

california
educator

DECEMBER 2025 VOLUME 30 ISSUE 2

THE ART OF ORGANIZING

Richmond educators prepare to strike
PAGE 30



Fight for Funding
Passage of Prop. 55 will ensure stable education funding — permanently
PAGE 20

Community Schools Work
Landmark study confirms their role in student success
PAGE 35

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OUR VOICE, OUR UNION, OUR PROFESSION

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

MAGAZINE

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Landmark study finds California's investment in community schools improves student learning, well-being. **PAGE 35** learningpolicyinstitute.org

And: Kudos for Pittsburg's community schools. **PAGE 37**

MEMBERS SPEAKING OUT

Teacher and Assn. of Linden Educators leader's impassioned words strike a chord as members confront board disrespect. **PAGE 15**

PROP. 50: LANDSLIDE WIN

Educators help drive decisive victory. **PAGE 18**

DIGITAL

IDEA: FUND IT FULLY!

With passage of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, Congress committed to fund 40% of the cost, but has never come close. Time for change! **PAGE 38** bit.ly/IDEA_FullFunding

CALIFORNIA READS 2026

Our new list of teacher-vetted books for Pre K-12 students. **PAGE 10** cta.org/careads

EDUCATORS POWER UNIONS

One of every four union-represented workers in the state is employed in education, as unionization rates rise. **PAGE 12** bit.ly/CAUnions2024

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

NEW: WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

CTA's first-ever Women's Leadership Conference, April 10-12 in San Diego, focuses on issues, challenges and opportunities important to women in education. **PAGE 8** cta.org/conferences

BUILD SKILLS & NETWORKS

Hone your skills, expand your networks at CTA conferences in winter/spring 2026. Topics include teaching and learning, racial justice and equity, LGBTQ+ issues, education advocacy and more. **PAGE 8** cta.org/conferences

MEMBER BENEFITS

HOLIDAY DEALS & DISCOUNTS

CTA members get exclusive Access to Savings for shopping, entertaining and getaways **PAGE 54** CTAMemberBenefits.org

BUILDING RESILIENCE

The Calm app — free to members — has a new program to cope with stress by building your resilience and improving your mental health. **PAGE 55** CTAMemberBenefits.org

Photo: Union educators came out big for Prop. 50, the Election Rigging Response Act, which won big too. Story on page 18.



THE PUSH FOR PROP. 55:

Our fight for permanent education funding

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ORGANIZING THROUGH ART

High-impact visuals build power, create community

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CTA SAYS “NO KINGS!”

Thousands of educators join rallies across the state

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Cover: Photo by Brooke Anderson, @movementphotographer. This page, from top: CTA-Berryessa members ready for action; educators and community take part in the art build for United Teachers of Richmond in October; marchers from the #NoKings rally in Los Angeles in October.



LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK. We accept signed email and letters; we excerpt user posts from CTA social media platforms and cta.org/educator. Content subject to editing for clarity and space. Photos must have permissions. Opinions expressed by writers are not necessarily those of CTA. Editor@cta.org; [#WeAreCTA](https://twitter.com/WeAreCTA)



Sac City and the Good Fight

I am so glad our union fought for and continues to fight for all of us ("Organizing to Win," Sept. 2025). I am a retired teacher of 21 years and now a substitute. I don't have to join the union, but I am proud to be a member and support the progressive and effective work they are doing. Thank you SCTA and CTA!

JOAN COCHRANE

Sacramento City Teachers Assn.

Note to Readers

Beginning in 2026, the California Educator magazine will publish five times a year. Our stories and coverage will remain the same. Check cta.org/educator for the latest news and additional content. Thanks for reading!



WHEN WE WIN, *We Celebrate!*

WHO SAYS YOU can't have your cake and eat it too? Not Lynwood Teachers Association, whose members celebrated with students, families and community in October after the Lynwood district school board approved a historic contract with LTA. The contract increases pay by 10.5% over three years and includes other major gains. As a Power Up Local in the **We Can't Wait** campaign, LTA has been organizing and fighting for fully staffed schools and improved class sizes, counselor ratios and more. See page 48 for details. (WCW involves 32 union locals and 77,000 educators across California; the campaign demands fully funded, fully staffed schools and fair wages for educators. Visit wecantwait.info.)

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MISSION STATEMENT

The California Teachers Association exists to protect and promote the well-being of its members; to improve the conditions of teaching and learning; to advance the cause of free, universal and quality public education for all students; to ensure that the human dignity and civil rights of all children, youth and adults are protected; and to secure a more just, equitable and democratic society.

EDITORIAL INFORMATION

California Educator is published for the information and edification of CTA members. The editorial philosophy is governed by the policies of CTA. Articles and advertising reflect that philosophy. Letters to the editor may be sent to editor@cta.org.

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CTA/NEA membership dues for the fiscal year (Sept. 1, 2025, to Aug. 31, 2026) are \$1,077, including a \$20 refundable contribution (see cta.org/contribution for details). \$27.54 of CTA annual dues is designated for CTA/ABC political activities to support state and local candidates and/or initiatives, and \$15.00 of CTA annual dues is designated for independent expenditures, totaling \$42.54 not deductible for income tax purposes. Please consult your tax adviser.

Subscription to the *California Educator* is \$10 per year, available to persons or institutions not eligible for CTA/NEA membership.

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** Automatic or electronic payments using your checking account and routing number are not considered purchases. By providing your payee with your debit or credit card number, your posted automatic payments will be counted as eligible purchases. Some bill payments will meet the monthly requirement for an ACH debit or credit transaction. Debit card cash-back amounts, cash advances on credit cards, and checks do not count towards qualifications.

11/2025



OUR GREATEST WEAPON IN THE FIGHT FOR SCHOOLS: *Us*

ON ELECTION DAY on Nov. 4, I saw people lined up at their local polling places to vote yes on Proposition 50 — an unusual sight given past turnout in off-year elections. They were energized and excited to help protect public schools, defend students and communities and fight back for *OUR* democracy and *OUR* country.

Soon after the election, at an Arizona gathering of education leaders from across the country, I realized Prop. 50's huge impact nationwide. The mood was electric. Person after person came up to me to express how the California victory — how we successfully stood up to authoritarianism — gave them hope that our national fight was winnable.

What we do in our state resonates around the world. We sent a message to politicians more beholden to billionaire donors than kids in their own communities: “Rigging elections to allow for more cuts to health care and public education is unacceptable. We will organize and we will vote you out!” Our success has emboldened more states to take action.

Winning Prop. 50 is part of our broader fight to protect public education and fund our schools, including our campaign to permanently extend Prop. 55 in 2026. We all know that a permanent extension is necessary to stop billions of dollars of cuts to school funding when Prop. 55 expires in 2030 — a devastating 15% in funding cuts would happen overnight to every school district budget in the state without our collective effort.

We've set an important goal for our union — 85% of our own members signing the petition to get this permanent extension on the ballot for 2026. This is going to take a lot of one-on-one conversations, and in those, we must connect the actual cuts to our classrooms and our students. From there, we will work together to get it passed. No one is going to come in and do this for us. We are the ones that we're waiting for.

We're going to have to organize like never before to fight back against the ongoing attacks on public education and fight forward for the future we want for all our students and families. We're facing a Republican-controlled Congress that is okay with using hungry children as bargaining chips in their fight to make health care unaffordable for millions and build a



government that exists only to benefit billionaires and the super wealthy.

It seems like everywhere you look, our people and our institutions are under attack — and as educators who have dedicated our lives to our students and communities, it can be a lot to deal with.

This is when we need to lean into our union — building together so we can fight back for each other and everyone depending on us. When we build our power and structures to win at local bargaining tables, we are building the same power we need to stop layoffs. When we mobilize against ICE raids, we are not only keeping our students safe but also building real solidarity and trust with our own members, students and families.

These fights and attacks are all connected, but they can also feel chaotic. Our union is how we stand steady in this storm and stick to a plan to win and continue to be a force for good. Our greatest form of resistance is to be constantly building a stronger CTA, chapter by chapter, site by site, and member by member.

This is how we become a fighting union. This is how we win.

And whatever challenges come our way, we will face them together — with power, with solidarity, and with a fierce commitment that a better world is possible and worth fighting for.

David B. Goldberg

CTA PRESIDENT



When the Good Outshines the Bad

EVERY DAY, it seems, there's some new outrage to get — well, *outraged* about: kids going hungry while billionaires get more tax breaks, families torn apart through detention and deportation, the list goes on.

Then there are staggering travesties that have persisted for decades, which never lose their ability to shock: the chronic disinvestment in public education, for one, which our union continues to fight, and which is behind our support for the permanent extension of Proposition 55 (“**Organizing to Win Critical Funding Fight for Public Schools**,” page 20) and the #WeCan'tWait campaign (wecantwait.info).

Tied to this is the ever-growing teacher wage gap, an astonishing reflection of disrespect for educators, public education and our future as a democratic and equitable society. In “**Organizing Is Key to Closing Pay Gap**” (page 11), a new report finds that stagnant weekly wages of public school teachers over the past three decades have fallen even further behind those of college graduates in other careers. The report author notes that along with increased funding “public-sector collective bargaining should be upheld and expanded, given the role of unions in advocating for improved job quality and better pay.”

Another travesty: How Congress can pass the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1976 and commit to paying 40% of the costs — yet to this day has never covered more than 17% (“**IDEA: Fund It Fully!**,” page 38, where you can also take action to fix this).

Yet despite the obstacles and challenges, educators persevere. What you do so well in the face of grim

▼ CTA members at the #NoKings march and rally in LA in October.



realities is what you consistently show your students and communities. You show hope. You model resilience. You believe in a brighter future and work relentlessly for it. Together in our union, you speak out against injustice (“**#NoKings in America**,” page 28). You create life-affirming, resolute artwork to convey critical messages that inspire and motivate others (“**The Art of Organizing**,” page 30). You take courageous stands against authoritarianism — and win (“**Prop. 50: Getting Out the Vote for Democracy**,” page 18).

Through our union, you are pushing for fair pay and improved teaching and learning conditions (“**Bargaining Roundup**,” page 47). You are using Community Schools to build systems and structures where students thrive and excel (“**Our Union's Fight for Community Schools**,” page 35, and “**Pittsburg: Community Schools for the Win**,” page 37).

As these stories document, fighting collectively with student, family and community allies results in unified, amplified voices; strong and expanded partnerships; victories; and change.

This list — a good list — will go on into 2026 and the future, and hopefully help obliterate the bad stuff. Hats off to you.

Katharine Fong

EDITOR IN CHIEF
editor@cta.org

Post This On the inside back cover of this issue is a mini-poster that you can tear out and put up in your classroom, office or anywhere you want to make clear is a safe space for all.



DECEMBER 2025

CALENDAR



LA LGBT Center

SPECIAL EDUCATION DAY

DEC. 2 It's the 50th anniversary of the 1975 signing of the **Individuals with Disabilities Act**, our nation's first federal special education law. IDEA makes public education available to all eligible children with disabilities and ensures that proper services are provided to them. Ways to promote awareness: showcase student achievements, organize events that foster empathy and understanding of different abilities, and thank special educators and parents for their dedication. Also: Tell legislators to fully fund IDEA; see page 38.

Transgender Awareness Week

NOV. 13-19 The week is dedicated to raising the visibility of transgender people and addressing issues the transgender community faces.

Transgender Day of Remembrance, Nov. 20, honors the memory of those whose lives were lost in acts of anti-transgender violence. **GLSEN.org's** Trans Action Kit has student and educator resources, including lesson plans.



American Education Week

NOV. 17-21 **American Education Week** celebrates our public school community and includes special days to honor parents, ESPs and substitute educators. Nov. 19 is National ESP Day. Visit nea.org/aew for more information. **#aew2025**

International Human Rights Day

DEC. 10 The day marks the adoption of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

in 1948. UDHR is a foundational document that outlines the inherent, inalienable rights of every person — rights that must be guaranteed to all students and community members regardless of their background, identity or status.



United Nations





New Educator Weekend — North

DEC. 5-7, 2025 *Hyatt Regency, Burlingame.*

NEW is for educators in their first three years in the profession. It has everything you need to be successful in your first years of teaching, including sessions about classroom management, lesson plans and ideas, connecting with your union, student loan forgiveness information, member benefits, project grants and more. ▶ cta.org/conferences

Good Teaching Conference — North & South

MASTER NEW SKILLS and update your expertise at CTA's **Good Teaching Conferences**. GTC supports excellent teaching and learning practices for classroom teachers via peer-to-peer instruction — and who better to learn from than fellow educators? Workshops focus on curriculum content areas for K-12 teachers; opportunities to network and share ideas with colleagues and experts abound.

• **GTC-North** **JAN. 30-FEB. 1, 2026** *Hyatt Regency, Burlingame*
Booking deadline: Jan. 15, 2026.

• **GTC South** **MARCH 20-22, 2026** *Hyatt Regency, Orange County*
Find more information, registration and a letter you can use to show your principal or district the value of attending GTC at cta.org/conferences. GTC-North

NEW! CTA Organizing Academy

JAN 18-18, 2026 CONFERENCE

Planet Hollywood, Las Vegas.

The Organizing Academy is centered on supporting chapter teams through facilitated sharing, planning and learning to move our "Fight Back, Fight Forward" campaigns throughout the state and in our locals. ▶ cta.org/conferences

CTA/NEA Retired Issues Conference

MARCH 12-13, 2026 CONFERENCE

Hilton OC, Costa Mesa.

Learn how CTA/NEA-Retired is protecting your future and monitoring legislation that affects your benefits. Stay connected, be protected and enjoy great benefits.

