

california

educator

MARCH 2025 VOLUME 29 ISSUE 4

**SUPPORT OUR
STUDENTS,
STAFF OUR
SCHOOLS**

PAGE 14



**Organizing to Stop
School Closures**

PAGE 26

**Members Step up in L.A.
Wildfires Aftermath**

PAGE 32

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VOLUME 29 ISSUE 4



#WeAreCTA

OUR VOICE, OUR UNION, OUR PROFESSION


WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

MAGAZINE

STOP SCHOOL CLOSURES

CTA locals' collective actions help keep schools open - up and down the state. **PAGE 26**

HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDS

These inspiring member leaders lift up students and communities. **PAGE 37**  youtube.com/CaliforniaTeachers

REMEMBERING LOIS TINSON

CTA's first African American and first person of color to serve as president. **PAGE 13** y2u.be/fWapT91-52Q

CTA OFFICER ELECTIONS

Read the candidate statements. **PAGE 51**

DIGITAL

WILDFIRES: CTA CARES


Our members come together for each other. **PAGE 32**

      cta.org/LAwildfires

HOME IS HERE

Find the latest info about current immigration policies, resources and guidance to protect yourself and your students and communities. **PAGE 3** cta.org/homeishere

BLUE SKIES AHEAD

Join CTA and NEA on the Bluesky social media platform. 

@wearecta.bsky.social,
@neatoday.bsky.social

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

IFT GRANT DEADLINE

CTA's Institute for Teaching awards grants to members and chapters for innovative projects. Apply by March 31. **PAGE 10** cta.org/ift

EMEID LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

BIPOC members interested in CTA leadership roles should apply to the Ethnic Member Early Identification and Development (EMEID) program. Deadline: April 1. **PAGE 8** cta.org/emeid

NEA'S ESP CONFERENCE

Enhance your skills and knowledge. March 21-23, Kentucky. **PAGE 8** nea.org/espconference

MEMBER BENEFITS

DISASTER RELIEF FUND

Over the years, CTA's DRF has provided millions in grants to CTA members. Donate and apply at cta.org/drff

SPRING GETAWAYS

Grab one or more of the great travel deals and discounts at CTA Access to Savings. CTAMemberBenefits.org/access

Photo: Members of El Camino Real Charter High School-UTLA went on strike in February before negotiating a new contract that includes a pay increase of 19% over three years. See Page 48.



OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE
WORTH FIGHTING FOR!

PAGE 14

Battling Back Against Closures

Educators' collective
actions keep our
schools open

PAGE 26



Social Justice Champions

CTA honors members'
work to lift up students
and communities

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Cover photo: The We Can't Wait rally at Oakland's Oscar Grant Plaza by Brooke Anderson, @movementphotographer. This page, from top: Perry Siniard speaks at United Educators of San Francisco's We Can't Wait launch; Imperial Beach students rallying to stop district school closures.



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)

▼ Farmersville Teachers Association members in a scene from CTA's Year in Review video.



CTA Year in Review

You'll want to relive the many impactful local actions, bargaining wins, and victories against extremism up and down the state in CTA's Year in Review, 2023–2024. Find the video at bit.ly/CTA_YearInReview_2023-2024. The inspiring images show what happens when we organize in solidarity. "Together there is not a single effort that collectively we can't solve," says CTA President David Goldberg in the video. In addition, the CTA Annual Report, Sept. 2023–Aug. 2024, can be found at cta.org/23-24.

Correction In our January 2025 issue, on page 31, we incorrectly stated that CTA/NEA-Retired member Mikki Cichocki had been reelected to the San Bernardino City School Board. We regret the error.

You have constitutional rights:

- **DO NOT OPEN THE DOOR** if an immigration agent is knocking on the door.
- **DO NOT ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS** from an immigration agent if they try to talk to you. You have the right to remain silent.
- **DO NOT SIGN ANYTHING** without first speaking to a lawyer. You have the right to speak with a lawyer.
- If you are outside of your home, ask the agent if you are free to leave and if they say yes, leave calmly.
- **GIVE THIS CARD TO THE AGENT.** If you are inside of your home, show the card through the window or slide it under the door.



KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: RED CARDS

All people in the United States, regardless of immigration status, have certain rights and protections under the U.S. Constitution. Red Cards help people assert their rights and defend themselves against ICE's unconstitutional actions. The cards are available in multiple languages. Visit cta.org/homeishere or check with your local chapter leadership for details.

The same webpage (cta.org/homeishere), titled **Home Is Here: Supporting Immigrant Educators, Students and Families**, contains the latest information about current immigration policies and resources and guidance you can use to protect yourself or your students and communities. This includes the state of California's plans to support those affected in the coming years.

Our union believes immigration policies should guarantee human rights and protect the integrity of the family unit without discrimination; we support immigration policies that keep families together. Regardless of immigration status of students or their parents, every student has the right to a free public education free from harassment.

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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, 2024, to Aug. 31, 2025) are \$1,029, including a \$20 refundable contribution (see cta.org/contribution for details). \$25.53 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 \$40.53 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.

CALIFORNIA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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01/2025



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CALIFORNIA
TEACHERS
ASSOCIATION



We Are the Ones We've Been Waiting For

YES, WE'RE LIVING IN turbulent, challenging times. Our efforts to give every student what they deserve — an accurate and honest education, instilling in them critical thinking skills and the freedom to pursue their dreams — are under attack. Lack of stable and adequate funding for our schools has led to devastating budget cuts, closures and layoffs.

Our right to live our truths is in the crosshairs of inhumane politicians and bureaucrats. Working people are under siege, with thousands of jobs eliminated or downgraded and workers' rights to collective bargaining and unions in peril.

Our union has dealt with struggles before and we have successfully pushed back, upheld our values, cared for colleagues and community and continued to nurture and educate all students.

We've been able to do this because when we work together, there's nothing we can't accomplish.

