

Schools begin to benefit from QEIA funds

While the promise of funding for the CTA-sponsored Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA) is tremendous in the coming years, teacher Janice Auld says the program has already had an effect at her school, Harmon Johnson Elementary in Sacramento.

"It has already reduced our fourth-, fifth- and sixth-grade classes to 25 or fewer students," she says. "We look forward to more new resources from QEIA making a big difference for our students."

The good news in North Sacramento will soon be spreading around the state as students, edu-

cators and families begin to benefit from the \$2.9 billion in extra resources that QEIA will pour into schools of greatest need.

CTA staff and leaders are mobilizing to make the law work, holding briefings and trainings, and making assessment visits to all targeted schools. Also, registration starts in March for the very popular, weeklong QEIA training at the CTA Summer Institute at UCLA in early August. Space is limited and priority will be given to school district teams of teachers, parents and administrators.

"This law is CTA's vision of how education reform should work,"

says CTA President David A. Sanchez. "Helping these students and schools will help all of public education and will also help close achievement gaps."

Signed into law in 2006 as Senate Bill 1133, QEIA has far-reaching implications and clearly demonstrates CTA's commitment to helping students who need help the most. About 500,000 students in 488 schools across the state will get extra resources. One of CTA's priorities, says Sanchez, is to expand the investment to even more schools.

Auld, who represents the Sacramento region on the NEA Board of Directors, was one of about

2,000 teachers, administrators, school board members and parents who attended one of CTA's QEIA briefings or other recent training on QEIA.

Held in Sacramento, Emeryville, Pasadena, San Bernardino and San Diego, the briefings discussed the important role of school site councils in regard to QEIA, budget and collective bargaining issues, strategies to improve professional development as required by the new law, and other key issues.

All selected QEIA schools are struggling with poverty or a severe lack of resources. Only schools ranked at the bottom of the state's Academic Performance Index

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Teachers demonstrate compassion

The New Haven Teachers Association in Union City celebrated the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. by organizing a public show of support for students at two Union City schools affected by the tragic and fatal shooting of a 14-year-old student.

After school had been let out for the holiday break in December, the boy was shot in front of Barnard-White Middle School and staggered onto campus in what police called a possible gang-related shooting. No suspects have been arrested.

To help heal their community, scores of local teachers, students, city council members, police, firefighters, parents and others greeted students after school on Jan. 18, as they left the campuses of Barnard-White and of James



NHTA photo by Charmaine Kawaguchi

Logan High School for the three-day Martin Luther King Jr. weekend. The shooting victim attended Logan High.

"As we were preparing to celebrate the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., we thought this was a good way to remind our students that we care about them and are there for them," says NHTA President Charmaine Kawaguchi. "This is a way for the community to help heal itself, and to show all of our students that we support them."

She says students reacted

warmly during the event. "Many students stopped to talk to their teachers. They had lots of smiles. It was a beautiful event."

Teachers and many others carried signs declaring nonviolence messages such as, "We care about you! Please care about each other!" and "We have the power to stop violence in our community."

Ten days later, New Haven teachers also took part in a community peace march through town. Their efforts will continue. The chapter will implement diversity training with members

Brian Fogel (right) and fellow members of the New Haven Teachers Association remind students of their support for them in an effort to stop the cycle of violence.

and the school district to help educators understand the ethnic tensions that have affected the town for many years.

"Seeing the community come together is great," says Kawaguchi. "There is movement now and it's wonderful."

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(deciles 1 and 2) are eligible. The schools share about \$260 million this school year, and then \$450 million a year for six years. Funding is for proven reforms such as smaller classes, more counselors and better training for educators.

Certain targets must be met at the schools. For example, grades 4-8 at QEIA schools must average 25 students or five fewer than in 2006-07, whichever is lower. Also, QEIA high schools must have a ratio of no more than 300 students per counselor. Complete information is on the CTA website at [www.cta.org/issues/current/qeia.htm].

The law stems from a court settlement of a lawsuit CTA and the state superintendent of public instruction filed to compel Gov. Schwarzenegger to pay back to public schools all funding mandated by Prop. 98, the state's minimum funding guarantee for public education. QEIA funding cannot be postponed or modified without court approval, and efforts to do so could subject the governor to contempt of court charges.

While the governor proposed state budget cuts of \$4.8 billion for education in January, QEIA funds were untouched.

Students at QEIA schools are overwhelmingly ethnic minorities, with 78 percent Hispanic or Latino, and 10.5 percent African American.

CTA research also shows that schools in deciles 1 and 2 often face more challenges than other public schools. They have 98 percent more poor students qualifying for the free and reduced-price lunch program than all other public schools; 134 percent more English learners; 91 percent more Latino students; 59 percent more African American students; and

167 percent more students whose parents did not graduate from high school.

Northern California educators Thuy Nguyen and Jacqueline DeWitt joined Auld at the November Sacramento briefing and came away enthusiastic.

Nguyen, a member of the Keyes Teachers Association in Stanislaus County, teaches at Keyes Elementary, a QEIA school in the rural Keyes Union School District. The briefing was an eye-opener. "It was great. I didn't know a lot about the law and now I do. I am very optimistic that QEIA will make a difference."

She is looking forward to smaller classes. Her fourth-grade class will go from 30 kids to 25 or fewer.

For DeWitt, the QEIA funding will also strengthen teachers' skills and teamwork abilities at Fairbanks Elementary, a high-poverty QEIA school in the Del Paso Heights School District in Sacramento.

"We're looking to spending our funding on teacher collaboration and better staff development," says DeWitt, president of the Del Paso Heights Teachers Association.

San Bernardino Unified teacher Rebecca Harper sits on the CTA QEIA Workgroup monitoring the law. She took her QEIA activism a step further by holding a training session about the law at a November achievement gap conference in Sacramento.

Harper, vice president of the San Bernardino Teachers Association, does not work at a QEIA school now but wants to transfer to one soon to be able to take part in the dynamic changes that are coming.

"This law offers a great opportunity for educators to make a real difference with students. It's very exciting."

MIKE MYSLINSKI