▶ cta.org/conferences

Equity & Human Rights Conference

MARCH 13-15, 2026 CONFERENCE *Hilton OC, Costa Mesa.*

The conference captures the essence of CTA's mission: to ensure the dignity and civil rights of all children, youth and adults are protected and to secure a more equitable and democratic society. CTA's Human Rights Award winners are celebrated at a gala dinner. ▶ cta.org/conferences



NEW! Women's Leadership Conference

APRIL 10-12, 2026 CONFERENCE

The Westin, Gaslamp District, San Diego.

The inaugural Women's Leadership Conference is dedicated to empowering and uplifting female CTA members. It will focus on the issues, challenges and opportunities most important to women in education, equipping them with the tools and strategies to thrive and grow.

▶ cta.org/conferences



CTA Conference Grant Program

Take your skills to a new level with the CTA Conference Grant Program. Grants let you attend a CTA conference and gain insights from experts, network with peers, and stay updated on the latest education issues. Grants cover registration and travel, and are available for members from small chapters, new members, BIPOC members and more. Visit cta.org/grants for details, eligibility requirements and to apply. Questions? Email grants@CTA.org.

Grants available for upcoming CTA conferences — see previous page for conference details. Application deadline for all three is Jan. 5, 2026:

- Good Teaching Conference — South
- Equity & Human Rights Conference
- Women's Leadership Conference

National Board Community of Practice Series

Are you a National Board Certified Teacher? CTA's Instruction and Professional Development department is hosting a series of webinars for educators who are renewing their Maintenance of Certification (MoC). Sessions are led by CTA members who are NBCT. Participants will have access to resources and component modules developed by the Stanford National Board Resource Center and CTA NBCTs. Questions? Contact NBCT@cta.org.

All sessions run 1:30 p.m.–6 p.m.:

- Dec. 4, 2025 — MoC Process and State Incentive Program
- Feb. 4, 2026 — Preparing for MoC Components
- Apr. 2, 2026 — MoC Component-Specific Support
- Apr. 29, 2026 — Readers Retreat

[Register for MoC webinars:](#)



Get Political in 2026!



PUBLIC EDUCATION is under attack and educators know elections impact our classrooms. Get the tools you need to fight back at CTA Political Academies. Participants learn to organize for success in local, regional and statewide electoral campaigns; and unlock CTA resources for school board, community college trustee, local measure and county election campaigns. Chapters are encouraged to send their local PAC or political team members.

Book your spot now at bit.ly/4gTH1Dn:

• **Political Academy — South**
FEB. 13-15 Hyatt Regency Orange County
 Registration deadline is Jan. 19, 2026

• **Political Academy — North**
FEB. 27-MARCH 1 Santa Clara Marriott
 Registration deadline is Jan 29, 2026

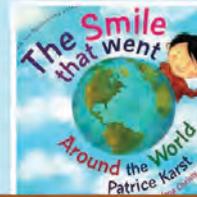
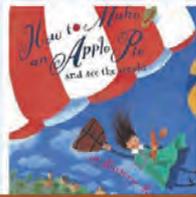
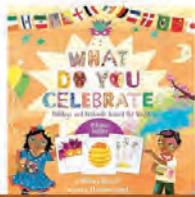
Hotel: Single occupancy rooms available at no cost to attendees. On-site daily parking provided to those not requiring lodging. All other expenses are the responsibility of the chapter, service center council or individual.

Political Academy Grant Program: Grants of up to \$500 per person available to small chapters and cover travel expenses (economy class flights, mileage, tolls, etc.).

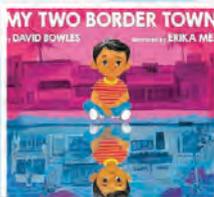
2025-2026

Teacher Recommended Books

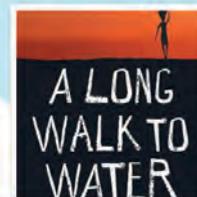
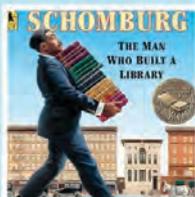
Hot off the press: CTA California Reads 2025-26! This year's theme: "Books Without Borders." These teacher-vetted books for Pre-K-12 will engage students and inspire them all year long. Find book descriptions and links to buy — at a 20% discount — at cta.org/careads.



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



PRIMARY SCHOOL



INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL



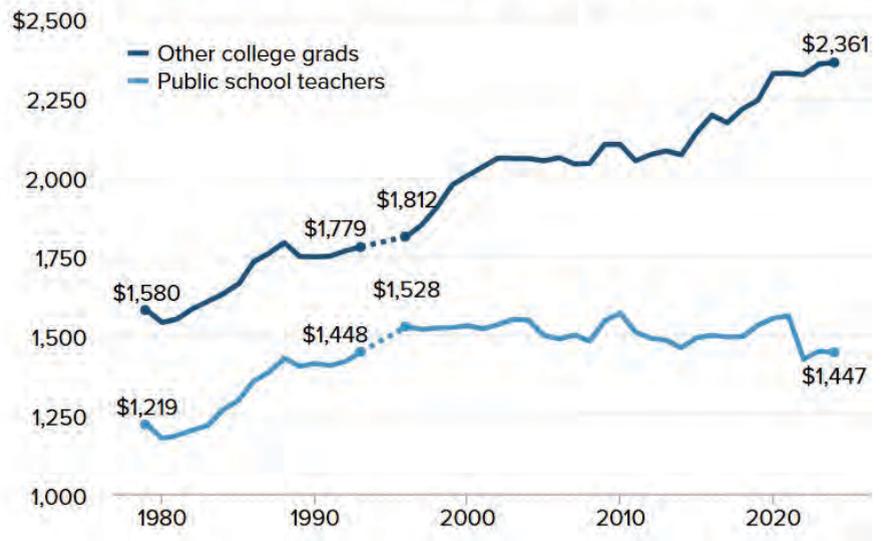
MIDDLE SCHOOL



HIGH SCHOOL

▼ Figure shows average weekly wages (2024\$) of public school teachers and other college graduate (nonteacher) peers. Source: Economic Policy Institute

Average weekly wages of public school teachers and other college graduates (\$2024), 1979–2024



IDEA Turns 50: Fund It Fully

OUR UNION CELEBRATES the 50th anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) this year. One in seven, or 14%, of California public school students, currently receive disability services under IDEA, same as the percentage nationwide.

IDEA was signed into law in 1975 and re-authorized in 1990 and 2004. While Congress committed to covering 40% of IDEA costs, it has never funded more than 17%. As CTA Vice President Leslie Littman (above) says in the video at bit.ly/CTA_IDEA50, the Trump Administration now has Special Education funding on the chopping block. Urge your legislators to support the IDEA Full Funding Act (S. 1277/H.R. 2598) at bit.ly/IDEA_FullFunding. See related story on page 38.

ORGANIZING IS KEY TO CLOSING PAY GAP

KEY DEMANDS OF CTA locals in the “We Can’t Wait” campaign, as well as being central in our union’s organizing and bargaining campaigns, include closing the teacher pay gap, fully staffed schools and stable education funding. Our fight on all these fronts is critical to the future of public education.

A new report shows how the current teacher pay gap has widened and that closing it is essential to attracting and retaining qualified educators and boosting student achievement. The September 2025 report by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) also underscores unions’ role in securing improved teacher wages: “Public-sector collective bargaining should be upheld and expanded, given the role of unions in advocating for improved job quality and better pay,” writes report author Sylvia Allegretto. The report echoes Allegretto’s findings in her California-specific report issued earlier this year, “California Teacher Pay: Decades of Falling Behind.”

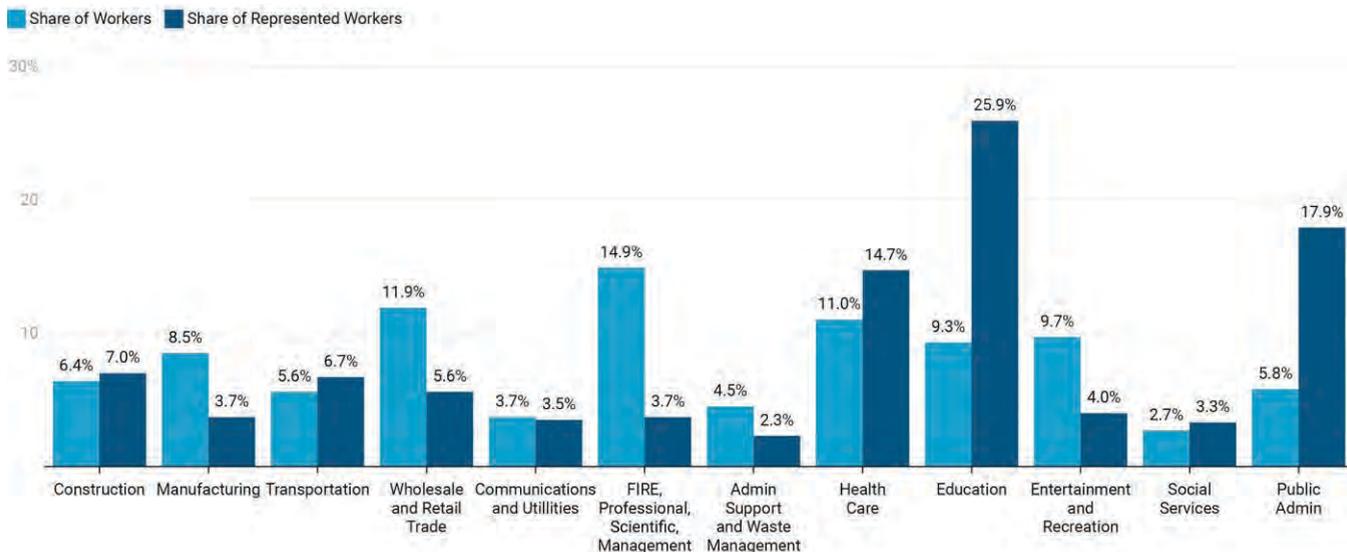
Although teachers typically receive better benefits packages than other professionals, they are not sufficiently large to offset the growing wage gap. The report suggests targeted and sustained investments in public education to mitigate the teacher pay penalty as well as funding and support at the local, state and federal levels to improve teacher pay and compensation.

The report updates EPI’s series that has tracked teacher wages and compensation nationally for two decades. It found that stagnant weekly wages of public school teachers have fallen further behind those of college graduates who chose other careers, resulting in a teacher pay gap that hit a record high in 2024. (see chart above). For the EPI full report, visit epi.org.



▼ **Employment and Unionization by Industry, California, 2023–2024**

Share of the workforce employed in each industry and share of union-represented workers (coverage) employed in each industry. For example, 9.3% of all California workers are employed in education and around 26.9% of union-represented workers are employed in education. Credit: UC Berkeley Labor Center



California — and Education — Unionization Rates Are Strong

A NEW REPORT, “State of the Unions: California Labor in 2024,” reveals a strong and active labor movement in the Golden State. The report, from the UCLA Institute for Research on Labor and Employment and the UC Berkeley Labor Center, notes that workers in education and the public sector tend to have stronger collective bargaining rights and higher union density. For example, while around nine out of 100 (9.3%) California workers are employed in education, around one out of every four (25.9%) union-represented workers is employed in education.

This shows that educators know that building power and winning campaigns and strong contracts in our union is the key to improving teacher pay, benefits and working conditions.

Among the report’s key findings:

- Union density in California has held steady for over two decades in defiance of national trends. In 2024, one in six California workers was represented by a labor union.
- Given the opportunity to vote in a union election, a large majority of California workers choose union representation. In 2024, unions filed petitions for over 300 elections. Workers voted for union representation in over 83% of those elections.

“Unions are proving resilient and determined, organizing workers across California despite steep challenges like housing costs, health care and new technologies,” said Enrique Lopezlira, co-author of the report. “We’re also seeing real momentum and new opportunities to grow union power.” For the full report, visit bit.ly/CAUnions2024.

“Inside California Education”

THE AWARD-WINNING public television series is airing a new season. The latest episode looks at a program that gives students with disabilities a chance to play sports at schools in Downey Unified and introduces student DJs at student-run KYDS radio station in Sacramento. Another segment shows a hands-on approach to high school civics in San Joaquin County (at right). The series covers the state, focusing on both K–12 and community colleges. Episodes can be streamed at insidecaled.org or on the PBS app.





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—Daniel L. Schwartz, PhD
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QUOTES & NUMBERS

Compiled by Julian Peeples



"I think that teachers are the cornerstone of a student's success. I feel like I can instill hope in students."

—CHRISTINE TRAN, recent college graduate preparing for a teaching career, recalling how an eighth-grade teacher sparked her passion for education, in an EdSource story about the impacts of our nation's political climate on new educators

7.6 million

Number of students who receive special education services nationwide, nearly 15% of the total student population

13%

Current congressional funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). When IDEA was passed in 1975, Congress committed to fund 40% of special education costs. But it has never funded more than 17%. See how to take action to fix this on page 39.



"We have to have a voice in order to keep the best possible learning conditions for our students."

—KEVIN COUGHLIN, Colorado Springs Education Assn. president, in an NEA Today story on the local's historic one-day strike in October (see page 46)



2 million

Number of students statewide who rely on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, known in California as CalFresh (Photo: CTA President David Goldberg, back row center, and NEA President Becky Pringle, in front of him, visit Alhambra Teachers Assn.'s community food pantry in September).



"Our job as educators isn't to shield (our students) from reality, but to meet their questions with honesty, care and, most importantly, developmentally grounded truth."

—GABRIEL MENDOZA, JR., CTA-Aspiring Educators president, in an NEA Today story on teaching across the political divide

\$27,000

Amount average teacher salary is higher in the 50 most well-funded basic aid districts in the state than the combined average in LCFF and other basic aid districts, according to a new study by Policy Analysis for California Education and Bellwether.



Volodymyr Hryshchenko/Unsplash

7.3%

Increase in costs of school supplies this year, according to a new report from the Groundwork Collaborative and the Century Foundation



"Our union has been proud to advocate for historic investment in this model that brings educators, parents, students, community organizations and administrators to the same table to make decisions about their school together. At a time when public education is under attack at the federal level, in California we are investing in models that work and organizing together for the schools our students deserve."

