



NEWS RELEASE

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San Mateo County Kicks Off School Attendance Initiatives

REDWOOD CITY, CALIF. September is Attendance Awareness Month, and the San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE) calls on schools, families, and the community to work toward improving school attendance across the county.

Attendance is critical to learning, and research shows that attendance in the first month of school is a predictor of attendance for the entire year. To help get San Mateo County students off to a great start this year, SMCOE and its partners have embarked on an effort to encourage good attendance and raise awareness about the impact of attendance on student achievement. According to San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools Anne Campbell, "It is critical that our county, our communities, and our families not underestimate the importance of school attendance on student achievement, even at a very young age."

Starting as early as kindergarten and prekindergarten, students who are chronically absent (miss 10 percent of class or 2-3 days of school/month) are more likely to have lower reading scores in third grade. By middle and high school, chronic absence is associated with lower graduation rates. Children with certain risk factors, including living in poverty, chronic health conditions, frequent moves, and disabilities, are especially hard hit since they can least afford to miss school. Children of color are also disproportionately affected.

In addition to sharing tools and information with school districts, SMCOE has posted a collection of attendance-related resources on its [website](#) and will use social media to help raise awareness and call others to action. The San Mateo County Board of Education and County Superintendent also adopted a joint resolution endorsing September 2017 as Attendance Awareness Month. "September is when everyone develops habits for the school year, so now is the perfect time for districts and families to make use of the videos, handouts, and other handy resources on our website," explained Joe Ross, the Board's President.

As part of their shared [The Big Lift™](#) initiative, the San Mateo County Office of Education, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation will kick off a year-long engagement with In Class Today, a spin-off of Harvard University's Kennedy School, which will support the seven Big Lift school districts in improving attendance. This attendance initiative was piloted in the county two years ago in partnership with Harvard Professor Todd Rogers. It contributed to a 15 percent decline in chronic absenteeism and involved regular communication with caregivers of children who are missing school.

At its meeting on September 12th, the County Board of Supervisors will present Superintendent Campbell with a proclamation designating September as Attendance Awareness Month.

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The San Mateo County Office of Education is committed to ensuring excellence and equity in education by inspiring students, investing in teachers, invigorating leaders, and involving communities.