Consider: Despite the anti-worker, anti-public sector sentiment at the federal level, our union recently helped pass the Social Security Fairness Act, which secures rightful retirement earnings for millions of Americans, including educators. During the last Trump administration, one out of five CTA members went on strike and won real improvements for educators and students. Our union helped win community school funding during that same period. Educators organized in Rocklin, Chino, Temecula and more to stand up to attacks on our LGBTQ+ students and educators.

These are huge victories, most won under adverse circumstances. So our response in the face of the current political climate is not to cower in a corner or acquiesce to the barrage of executive orders and new directives.

No. We fight back. We stand up to any and all attacks on our students, public education and workers' rights:

- Our union is fighting back against harmful ICE raids that threaten our communities, frighten our students, and erode any sense of safety they deserve to feel at school and other traditional safe spaces. We've already put together resources to support immigrant students, families and educators; find these at cta.org/homeishere.
- Our union is fighting back by empowering each other with our Cadre Training Program, which develops our members' racial

and social justice perspectives, giving them the tools to reach and teach students and colleagues with sensitivity and understanding (cta.org/cadre).

- Our union is fighting back against harmful school closures in our communities. Learn more about that on page 26.

We also fight forward, because this is about more than just surviving to see another day — we fight forward to ensure better days ahead:

Our union is fighting forward to protect education funding in the state budget and to launch new campaigns to secure school funding in the coming years. Together, we will combat disinvestment in public schools that hurt our students, families, schools and educators. In California — a state with the fifth-largest economy in

the world — we cannot and will not wait anymore for fully staffed schools, safe and stable schools, and competitive wages and benefits for educators. Read about the "We Can't Wait" campaign on page 14. You can also see how other local bargaining campaigns are pushing forward for the schools our students deserve on page 47.

Our union continues to actively engage and listen to members as we build strength and solidarity. Our organizing grants, president release time grants and planning grants are historic resources to

ensure our locals have the tools and support they need to organize in every worksite.

The fact is, when our union is alive at our worksites, we have the power we need to hold our administrators accountable, enforce our rights and demand the support our students need. When our union is alive at our worksites, our members will walk door-to-door for school board elections, show up for rallies outside school board meetings, and be ready to go on strike.

Strong worksites and locals are fundamental to building a stronger statewide union. This is how we fight forward and build power to not only win at our bargaining tables but to also protect each other and our communities.

We have the community support, organizing power and will to win the battles before us and those that will rise ahead. We can do this, together. *We* are the ones we've been waiting for.



David B. Goldberg
CTA PRESIDENT



Watch Your Back (Page)

THERE IS A LOT of good, important information in this issue of the *Educator*, from the Red Cards that state your constitutional rights regardless of immigration status (page 3; they can be ordered at no cost) to invaluable professional development opportunities coming up (page 8, in our Calendar section).

Now it's easy for some of that intel to be amplified. Check out the inside back cover, which is a mini-poster with the message "All Students Are Safe in This Space." The page is perforated so you can tear it out and post it in your classroom or school hallway. Going forward, each issue of the *Educator* will contain a perforated inside back cover with meaningful messaging or essential facts and findings on specific topics. We hope this is useful to you.

Also within these pages is an annual favorite: CTA's Human Rights Award winners ("**Social Justice Champions**," page 37). Every year, our union recognizes members whose social justice work has had big impacts on their students and communities. Read about UTLA's Ron Gochez, who delivers a culturally relevant curriculum that uplifts the histories, identities and contributions of Indigenous, Latina/o/x and Chicana/o/x communities. Learn how Greg Lawson, North Cow Creek Educators Assn., has been creating awareness and educating people on human rights and social justice in a very conservative part of the state for 20 years.

Donna Fernandez, a Pomo from Elem Indian Colony and Santa Rosa Teachers Assn. member, is committed to equitable educational opportunities for Native youth, teaching math while contributing to representation in STEM fields. Lee Wygand, Riverside County Office Teachers Assn., is a fierce champion, both within their own local and statewide, for students with hearing loss and diverse needs. In all, we celebrate nine remarkable award winners.

▼ See the inside back cover for a mini-poster you can tear out and post in your classroom or school hallway.



Our union boasts a great many champions, of course. Some figure prominently in battles with their districts, such as during contract negotiations and in hot-button discussions about closing schools. In our story "**Organizing to Fight School Closures**" (page 26), Oakland Education Assn.'s Chris Jackson says OEA is highly skeptical of the district's ongoing budget deficit – stated as a reason to shutter neighborhood schools. "My [text]books are older than my students, but the district says it spends millions on books every year," he notes.

Scores of you have stepped up to help colleagues in need after the LA wildfires. "**When Disaster Strikes, Our Union Is Here**" (page 32) describes Carolyn Grumm, Arcadia Teachers Assn., who as a volunteer with a local search and rescue team found herself in the thick of rescue efforts in the Eaton fire. "I hope [my students] feel part of what I did," she says. "It's good for them to know what volunteerism is and the importance of giving back to your community."

We're in awe of your generosity, fighting spirit and dedication to your students and communities. Keep an eye on the back page, and let us know what you think.

Katharine Fong

EDITOR IN CHIEF
editor@cta.org

March 2025

CALENDAR

▼ "The Colors I Breathe," by Isabella Ortega La Sierra High School (Grade 9), 2025 YAM Flag and Banner Program winner; teacher: Mollie Ganier, Alvord Educators Assn.



Arts Education

ART HAS ALWAYS been a powerful tool for healing, expression and connection. Educators know the transformative role that creativity plays in processing trauma — from the recent L.A. wildfires, among other events — and fostering hope. March, Music in Our Schools Month (nafme.org), Arts Education Month and Youth Art Month (YAM; caea-arteducation.org), is a wonderful time to unleash the artist within.

Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. About 15% of public school students in California received special education services in 2022–23, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. With the right supports, these students can be included in and contribute to all areas of school and community life. Read CTA's stance on education for those with developmental disabilities at cta.org/our-advocacy/special-education.