—CTA President DAVID GOLDBERG at a September press conference announcing findings from a new Learning Policy Institute study on community schools (see page 35.)

▼ Brie Baumgarten, front row center (holding white papers) with members of the Assn. of Linden Educators.



Linden Vice President Speaks to Board About Massive District Reserves

Small rural chapter demands district prioritize educators

By **Brie Baumgarten**

Brie Baumgarten is vice president of the Association of Linden Educators in San Joaquin County 12 miles east of Stockton. The local and its school district of 115 teachers recently went to impasse for the first time in their history. ALE has successfully used social media to convey information to the community and garner more member activity and support; its “Did You Knows” on Facebook, for example, let people know that the district is sitting on massive reserves — 41% more than the state requires.

At the September board meeting, dozens of ALE members showed up wearing red. The October meeting drew twice the number of members. Following Baumgarten’s speech below, all ALE members walked out together. “Nothing felt stronger or better than in that moment,” she said.

I STAND BEFORE YOU tonight as the vice president of the Association of Linden Educators — but also as a teacher, a parent and someone who deeply loves this district.

At the last board meeting, I spoke about the disappointment our teachers feel over the stalled negotiations. I left that

night feeling unheard and unseen. It was clear that minds were already made up.

Board members, I hope you took the time to read the emails my members sent you about their paycheck concerns. Because only one of you responded. One. You are our board. You represent us — you should not resent us.

If you had read those emails, you would have seen the real impact of the insurance increase: an average post-tax loss of \$142 a month — with some teachers losing as much as \$280. That’s not a small number when you’re living paycheck to paycheck.

Your silence told us everything. It told us you don’t care.

We are here tonight because our teachers are hurting. In my last speech, I said we weren’t angry — we were disappointed. That is no longer the case.

We are angry.

We are working harder than ever, giving everything we have to our students, yet we are falling further behind. The cost of living keeps climbing — groceries, gas, rent, insurance →

Continued on Page 17



Health Care Costs Hurting Rural Educators

Teachers cannot afford health care, and students are paying the price By Jade Potter

Teachers in **Calaveras Unified School District (CUSD)** are facing a crisis that makes it nearly impossible to survive on their wages once health care costs are factored in. This problem isn't unique to Calaveras. Our neighboring district in Amador is also struggling with unaffordable health benefits.

Across California, rural schools are at risk of losing teachers because it has simply become impossible to pay extraordinarily high premiums and still make ends meet in today's economy.

Between 2021 and 2025, out-of-pocket health premiums for teachers in CUSD have risen anywhere from 38% to 78% depending on the plan. For the 2025–2026 school year, the “lowest-cost” Bronze plan will climb from \$375 to \$672 a month — more than \$8,000 a year — and that's before a \$10,000 deductible. The most comprehensive plan requires teachers to pay \$2,500 a month, or more than \$30,000 a year, just to have full coverage.

What does this mean in real life?

- A first-year teacher earning \$56,355 will take home \$49,182 before taxes under the Bronze plan, or as little as \$28,329 with the highest coverage.
- A mid-career teacher with six years of service and a salary of \$68,631 can see their take-home fall to \$40,605 under full coverage.
- Even a 14-year veteran with advanced degrees, earning \$89,255, is reduced to \$61,229 under the most comprehensive plan.

Because health care costs are rising faster than salaries, many teachers will actually take home less in 2025–2026 than they did

in 2024–2025. **See the chart on the next page for the breakdown of plan costs and impact on take-home pay.**

The result is clear: Teachers are being forced to consider leaving CUSD, or education altogether. When that happens, it is our students who pay the price. Each time a teacher is forced out because they cannot afford to stay, students lose the guidance of experienced mentors and the high-quality education they deserve. Positions remain unfilled, class sizes rise and the hope of attracting qualified teachers dwindles. Our students should not be the ones bearing the consequences of a broken system.

If we want to attract and retain teachers in our rural schools, something must change. Affordable health care is not a luxury, it is a necessity. Without it, both teachers and students will continue to lose.

This is not just a Calaveras problem. This is a California problem. Rural districts are losing teachers to the crushing cost of health care. If we truly believe in the value of public education, this cannot continue. We urge community members

to reach out to their legislators and demand change. Protecting teachers from being priced out of the profession is the only way to protect our public schools ... and our students deserve nothing less. ■



Jade Potter

Jade Potter is vice president of Calaveras Unified Educators Assn. This article ran in the Ledger Dispatch (Amador County) in early September.

Health Care Costs Affect Educators at All Career Stages

Using the 2025–26 salary schedule, this chart demonstrates how health care costs reduce Calaveras Unified School District teacher take-home pay at different career stages.

Step	25/26 BA I Step 1	25/26 BA I Step 1	25/26 BA I Step 1
	\$56,355.00	\$56,355.00	\$56,355.00
Plan	Bronze	Plan 6B	Plan 1A
Plan Cost Per Month July-Sep	\$375.00	\$1,342.00	\$1,842.00
Plan Cost Per Month Oct-June	\$672.00	\$1,878.00	\$2,500.00
Plan Cost Per Year	\$7,173.00	\$20,928.00	\$28,026.00
Total Wages Pre Taxes and Deductions	\$49,182.00	\$35,427.00	\$28,329.00
Step	25/26 BA+60 III Step 6	25/26 BA+60 III Step 6	25/26 BA+60 III Step 6
	\$68,631.00	\$68,631.00	\$68,631.00
Plan	Bronze	Plan 6B	Plan 1A
Plan Cost Per Month July-Sep	\$375.00	\$1,342.00	\$1,842.00
Plan Cost Per Month Oct-June	\$672.00	\$1,878.00	\$2,500.00
Plan Cost Per Year	\$7,173.00	\$20,928.00	\$28,026.00
Total Wages Pre Taxes and Deductions	\$61,458.00	\$47,703.00	\$40,605.00
Step	25/26 BA+90 I Step 14	25/26 BA+90 I Step 14	25/26 BA+90 I Step 14
	\$89,255.00	\$89,255.00	\$89,255.00
Plan	Bronze	Plan 6B	Plan 1A
Plan Cost Per Month July-Sep	\$375.00	\$1,342.00	\$1,842.00
Plan Cost Per Month Oct-June	\$672.00	\$1,878.00	\$2,500.00
Plan Cost Per Year	\$7,173.00	\$20,928.00	\$28,026.00
Total Wages Pre Taxes and Deductions	\$82,082.00	\$68,327.00	\$61,229.00

“Rural schools are at risk of losing teachers because it has become impossible to pay extraordinarily high premiums and still make ends meet.”

—Calaveras Unified Educators Assn. Vice President **Jade Potter**

Continued from Page 15

— everything. But our paychecks have not kept up. The 2.3% cost-of-living adjustment we’re asking for doesn’t make us rich. It doesn’t even catch us up. It simply helps us hold on.

We are fighting to stay here — to stay in Linden Unified. We are fighting to stay in teaching. The profession we love has been devalued, disrespected and dismissed. What happened to the “superheroes” we were in 2019? Since then, class sizes have grown, workloads have multiplied, and the respect has faded.

And for me personally, I am fighting for my own children to stay in this district. I want them to grow up surrounded by the incredible educators who built this community. I should not have to consider leaving for financial reasons. No teacher should. But every year, that fight gets harder.

Teachers should not have to choose between paying their bills

and staying in the classroom. We should not have to watch our colleagues leave for districts that value their work more. And we should not have to beg — year after year — for the basic dignity of keeping up with inflation.

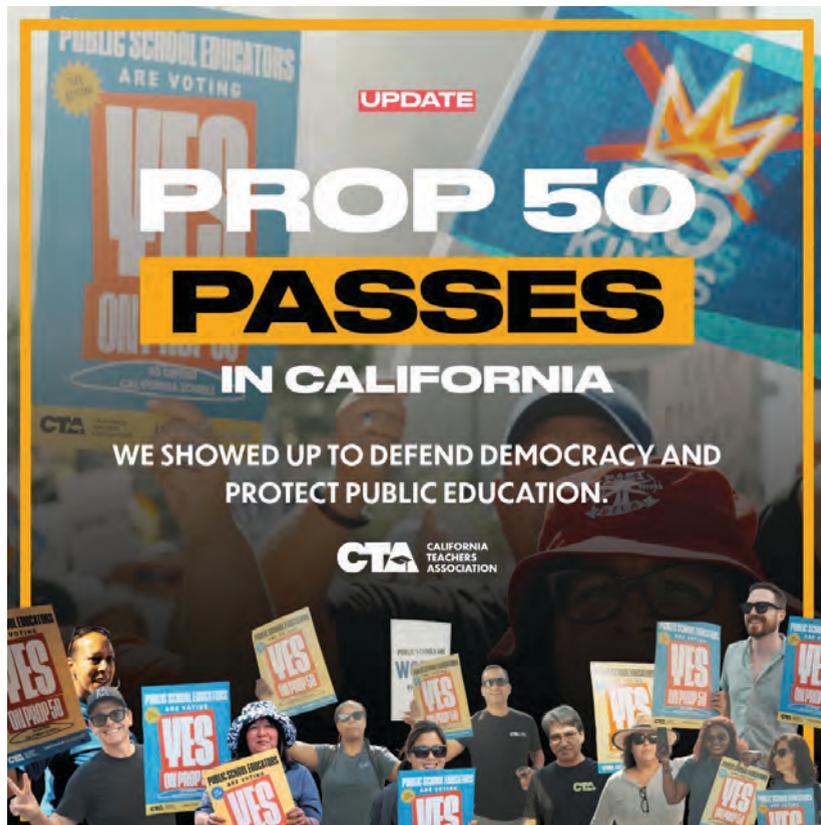
“The profession we love has been devalued, disrespected and dismissed. What happened to the ‘superheroes’ we were in 2019? Since then, class sizes have grown, workloads have multiplied, and the respect has faded.”

—Association of Linden Educators VP **Brie Baumgarten**

This district is sitting on massive reserves — far beyond what the state requires. Meanwhile, the teachers — the very foundation of this district — are being stretched to their limits. That’s not balance. That’s not fairness. And it’s not sustainable.

We come here tonight with passion, with pride and with a deep commitment to our students. We love what we do. We love this community. But love doesn’t pay the bills.

We want Linden to be a district that keeps great teachers — not one that drives them away. Do not make me be the next to leave. ■



▼ In the days leading up to the election, CTA members walked door to door up and down the state. Pictured are member educators from multiple locals canvassing in the Monterey area.



PROP. 50: *Getting Out the Vote for Democracy* Educator support and actions key to decisive victory

By Julian Peeples

UNION EDUCATORS WERE a crucial part of Election Night’s nationwide “Blue Wave,” helping to propel Proposition 50 to a landslide victory and win a major battle for our public schools, communities and democracy.

The outcome was never really in question on Election Day, with major media outlets declaring Prop. 50 a winner almost immediately after polls closed. After the votes were tallied, it was 63.8% Yes, and 36.2% No — a landslide in California electoral politics, especially in an off-cycle special election.

“What an inspiring victory for our union, our shared values and our movement. It was a fight CTA didn’t want or need, but a fight we had to help win — and that’s what we did,” says CTA

President David Goldberg. “Our union was one of the first to sign on and say we’re going to take a stand here. Our impact in this election is not only being felt in your local community and our state, but across this nation.”

CTA members up and down the state walked precincts and phone banked to educate voters about the initiative and why it was necessary to defend fair elections and our democracy.

“The passage of Prop. 50 is union power! When we organize, we win,” CTA Secretary-Treasurer Erika Jones says. “We said yes to democracy and to a better future for our schools and communities!”

Prop. 50 was a response from California to the blatant power

▼ CTA Secretary-Treasurer Erika Jones, right, spoke with social media influencer and former educator Mrs. Frazzled in video post.



“Our union was one of the first to sign on and say we’re going to take a stand here. Our impact in this election is not only being felt in your local community and our state, but across this nation.”

—CTA President **David Goldberg**

grab by Texas Republicans working with the Trump administration to gerrymander their Congressional districts, rig their elections and vote to slash funding for public education, health care and more to provide tax cuts for billionaires. Earlier this year, Trump and Republicans in Congress voted to cut critical funding for special education, school meals for hungry children and health care for vulnerable families, following attempts by union educators to speak with them and urge them to protect our most vulnerable.

“Of the nine Republican representatives in California, several refused to even meet with local teachers in their offices. Some lied directly to our faces. They promised they wouldn’t vote for draconian cuts to our

schools and our health care — only to go back to DC, side with Trump and vote to harm kids and families here in California,” Jones said during the campaign.

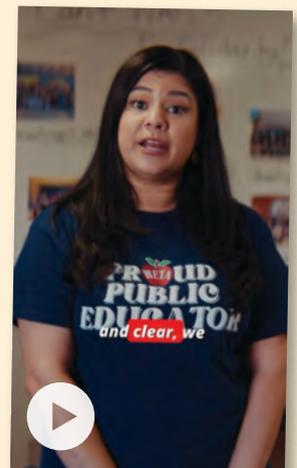
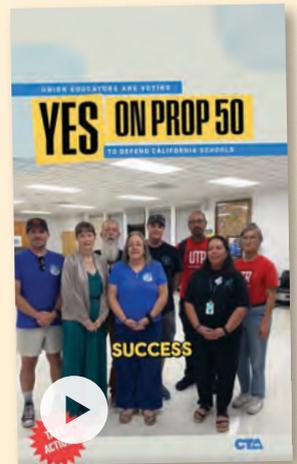
With Prop. 50’s approval, five of these congressional Republicans, Reps. Doug LaMalfa, Kevin Kiley, David Valadao, Ken Calvert and Darrell Issa, face much steeper challenges to retaining their seats, which will hopefully make them more accountable to voters in 2026. Gov. Gavin Newsom said the victory was a loud statement from the Golden State.

