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Schools Chief Tom Torlakson Announces 2011 Model Dropout Prevention Programs

SACRAMENTO—State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson announced today that nine districts have been designated as models of attendance improvement and dropout prevention by the State School Attendance Review Board (State SARB).

“In addition to the financial emergency facing schools across California, the state is also confronted by an ongoing dropout crisis. Young people who desperately need an education are not attending school regularly and falling further behind until they eventually drop out of school,” said Torlakson. “This simply is unacceptable. We must intervene and provide assistance to these students and their families before dropping out becomes inevitable.”

California’s adjusted four-year derived dropout rate for 2008-09 was 21.7 percent, up from 18.9 percent the previous year.

“Despite the drastic budget cuts and dropout rate trend in the state, exemplary school districts are moving forward with their local community representatives to improve school attendance and keep children in school,” Torlakson said. “These districts are joining with other local agencies, including social services, mental health, and law enforcement, to establish school attendance review boards (SARBs) that work miracles and garner the support many students need to attend school regularly and graduate.”

The State SARB is a panel appointed by the State Superintendent to promote intensive guidance and coordinated community services to meet the needs of students with chronic attendance or behavior problems. Members of the State SARB evaluated local SARB applications from across the state for excellence in specific content areas, including SARB chairperson leadership, interventions prior to SARB referral, community collaboration, inventory of resources for high-risk youth, goals and objectives, program design and content,

measuring and reporting outcomes, and interpersonal communication. The most important content area was the prevention efforts to improve attendance prior to SARB referral.

“Implementing programs to ensure regular attendance and high school graduation has never been a simple challenge, but these nine districts have done this work during a period of multiple rounds of downsizing and reduced resources in the community,” Torlakson said.

“Three of these districts deserve special commendation because they have been recognized as models in previous years: Chula Vista [Elementary School District](#) and Grossmont Union High School District in 2008 and Colton Joint Unified School District in 2009. These districts have focused persistently on removing barriers to the learning and achievement of students most in need,” he said.

Districts recognized for their model attendance improvement and dropout reduction program retain their title through the 2011-12 school year to serve as mentors for other SARBs seeking to achieve model status.

Tom Torlakson has noted, “These model SARBs have an important role to play in disseminating information on effective practices to improve pupil attendance and to reduce the dropout rate.”

This year’s model SARBs will be recognized on April 21 at the Sir Francis Drake Hotel in San Francisco.

A list of the nine districts and SARB chairpersons who can act as mentors for other SARBs in the state is attached below.

For more information on the SARB process for attendance improvement and dropout reduction, please visit the California Department of Education Web site at

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ai/sb/>.

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The California Department of Education (CDE) is a state agency led by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson. For more information, please visit <http://www.cde.ca.gov> or by mobile device at <http://m.cde.ca.gov/>. You may also follow Superintendent Torlakson on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/TorlaksonSSPI>.

ATTACHMENT

2011 Model SARB Programs

1. **Alhambra Unified School District**, Patricia Mahony, SARB Chairperson, Alhambra, 626-943-3460, Superintendent: Donna Perez.
2. **Chino Valley Unified School District**, Colleen Alton, SARB Chairperson, Chino, 909-628-1201, extension 7750, Superintendent/Designee: Patricia M. Miller.
3. **Chula Vista Elementary School District**, Cheryl (Lisa) Butler, SARB Chairperson, Chula Vista, 619-425-9600, extension 1571, Superintendent/Designee, Oscar Esquivel.
4. **Colton Joint Unified School District**, Amanda Corridan, SARB Chairperson, Colton, 909-580-6525, Superintendent/Designee: Jerry Almendarez.
5. **Downey Unified School District**, Robert Jagielski, Ed.D., SARB Chairperson, Downey, 562-469-6564, Superintendent/Designee: Wendy L. Doty.
6. **Grossmont Union High School District**, Jeni Mendel, SARB Chairperson, El Cajon, 619-644-8012, Superintendent/Designee: Ralf Swenson.
7. **Huntington Beach Union High School District**, Kathleen Lommen, SARB Chairperson, Huntington Beach, 714-903-7000, Superintendent/Designee: Dr. Duane Dishno.
8. **Napa Unified School District**, Kurt Schultz, SARB Chairperson, Napa, 707-253-3585, Superintendent/Designee: Patrick J. Sweeney.
9. **Santa Ana Unified School District**, Nancy Diaz-Miller, SARB Chairperson, Santa Ana, 714-433-3484, Superintendent/Designee: Jane Russo.

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