#AccelerateAction

It will take until 2158 to reach full gender parity, according to data from the World Economic Forum. Not acceptable! Step up in solidarity on International Women's Day 2025, March 8, to **#AccelerateAction** and call for swift, decisive steps to end systemic barriers and biases that women face. Find ideas at internationalwomensday.com. (And did you know: IWD has origins in working women going on strike together more than 100 years ago.) March is also **National Women's History Month**. The 2025 theme, "Moving Forward Together! Women Educating & Inspiring Generations," celebrates the collective strength and influence of women who have dedicated their lives to education, mentorship and leadership (see our story on CTA's Lois Tinson, the first woman of color to serve as CTA president, on page 13). More at nationalwomenshistoryalliance.org.

GOOD TEACHING CONFERENCE SOUTH

MARCH 14-16 Hyatt Regency Orange County

Missed GTC North last month? You can still attend GTC South, chock full of the peer-led trainings and workshops you need to refresh and refine your K-12 teaching practices. Bonus virtual pre-conference session: "Behavior Basics: A Framework for Managing Classrooms Behaviors," March 13, 5-7 p.m. ► cta.org/conferences



CTA/NEA-Retired Issues Conference

MARCH 6-7 CONFERENCE

Santa Clara Marriott. Learn how CTA/NEA-Retired is protecting your future and watching legislation that affects your benefits. ► cta.org/conferences

Chavez/Huerta Awards

MARCH 7 ENTRY DEADLINE

CTA's Cesar E. Chavez and Dolores Huerta Education Awards honor students who show they understand Chavez's guiding principles with a visual art project or written essay. Awards up to \$550 go to both sponsoring CTA member and student.

► cta.org/scholarships

Equity & Human Rights Conference

MARCH 7-9 CONFERENCE

Santa Clara Marriott. Affirms CTA's mission to protect the civil rights of all people and secure a more equitable, democratic society. Speakers and workshops address diversity, equity and social justice. ► cta.org/conferences

NEA National Leadership Summit

MARCH 7-9 CONFERENCE

Huntington Place Convention Center, Detroit. Develops activist leaders and prepares them with the knowledge and skills necessary to lead thriving associations. ► nea.org/leadershipsummit

NEA Higher Education Conference

MARCH 14-16 CONFERENCE

Hilton Penn's Landing, Philadelphia. College educators share ideas and learn from each other. The theme: "Promoting, Protecting, and Strengthening Higher Education."

► nea.org/higheredconference

Spring CUE

MARCH 20-22 CONFERENCE

Palm Springs Convention Center. This ed tech conference by CUE (Computer-Using Educators) offers hundreds of sessions with keynotes from renowned educators. ► cue.org

John Swett Awards

MARCH 21 NOMINATION DEADLINE

CTA's John Swett Awards for Media Excellence recognize media professionals for outstanding coverage of education during 2024, and student journalism. CTA local chapters and Service Center Councils may nominate.

► cta.org/awards

NEA ESP Conference

MARCH 21-23 CONFERENCE

The Galt House Hotel, Louisville. The nation's premier professional development opportunity for education support professionals enhances ESP's skills and knowledge. ► nea.org/espconference

EMEID Leadership Program

APRIL 1 APPLICATION DEADLINE

BIPOC members interested in CTA leadership roles can apply online to the Ethnic Member Early Identification and Development program. Participants will attend EMEID Orientation on July 15, and the Emerging Leaders Program at CTA's Summer Institute July 16-20.

► cta.org/emeid

CTA/NEA-Retired Pedretti Credential Candidate Scholarship

MAY 17 APPLICATION DEADLINE

The scholarship provides financial aid to aspiring educators pursuing a Pre-K-12 teaching credential at an accredited institution of higher education.

► cta.org/scholarships

The LGBTQ+ Safety in Schools Grant and Scholarship Program in Honor of Guy DeRosa

MAY 30 APPLICATION DEADLINE

The program was created to promote human and civil rights by making public schools safe for LGBTQ+ persons.

► cta.org/scholarships

Aspring Educators Conference

JUNE 28-JULY 1 CONFERENCE

Portland. Future educators connect with colleagues, learn about their profession, and act on important education issues affecting public schools and communities. Registration opens in May. ► nea.org/professional-excellence/conferences-events

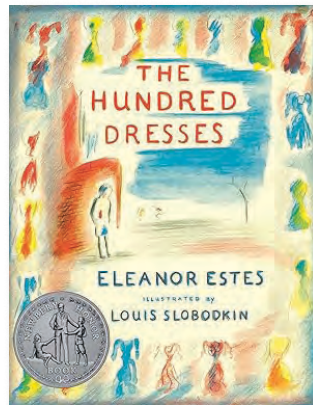
The Need to Read



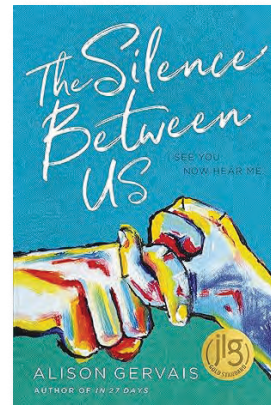
MARCH IS ALWAYS a grand time to have students read a few good books, what with Read Across America Week, March 3–7 (see below). Choose from CTA's 2025 California Reads list — teacher-vetted books for all grade levels that open young eyes to new worlds and ways of life. Here are a few picks; for the complete list visit cta.org/careads.



In *Stacey's Extraordinary Words* (Stacey Abrams, author; Kitt Thomas, illustrator; preschool-grade 3), the bestselling activist and author embarks on a tale of perseverance based on her own childhood. Stacey, a word-loving girl, faces anxiety about the spelling bee. Fear of failure and bullying threaten to silence her. The story gently explores themes of determination and self-worth, reminding young readers that their voices matter. Stacey's relatable and inspiring effort to overcome her fears make the book a wonderful choice for children navigating similar challenges.



The Hundred Dresses (Eleanor Estes, author; Louis Slobodkin, illustrator; grades 1–4) is a timeless tale about empathy and standing up for others. Wanda Petronski, a shy girl constantly mocked for wearing the same blue dress every day, becomes the unwitting catalyst for her classmates' understanding of prejudice and the pain it causes. When Wanda is forced to leave school, her classmates are compelled to confront their own complicity in her suffering. A powerful and moving reminder that kindness and compassion are essential qualities in a just society.