“California made it clear: we’re taking back our voice and democracy,” Newsom said on Election Night. “Here’s to proof that when we act together, we win.” ■

▼ CTA President Goldberg cast his ballot for Prop. 50, urging members and others to do the same, in a short video.



▼ Members made videos about why they were voting yes on Prop. 50; see them at bit.ly/CTA_Prop50videos.



▼ After the district forced a school consolidation process last school year, CTA-Berryessa members are organizing to help pass a Prop. 55 extension.



ORGANIZING TO WIN CRITICAL FUNDING FIGHT FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Permanent Prop. 55 extension is a lifeline
for California students and communities

By Julian Peebles

“OUR EDUCATIONAL SOLVENCY is on the line with the Proposition 55 extension,” says Sandra Rivera, president of Alum Rock Educators Association (AREA). “The renewal of Prop. 55 is the lifeline for public education.”

The past year has been especially challenging for California public schools, with threats coming from all directions: Chronically underfunded public education needs; attacks by extremists from outside our communities and even on our school boards; continued waste, fraud and corruption from bad faith actors in the charter school industry that siphons precious resources from neighborhood public schools; and a Trump Administration that appears determined to destroy public education.

With a misguided austerity mindset permeating school boards across the state, many districts have turned to extreme and unnecessary measures, like closing schools and laying off educators — bringing further chaos to our classrooms and communities at a time when our students need their schools to be safe havens.

Amid these ongoing attacks, an imposing deadline looms

— the 2030 expiration of Proposition 55 funds for our schools, which would mean an immediate, devastating 15% cut to funding for our public schools (find out how much your district stands to lose at cta.org/Prop55Extension). While 2030 may seem like a long time away, our union is already working hard to secure that funding permanently, organizing a signature-gathering campaign to qualify an initiative for the November 2026 election and strategizing a ground game to ensure we win for our public schools.

“We as educators came into this profession to support *all* students — and that has to be both inside and outside the classroom,” says Alexis Weiner, Burbank Teachers Association (BTA) external organizing chair. “[Prop. 55] is one way to maintain the stability our schools need.”

In CTA locals throughout the state, educators are organizing to build power, creating structures to communicate, educate and take action for the resources our students need and defending public education as a cornerstone of our democracy. As CTA-Berryessa (CTAB) organizes to gather signatures for the

PROTECT SCHOOL FUNDING

PROP 55 EXTENSION

JOIN OUR FIGHT >>>

WHAT IS PROPOSITION 55?

Prop. 55 is essential to our fight for school funding. It was approved by voters in 2016, extending Prop. 30's personal income tax increases.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT



FUNDING

Prop 55 generated over **\$14.6 BILLION** for California public schools and community colleges in fiscal year 2024-2025.



TAXES

Prop 55's tax extension applies to couples' earnings over **\$700K**.



EDUCATION CUTS

Failure to pass extension would mean **massive education cuts** in 2030.

"No one's going to save us but ourselves. We teach in these schools, we teach these students, we know what they need and it's up to us to build the schools they deserve."

—Celia Greene, Burbank Teachers Assn.

JOIN THE FIGHT TO EXTEND PROP. 55 — *Permanently*

PROP. 55 IS ESSENTIAL to our fight for school funding. It was approved by voters in 2016, extending Prop. 30's personal income tax increases. It generates almost \$15 billion annually for our schools and community colleges.

But Prop. 55 is set to expire in 2030. Extending it — permanently — is vital to preserve the resources we have and achieve more in the future. The tax extension would apply to couples earning more than \$700,000. Without an extension, our schools and community colleges will be hit with an immediate 15% cut in funding.

Take action with our union now to secure permanent funding.

- Find out how much funding your district stands to lose at cta.org/Prop55Extension.
- Join your local chapter's signature-gathering campaign to qualify an initiative for the November 2026 election.
- Talk to friends, fellow educators, families, neighbors and more about this crucial school funding extension for the 2026 ballot.

Find resources at cta.org/Prop55Extension.

Prop. 55 extension, President Joe Hermann says our collective advocacy makes a difference.

"It's a time to come together like never before for an issue we can all agree on and see the value for students, public education and working families," says Hermann.

Throughout the state, our locals are already fighting at the table for safe, stable schools and the teaching and learning conditions all students deserve, advocating for the support and resources they need to be the leaders of tomorrow. Here's a look at how local associations from across the state are building structures at every worksite to win local campaigns *and* win a permanent extension of Prop. 55 funding as a statewide union.



Participating in the We Can't Wait campaign. CTA-Berryessa members are building structures to communicate and mobilize. Below, President Joe Hermann speaks to the school board about their bargaining goals.



BERRYESSA: *Fighting Back Against a Culture of ‘No’*

“EVEN THOUGH THEY SAID closing schools was going to save us money, it didn’t,” says CTAB President Hermann. “The talking points of the school closures saving the district money, really didn’t happen.”

The school district in North San Jose heated up last school year with a consolidation process that saw the school board approve closing three schools, upending their community and putting students at risk. Hermann says the staffing in Special Education environments and the facilities themselves are inadequate and unsafe, causing ongoing concerns for eloping students with special needs. Meanwhile, class sizes are increasing and demands on educators are growing, yet Hermann says 60% of his members can’t afford a one-bedroom apartment in Silicon Valley.

The situation is causing ongoing educator churn, where annual turnover has more than tripled since 2020. The

district’s approach at the table during their current bargain isn’t helping matters, with admin failing to provide the necessary resources to recruit and retain educators.

“Right now, everything they’re saying at the table is ‘no.’

No to health care, no to safe classrooms, no to fair wage increases — everything is no,” Hermann says.

“We want to be innovative and be able to attract students and families to our schools. That’s going to be tougher and tougher to do with less resources.”

If Prop. 55 were to expire, Berryessa Union School District would lose \$2.1 million in funding, which Hermann says would directly impact the quality of education for all Berryessa students.

“It’s going to be tough to keep those lower class sizes and keep caseloads low, which means that our members are going to have to do even more work than they already have on their plates,” Hermann says. “To be the

“We need to tax the rich equitably so that we can fully fund our schools — not have to go to voters every few years to ask for more.”

—CTA-Berryessa President
Joe Hermann

PROP 55 EXTENSION



WHAT IS PROPOSITION 55?

PROP. 55'S TAX EXTENSION APPLIES TO COUPLES' EARNINGS OVER

\$700K

- » Prop 55 was approved by voters in 2016, extending Prop. 30's personal income tax increases.
- » The tax extension applies to California's wealthiest residents – those filing jointly with more than \$700,000 in personal income in 2023.
- » Extending Prop 55 will not raise anyone's taxes and the brackets will adjust upwards over time.

PROP 55 EXTENSION



WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Prop. 55 generated over \$14.6 BILLION for California public schools and community colleges in fiscal year 2024-2025.

- » \$13 billion to TK-12 school districts
- » \$1 billion to community colleges



IF WE DON'T EXTEND PROP 55, OUR SCHOOLS WILL LOSE THIS FUNDING IN 2030

fourth-largest economy in the world and see how we fund our schools in California is depressing. We need to tax the rich equitably so that we can fully fund our schools — not have to go to voters every few years to ask for more.”

CTAB has been organizing to fight back and fight forward in our union's We Can't Wait campaign — building structures in their local to communicate and mobilize members and focusing on transparency so all members are in the know. Hermann says they began organizing these structures for their current bargain and will lean into them when the Prop. 55 extension campaign moves forward. They've been holding structure tests to assess their strength, with more than 80%

of members signing a petition in support of their collective bargaining goals and more than 60% of members participating in group photos/posters to present to the school board. Hermann says the goal is to get more people involved in their shared struggles.

“We're having people come together. Our speech language pathologists had an issue, we held a meeting with all of them. Since we're a collective bargaining unit, let's collectively work toward the goals we want,” Hermann says. “Since the Prop. 55 extension is definitely for all of us, we need to build that capacity and come together like never before.”



▼ Burbank Teachers Association members are building internal structures and external partnerships, and joining forces with other unions, to win more resources for Burbank students.



BURBANK:

Site Structures That Build Power

Burbank Teachers Association (BTA) has been trying to help the school district win a local funding source since shortly after Prop. 55 passed in 2016 to help address increasing needs.

“My class sizes have never been larger, and they keep growing,” says Weiner, a high school teacher. “It’s not sustainable to be able to provide the level of education I know my students deserve with this number of students in my classroom.”

According to Celia Greene, third grade teacher and BTA internal organizing chair, recruitment and retention of educators is already difficult. “You lose institutional knowledge and you’re constantly training new people and starting over,” Greene says.

Without an extension of Prop. 55, Burbank Unified would lose \$21.7 million in funding — a staggering amount that Weiner says would mean layoffs and the end of so many programs, including all the district’s CTE and arts programs, student mental health services, counseling, and college and career readiness resources.

“There is no fat to cut at my school at all. We don’t have arts teachers at the elementary level — we don’t even have arts supplies, I buy my own watercolor paper and markers,” says Greene. “The things that would be cut would not be supplementary. Those are gone. In our bargain, we squabble over a few hundred thousand dollars; \$21 million is unfathomable.”

As they explored a potential parcel tax campaign, BTA sent a team to the NEA Skills to Win training earlier this year, learning skills and techniques to increase member engagement and build structures to increase the capacity of their site representatives and make them a meaningful part of the union’s governance. When they held their first structure test in the spring, BTA had a baseline participation of 300 out of 720 members. Greene says they built out their structures to track membership engagement, including exactly how and where people got involved, and asked their members to sign a commitment card.



Greene

“The structures existed — we had site reps — but we streamlined and decentralized our communication and added more supports at every level,” Greene says. “We started giving the reps significantly more support in their roles, including meetings, lists, talking points and tools. We shadowed them and we modeled conversations. We gave them training in 1-on-1’s with the ultimate goal of building member engagement and it worked — (from April to the start of this school year) we went from just over 300 active members to 470!”

Greene adds that the structures can be easily replicated to be a test of rep capacity.

Externally, BTA is meeting with the community at large, holding a parent roundtable, building relationships with families. The time and effort invested into organizing is working, exceeding BTA’s expectations as the fight continues for the schools Burbank students deserve and to permanently extend Prop. 55.

“I was surprised to see how hungry people were to participate and take action,” Greene says. “They were waiting for someone to give them an opportunity to do something — and the fight for funding gave them that.”



DSTA President Trina Gonzales-Alesi

DESERT SANDS:

Building Chapter Action Teams in the Low Desert

OFF THE I-10 in the Low Desert, transportation is a lifeline for remote locations including public schools, keeping campuses supplied and getting students to and from school safely. **Desert Sands Teachers Association (DSTA)** Vice President Dani Oswood says being three hours into the desert poses logistical and financial challenges, especially with students who live a half-hour away from school and campuses with poor internet connectivity.

"Funding cuts have exponential impacts to rural districts," she says. "Our district needs updated technology — we struggle with WiFi because many of our locations are remote.

"Our transportation budget is going to take a huge hit if Prop. 55 expires. That doesn't necessarily affect certificated staff, but it impacts how your students get to school," says Oswood, a physical education teacher. "I'm looking at how we're going to be able to get food to our students — I imagine that's going to go away."

DSTA is currently in bargaining and while Desert Sands Unified has a large reserve, according to Oswood, programs are still underfunded and they lost some staff since last school year.

The district would lose a whopping \$36.1 million if Prop. 55 were to expire, which Oswood says would have significant impacts on students — including less classroom supplies and fewer paraprofessionals in special education classes.

"Each site would lose a few educators, which means that class sizes won't be optimal for the quality of education we want to give our students," she says. "If your budget is cut so much that

you only have nuts and bolts for the schools to run, you can't provide the services your students need."

DSTA is organizing Chapter Action Teams (ChAT) to lead their Prop. 55 extension campaign at every site — it's an idea that came out of their participation in the Low Desert Leadership Conference. These teams are comprised of 4–5 members at each site, who have committed to collecting signatures and sharing information about the importance of the Prop. 55 extension.

"We asked all the site reps to fill out a Google form so we can track who is active on these teams. It's a way of doing site mapping but around a common theme — and then we create more of a collective union," Oswood says. "We're trying to mobilize and make the education system as strong as possible, and that starts with proper funding. Most educators are doing the job because we want students to succeed, and they can't if we're not giving them the proper resources."

Oswood says DSTA is working to be more deliberate about member outreach, giving multiple avenues for members to get involved and inviting them to do so. That includes engaging new educators about the union, our shared values and collective fight for the public school funding our students need and communities deserve.

"At a community level, people never say 'don't fund our schools' because they know how much it means to our kids — and if we don't push at the community level, we're not going to get the funding we need at the state level!"



Oswood

"Sometimes what we're facing is daunting, but that's why this is the time to work even harder. It's necessary work and it can connect us more as a union."

—Desert Sands Teachers Assn. Vice President
Dani Oswood



▼ United Teachers of Pasadena members are leaning into each other and building solidarity as they fight impacts from wildfires and funding shortfalls.



PASADENA:

Fighting Back Against Cuts After Devastating Wildfires

WILDFIRES DEVASTATED Los Angeles earlier this year, compounding the challenges of providing the education all Pasadena students deserve in **Pasadena Unified School District** (PUSD).

After identifying upward of \$35 million in cuts last year, threatening to lay off 115 educators and ultimately laying off 25, PUSD has been looking at even more severe cuts moving forward, says Jonathan Gardner, president of United Teachers of Pasadena (UTP).

"They listed cutting the health clerks at our school sites, who fill in for our nurses," Gardner says. "They looked at cutting counselors and librarians to the contractual requirement."

Gardner says the funding situation is grim even without a potential expiration of Prop. 55 and loss of \$2.8 million for PUSD. It's a statewide problem, Gardner says, that students in other states do not have to endure.

