



# Memorandum

**TO:** All Children Achieve  
Committee

**FROM:** Mayor Ron Gonzales

**SUBJECT:** Implementation of the  
San José High School Initiative

**DATE:** October 30, 2006

Approved

Date

10/30/06

## RECOMMENDATION

That the All Children Achieve committee accept the report on the San José High School Initiative.

## BACKGROUND

During my time as Mayor I have made education a top priority so that all San Jose students have the opportunity to achieve success in school. I am proud that we have kept our commitment to make sure that the City is a valuable partner with our schools and with parents to increase the number of children entering school ready to learn and leaving school ready to be productive and engaged citizens of our community.

In June this year the All Children Achieve committee accepted a report from my office on how San Jose could expand our options and innovations to help improve high school education. Since then, we have worked closely with the City Administration, school district representatives, and other community leaders to plan and implement projects. These efforts have included the inaugural citywide Parent Summit, programs to reduce truancy, and City-funded high school homework centers.

The specific goals of the high school initiative include:

- San José high schools will reduce the number of dropouts by 50% by 2010.
- High school graduation rates will increase by 10% over the next five years.
- San José high school graduates will be prepared to enter college and/or the Silicon Valley workforce.

## **2006 Goals and Objectives for Implementation**

At the end of 2005, I convened a stakeholder meeting to discuss specific challenges affecting our high schools and how the City can play a role to help to improve San Jose's high schools and contribute to student achievement in partnership with the community.

As a result of this meeting, truancy reduction, parent involvement, and college and career preparation were identified as critical problem areas we should focus on this year. With the participation of the stakeholders, the Mayor's Office developed a plan to address concerns of high school students and their families.

### **1. Parent Summit**

The concept of the summit was to provide parents with practical and accessible information about how to participate in their children's education and support academic achievement. My office established a planning committee with school district leaders, parent groups, and community organizations to organize the inaugural Mayor's High School Parent Summit held on September 23, 2006.

Objectives achieved:

- The event was successful with more than 500 parents, students and other guests attending the daylong series of workshops and a resource fair in the City Hall Rotunda. Parent workshops were offered on Gangs and Truancy, College and Career Preparation, and School/Parent Relationships. The keynote speaker was Dr. David Lopez, president of National Hispanic University. Participant surveys praised the value of the Parent Summit and endorsed making it a regular annual event.

### **2. Truancy**

There are approximately 41,000 high school students in San Jose. As stated in previous reports to the ACA committee, the San Jose Police Department estimates that between 3000 and 5000 local high school students do not attend class on a daily basis. This represents between seven and twelve percent of the San Jose high school student population that is truant to some degree. Effective City programs and partnerships can help schools reduce truancy, help students stay in class and learn, prevent crime, and help schools to reach average daily attendance goals and obtain the revenues they should receive from the state.

Objectives achieved:

- Based on feedback from the San Jose Police Department and the San Jose City Council, the Mayor's June Budget Message directed the City Manager to restore the overtime portion of the Truancy Abatement/Burglary Suppression (TABS) program to keep both TABS centers open, and to restore counseling services for TABS.

- This Council Approved budget direction keeps the TABS program intact for this fiscal year. In future budgets I recommend that the City Council should protect this important program and when possible, allocate additional resources that would allow the TABS program to increase its reach and effectiveness to bring truancy rates down further.

### **3. High School Homework Centers**

The City currently spends \$254,000 on homework centers at 21 San Jose high schools and serves 1,300 high school students daily. On average, each high school homework center sees about 37 drop-in participants per day and receives about \$12,000 in City funding. The centers support student achievement with onsite tutors and peer assistance while providing some of the one-on-one student to adult interaction that research shows is important for academic success.

High school counselors are sorely needed to advise students and their families about education opportunities and the steps students need to take to make progress toward academic and career goals. Homework centers continue to be a bridge for schools that are strapped for counseling resources. Currently, there is about one counselor for every 800 high school students, a ratio far too low to provide meaningful guidance for most students. Although some high schools have incorporated extra advisory periods in their daily schedules to allow more time for students to discuss college and career exploration, this remains the exception rather than the norm.

Objectives reached:

- The Mayor's June Budget Message approved by the City Council included my recommendation to direct the City Administration to work with the local California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP) to identify ways to activate homework center programming that would inform students of college and career opportunities in San José. This would allow homework centers to provide another valuable service that helps students become better prepared for higher learning and career success.

### **CONCLUSION**

It is important that San Jose continue to work with community partners to foster strong high school learning communities that can prepare graduates to enter college or workforce, including those students most at risk of dropping out. We have taken several concrete steps this year to identify priorities, designate resources, and set a course that can lead to improvements and progress to our long-term goals. I am proud of the early progress we have made in this direction, but there is much more that we must do together to help our high schools obtain greater success for our students. It is my hope that our education initiatives we have started will continue and expand in the coming years under the leadership of our next mayor and council.