The Silence Between Us (Alison Gervais, author; grades 7–9) explores the experiences of a Deaf teenager navigating a hearing world. Maya, a vibrant and tenacious young woman, faces the challenges of a new school, cultural differences and the complexities of first love. Gervais masterfully captures the nuances of Deaf culture, offering a nuanced perspective on communication, identity and self-acceptance. The novel will resonate with Deaf and hearing audiences alike.



◀ Read Across America selection *Poetry Comics* (Grant Snider, author and illustrator) presents clever, calming poems in graphic novel-style panels about everything from new shoes and falling leaves to friendship and growing up.

Read Across America Week

CTA CELEBRATED a nation of diverse readers March 3–7 — and beyond — during Read Across America Week. NEA offers a Read Across America calendar with 12 months of recommended books, authors and teaching resources that promote diversity and inclusion. Choose a few relevant, age-appropriate books for your students and spread the love of reading. Visit nea.org/readacrossamerica.

IFT Grant Deadline: March 31

CTA's Institute for Teaching enhances, supports and sustains high-quality teaching and public schools for all students, and awards grants directly to CTA members and local chapters. Grants available for the 2025–2026 school year include:



• **NEW! Environmental**

Education Cohort: Up to \$5,000 (Environmental Educator Grant) or \$20,000 (Environmental Impact Grant) for projects focused on environmental education.

• **Educator Grant:** Up to \$5,000 for individual educators to impact a classroom or group of students.

• **Impact Grant:** Up to \$20,000 for teams of two or more educators to make an impact across multiple classrooms or school sites.

All CTA members are eligible to apply for grants. Visit cta.org/ift for details. Deadline to apply: March 31.

▼ The 2024–25 EMEID cohort, pictured at January State Council with CTA officers.



CTA'S EMEID Program: Apply by April 1

Are you a CTA member and educator of color interested in broadening your knowledge of our union and exploring leadership opportunities? The Ethnic Member Early Identification and Development Program may be for you! EMEID's goal is to increase the number of CTA leaders of color in roles such as local president, bargaining chair, State Council rep and other leadership positions.

The program builds on CTA/NEA programs, trainings, conferences and events and incorporates interaction and coaching with local chapter, CTA and NEA leadership and staff. Participants must attend the EMEID orientation on July 15, 2025, and the Emerging Leaders Program at CTA's Summer Institute July 16–20. Apply by April 1. Find more at cta.org/emeid — and get your questions answered at a virtual meeting on March 20.



◀ Artwork by 2023–2024 César E. Chávez and Dolores Huerta Education Awards Program (Region 2, grades 9–12) winner Haley Nunes; teacher Joy Cornish-Bowden, Tracy Education Assn.

César Chávez Day, Dolores Huerta Day

March 31 and **April 10** are César Chávez Day and Dolores Huerta Day, respectively. Educators can teach students about these labor and social justice icons whose work continues to resonate today. The State Board of Education offers a model Chávez curriculum for multiple grade levels. The Cesar Chavez Foundation (chavezfoundation.org) has K–5 social science curriculum and 6–8 ELA curriculum, both aligned with grade-level standards and SEL competencies that reflect Chávez's core values.

PBS' "Lesson plan: Dolores Huerta — a lifetime of activism" is for grades 6–12 (pbs.org); the National Women's History Museum's "Dolores Huerta: The Life and Work of a 20th Century Activist" explores her primary contributions and core activism strategies (womenshistory.org).

Exclusively for ESPs

NEA's national Educational Support Professionals conference, March 21–23 in Louisville, KY, is set to grow and strengthen your

professional excellence. Interactive workshops will cover everything from “Cultural Wealth and ESP Power” to “How to Turn the ESP Bill of Rights into Local Wins” to “Fostering Meaningful Parent-ESP Relationships.” Enhance your knowledge and skills to advocate for students and educators, champion racial and social justice, build community relationships, and sustain stronger locals. Hurry — registration is limited. nea.org/esconference



COMING UP



April: Autism Acceptance Month

The month and beyond are opportunities to learn more about autism, lift autistic voices and share in the community's joy. A good resource is the Autistic Self Advocacy Network (autisticadvocacy.org), a nonprofit run by and for autistic people, which works to promote the rights and humanity of all autistic people and center their perspectives and needs. Another resource: Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network (awnnetwork.org).



Celebrate School Librarians!

National School Librarian Day is celebrated on April 4 each year. These important educators are dedicated to helping students find and use the resources they need to learn and succeed. Thank your school librarian in person and/or on social media ([#SchoolLibrarianDay](https://twitter.com/SchoolLibrarianDay)).

For All Aspiring Educators CTA-Aspiring Educators is holding its Spring Event and Representative Assembly April 19–20 at the Westin Bonaventure, Los Angeles. This is free to all CTA-AE members (excluding travel costs; travel sponsorship may be available) but you must register in advance at bit.ly/CTA-AE25SpringEventReg. Become a member at cta.org/ctaee.

QUOTES & NUMBERS

Compiled by **Julian Peebles**



286,435

Social Security beneficiaries in California impacted by the signing into law of the Social Security Fairness Act (see Page 45.)

\$360

Average increase in monthly Social Security benefits to impacted individuals with the repeal of the Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provision, according to NEA.



"When I hear about this astonishing victory over entrenched economic injustice, I feel both pride and gratitude for our union and the fierce teachers and allies who have been advocating to overturn this injustice for decades."

—**HEATHER ZUNGUZE**, Pacific Grove Teachers Association member, about the adoption of the Social Security Fairness Act



"Teaching is our calling, but it doesn't have to be our vow of poverty. Remember that when you talk to anyone who thinks you have the summer off, and share your story about why you continue to come back, year after year."

—**NICHOLAS FERRONI**, New Jersey Education Association member, in a recent article in NEA Today



"One job should be enough ... Appreciating people financially is just one way to show that our work is seen."

—**TEANNA TILLERY**, paraeducator and United Educators of San Francisco member, about UESF's recent bargaining victory that saw average paraeducator pay rise 27%



"My students deserve to have someone on the council who represents them."