"In other states, every single school has a librarian, nurse and counselor. They have these supports embedded in the schools," he says. "In California, it's just not like that. How do you not have a school nurse in every school? California is the fourth-largest economy in the world and our schools are 51st in the nation in access to school librarians."

PUSD has a history of underpaying educators, which has made it difficult to recruit and retain staff. Three years ago, Pasadena teachers were the lowest paid in LA County and while UTP has organized to win 30% pay increases in the past five years, the impact of that reputation and the high turnover it caused is still there.

"The hidden cost of all this turnover has been spending millions of dollars on educators who leave," says Gardner, who adds that he was an induction member to five new educators and all five left the district. "You wind up wasting a lot of money and coming up with a lot of different schemes when you have that kind of turnover."

UTP has been organizing around their current bargain, holding a structure test recently, which included circulating a bargaining petition and obtaining signatures from 85% of members. Gardner says they'll be utilizing the same structures to gather signatures for the Prop. 55 renewal.

"Overall, I'm pretty confident that we'll be able to pull off our 85% goal," he says. "Back in the 1960-70s, our public schools had much more funding and we were Top 5 nationally in achievement. Anyone who believes our students deserve a world-class education should be supportive of that effort."



Gardner

"In the 1960-70s, our public schools were Top 5 nationally in achievement. Anyone who believes our students deserve a world-class education should be supportive of Prop. 55."

—United Teachers of Pasadena President **Jonathan Gardner**



▼ AREA members pictured at a CTA leadership conference with CTA President David Goldberg earlier this year.



ALUM ROCK: *Fighting for Stability After School Closures*

THE IMPACTS OF widespread charter school encroachment and district mismanagement are on display in **Alum Rock Union School District** (ARUSD), which voted last spring to close or consolidate eight of its 21 schools. The turbulence continued in August, with the school board firing their superintendent for the second time in three years. As educators work to create some sense of stability for students, Alum Rock Educators Association's Rivera says there are widespread impacts in the schools that remain.

"We're seeing greater needs in different classroom areas than before," she said. "Instead of smaller class sizes and campuses, we have bigger classes and campuses, and we just can't provide the same services. How are we going to be able to give our students the small-class experience Alum Rock has always provided?"

If Prop. 55 funding expires, ARUSD would immediately lose about \$11.2 million in state funding, which Rivera says would alter the educational experience for all Alum Rock students, with layoffs and program cuts a certainty.

At risk would be "non-classroom and support staff, as well as reducing non-core programs like arts and enrichment," she says. "If school isn't fun and we're not tapping into students' interests, we see more behavior issues, attendance issues and truancy. Then that hits us in the ADA" (Average Daily Attendance funding for California schools is based on student attendance and used for general purpose funding like the Local Control Funding Formula [LCFF]).

Rivera worries that school districts like Alum Rock will be unable to weather the draconian cuts that would come with Prop. 55 expiration. With ARUSD's more than \$30 million a year in special education costs alone, any funding cuts will equate to very steep drops in services for students. She says AREA leaders have been educating members about Prop. 55 and the need to extend the funds — and how failing to do so would look in their district.

▼ AREA Treasurer Danielle Letts, Vice President Maria Martinez and President Sandra Rivera



"Extending Prop. 55 isn't a passive thing where we can count that our expertise is going to be heard, and it's going to be automatic. There is no time or situation too small — talk to anybody and everybody who will listen that this is a definite need and now."

—Alum Rock Educators Assn. President
Sandra Rivera

▼ This page and next: CTA members marched in the streets and joined the massive rally in downtown LA's Grand Park.



▼ CTA President David Goldberg

#NoKings *in America*

*CTA members, leaders,
take part in massive national
protest against authoritarianism*

ON OCT. 18, more than 800 representatives on CTA State Council of Education joined tens of thousands in downtown Los Angeles and millions nationwide to rise together against the authoritarian Trump presidency and shout out loud that there are **#NoKings** in America.

It was one of thousands of protests that took place across the country, as people increasingly oppose the administration's policies on immigration, education, health care and environmental protections. An estimated 7 million attendees nationally exceeded the 5 million who took part in the first **#NoKings** Day in June.

CTA State Council delegates and leadership brought the power and energy of educator solidarity as they rallied in LA's Grand Park outside City Hall, led on a march there by Grammy Award-winning band Ozomatli. ■





▼ It takes a village: Educators, students, families and community allies helped paint this parachute, whose Rosie the Riveter is modeled after UTR member Miesha Gash.



THE ART OF ORGANIZING

Art builds and impactful visuals help locals build power internally and in their communities

Photos by **Brooke Anderson**, @movementphotographer

▼ Scenes from the weekend art build, with multiple people participating to make banners, pickets and more.



IN THIS TIME of instant social media posts and speedy news updates, photos and video from a rally or protest require bold, eye-catching, immediately understandable signage that inspires, motivates and invites all to join.

Union educators understand this: Visual messaging amplifies our voices. Art is central to building power, unity and history.

The 2019 **#RedForEd** actions by United Teachers Los Angeles and Oakland Education Association demonstrated the power of art to help mobilize entire cities and communities against injustice. Along with student, family and local artist support, educators and allies created posters, banners and huge parachute artwork that conveyed passion, outrage, hope and demand for change.

“Teachers stood up to Trump during his first administration,” says artist and organizer David Solnit, explaining why he is drawn to working with educators.

“With their position so closely connected to their communities, they are a significant force to fight back against authoritarianism. Teachers really do save the world.”

Solnit is a key figure in our union members’ full embrace of visual communication and messaging. He

has led multiple art builds with CTA locals, most recently in Richmond, where in October United Teachers of Richmond members, seeking fair pay, affordable health care and fully staffed schools, voted 98% in support of a strike. He is helping locals create vivid artwork for the “We Can’t Wait” campaign. (WCW involves 32 union locals and 77,000 educators across California; the campaign demands fully funded, fully staffed schools and fair wages for educators, with UTR and other large locals having aligned their contract expiration dates for maximum collective impact.)

But art builds, says UTR President Francisco Ortiz, are not just for members. “They are a way

“Art builds are a way of building community from the ground up, to build our muscle with our students, parents, community and allies to fight for our schools.”

—UTR President **Francisco Ortiz**



► From top: Banner art is projected onto the wall and traced onto fabric; David Solnit (in green shirt) leads a discussion on messaging; printed patches that will be cut and painted.

“With teachers so closely connected to their communities, they are a significant force to fight back against authoritarianism. Teachers really do save the world.”

—Artist and organizer **David Solnit**



of building community from the ground up, to build our muscle with our students, parents, community and allies to fight for our schools.” He notes that at the UTR art build, members’ children and friends, representatives from partners Richmond Progressive Alliance and Reimagining Richmond and students from UC Berkeley’s Labor Center were busy painting and helping with tools and gear.

“We are in the fight of our lives for public education, [so] the love and support from everyone are very meaningful,” says Ortiz of the community connections. “The art we make allows us to go to major events, such as town halls, school board meetings and other actions, and represent both educators and community — *showing we are one!*”

Participants at the UTR art build included members of locals from up and down the state, including Whittier Elementary and West Sacramento teachers associations and a big contingent from Bay Area locals. They came to learn how to make impactful visuals as well as to assist.

“As part of the East Bay Coalition for Student Success [comprised of 18 CTA locals, including UTR], we support each other,” said Celia Medina-Owens, Pittsburg Education Association president.

United Educators San Francisco President Cassondra Curiel said simply, “Solidarity is a verb.” ■



▼ UTR President Francisco Ortiz says of the art build, “We are in the fight of our lives for public education, [so] the love and support from everyone are very meaningful.”



▲ Walking art: A strong message is pinned onto a shirt.

▲ Camaraderie with a cause: Everyone is welcome to join in and paint.





“An art build is an organizing strategy, unifying action and amazing communication tool.”

— **Bethany Meyer**,
Oakland Education
Association

ART BUILD ESSENTIALS

MORE ART BUILDS led by David Solnit and his team are scheduled at CTA locals in Natomas and San Diego in January 2026. In many respects these are “train the trainer” events that allow locals to gain the skills to create stunning visuals and messages that can be used in multiple settings.

Specifically, members learn how to trace designs that are projected on a wall onto fabric used for banners and other signage, which they then paint. They help with screen-printing in multiple languages, and with mounting finished signs onto sticks. They learn how to assemble and reassemble the banners.

San Diego Education Association has held several art builds with great results. “In April and May we had pickets at 125 sites — our signs got a lot of honks, energized our membership and fostered solidarity,” said SDEA Secretary and campaign organizer Sarah Darr. Darr was a presenter on the recent Solnit webinar “Arts Organizing to Win” (bit.ly/CTA_ArtsOrganizing).

Of course, the messages communicated on the signage are critical. Other webinar presenters spoke of how their locals came up with powerful, effective messages.

- Berkeley Federation of Teachers’ Julie Searle suggests forming an organizing team and choosing a

strong, easy-to-understand message based on a framework that includes “the battle of your story” — including the conflict, characters and imagery. BFT’s clear, meaningful message for one campaign: “Love our jobs but can’t afford them.”

- Oakland Education Association’s Bethany Meyer says members worked together to create slogans such as “Public Schools Are Not for Sale” and “Fight for the Schools Students Deserve.” “When they saw ‘Public Schools Are the Heart of the Community,’ the community understood what we were fighting for,” she says. The messages endure: “These signs are hanging up in classrooms across town.”

Based on your story and message, create simple, appealing designs and offer easy prep to paint and build, says Searle — everyone can participate in the fun, uplifting art build and can take home patches and posters to help spread the word. Meyer urges locals to “make the art special to where you are — the local flavor and culture.”

“An art build is an organizing strategy, unifying action and amazing communication tool,” Meyer says. “We tracked member and community participation by site like any other action. We used it in our escalation plan to gauge participation and readiness to strike.”

▼ CTA President David Goldberg speaks at the press conference announcing results of the community schools report by the Learning Policy Institute. Parents, educators, San Diego Education Assn. President Kyle Weinberg (in red T-shirt) and CTA Board Member Kisha Borden (to Goldberg's right) also participated in the event, which was held at Encanto Elementary School in San Diego.



Our Union's Fight for Community Schools

Landmark study shows improved student learning and well-being in just one year

OUR UNION'S ongoing fight to support and grow the community schools movement is making a big difference: A new report from the Learning Policy Institute (LPI) finds that community schools in California in the past year have positively impacted students and families in multiple ways. In addition to marked improvement in chronic absenteeism and suspension rates, students have made major gains in academic achievement — particularly among historically underserved students.

“Community Schools Impact on Student Outcomes: Evidence From California” shared encouraging results from LPI’s research of the first cohort of California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP) grantees with a full year of student outcome data. The evidence shows the state’s investment in community schools is already creating transformative change, even in a short time.

“This report underscores what we already see happening at

community schools across California: This is a model for public education that works,” said CTA President David Goldberg at the press conference in September announcing the findings. “Our union has been proud to advocate for historic investment in this model that brings educators, parents, students, community organizations and administrators to the same table to make decisions about their school together.

“At a time when public education is under attack at the federal level, in California we are investing in models that work and organizing together for the schools our students deserve.”

Our union has been deeply committed to helping grow and support California’s community schools, a partnership with the state, school districts, students, families and communities, even before the CCSPP investment of \$4.1 billion in 2021. CCSPP is the nation’s largest community schools initiative, now serving more than 2,500 schools. Community schools’ 



CTA & Community Schools

Our union is committed to helping grow and support California’s community schools, in partnership with the state, school districts, students, families and communities.

Read more of our coverage of CTA and members’ work, and find information and resources, at cta.org/communityschools.

“At a time when public education is under attack at the federal level, in California we are investing in models that work and organizing together for the schools our students deserve.”

—CTA President **David Goldberg**

shared governance component is crucial to their success, and our union has been diligent across the state in fighting to get school district administrators to embrace this critical collaboration.

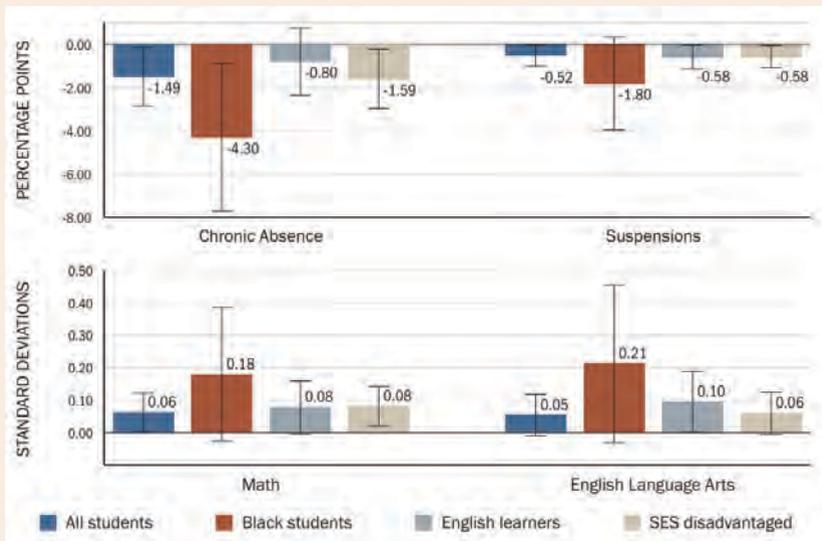
As Community Schools Coordinator Clarisa Elmore said at the press conference, held at Encanto Elementary (one of 35 community schools in the San Diego Unified School District), “Being a community school means inviting parents to the table — not just as participants, but as thought partners and leaders.”

Next page:

Pittsburg’s Community Schools honored

▼ Community Schools’ Effects

This chart shows the gains made by historically underserved students at community schools in CCSP’s first cohort in the first year. Outcomes are shown by student group (all students, Black students, English learners and socioeconomically disadvantaged).



