

Silicon Valley Education Foundation Kicks Off \$3 Million STEM Initiative To Improve Student Achievement

Milpitas, CA -- August 19, 2008. Officials at the Silicon Valley Education Foundation today announced the formal kickoff of their \$3 million campaign to fund programs aimed at improving student performance in science, technology, engineering and math, known as the Silicon Valley STEM Initiative.

Noting that students across Silicon Valley are falling behind in STEM subjects and may not be able to provide the future skilled workforce that area companies demand, Muhammed Chaudhry, SVEF president and CEO, said it is vital to provide enrichment programs to bridge the knowledge gap. The foundation is reaching out to business, civic and education partners to help implement the STEM Initiative.

"If Silicon Valley hopes to continue to lead the world of innovation, and lead the knowledge economy, we must produce home-grown talent," Chaudhry told a press conference held at Milpitas tech firm Flextronics, one of the STEM Initiative's partners. "We are falling behind in preparing our children for 21st century jobs."

SVEF, which provides resources to the county's 34 school districts, has already launched a math initiative – *Stepping Up to Algebra* – an accelerated Algebra I program. It launched this summer in four school districts, hosting 450 6th and 7th graders, who spent four weeks in intensive classroom study getting ahead in algebra to be better prepared to take Algebra I during the school year.

The program was made possible by a \$1.7 million grant from the Knight Foundation and support from local firms, such as Flextronics, SAP, Google, National Semiconductor, Cisco, IBM, LSI and KeyPoint. Representatives from those firms attended the press conference. The companies provided the algebra program with financial support, as well as corporate volunteers, who worked with students in the classroom to show them the connection between math and the workplace. All participants received certificates of appreciation for their contributions.

Algebra I has received a great deal of attention recently following the state Board of Education's decision requiring all 8th grade students to take Algebra I. The mandate has raised concerns among California's Schools Superintendent Jack O'Connell and other educators over lack of funding to hire and train thousands of new math teachers needed to implement the plan. O'Connell says it will take \$3.1 billion to meet the challenge, putting additional demands on an already strained budget. As state policy makers continue to wrangle over the budget, SVEF is forging ahead with its STEM Initiative.

SVEF also announced the formation of the Silicon Valley STEM Leadership Board made up of Silicon Valley corporate leaders, educators and state and local legislators. The board will advise the foundation on shaping the STEM Initiative.

Also attending today's press conference were students who participated in the *Stepping Up to Algebra* program. Twelve-year-old Indy Dang wasn't too crazy about going to the algebra class. "My mom said I had to. I didn't want to," he said, hoping to spend the summer at the mall. "I didn't really like math before. Now I like it a lot better. The teacher made us see how you need math in all the things you do in life."

Indy's mom, Thanh Dang, said she saw her son gain confidence as a student by mastering algebra problems. The class pulled him out of his shyness.

The *Stepping Up to Algebra* program is the first of a series of programs created by the foundation to improve student achievement in STEM subjects. Students who perform at or above grade level in math participate at no charge.



Muhammed Chaudhry, SVEF CEO shares a moment of laughter with algebra student Thienson Pham, 12.