—**MICHELLE VELASQUEZ BEAN**, English professor and Rio Hondo College Faculty Association member who recently became the first woman of color elected to the La Mirada City Council



81%

Percentage of educators who say their salaries are not keeping up with rising costs for groceries, childcare and other necessary expenses in CTA's *State of California's Schools* report (see Page 23).



\$23.5 BILLION

Total combined revenues of 32 school districts in our We Can't Wait campaign (see Page 19).

▼ A slide from the January 2025 CTA State Council African American Caucus presentation.

A CONSUMMATE LEADER

Remembering CTA's Lois Tinson

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH in March is an excellent time to remember our union's own stellar history of women leaders. Lois Tinson was one of them — the first African American and the first person of color to serve as president of the California Teachers Association (1995–1999).

She was also one of the founding members of the CTA African American Caucus and the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee (now Racial and Equity Affairs Committee).

Tinson was a staunch activist in our fight for smaller class sizes and to protect public education funding. She worked to secure passage of the state's landmark Class Size Reduction law in 1996, which established CTA as a potent political force on behalf of students and public schools. CTA's successful public campaign for more teachers and smaller classes led to new funding where 95% of state school districts reduced K–12 class sizes.

"Everybody in the world took credit for class size reduction, but we knew it was the California Teachers Association," she said in a CTA interview (cta.org/history/oral-history). "[We were victorious] because we have teachers who care, and will stand up and say it, and will work under diverse circumstances in the classroom, out of the classroom, everywhere there are needs."

Lois Tinson was born on April 19, 1938, in Arkansas City, Arkansas. She recalled being the only student in her grade at her school while growing up. "I was valedictorian, salutatorian and everything," she said, often joking that she was "the smartest" and "the dumbest" in her class. She went to college and became an educator, teaching in Arkansas schools before moving to Los Angeles in 1961.

Tinson taught English at North Park High School in Baldwin Park and received her master's and doctorate degrees from Pepperdine University. She was also a professor at Pepperdine.

Those who worked with her at CTA remember her quiet strength and grace in addition to her effective leadership.



"The game, my friend, is not over. It has just begun. And in the name of human decency and dignity, and for the sake of our students ... we are going to win!"

—Lois Tinson

Other accomplishments during her presidency:

- CalSTRS (California State Teachers' Retirement System) benefit increase legislation
- Charter schools legislation, including CTA endorsement of a bill to increase the number of charters only after insertion of requirements that charter teachers hold state credentials and there would be more oversight of spending, curriculum
- Community college funding legislation
- Passage of Prop. 1A — \$9.2-billion school bond that replenished state matching money for construction of new schools and colleges
- Defeat of Prop. 226 — "Paycheck Protection" anti-union dues
- Defeat of Prop. 8 — Gov. Pete Wilson education reform initiative
- CTA blueprint for educational excellence
- 20% CTA membership growth (1995–1999)

Lois Tinson died in December 2003 after a long illness. To watch CTA's farewell video to Tinson after her presidency ended, visit y2u.be/fWapT91-52Q.

CTA presents the African American Human Rights Award in Honor of Lois Tinson to an individual CTA member whose activities have helped to achieve significant progress on behalf of equal opportunity for African Americans. Find out more at cta.org/awards. ■

▼ Oakland Education Assn., United Teachers of Richmond, Berkeley Federation of Teachers and United Teachers of San Francisco at the launch rally at Oscar Grant Plaza in Oakland.



WE CAN'T WAIT!

Support our students, staff our schools

EVERY STUDENT DESERVES fully staffed and resourced schools. Every educator deserves a living wage that reflects their vital role in our communities.

The reality, unfortunately, is very different. Our union aims to change that.

On Feb. 4, more than 80,000 educators across California launched “We Can’t Wait,” a campaign involving CTA locals’ shared demands and coordinated negotiations with 32 school districts. Educators from Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, Oakland, Anaheim, Sacramento, Richmond and two dozen other school districts — who teach and serve 1 million students — participated.

“It’s unacceptable that in the “Golden State,” with its vast wealth and resources, our communities struggle with fully staffing our neighborhood schools,” said CTA President David Goldberg at the kickoff press conference in Sacramento. “This is why educators are coordinating to take a stand statewide. Together with parents, students and our communities, we demand that districts prioritize resources for our students and ensure California leads the country in providing a quality

public education for every student.”

Participating locals’ shared demands include:

- Fully staffed schools, with smaller class sizes and caseloads
- Safe and stable schools, with no layoffs, budget cuts or school closures
- Competitive wages and benefits for educators, to match the essential role they play in society

While locals will bargain separately with their districts, the campaign aligns bargaining sessions during the same time period this spring and early summer, with many locals’ contracts expiring at the end of June 2025. Multiple locals negotiating contracts at the same time will bring heightened public awareness and support for educators, students and schools, and also put pressure on the state.

The goal is to give students and educators what they need and deserve — long term.



◀ Top photo, CTA Vice President Leslie Littman (far left), board member Kisha Borden (middle) and San Diego Education Assn. President Kyle Weinberg (far right) at the SDEA We Can't Wait launch. Bottom photo: Sacramento City Teachers Assn. President Nikki Milevsky speaks at the We Can't Wait press conference in Sacramento.



"It's unacceptable that in the "Golden State," with its vast wealth and resources, our communities struggle with fully staffing our neighborhood schools."

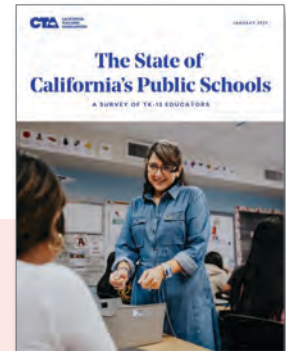
—CTA President **David Goldberg**

"Whenever we're able to improve our working conditions as teachers, we're able to improve our students' learning conditions," said Sacramento City Teachers Association President Nikki Milevsky at the press conference.

At the campaign rally in Oakland, Parent Voices Oakland Executive Director Clarissa Doutherd said that the unified action of "We Can't Wait" will benefit students and schools.