Major Findings of the LPI Report

The LPI report shows how California’s investment in community schools has significantly impacted student attendance, reduced suspension rates in schools and increased academic achievement scores, especially for students who have been historically underserved including Black students, English learners, and students from low-income backgrounds. Major findings:

- Compared to matched comparison schools, community schools’ chronic absence rates dropped by 30%, suspension rates fell by 15% and academic achievement rose.
- Black students and English learners saw gains equivalent to about 43 extra days of learning in math and 36 in English language arts.
- The strongest academic improvements occurred in schools with the greatest progress in attendance.
- Results suggest that community schools’ holistic approach can reduce educational inequities and improve multiple student outcomes.

“The early results from the first cohort of schools served by the California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSP) are promising,” said Walker Swain, a principal researcher at LPI and lead author of the new report. “In just the first full year of implementation, CCSP schools noticeably outperformed similar schools that did not receive grant funding, making significant reductions in chronic absence and suspension rates, along with improvements in student achievement; especially for historically underserved students.

“Our results echo findings from a similar RAND study of New York City community schools, where larger gains unfolded over a longer period of time. Together, these studies suggest community schools are a scalable tool for addressing educational inequalities and promoting deeper learning.”

For the full report, visit learningpolicyinstitute.org.

Credit: Learning Policy Institute

▼ “Lunch on the Lawn” at Martin Luther King Jr. Junior High with families and community partners; photo: Jose Rodriguez, Community School coordinator.



PITTSBURG:

Community Schools for the Win

PITTSBURG SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS have seen impressive gains in literacy, math and science assessment scores following adoption of the community schools model. State Superintendent of Schools Tony Thurmond, school district officials and Pittsburg Education Association (PEA) leadership held a special press event in October to celebrate.

PEA President Celia Medina-Owens spoke at the event, crediting community schools’ shared decision-making model for student success. “We know that when educators and support staff are empowered to collaborate with school and district leadership, we can focus on the students and their individual needs and everyone thrives.”

Statewide assessment results show that the number of Pittsburg Unified School District students who met or exceeded standard in English Language Arts increased by 4.6% since last year, while the rate of students who met or exceeded standard rose by 1.5% in math and 2.9% in science. In addition, students’ average scale score increased in every grade level and nearly every student demographic group for ELA and math.

All 13 schools in Pittsburg district are community schools. Nine schools have grant money from the California Community Schools Partnership Program, which has seen a total investment of \$4.1 billion statewide since its launch in 2021. Four schools are funded through their LCAPs.

California’s community schools address the whole child, where academics are intertwined with student well-being and social-emotional learning. The schools build partnerships with community organizations to provide resources, such as mental health services and family outreach including home visits, that engage both families and students. Visit cta.org/communityschools for more. ■

▼ Students vote for their representatives for the Community Schools Site-Based Steering Committee at Marina Vista Elementary; photo: Kelly Johnson, Community School coordinator.



“When educators and support staff are empowered to collaborate with school and district leadership, we can focus on the students and everyone thrives.”

—Pittsburg Education Assn.
President **Celia Medina-Owens**



IDEA: Fund It Fully!

*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
is chronically underfunded, while special education
monies and services are on the chopping block*

THIS YEAR, while our union and the nation celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), its promise remains unfulfilled and federal special education funding is in danger of being cut altogether.

Special education programs address our most vulnerable students' unique needs. Public schools provide special education services to more than 7 million students with disabilities nationwide. But our schools constantly struggle to fund these services because they don't receive adequate federal support.

IDEA was signed into law in 1975 and reauthorized in 1990

and 2004. Before IDEA, students with disabilities were cast aside and denied opportunity. With the passage of IDEA, Congress committed to fund 40% of the average per-pupil cost for special education. But Congress has never funded more than 17%; current funding is a paltry 13%.

Meanwhile, the Trump Administration is taking steps to decimate special education. After making deep cuts to staff at the Department of Education last spring, the administration recently cut more, particularly staff that carries out services for students with disabilities, oversees \$15 billion in special

Take Action!

Visit NEA's action page at bit.ly/IDEA_FullFunding to find out exactly how much IDEA funding is missing from our state or your school district. Then use the message template — replicated below, and which you can personalize — to urge your senators and representatives to support the IDEA Full Funding Act (S. 1277/H.R. 2598).

The bill proposes regular, mandatory increases in IDEA funding to address chronic underfunding that has left many schools struggling to provide adequate special education resources. It aims to fulfill the federal government's promise to cover 40% of special education costs.

When fully funded, IDEA will significantly enhance the resources available for special education, allowing schools to better support students with disabilities. This includes hiring qualified staff, providing necessary services, and ensuring that all students have access to quality education regardless of their disabilities.

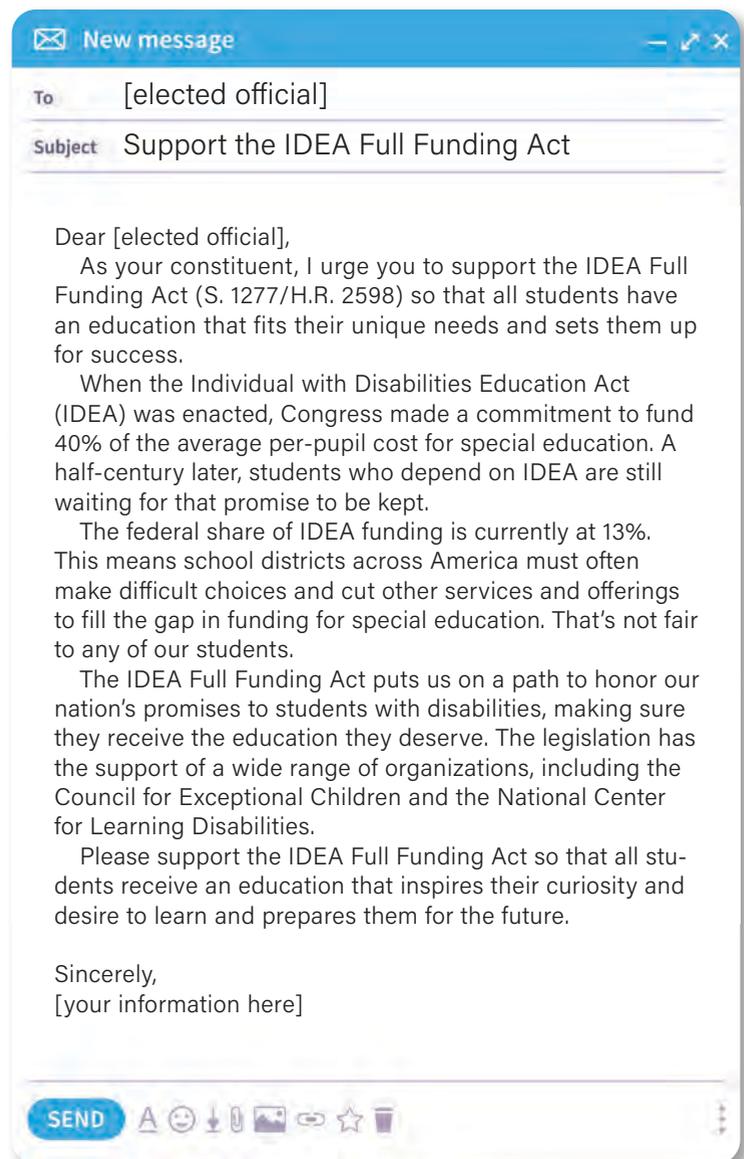
education funding and ensures that states use these funds appropriately. By firing nearly every employee who supports special education, the administration is turning its back on the more than 7 million children with disabilities. (On October 15, a federal judge temporarily halted the cuts.)

What can we do? We must urge our legislators to support the IDEA Full Funding Act (S. 1277/H.R. 2598), co-sponsored by U.S. Rep. Jared Huffman, who represents California's District 2 (see box). The bill will ensure that Congress funds IDEA at the full 40%.

"All children — no matter their zip code, race, disability or any other factor — should be able to access a full, exceptional education, and this legislation will help school districts provide the necessary resources to make this vision a reality," said Huffman earlier this year.

"Our bill holds up the federal government's end of the bargain to fully fund special education services on a permanent basis and set all students up for long-term success." ■

Watch CTA Vice President Leslie Littman's short video on IDEA's 50th anniversary and the need for full funding at bit.ly/CTA_IDEA50.



The image shows a screenshot of an email composition window. The title bar is blue and says "New message". The "To" field contains "[elected official]". The "Subject" field contains "Support the IDEA Full Funding Act". The body of the email contains the following text:

Dear [elected official],

As your constituent, I urge you to support the IDEA Full Funding Act (S. 1277/H.R. 2598) so that all students have an education that fits their unique needs and sets them up for success.

When the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was enacted, Congress made a commitment to fund 40% of the average per-pupil cost for special education. A half-century later, students who depend on IDEA are still waiting for that promise to be kept.

The federal share of IDEA funding is currently at 13%. This means school districts across America must often make difficult choices and cut other services and offerings to fill the gap in funding for special education. That's not fair to any of our students.

The IDEA Full Funding Act puts us on a path to honor our nation's promises to students with disabilities, making sure they receive the education they deserve. The legislation has the support of a wide range of organizations, including the Council for Exceptional Children and the National Center for Learning Disabilities.

Please support the IDEA Full Funding Act so that all students receive an education that inspires their curiosity and desire to learn and prepares them for the future.

Sincerely,
[your information here]

At the bottom of the window is a blue "SEND" button and a row of icons for text formatting, attachments, and other email functions.

Notable Gains in Statewide Assessment Results

2024–25 data show continued progress across all student groups

IN OCTOBER, the California Department of Education (CDE) released 2024–25 assessment results that show continued progress made by K–12 students, including further movement to close equity gaps for socioeconomically disadvantaged students, Black/African American students, and Hispanic/Latino students.

Overall, the percentages of California students meeting or exceeding standard in English language arts (ELA), mathematics and science showed modest increases at a higher rate than the year prior, suggesting growing momentum.

For example:

- **ELA:** +1.8 percentage point change for students scoring Proficient or Advanced (about 4x larger than last year’s gains)
- **Math:** +1.8 percentage point change for students at Proficient or Advanced (twice as large as last year’s gains)
- **Science:** +2.0 percentage point change for students Proficient or Advanced (4x larger than last year’s gains)

In total, the proportions of students meeting grade-level expectations also grew to 70.6% in ELA, 61% in mathematics, and 86% in science.

Assessment results include data for the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) and the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC).

Assessment results also show that Black or African American students and Hispanic or Latino students made higher-than-average improvements in ELA, math and science, as illustrated by the chart below.

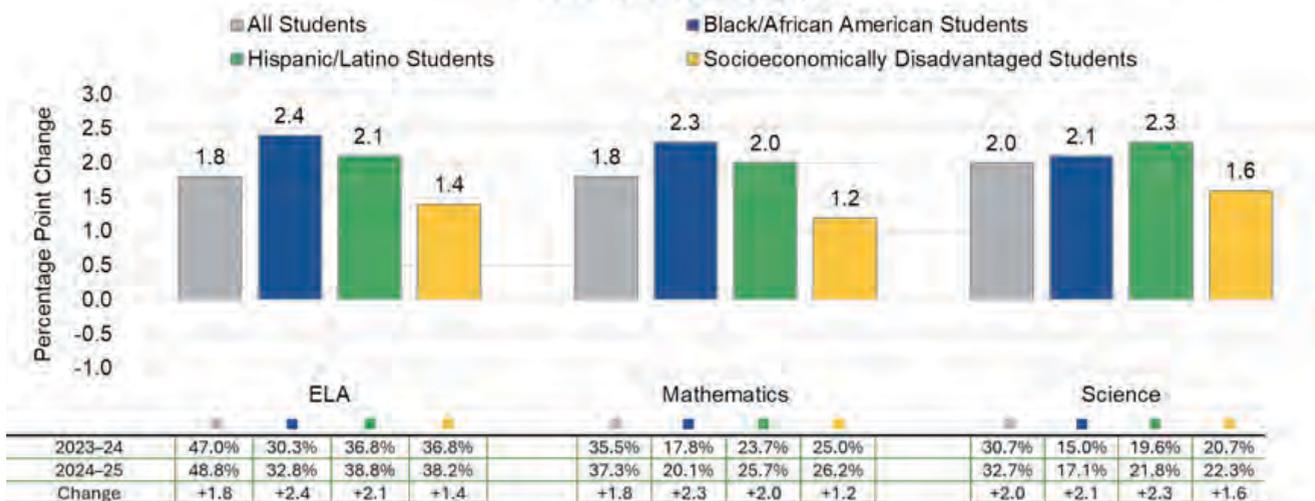
The CDE announcement singled out several school districts for particularly significant increases in student achievement, including Compton Unified, Los Angeles Unified, Pittsburg Unified, Roseville Joint Union High School District and Sanger Unified.

The gains in student achievement come at a time when Community Schools are showing powerful learning results (see the Learning Policy Institute’s landmark report in “Our Union’s Fight for Community Schools,” page 35).

With our union’s steadfast advocacy and organizing for Community Schools and their shared governance model, students at these schools are thriving. The CDE recently recognized Pittsburg, where all 13 of the district schools are Community Schools (see “Community Schools for the Win,” page 37). In Pittsburg, students have seen impressive gains in literacy, math and science assessment scores. ■

From the California Department of Education:

Year-over-Year percentage point Change in Students at Proficient or Advanced Levels for ELA, Mathematics, and Science from 2023–24 and 2024–25 for All Students and Selected Student Groups



Organizing Grants for Local Leaders

APPLICATIONS RECENTLY CLOSED for CTA's **Spring 2026 Local President Release Time for Organizing Program**. These grants allow presidents to engage all chapter members and organize and strengthen their locals.

