

Thank you for joining us today, as together we look to the future of education for our students. I am deeply honored that the people of Monterey County re-elected me, and affirmed their trust in my leadership of education.

Our children are our most precious resource, and they are our hope for the future. To be re-elected as the chief educational leader in Monterey County is, for me, a most sacred trust.

Thank you, Judge Grover, for presiding as I took the oath of office. Danny, I appreciate you standing with me. You both represent the significance of the commitment that I dedicate myself to fulfilling throughout the next four years.

Ron, • Judy, • Byrl, • Steve, • Sergio, and • Sylvia, your remarks were an uplifting expression of support, and a great blessing, as was the performances of the students from Youth Music Monterey, the Boys and Girls Club, Melrose, the color guard from Seaside High School, and our AmeriCorps member.

I'd also like to thank the distinguished members of the County Board of Education for your strong partnership with me, and the dedicated employees of the Monterey County Office of Education, who are on the front line working throughout Monterey County, and helping fulfill the educational mission for our students. And thank you, friends, colleagues, and community members, for your support and commitment to education. We are creating great synergy for the work that lies ahead in the next four years.

I am very honored to introduce to all of you members of my family who are here with us today:

• my mother, Jean; • my brother Joe; • Danny, my nephew and godson; and • Danny's great-uncle, Bill Conrad who lives here in Carmel Highlands.

My father passed away three years ago, but I know he is here in spirit. Family gives us our roots and our wings all through life. I treasure my family and thank you for your love that is always with me.

I recently read a book about the leadership of Abraham Lincoln through the time of the Civil War, when our country's future hung delicately in the balance.

He was President of the United States at one of the most critical of times in our history.

Abraham Lincoln's response to the challenges of his time can also be our response today.

He met the challenges he faced with a line of sight that transcended the many obstacles and criticism that the uncertainty of crisis brought.

He confidently focused on what was imperative. So too must our focus be.

My line of sight is directed to our students in the classrooms of Monterey County and doing what is in all of their best interest, while making the most of dwindling resources.

Every generation is called to leave the world a better place for the next generation. This is part of the human spirit around the world throughout the ages.

We say our children's education is our top priority. For this to be true, the words must be backed up with the evidence of our actions, showing it to be so.

This is not the case when we look at state funding and support for education. The state budget crisis has fallen disproportionately on our schools with 60% of state funding cuts coming from education when education is 40% of the state budget.

While public education is a state responsibility, it is a local function under the direct local control of each school district's elected board of trustees.

The County Office of Education provides leadership and support services. I invite you to visit our new website and learn about the great breadth and depth of the vital services MCOE is providing.

Where do our students stand? Each one of them counts on us to open wide the door of opportunity, and help them soar to boundless heights in their lives, as they discover their talents and abilities, and learn and grow.

Looking to the state's academic performance index, Monterey County schools' API growth on state tests over the last 10 years is, in fact, greater than the state.

But student achievement is not at the level it needs to be, and we have a large achievement gap to close. It takes making far greater growth to close a gap. It takes extraordinary, strategic work.

In 2010, most of our lowest performing schools did just this by making double-digit API growth. We have a detailed report that you can take with you that gives all the details.

Nine schools that MCOE directly supported made average gains of 61 points. These gains are the result of very hard work by teachers, students, parents, and schools as a whole.

For example, in the last year, MCOE provided professional development for 3,900 teachers in instructional strategies, newly adopted curriculum, technology, and math content knowledge.

And 317 administrators were trained in leadership strategies, for accelerating student achievement and for accomplishing continuous school improvement.

The Monterey County Children's Council studied all of the pertinent the data on our children, and targeted the critical need for our students to graduate from high school healthy and prepared.

This work begins at the beginning, and is a comprehensive undertaking, based on the priorities identified in each community.

Our Monterey County public agencies and organizations are working so very closely together today that we are in sync. We are weaving our services and resources together to respond to the unique needs of communities throughout the county.

This level of working together is evidenced by what the Community Alliance for Safety and Peace is doing every other Wednesday morning at 7:00 am in Salinas. A new level of hard, strategic work is underway. The room is filled to capacity with community leaders addressing together the critical issue of youth gang violence.

The 21st century world in which we live today, calls for interdependence in how we relate, communicate, and work together. We must connect with each other in far better and stronger ways than ever before

• in the family, • at school, • in the workforce, and • in the community.

Our children need us to do this.