"We unite across California to demand that districts prioritize spending that directly impacts our children and our schools, so that our kids have stability, so that our kids have fully staffed schools that aren't in threat of closure every single other year," Doutherd said.

Quality public education — and our very democracy — is at stake. "We're hoping that this campaign ... will bring a light to the circumstances that we work under to achieve what is the foundation of our democratic society every day, said Cassondra Curiel, president of United Educators of San Francisco, at the UESF campaign launch, "and what it needs to survive moving forward and how that represents what [California] families and citizens should really be expecting in public schools." ➔



The State of Our Public Schools

In January, CTA released "The State of California's Public Schools," a survey of TK–12 educators conducted by GBAO Strategies. Top-line findings: Despite recent investments, schools remain underfunded and educators face increasing economic precarity. Almost two-thirds of educators consider financial insecurity — including the ability to afford everyday goods and services such as groceries and childcare — to be a big concern, and almost 70% say health care costs are eating into their paychecks. While many cite serious struggles, the majority expressed job satisfaction and a deep commitment to public education.

Despite its tremendous wealth, California continues to rank well below national averages for student funding and staff ratios. The state is in the bottom five in the U.S. for class size ratio and 48th for access to school counselors. Persistent threats of layoffs and school closures disrupt thousands of students and educators each year but fail to fix the underlying issues. Read details of our findings on page 23.

OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE WORTH *FIGHTING* FOR

“ ”

Teachers are increasingly leaving our school district because of the high cost of living and severe lack of affordable housing.

Renata Sanchez
San Jose Teachers Association President



“ ”

Our students deserve class sizes and staffing levels that allow them to thrive and feel safe at school, and to know that they aren't going to have that support taken from them due to layoffs and school closures.

Kampala Taiz-Rancifer
President Oakland Education Association

CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS BY THE NUMBERS

73%

of CTA members surveyed said they were concerned about their ability to pay for housing.



33RD

in the nation for per pupil funding



48TH

in the nation for student access to school counselors



Nearly 70%

CTA members surveyed are concerned about their ability to pay for basic necessities like groceries and gas.

California is the 5th largest economy in the world. Corporate profits are on the rise while the rest of us struggle to keep up.

California students and families deserve fully staffed and resourced schools. The lack of state funding disproportionately affects our most vulnerable students including immigrant students, unhoused students, LGBTQIA+ students and students of color. Students denied the opportunity to learn in a fully staffed and resourced school will never get those years back. It doesn't have to be this way.

Why We Can't Wait

- Education funding at the state level is unstable and unreliable — leading to cycles of budget cuts, educator layoffs, school closures and an ongoing lack of resources and staffing.
- Educator wages are considerably lower than those of similar workers in other professions, making it difficult for educators to meet their own and family needs, including affordable housing.
- This has resulted in a growing educator recruitment and retention crisis, with thousands of vacancies across California.

California boasts the fifth-largest economy in the world, with corporate interests and the wealthy growing ever richer. Yet educator wages are far below those of other college-educated workers, leading to many educators struggling to get by, having

to take on second and third jobs or living far from the communities where they work. Schools are inadequately staffed, resulting in reprehensible class sizes and little to no student access to school counselors, nurses and mental health professionals. Essential school programs and resources are being cut, and educator layoff notices are a regular occurrence.

Meanwhile, funding for public education remains precarious and subject to vicious cycles of budget cuts. Many schools are facing closure or have closed. It's little wonder that there's an ongoing crisis in educator recruitment and retention.

Our union recognizes that the status quo is untenable, and the situation is urgent. We also know that there are solutions to these problems. Remedying the issues will take all our collective power — and is the driving force behind the “We Can't Wait” campaign.

“Local chapters have been preparing for this campaign for a

**"We are tired of being told to wait
by district administrators and school boards.
We can't wait to close the pay gap
and fund public education the way
educators and students deserve!"**

—Live Oak Elementary Teachers Association President **Lauren Pomrantz**



TEACHER PAY GAP IS GROWING

IN LATE JANUARY, the nonpartisan Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR) issued a new report, "California Teacher Pay: Decades of Falling Behind." The report found that over the last four-and-a-half decades, the average weekly wage of teachers in California increased by 26.3%, while those of non-teacher college graduates rose by 70%. When the high cost of living in California is considered, teacher wages have been flat since 2003.

Sylvia Allegretto, a CEPR senior economist and author of the report, estimates the average weekly wage for California public school teachers in 2022 was \$1,844, while other college graduates' average weekly wage was \$2,847.

The pay gap "really influences the teacher shortages, the retaining of current teachers, the recruitment of future teachers into the profession," said Allegretto at the kickoff press conference. "Here in California ... the high cost of living is a serious problem. The complexity of these challenges calls for a massive coordinated effort."

At a "We Can't Wait" press conference held by San Jose Teachers Association, SJTA President Renata Sanchez drove home the point.

"My mom taught for 37 years. She was able to purchase a home and comfortably raise a family of five on a teacher's salary," Sanchez said. "I've been teaching for 17 years and I cannot afford rent for a single-bedroom apartment by myself without commuting for hours away each day.... The educator wage gap is wider than it has ever been."

couple years. We are organizing internally and mobilizing externally with the support of parents and community groups," said San Diego Education Association President Kyle Weinberg at the "We Can't Wait" kickoff press conference.

"Why? Because we can't wait for adequate school staffing. We can't wait for our schools to have sufficient resources. We can't wait for schools to be safe and stable. California's students deserve better."

"We Can't Wait" helps our locals — those involved now and those joining in the future — support each other, learn from each other and build collective pressure on the state to respond.

"It's incredible to feel the unity with our fellow educators across the state to win for public education and our students," said Live Oak Elementary Teachers Association President Lauren Pomrantz, who noted that despite Santa Cruz County being one of the least affordable places for educators to live, none of its districts pay the statewide average. Teachers often pay for their own supplies and have had to pay between \$1,200 and \$1,500 in health benefits out of their own pockets.