The program is straightforward: All eligible chapters that are willing to do the site-based organizing work and submit an application on time receive the grant.

Goal of the grants: Through site-based organizing, chapters are able to

- increase union membership, expand site leadership and member participation, and run successful campaigns to win on issues that members, students and communities care deeply about;
- take effective collective action to solve site-based issues and win strong contracts;
- join with other CTA chapters across California to more effectively address key statewide issues like school funding and educator recruitment and retention.

New participants are required to attend a training.

About 220 local presidents are currently taking advantage of the grants. Douglas Knepp, president of West Sacramento Teachers Association, is in the middle of his second consecutive grant that allows 80% release time. He says the grants have been invaluable as he works to strengthen WSTA.

“The ability to get all of my organizing structures in place and test them was impossible before,” he says. “With release time I can build structures and relationships that I can track and count — so WSTA can be at peak power.”

Specifically, the grants give him time for site visits and one-on-one conversations with members. “I’ve developed personal relationships that make a difference. We’ve been able to get to our goal of one site rep for every 10 members and to identify organic leaders.”

▼ Knepp, foreground, at the **#NoKings** rally in LA in October, has received two Local President Release Time grants.



Structure-building has included setting up action teams where site reps and member leaders can reach out to other members and rapidly get their input. “We’ve had pickets, walk-ins, limited work-to-rule actions, etc., and before doing them we need to know how many members can show up. The action teams mean we get prompt information and can make quick decisions. Our actions now have 80% participation.”

Knepp says the grants are particularly helpful for smaller associations, such as WSTA with its 450 members. “For small locals like ours, it’s hard to raise funds for release time. So we really appreciate the CTA grants.”

Read more about the grants at cta.org/leader-resources/cta-organizing-plan, where you can also find information about **Local Planning Grants** and **Local Site Visit Grants**. For questions about all grants, reach out to your CTA Primary Contact Staff or email releasetimefororganizing@cta.org. ■

IN ADDITION: The NEA Center for Organizing is offering grants through its Local President Release Time Program. **Application deadline for the 2026-2027 year is Jan. 20, 2026.**

The three-year grants allow locals, with the advantage of a release-time president, to organize and to grow in strength and influence. Local leaders are able to have a more visible presence at worksites, identify future leaders, and be more engaged within the community. Locals that receive a grant have a shared commitment from the local affiliate, CTA and NEA to fund the release time. For details visit nea.org/grants/75315.htm#,

▼ EEEA member leaders and participants at the daylong intensive training.



Secrets to Successful Organizing

Escondido local invests in a training to build member power

By Jonathon Mello

ON SEPTEMBER 30, the Escondido Elementary Educators Association (EEEA) executive board brought together their 30-member organizing team for an all-day, intensive “Secrets of a Successful Organizer” training. The goal: build the power EEEA members need to win the schools their students deserve, both in their current tough contract fight and in the future.

For the training, EEEA leadership turned to a well-known and effective guide developed by Labor Notes, the go-to media and organizing project for union members who want to put the movement back in the labor movement. In 2016, Labor Notes organizers distilled generations of organizing know-how into “Secrets of a Successful Organizer.” The step-by-step guide to building power on the job has become the essential handbook to learn how to identify the key issues in your workplace, build campaigns to tackle them, anticipate management’s tricks and traps, and inspire your co-workers to stand together despite their fears. (Our union also incorporates elements of Labor Notes’ guidebook into our trainings.)

That day, member leaders — who had taken the Labor Notes training — worked through key modules, including “Beating Apathy” and “Assembling Your Dream Team.” Participants learned how to map existing social networks in their

workplaces, identify leaders and recruit them into the union’s contract campaign.

“We are using these tools to empower member leaders and grow the core of our union,” said Rocio Hernandez, EEEA treasurer, who helped lead the training. “‘Beating Apathy’ gives you the tools to really listen, identify the issues that matter most to our members, and turn those issues into a plan of action.”

Sonya Shaffer, an EEEA at-large executive board member, led the “Aiming for the Bullseye” exercise, which helps organizers visualize their member engagement.

“It helps us think about our union not as a hierarchical triangle,” Shaffer explained. “We learned skills to more effectively engage members and move them from disengaged to supportive, then to activists, and finally to the core group of people who are always thinking about organizing.”

EEEA has been putting these “secrets” into action as they fight for a fair wage increase, a competitive benefits package, and meaningful Special Education supports.

According to EEEA President Brandi Krepps, “The goal behind this training was to empower our site leadership and develop a plan to catapult our association forward as one of

“This has already made an impact on negotiations, where everything started out as a ‘no’. We have gained major traction in improving working conditions and fixing decades’ worth of step and column gaps that have affected our career earnings.”

—EEEA President **Brandi Krepps**

▼ EEEA member leaders trained 30 members of their bargaining team in how to engage members and move them to activism.



▼ EEEA at-large executive board member Sonya Shaffer.



being progressive and strong. I can't be prouder of not only the executive board, but of our site leaders as well.

“We often hear, ‘What is the union doing for me?’ This training was designed to show that *we* are the union. The union is every single member in our association. After this training, our school sites have had record showings of members wearing union t-shirts on ‘EEEA Tuesdays’ and during district leadership visits.

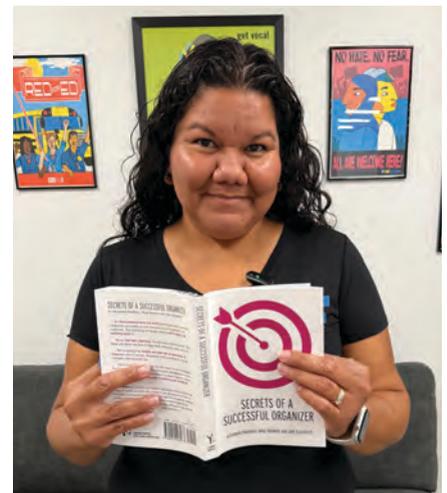
“This has already made an impact on negotiations, where everything started out as a ‘no’. The tide is already shifting, and we have gained major traction in improving working conditions and fixing decades’ worth of step and column gaps that have affected our career earnings.”

Driven by the power of their site-based organizing, EEEA’s bargaining team has already won tentative agreements on a “Leaves” article in the contract that includes:

- Six weeks of paid pregnancy leave and six weeks of paid paternity/adoption leave;
- Landmark improvements to the district’s Special Education program;
- A benefits agreement that not only ensures that the district will shoulder the burden of this year’s soaring benefits costs, but will structurally address benefits in the future.

EEEA members are committed to continuing to use their sharpened organizing skills to win a fair wage settlement as well. ■

▼ EEEA treasurer Rocio Hernandez.



Labor Notes Since 1979, Labor Notes has been a vital resource for helping union members build power, fight the boss, and grow a more democratic and member-driven labor movement. The media and organizing project publishes a monthly magazine and books, offers news and opinion on its website at labornotes.org, and organizes conferences and workshops to train activists. Visit the website for more information. For details about Labor Notes’ “Secrets of a Successful Organizer” training and guidebook, visit labornotes.org/secrets.

Legislative Update

By Julian Peebles

Recent education-related bills and their status:

Governor Vetoes SB 414 Over Cost Concerns, Unworkability

Gov. Gavin Newsom heard our union's significant concerns and vetoed SB 414, saying it failed to address systemic weaknesses exploited by non-classroom-based charters. In his veto message, Newsom said the legislation fell short of the goal to improve oversight and accountability.

"While the oversight and auditing provisions are meaningful, other sections are unworkable, would face legal challenges, and require hundreds of millions of dollars to implement," he wrote.

The concern about oversight of non-classroom-based charter schools comes after the Learn4Life charter school scandal, which saw \$450 million in funding go to the operator in 2023–24 alone for what amounted to packets, online assignments and little teacher interaction. While the operator's co-founder makes about \$600,000 a year, Learn4Life spends the minimum possible on educators — and SB 414 would have allowed them to spend even less.



AB 560: Improvements for Special Education Students, Teachers

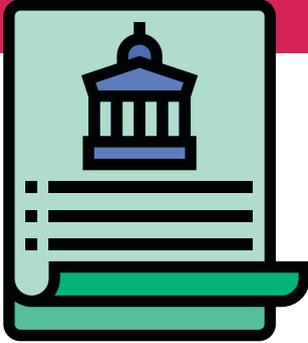
Gov. Newsom signed CTA-supported AB 560 into law, which will provide additional supports for California's special educators.

Among the provisions, AB 560 equally distributes initial assessment workloads across resource specialists, requires the state to develop recommended maximum adult-to-student staffing ratios, and guarantees that educators and other stakeholders are part of the process to develop and shape recommendations.

AB 288: PERB Can Rule on California-Related Labor Issues

CTA-supported AB 288 (McKinnon) was signed into law, expanding the jurisdiction of the state Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) by authorizing certain workers to petition PERB to protect and enforce their rights when the federal government can't or won't.

"It is more important than ever that states stand up to protect workers and ensure they have a path to defend their right to organize and collectively bargain," said Gov. Gavin Newsom upon signing the bill. "California is a proud labor state — and we will continue standing up for the workers that keep our state running and our economy booming."



2025 Education Bill Scorecard

Bill	Description	CTA Rec.	Status
AB 49 (Muratsuchi)	No ICE on School Campuses	Support	Signed into Law
AB 715 (Zbur)	Antisemitism in Schools	Oppose	Signed into Law
AB 1224 (Valencia)	Substitute Teacher Limits	Oppose	Vetoed by Gov.
AB 1454 (Rivas)	Early Literacy Reform	Support	Signed into Law
SB 414 (Ashby)	Charter Accountability	Oppose	Vetoed by Gov.



Nominations: Member-In-Politics, Chapter-In-Politics Awards

Nominations for CTA's Member-In-Politics Award Program in Honor of Ted Bass and Chapter-In-Politics Award Program in Honor of Joyce Fadem nominations are still open! The awards recognize CTA members and chapters for their outstanding contributions throughout the state for the effective use of the political process. The awards period extends from January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025. **The deadline to submit your nomination form is January 16, 2026.**

These awards celebrate CTA members and chapters who organized and took action on critical issues like cuts to students' and families' health care, attacks on immigrant communities and threats to dismantle public education by the Trump administration.

Member-in-Politics Awards

Six Member-in-Politics Awards will be presented in the following categories: Getting Others Involved, State Priorities, Local Priorities, Partisan/Non-Partisan Activities, Coalition Building and an overall Member-in-Politics Award. Find the nomination form at cta.org/awards.

Chapter-in-Politics Awards

Four Chapter-In-Politics Awards will be presented to a Small, Medium, Large and Rookie chapter. Find the nomination form at cta.org/awards.

Awards will be presented to the winners at the spring State Council of Education, March 27-29, 2026, during the Political Involvement Committee meeting.



▼ CSEA members went on strike to make their voices heard and draw attention to urgent student needs.



COLORADO SPRINGS

One-day Strike Draws National Attention

ON OCT. 8, thousands of public school educators and allies from across the country came together in Colorado Springs, CO, for a one-day strike to protest unfair labor practices and the local school district's efforts to silence its teachers.

Colorado Springs Education Association (CSEA) announced the strike in September; shortly after, educators received district emails threatening disciplinary action or dismissal if they chose to participate. That didn't deter the multitudes that picketed at school sites across District 11, united in the belief that all students — in Colorado Springs and beyond - deserve safe and well-resourced schools. CTA and NEA helped support the action.

The strike followed months of outrage among CSEA members. In December 2024, the school board voted to let a 56-year-old master agreement with the union expire in June. Since 2023, the board has banned Pride flags and other materials in classrooms, limited sports participation for transgender students, and banned library books with LGBTQ+ characters. A new high school health textbook had a chapter that covered gender and sexual identity ripped out, despite previous board approval.

The district has refused to bargain with CSEA about urgent needs to lower class sizes; add more counselors, social workers and special ed staff; and retain educators.

The strike, said CSEA President Kevin Coughlin, was a moment for teachers to elevate their voices and prioritize student performance over divisive politics that distract from learning. It also allowed them to knock on more than 10,000 doors to advocate for a slate of school board candidates in the Nov. 4 election who could ensure students receive the education they deserve.

"Instead of focusing on smaller class sizes or retaining high-quality teachers, the current board has dragged our schools into culture wars that leave students feeling unsafe," Coughlin told the crowd at a strike rally later in the day.

"They try to silence educators and ignore parents because we knew before they could tear pages out of our textbooks, they had to get rid of the contract that gives educators a voice and acts as a barrier against top-down mismanagement. But we will not be silenced. We are uniting to elect education champions who will put kids first."

Note: At press time, two CSEA-endorsed candidates appeared to have won seats on the school board. ■

Bargaining Roundup

Compiled by **Julian Peoples**



PORTERVILLE:

Educators Organize and Win!

Porterville Educators Association (PEA) members held a series of rallies and actions during their bargain, organizing and building power to win a new contract that raises pay and addresses ongoing working condition issues. PEA won binding arbitration and representation in discipline issues, a 3% wage increase retroactive to July 1 and \$3,500 applied to their health care coverages (originally proposed to be deducted from educators' pay).

Porterville's fight was solidarity in action, with leaders and members from neighboring CTA locals attending PEA's rallies and speaking on their behalf at school board meetings.

United Teachers of Richmond Authorize Strike

United Teachers of Richmond (UTR) members voted overwhelmingly in mid-October to authorize a strike if necessary in their ongoing fight for the fully staffed, stable schools all West Contra Costa students deserve. Educators have been dealing with excessive workloads and more than 70 educator vacancies, which further increase demands. Meanwhile, school district officials are preparing to pay strikebreakers triple the substitute daily rate instead of working to reach a fair agreement with UTR that provides the stability West Contra Costa students and families need.

Visit [UnitedTeachersofRichmond.com](https://www.unitedteachersofrichmond.com) for more news and information.



