Senator Joe Simitian, Assemblyperson John Laird, and Senator Tom Torlakson.

**April 4 press conference:** Lt. Governor John Garamendi called a press conference, held on the steps of Santa Cruz High School, to urge the Legislature and the Governor to recognize the message that the state must increase revenues and reform spending formulas rather than cutting education funding. The event was held before high school students, and included Senator Joe Simitian, myself, Superintendent Alan Pagano, union leaders, and teachers.

**April 14 press conference:** I joined Brian King, President of Cabrillo College, George Blumenthal, Chancellor, UCSC, and Dianne Harrison, President, CSU Monterey Bay, at a press conference this past Monday to urge the Legislature and Governor to recognize investment in K-12 through higher education is critical to growing the state’s economy.

**Affects of the State Budget on SCCOE Personnel**
The potential loss of revenue from grants (CTAP, Youth Employment Program, Emergency Crisis Response Grant, etc.), the proposed 10% across-the-board State budget cuts, and the transition of SELPA staff to Soquel School District will necessitate notification of potential layoff to a small number of SCCOE employees. We are exploring multiple options to restore funding to most, if not all, affected programs and employees and expect to be in a position to rescind the preliminary layoff notifications.

**Introduction of ROP Assistant Director**
I am pleased to introduce Mark Hodges as the new Assistant Director, ROP, effective July 1. Mark moves into the position now occupied by Bryan Wall who will become ROP Director upon Rieber’s retirement June 30th.
Encinal Facility Update
Associate Superintendents Barney Finlay and Alice Talnack updated the Board on facilities improvements and relocation issues relative to the Encinal facility. Progress includes bids status, voice and other IT systems and resolution of air quality and environmental issues.

ROP Fashion Show
The ROP Watsonville High Retail Merchandising Spring Fashion Show was held March 7th at the Mello Center. The event continues to be a popular community event supported by many local businesses and volunteer groups. Particular acknowledgement is given to ROP Class Instructor, Nevenka Radich.

ROP Santa Cruz High Career Fair
ROP presented a career fair to Santa Cruz High students last week. Thirty local professionals participated with small student groups to discuss and respond to questions about careers in law, acupuncture, the environment, dental hygienist, interior design and radiology, culinary and other career interests.

SCCOE Hosts 27th Assembly District Candidates Forum
The County Office of Education hosted a public forum sponsored by the League of Women Voters. I had the opportunity to introduce 27th District candidates Barbara Sprenger, Bill Monning, Emily Reilly, Mark Hinkle, Robert Murray and Stephen Barkalow who spoke and responded to audience questions regarding early education, access to quality child care and after-school programs.

United Way Campaign Awards Luncheon
Brunella Deeds and I attended the United Way Campaign Awards luncheon on April 3rd at the Cocoanut Grove. County Office of Education staff received the 2007-2008 silver award in the public education category for outstanding service to the people of our community. Thank you to all participating employees and to Brunella for coordinating our campaign effort.

Rio Del Mar, California Distinguished School
Congratulations are extended to the principal, staff and students at Rio Del Mar Elementary School which was recognized as a 2008 California Distinguished School. The California Distinguished Schools program identifies and honors the state’s most exemplary and inspiring public schools based on API and AYP results.

Pajaro Valley Prevention and Student Assistance Retreat
This past weekend, I attended the PVPSA retreat. The association is a dedicated non-profit which supports students in the Pajaro Valley Unified School District. At issue is the potential loss of revenue for the 2009-10 school year that would adversely affect student services to PVUSD. Over the course of the next year, we are looking at a long-range sustainable plan to replace Safe School and Healthy Students Programs funding which will sunset in 2009.
Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council
Other Council members and I met with other service providers for the quarterly meeting. The agenda included a review of funded projects for 2007-08 and adoption of a spending plan for fiscal year 2008-09, as well as a review of the current Accountability Block Grant and application for the next year’s grant.

William James Association, Community Youth Arts Project and Prison Arts Anniversary Celebration
I spoke at the April 5th event addressing the importance of integrating the arts into education and how the collaboration between the Community Youth Arts Project and the County Office of Education Alternative Education Program serves as a model.

Fine Arts Concerts Grant Application
The County Office of Education applied for a $10,000 grant from the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County to partner with Jon Orlando, Executive and Artistic Director of the Cabrillo College Distinguished Artists series, to sponsor outstanding professional musicians from a variety of musical genres to offer free concerts at high schools throughout the County.

TICAL Conference
I attended the TICAL Annual California Conference last Friday. Sir Ken Robinson, internationally renowned expert in creativity, was the keynote speaker. He discussed the importance of bridging practice, policy, and theory to help promote creativity in schools and shared his experiences with educational systems worldwide. Sir Ken presented to local educators at the COE sponsored countywide event last August.

Trustee Meetings
I thank all Board trustees for making time to meet with you individually at breakfast or lunch. The trustees’ insight and dedication to education and the students in the schools in our county are personally appreciated.

Regularly Scheduled Meetings Attended
First Five                Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council
United Way Campaign Committee  Pajaro Valley Prevention and Student Assistance
Superintendents’ Council Meeting  COE Managers Meeting
Special Education Coordinating Council