"Santa Cruz educators are tired of being told to wait by school district administrators and school boards. We can't wait to close the pay gap and fund public education the way that educators and students deserve."

It's simple: If we want change, we have to come together in our union to fight for it. Collective action by all of us exponentially increases the impact and can effect great and broad change in policy and public opinion. Together with support from allies and communities, CTA's solidarity and work toward our shared goals are powerful and unbeatable.

Find more information about "We Can't Wait" and get involved with the campaign at wecantwait.info. ■



▼ We Can't Wait launch day at Del Mar Elementary in Santa Cruz; Live Oak Elementary Teachers Association President Lauren Pomrantz is standing fourth from right.



"We are a loving staff ... but we're getting really tired."

—Wendy Criner,
Anaheim Secondary
Teachers Assn.

INADEQUATE PAY

Julia Sayavong is a TK teacher and member of San Jose Teachers Association; she is an auxiliary site representative.

"I had to move in October 2024. My landlord raised the rent each year, so when the lease was up at our apartment my partner and I had to find something that was more affordable.

"It was hard to find a place within our budget. Our new place is 700 square feet, smaller than our old place by 100 square feet, with no closet space, for the same price. Everything is close to \$3,000 a month. This is normal for the Bay Area.

"I have two side jobs: I help a parent with their child every two weeks on Zoom, and I babysit. I used to tutor. I'm also getting my master's in early childhood education. I'm already in debt from my undergrad education. With my master's degree I will get another \$3,000 a year in salary, or \$250 a month.

"The amount of work I have to do for an extra \$250 a month — I should just babysit more. I just started with a new family for five babysitting sessions. I'll get paid \$1,000. This is really sad.

"The extra income from my side jobs helps me pay my credit card and student loans, of which I still owe \$15,000. I have to be really disciplined: meal preps, Costco gas, no Uber eats.

"I love my job, I love my community, I love where I'm at, but can I really stay here and what would I have to sacrifice? I can stay now because I have a partner — it's hard by yourself; I have a teacher friend whose whole paycheck goes to pay bills."



Julia Sayavong

CLASS SIZE

Wendy Criner teaches English and ELD at Western High School in Anaheim. A member of Anaheim Secondary Teachers Association (ASTA), she is a site rep, bargaining team member and CTA State Council delegate.

"Our feeder junior high Orangeview, with 350–400 students, was closed and will move to our campus next year. We've been told that we need to get down to 1,400 students total to have enough space for everyone. (Western alone has 1,450 students.)

"We don't have language in our current contract that caps class period limits. A teacher's cap for the entire day is 195 students — an average of 39 per class. Class sizes in ELD classes are small — but that means other classes can have 43 students. I have 43 in a freshman English honors class. We have math and science classes with similar numbers — one science class had 50 kids in a class designed for 40 for weeks. Students who get attention are the ones participating or acting inappropriately. We're expected to teach our curriculum to all these students in 55 minutes.

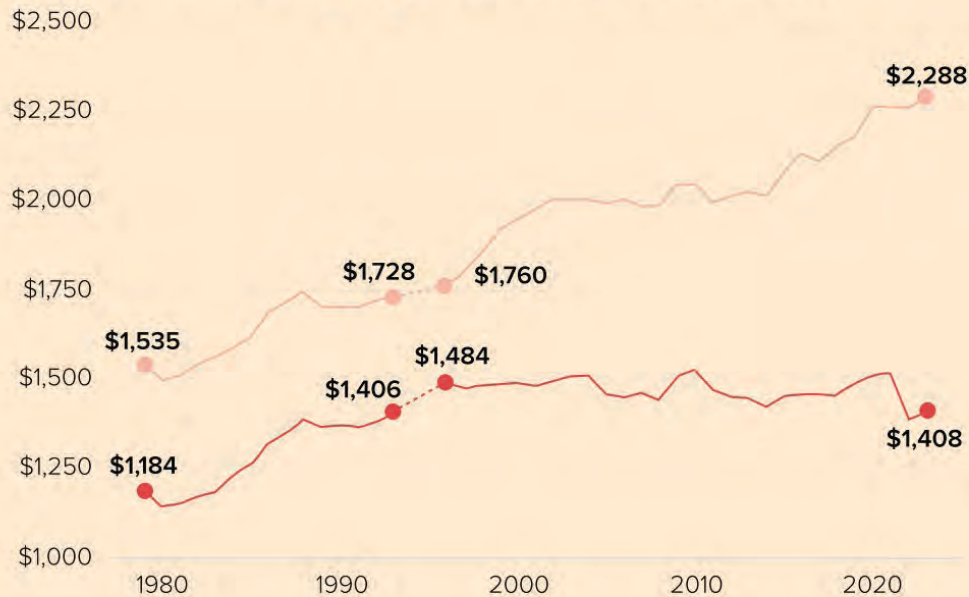
"Class caps need to be bargained to make sure we're holding to reasonable and effective limits — ASTA is looking into this.

"Western is a community school so we make sure kids get clothes, glasses or dental work when they can't afford it. We are a loving staff. The problem is that it's exhausting. We're suckers for the job we do, but we're getting really tired."



Wendy Criner

Average weekly wages of public school teachers and other college graduates, 1979-2023



Other college grads
Public school teachers

Notes: Figure shows average weekly wages (2023\$) of public school teachers (elementary, middle and secondary) and other college graduate (nonteacher) peers. Data points for 1994 and 1995 are unavailable; dotted lines represent interpolated data. See Allegretto and Mishel 2019.

Source: Author's analysis of Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group data accessed via the EPI Current Population Survey Extracts. Version 1.0.53 (EPI 2024a), <https://microdata.epi.org>.

OUR CAMPAIGN BY THE NUMBERS

1 Million

Students attending 1,809 schools across California.

75%

Of the students we support are low-income, English language learners or foster youth.

Over 80,000

Classroom teachers, school counselors, school nurses, social workers, bus drivers, custodians, instructional aides and more.

32

Educator unions across California are negotiating collective bargaining agreements to address these key issues in 2025.

\$23.5 Billion

Combined annual revenue of our districts.