MT. DIABLO:

Educators Organize and Win Agreement

Mt. Diablo Education Association (MDEA) won a contract agreement in late-October, following a lengthy bargain that went to impasse in April. MDEA won a 2.3% pay increase for this school year, fully paid health care and class size reductions for the first time in a decade. During their campaign, MDEA held large rallies at school board meetings to build support and pressure district administration to negotiate a fair agreement.



▲ See UTR's strike-ready art build, page 30.





DUARTE:

Educators Building Movement as Negotiations at Impasse

More than 70% of **Duarte Unified Education Association (DUEA)** members marched through the streets of Duarte and filled the school board room in mid-October to demand a fair contract for educators. DUEA members are fighting for more prep time and increases to pay and health care. Duarte educators are near the bottom for pay and benefits in Los Angeles County, while the school district has more than 20% of its budget in unrestricted reserves.

Stay current with DUEA's fight by following them at [@TheDUEA](#) on Facebook.

LYNWOOD:

Educators Say 'We Can't Wait' and Win!

Lynwood Teachers Association (LTA) members built major power during their bargain, winning a contract that increases pay by 10.5% and includes other major gains that will help ensure all Lynwood students have safe, stable and fully staffed schools. LTA organized to achieve wins for fully staffed schools,

and ensure class sizes, counselor ratios and caseloads are manageable so the most vulnerable students receive the support they need. As a Power Up Local in the We Can't Wait campaign, LTA members are building on their recent successes that have included 22.5% wage increases since their current organizing campaign began, and fighting forward for the resources all California students deserve by collecting signatures for the Prop. 55 extension.





OAK GROVE:

Lowest-Paid Educators in County Fight for Better

Oak Grove Education Association (OGEA) members are building a local movement in South San Jose to support educators who have been neglected by district administration. The lowest paid educators in Santa Clara County by every metric, OGEA is fighting for a contract that helps recruit and retain educators in an environment where double-digit health care cost increases over the last three years have compounded their below-market pay.

OGEA members have held a series of rallies this school year, packing school board meetings and calling on the school board to treat educators fairly. Keep up on OGEA's fight by following [@OakGroveEducators](#) on Facebook.



Natomas Educators to School Board: We Can't Wait for Health Care, Working Condition Improvements

After more than a dozen bargaining sessions since February, **Natomas Teachers Association (NTA)** continues to fight for fully funded health care, lower special education caseloads, increased pay, and improvements in school safety. Despite some of the lowest educator wages in the Sacramento region that force 1 in 5 NTA members to work a second job, Natomas is refusing to make a fair offer. The district's ongoing lack of respect caused more than 60 educators to leave the district last year, with many of those positions still unfilled.

NTA educators and community are fed up with the school board's lack of leadership — NTA is getting strike-ready to fight as long as it takes to win the contract they deserve.





Little Lake Educators at Impasse

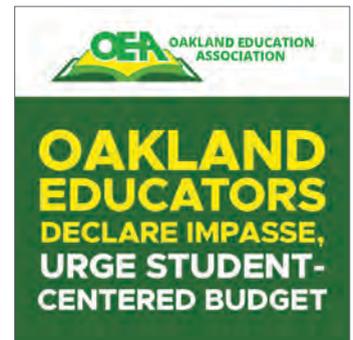
Little Lake Education Association (LLEA) declared impasse with Little Lake City School District on Oct. 30. LLEA educators, who serve students across Santa Fe Springs and Norwalk, are fighting to keep fully funded health care and smaller classroom sizes and have called on the district to tap its \$6 million in unrestricted funds to cover budget shortfalls.

Many parents kept their children home on Nov. 10 in support of their teachers. While the union does not condone students missing school, LLEA President Maria Pilios said, “we are appreciative of the support the community is giving us.” She said educators have yet to receive information they need on district finances to negotiate health care costs. LLEA is also against raising class sizes, as that is a primary reason the district can boast stellar state test scores.

Oakland Contract Talks Stalled, Educators Head to Impasse

On Nov. 7, **Oakland Education Association (OEA)** announced it’s at impasse with Oakland Unified after months of stalled progress. Educators have been working without a contract since July. As the district insists on cuts, OEA is pushing for less bureaucracy and more student support.

“OUSD keeps saying they are broke, but their spending tells a different story,” said OEA President Kampala Taiz-Rancifer, noting that Oakland teachers are the lowest paid in the county and turnover rates are high. OEA has repeatedly submitted contract proposals that would lower class sizes, strengthen special education, and improve school safety to improve student outcomes. The district has responded by proposing additional cuts.



UTLA: Rallies, Union Solidarity as Negotiations Continue

As UTLA negotiates their expired contract with LA Unified, members rallied Nov. 6 in multiple locations around LA, joined by parents, students, community allies and unions representing district food service workers, custodians, TAs, construction workers and other education employees. This was the first time that all eight LA Unified employee unions rallied together in vibrant displays of community and union solidarity behind winning concrete improvements for educators, students and school staff.

UTLA leaders say that with \$5 billion in reserves, the district can afford to pay staff what they deserve and fund improvements for students, like lower class sizes and more mental health supports.

In a major win in early November, LAUSD district dropped their proposal to pass increased health care costs onto employees. UTLA has reached tentative agreements on a number of items thus far in negotiations; and as of mid-November made progress in bargaining on adult education, improved ratios for high school counselors, and support for immigrant students and staff. But LA Unified has yet to respond on core demands around salary, class size, staffing and more.

5 Extraordinary EDUCATORS



These **Teachers of the Year** change lives, strengthen school communities By Amy Peruzzaro

FIVE OUTSTANDING EDUCATORS from across the state — all CTA members — were named the 2026 California Teachers of the Year in October.

In a statement announcing the news, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond praised the hardworking educators and highlighted their passion, creativity and commitment to inspiring students every day.

“These extraordinary educators represent the very best of our public schools and remind us that great teaching can change lives and strengthen entire school communities,” said Thurmond.

The five will serve as ambassadors for the profession and representatives of the state for the calendar year.

The 2026 California Teachers of the Year



April Raguindin

BAKERSFIELD ELEMENTARY TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

first grade teacher at Dr. Douglas K. Fletcher Elementary in Kern County

As a dedicated teacher, Raguindin became certified as a reading interventionist to give her students the best possible literacy instruction during the school day. She is also active in after school programs, including teaching gardening and cooking, and builds upon the resources of an Edible Schoolyard program that she helped to establish.

Thurmond nominated Raguindin as California’s representative for the National Teacher of the Year competition. She will compete against other state nominees, and the 2026 National Teacher of the Year will be announced in the spring.



Rene Romero

COVINA UNIFIED EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

International Baccalaureate Language and Literature teacher at South Hills High School in Los Angeles County

Romero uses his own background as an English Learner from East LA to make sure that his classroom is an inclusive and supportive environment. As an IB teacher, he supports students to make meaning out of advanced and complex texts, and ensures that every child feels supported to take on new challenges, develop their voice, and thrive.





Chrizia Dela Rosa

EAST SIDE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

ninth-grade mathematics teacher at Piedmont Hills High School in Santa Clara County

Teacher and volleyball coach Dela Rosa is passionate about knowing and including every child. She creates a classroom culture in which students understand that they need practice to build their math muscles just like they practice to build skill on the court. She uses data analysis to learn from constantly evolving data sets of student feedback.



Dr. Heather Povinelli

MONROVIA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

second grade teacher at Bradoaks Elementary Science Academy in Los Angeles County

Povinelli is inspired by seeing her students learn to exceed their own expectations of themselves. As someone who has dwarfism, she uses her disability to teach students about inclusion, equity and belief in oneself. Through her doctoral research, Povinelli has highlighted strategies and practices used by dwarf teachers that can be applied by any teacher to more effectively reach every child.



Corina Martinez

ESCONDIDO ELEMENTARY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

kindergarten teacher at Pioneer Elementary School in San Diego County

Martinez is driven to support her students' learning and to make sure they have every support they need to thrive. She has worked with community organizations at her school site to build out programs that support students' social-emotional learning and partnership with families, and is tackling chronic absenteeism by creating real solutions for families.

Presented by the California Department of Education and supported by the California Teachers of the Year Foundation, the California Teachers of the Year Program began in 1972 to honor standout teachers and encourage and inspire new teachers to enter the profession.

For more information on the awards program, visit the CDE California Teachers of the Year web page at cde.ca.gov/ta/sr/ct/.

▼ CTA State Council at work.



State Council Elections

A special election took place during CTA State Council of Education in October 2025 and the body elected:

Vanessa Barrera for NEA Board Member, District 10
Term of Office: Oct. 18, 2025 to Aug. 31, 2026

In addition, the following positions were opened during the October 2025 State Council:

- **CTA Board [Special Election]**
District M
- **NEA Board of Directors**
Districts 1, 3, 10 and 12

Those interested in running should contact ctaelections@cta.org for more information and requirements for each position. The deadline to file a Declaration of Candidacy is **Jan. 12, 2026, by 4 p.m.**

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Holiday Travel Getaway: Members can enter to win through Dec. 28 by visiting the Access to Savings homepage — the more days you visit, the more entries you earn!

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Calm Launches Program to Build Resiliency, Improve Mental Health

A NEW PROGRAM on the Calm app helps listeners learn how to rewire their brains to address stress and burnout, build resilience and improve mental health.

"Modern-day stress and burnout look different," says Harvard physician Dr. Aditi Nerurkar, MD, MPH, in the introduction to **Stress and Burnout Support**, the new series she developed in collaboration with Calm.

An expert in stress, burnout, mental health and resilience, Dr. Nerurkar explains that the classic signs of burnout used to be a lack of motivation and productivity. Today, however, 60% of people with burnout have "an inability to disconnect from work as their main feature."

This change stems from the "constant onslaught" of stressors in the past few years, she says. Without the opportunity to rest and recover from stress, our brains don't function properly. We shift into survival mode, diminishing our ability to plan, organize, prioritize and execute tasks.

And the longer we're in that state, Dr. Nerurkar explains, the harder it is to get out and the more we're at risk of burnout.

To help members rewire their brains and shift out of a state of chronic stress or burnout, in each of the five episodes of **Stress and Burnout Support** Dr. Nerurkar guides listeners with the same practical techniques that worked for her when she was a medical resident struggling with debilitating stress. She explains the science behind each tool and then teaches listeners how they can apply them in just a few minutes anytime during the workday.

The program is available on the Calm app and on the Calm Health platform. Visit CTAMemberBenefits.org/Calm or scan the QR code to access the unique CTA Calm link to set up your free premium subscription.

For any questions, contact Member Benefits at CTAMemberBenefits@cta.org or call (650) 552-5200. ■



Lit From Within

Often educators' creativity spills over into a book, album, blog or vlog, or other work. We showcase our members' talents:

Compiled by **Amy Peruzzaro**

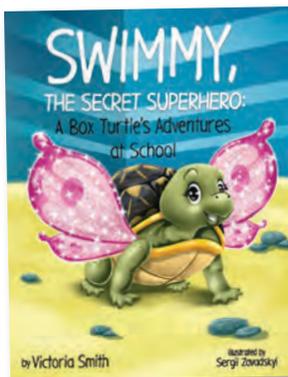
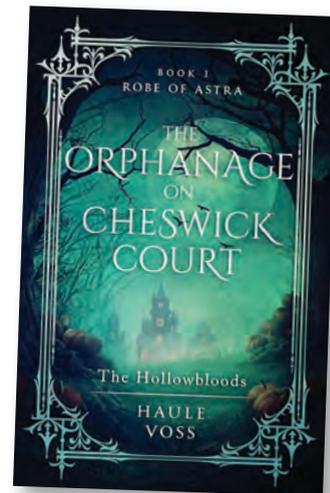


Balancing Fun and Respect

TK teacher and Santa Maria Elementary Education Assn. member Melissa Meyers has written *Blue's Sleepover*, which follows an energetic French bulldog's first night away from home with his Abuela. The story centers on Blue's playful nature, which progresses from rowdy and fun to a moment where he must learn a lesson about self-control. It presents a relatable conflict for young readers about respecting boundaries and family, and successfully delivers its message by blending humor with important life lessons.

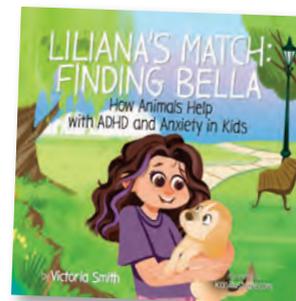
Exploring Trauma in Mythical Spaces

Sacramento City Teachers Assn. member and school nurse Chaulette Palafox has written her first book. *The Orphanage on Cheswick Court: The Hollowbloods* follows 15-year-old Thaddeus Volkameria, who has been orphaned by forbidden magic. He is raised by enchanted wolves until he is mysteriously summoned to an orphanage at the edge of a cursed forest for children marked by dark powers. There, Thaddeus and his three unlikely friends investigate his parents' unresolved deaths and the disappearance of a boy from within the facility. Their quest leads to a confrontation with ancient sorcery and the Dark Hollow magic Thaddeus carries, exploring themes of identity, grief and resilience.



Making Connections, Emotional Journeys

CTA/NEA-Retired member and former elementary school teacher Victoria Smith has written two stories about emotional growth for young readers. In *Swimmy, the Secret Superhero: A Box Turtle's Adventures at School*, a brave box turtle with tattered wings courageously protects her school, highlighting the importance of love and loyalty. Similarly, *Liliana's Match: Finding Bella: How Animals Help Kids with ADHD and Anxiety* is a compassionate tale about a young girl with a busy brain who finds connection and understanding with a special puppy. This story gently explores themes of resilience and emotional growth.



Got something for these pages — a book, an album, a podcast or more? We lean toward content that can be used in the classroom. Let us know at editor@cta.org with "Lit From Within" in the subject line. (Check out past issues at cta.org/lit.)

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