As I begin my new term of office as County Superintendent of Schools, I am calling on us all to enter this new level of interdependent partnership for education. We now know a lot more than we did a few years ago about what is required to prepare our students for success in the world of the 21st century.

There are three fundamental goals for the school, family, and community that are •so basic, •so important, and •so doable that they will make a significant difference for our children.

First goal. Children will read on grade level by the end of third grade.

Children who are not able to read on grade level by the end of third grade have a very difficult time succeeding in school, and life thereafter. The dropout rate and the number of prisons beds needed are predicted by this statistic.

Our number one educational priority is to ensure children are reading on grade level by third grade, so they are able to read to learn when academic rigor advances, beginning in fourth grade.

Families can support their children's literacy by having regular reading time at home.

For families without books, the local library is a center for literacy, to go to regularly and come home with a rich collection of books for family reading time.

Parents can read to their children, or have their children read to them, or designate a daily time for reading.

In schools, we have excellent work underway. And early childhood education, school readiness programs, and parent education are critical priorities programs. We have great resources in place in our communities, such as First 5, Head Start, and state preschool programs, focused on helping children enter kindergarten ready to learn.

One-to-one reading with children is essential for them to develop reading fluency. For many children, this is does not happen.

Community members can become volunteers who read with children in schools throughout the county by participating in Monterey County Reads.

The partnership that Sylvia Panetta and The Panetta Institute formed with our school districts and the County Office of Education in 1997 gave us just the kind of interconnectedness we need. Since the inception of Monterey County Reads, over 2,000 community volunteers have stepped up to the plate and engaged in helping our children become readers.

The need is great and so is the opportunity to make a difference for a child's life. This is a powerful way the community can help us reach this goal for our children.

Thank you, Sylvia, for making this opportunity available to community volunteers, and showing us what it takes to engage in a true partnership that accomplishes its goal.

Since the year 2000 MCOE has had 30 AmeriCorps volunteers a year – for over a decade -- working full time in our schools that face great challenges, in one of the nations most successful AmeriCorps programs – Monterey County United for Literacy.

This year alone 600 children in Kindergarten through grade 4 are being helped to achieve grade level reading ability. Thank you to our AmeriCorps members, represented here today.

We must ensure all of our students are able to read on grade level by the end of third grade.

Second Goal. We will make education relevant and dynamic for students with the knowledge, skills, and creative expression required for success in interdependent world of the 21st century.

How is it that the world has changed so much in the last 100 years, yet schools look pretty much the same as they always have?

21st century schools are not just four-wall dispensaries of knowledge, but community-wide laboratories where students can learn, apply, and practice the skills necessary to succeed and make a difference in our dynamic world.

Learning must make sense to students, be creatively expressed, and develop the technological, communicative, and interpersonal skills required today.

Students must connect new information with what they already know and apply it practically and expressively.

Creative imagination and innovation are America's greatest strengths.

Yet, we have cut both out of the curriculum, especially in our most challenged schools, where the focus is almost exclusively on state test preparation -- paper, pencil, and textbook exercises. When this is all there is, it's boring, irrelevant, and meaningless.

The funding for schools has been so severely cut and the pressure so great, with tightly prescribed lessons that teacher creativity is systematically being snuffed out. Our teachers need us to help here.

The Monterey County Office of Education is prioritizing creativity, innovative thinking, and communication using modern technology.

We have a new Media Center for Arts, Education, and Technology, under the direction of Hamish Tyler.

MCOE was recently awarded a \$5.6 million competitive federal stimulus grant for public access to technology with five partners:

- **Boys and Girls Club of Monterey County, • CSUMB, • Hartnell College,**
- **National Steinbeck Center, • Monterey County Free Libraries, and**
- **Community Information Center in South County.**

There were 20,000 applications for this grant and only 67 were awarded in the nation. We are the only partnership of our kind awarded in the nation.

We will even have a state-of-the-art mobile computer lab, fully equipped with 15 computer stations. An instructor will be on board traveling to all areas of the county. You can't miss it when it arrives and pulls up in your community!

In addition, MCOE was awarded a \$660,000 Career Technical High School grant.

We are creating a state-of-the-art modern Media Center where 100 students will soon be engaged in an exemplary 21st century, complete learning environment. They will fully utilize science and technology and engage in the full scope of arts and media production.

