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Mt. Diablo High School Human Rights Education Students Successfully Work With School District To Change District Buying Practices – Now Only Fair Trade Chocolate To Be Used In On-site Baking; To Be Announced At Board Meeting Tuesday February 22

(Concord, CA) – At the Mt. Diablo Unified School District board meeting on February 22, 2011 the students of the Mt. Diablo High School Human Rights Education class of 2010-2011 and the Mt. Diablo school board will celebrate the district's commitment to using only fair trade chocolate chips in all on-site baking.

In October of 2010 students Zaharina Velazquez and Jake Cooper, along with teacher Dan Reynolds spoke at a board meeting, asking the district to consider using only fair trade chocolate in the district. The board was receptive and immediately began working to make the request a reality. The students and teacher spoke to the board after learning that child slavery exists in the cocoa industry. The students studied a unit on 21st century slavery in the pilot course in Human Rights Education.

Reynolds worked with district Health and Nutrition Services director Kathleen Corrigan, supervisor Suzanne Bernhard and cafeteria manager David Kling over the course of several months to identify a local supplier and to determine if the change to fair trade chocolate would be economically feasible.

The Mt. Diablo Unified School district is one of the largest districts in the state of California, and this change to using fair trade chocolate chips in all on-site baking is a big step in raising awareness for the district's roughly 35000 students around ethical consumer practices that value human beings and sustainability alongside profits.

At the October meeting Velazquez said: "We learned that our school uses Hershey's chocolate for their baking needs. We would like to see a switch from Hershey's to a fair trade product so as to offer students concerned with the issue an alternative, not only at our campus but at all schools district wide." And Cooper added: "We do not want our school, our district, and our students to be subject to these heinous practices. Slavery and child labor must be stopped. We as consumers can help to alleviate the problem."

In response to the districts agreement to use only fair trade chocolate Reynolds said, "the students are absolutely thrilled that the district was so receptive, and so willing to listen to their concerns, and to take real action on this important issue. This is teaching them that their voices can affect change for the better in this world, and that is a wonderful thing."