



For Immediate Release

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Mayor Reed, Superintendent Weis and Other Local Leaders Launch SJ2020 Initiative

San José, Calif. – San José Mayor Chuck Reed and Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools Charles Weis, Ph.D. were joined today by local educators, business leaders and community organizations to announce the launch of SJ2020. The ambitious educational initiative seeks to eliminate the achievement gap in San José and ensure that all students test as proficient or advanced on grade-level state assessments by the year 2020.

“Too many students fail to achieve their full potential because they lack a fundamental education,” said Mayor Reed. “Raising achievement for all San José students is the best way to maintain a strong workforce, economy and community in the years to come.”

To achieve its bold goal, SJ2020 will capitalize on research-based strategies that have proven successful in raising student achievement. While many of these strategies are already being deployed in individual schools and communities, Mayor Reed and Superintendent Weis have brought together a broad coalition to coordinate and implement these strategies city-wide. These include efforts to:

- Create a culture of success that includes high standards for all students;
- Recruit, develop, and retain high-quality teachers and effective leaders;
- Use regular assessments to inform instruction; and
- Unite the community to support students and families holistically.

“This is the civil rights issue of our generation,” Superintendent Weis said. “We know what needs to be done; we know how to do it. And the time to do it is now.”

At the initiative’s launch, more than 200 representatives from the education, government, business and non-profit sectors signed on to the SJ2020 compact. Each committed to sharing their best practices, aligning their individual resources and working strategically to help all students reach proficiency.

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San José is home to approximately 150,000 (K-12) students and 19 public school districts. More than 40 percent of all students tested are not proficient in their grade level skills and about 2,300 middle and high school San José students drop out each year. These students are more likely to be unemployed, earn significantly less, rely on public assistance, suffer from poor health and/or engage in criminal behavior. Over their lifetimes, dropouts earn an estimated \$400,000 less and are 3½ times more likely to be incarcerated than those graduating from high school.

There is also a disparity in academic performance, known as the achievement gap, between under-performing Hispanic/Latino and African-American students and their Caucasian and Asian peers. For example, only 41 percent of Hispanic/Latino students and 45 percent of African American students in San José tested as proficient or advanced on the mathematics portion of the 2009 California High School Exit Examination, compared to 69 percent of Caucasian students and 85 percent of Asian students.

SJ2020 is a collaboration between the City of San José, the Santa Clara County Office of Education, and numerous local school districts, charter schools, institutions of higher education, businesses and non-profit organizations. The SJ2020 Planning Committee is chaired by Mayor Reed and Superintendent Weis, and also includes representatives from: Alum Rock Union School District; Applied Materials; California State University, East Bay; The Education Trust – West; Franklin-McKinley School District; National Hispanic University; the Office of Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren; PACT (People Acting in Community Together); San José Charter School Consortium; San José Unified School District; San José State University; Silicon Valley Education Foundation; and Teach for America.

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