Further, I am please to announce today that

- **the Monterey County Business Council,**
 - **the Monterey County Business Education Research Center, and**
 - **MCOE are ready to launch Career Explorer 831 for our high schools,**
- thanks to a grant from AT&T. (With us from AT&T is Dr. Bettye Saxon.)**

Students and teachers will now have available a web-based communications network that will allow them to connect with businesses and explore numerous career and technical options for the future.

Career Explorer 831. org will enable students to engage with businesses and see the connection between what they are learning in school, and how it makes sense in the real world.

Parents will be able to use Career Explorer with their high school student. Parents can use this new tool to talk about and encourage career options.

In the classrooms, our teachers need resources and opportunity to be creative and innovative. I am calling the people of Monterey County to take action about this. MCOE has been receiving many calls from businesses and cities asking, “ How can we help?”

We have an answer. I am calling the community to join together to create a Resource Area for Teaching here in Monterey County, similar to what has been in operation successfully in San Jose for 17 years.

We don't have to reinvent the wheel. This is a place where teachers can go for • tools and materials, • professional development, and • the stimulation of their imaginations so they can take back to the classroom standards-based activities, and engage their students in making sense of what we expect them to learn.

We know what can be done when our business community comes together. I would like to acknowledge Reclaim for the Future.

This is a non-profit organization established by Gary Walter in partnership with CSUMB where there is a 5,000 sq. ft. warehouse. (Gary and leaders from CSUMB are with us today.)

Through Reclaim for the Future, Monterey County's construction industry participates in recycling surplus wood and metal materials.

These essential materials are distributed to our local middle school and high school shop programs so students have the wood and metals they need to build projects.

Thank you, Gary and CSUMB, for making hand-on learning possible in the award-winning shop programs throughout Monterey County.

Stay tuned as we will be launching a call to action to create a dynamic teacher resource center in Monterey County and bring hand-on, creative and innovative learning to all of our teachers and students.

We must make education relevant and dynamic for students with the knowledge, skills, and creative expression required for success in interdependent world of the 21st century.

Third Goal. We will make available a wide variety of healthy extracurricular activities for our students in their local community.

Outside of school, students need to be positively engaged in a wide variety of healthy activities, especially as they reach middle school.

Youth is a time of exploration of all kinds of interests as children grow and discover their many talents and abilities. Emerging teenagers are on the shaky road between childhood and adulthood and are exploring all the possibilities. Healthy possibilities must be there for them to explore.

Families struggling to make ends meet simply cannot afford to sign their children up for costly extracurricular activities.

Traditionally, high schools do a wonderful job of providing extra- and co-curricular programs for students.

Today, with dramatic funding cuts for basic education, many of these programs are threatened. The times require the community to engage and make sure there is a wide array of options available for students of all ages.

It is our responsibility to make parents aware of the opportunities available, so that parents can fulfill their responsibility of ensuring their children are making good use of all of their time.

I am asking local community leaders to examine the scope of options available for youth and the level of participation in each of our communities.

MCOE stands ready to be a partner with communities and schools in this planning process, beginning with looking at the after school programs currently being offered.

We are grateful to have outstanding extracurricular programs available that need our support, such as

- the Boys and Girls Clubs,
- Community Partnership for Youth,
- YMCA,
- parks and recreation,
- the Lyceum of Monterey County,
- the visual and performing arts organizations (such as Youth Music Monterey represented here today),
- My Museum, public libraries, and
- faith community activities.

The most recent example of the community organizations coming together to provide extracurricular activities for our students, is the Lyceum's new partnership called Monterey County Young Journalists.

It was created by syndicated columnist Peter Funt to fill the gap caused by

cutbacks in journalism courses at many local high schools. Professional journalists around the county are responding to the need.

The Herald and KSBW are sponsors of this opportunity, for students to experience journalism in a hand-on way. The program was available to all students in Monterey County. The program was also supported by KRXA radio. (Peter Funt is here with us today.)

This is the kind of community driven initiative that our students need.

We must examine what is and is not available, the level of participation, how to reach families that need to be connected, and what more is needed to make a wide array of extracurricular activities available to our children and youth in their local community.

As the chief educational leader in Monterey County, I am committed to providing leadership, support, and service that is needed to prepare all of our students for success in the interdependent world.

I ask everyone to engage in this critical partnership of ensuring our students are:

- Reading on grade level,
- Engaged in relevant, creative, meaningful learning experiences and
- Healthy activities in community.

Let's do it!

Thank you for the honor of serving as your County Superintendent of Schools. I'm looking forward to all we will accomplish in the next four year. Thank you!