"I look at friends I went to college with, and they have higher salaries with less education. It is disheartening."

—Ana Reyes-Becerra,
United Teachers of Richmond



Local Power

TOGETHER, 80,000 educators, in 32 California school districts serving 1 million students, are joining parents, students and communities to fight for our shared demands. These districts must prioritize the resources our students need and deserve.

Albany City USD
 Anaheim Union High School District
 Berkeley USD
 Dos Palos Oro Loma Jt. USD
 Fairfield-Suisun USD
 Farmersville USD
 Hayward USD
 Lincoln USD
 Live Oak Elementary
 Livingston Union Elementary
 Los Angeles USD
 Los Banos USD
 Lynwood USD
 Madera USD
 National School District
 Natomas USD
 Nevada Joint Union High School District
 Oakland USD
 Riverside USD
 Sacramento City USD
 San Diego USD
 San Francisco USD
 San Jacinto USD
 San Jose USD
 Stockton USD
 Soquel Union Elementary
 Twin Rivers USD
 Ventura USD
 Washington USD
 West Contra Costa USD
 Whittier City Elementary
 Woodland Joint USD

▼ SJTA President Renata Sanchez at the We Can't Wait press conference in San Jose.



▼ CTA Secretary-Treasurer Erika Jones speaks at the OEA/UTR/BFT rally.



COMBO CLASSES AND SHORT-CHANGED STUDENTS

Cecilia Carrasco teaches a 3/4 combo class and 3rd grade at Empire Gardens Elementary in San Jose. A San Jose Teachers Association member, she is a site rep and works on SJTA's equity team.

"Empire Gardens has about 200 kids — other schools in our district have 600–800+ students, with PTAs. A strong PTA can raise up to \$20,000 a year to pay for extra things. We don't have a PTA, so for example with Proposition 28 we got funds for music instruction but we have been without a teacher for six months.

"This year, we have an attendance counselor, no academic counselors. The attendance counselor has helped improve our attendance, which was really low. Schools with lower enrollment like ours have more combo classes. We don't receive a lot of training to teach combo classes. Combo class teachers lack time — I have 60 minutes to teach third- and fourth-grade math. For social studies we pull out the more important stuff such as government, since there's no specific curriculum for a ¾ combo. I have 13 third-grade kids with 13 third-grade textbooks, and nine fourth-grade kids with fourth-grade textbooks. If I'm teaching my third graders, I want my fourth graders to be quiet with collaborative tasks. Students don't have me for the full hours I should be teaching them.

"It is stressful trying to teach everything in the time you have. The district wants you to teach one lesson a day. If students are not mastering it, there's little leeway to spend time on it, you have to push forward. Our principal created small-group "math opportunity" time to work on concepts that students are struggling with.

"We have a lot of teacher turnover. I've been doing combo classes since 2016, and I'm too attached to my Title 1 kids to leave. But we try not to give new teachers a combo class."



Cecilia Carrasco

▼ United Educators of San Francisco used a cable car to visit multiple school sites on We Can't Wait launch day.



NOT ENOUGH COUNSELORS

Adriana Goni is a counselor at Millennial Tech Middle School and San Diego Education Association member.

"I'm in my ninth year as an educator, but first year counseling. I taught mild-moderate Special Education and general ed English and history. My site is small; we are a Community School, and Title 1.

"It's always a struggle at my site, with one counselor per 380 students. Counselor caseloads are higher at the high school level — it's difficult to do work that is preventative, either social-emotional or academic, with so many students. With Special Ed, we always struggled to have enough paraprofessionals and mod/severe teachers — we had no continuity, lots of turnover.

"We have pieced together counseling staff that doesn't include allocation from the district — which is not enough to do everything we need. We had to move funding around from different places. We have a dean of students funded 'hodgepodge' who helps catch [low-level student behavioral issues] and teaches a related class. We have a paraprofessional supporting the counseling department.

"We're working hard to create a solid [student behavioral] framework that addresses our school safety needs and other concerns, so students experience consistency across the site."

A LIVING WAGE, WORKLOAD

Ana Reyes-Becerra is a Special Education teacher at Sheldon Elementary in Richmond. She is in her sixth year as an educator and is a United Teachers of Richmond member.

"I grew up in the area and went to the school I work at now. My husband is also a teacher at Kennedy High in Richmond. We both went to UC Berkeley. I have a master's degree in Special Education and a credential. It's still not affordable to own a home on our own — we are lucky to co-own with my mom. I look at close friends I went to college with, and they have higher salaries with less education. It is disheartening.

"I moved districts in the past year — the higher salary was a big incentive. I love the place I work, it's very supportive, but the demands of the job make it difficult. We bring up workload frequently — a lot is mandated at the state level so the district keeps adding on more work for us, with no extra time to do it.

"I teach math and reading to all different kinds of Special Ed students. I do initial IEPs of Special Ed services, I assess students, I'm their case manager. It feels like I'm doing three jobs in one, and not really getting paid for all of that.

"My dream was to teach in my community. I am achieving that dream, but it's still hard to live in this economy. We want to stay here, we don't want to move, but as a family we don't think we'll be teachers for the rest of our lives."



Ana Reyes-Becerra



WE CAN'T WAIT

**IT'S SIMPLE:
IF WE WANT
CHANGE, WE
HAVE TO COME
TOGETHER IN
OUR UNION TO
FIGHT FOR IT.**



**To learn more and join the movement,
talk to your local union leadership.**

▼ A scene from the video at the We Can't Wait website (wecantwait.info).



"It's all interconnected. The vacant Special Education positions, how expensive housing is, and our pay. If we want to fully staff our schools, we need a living wage."

**—Meisje Webb,
San Diego Education Assn.**

▼ Sign at a recent Ventura Unified school board meeting that discussed educator layoffs.



Our Plan to Win

EVERY SCHOOL DESERVES full funding to provide students with the resources they need, and every educator deserves a living wage that reflects their vital role in our communities. With your support, we can ensure both educators and students have the support they need to thrive.

1. Union educators from across the state are organizing with parents, students and communities
2. Our shared demands were developed by classroom educators and community members
3. School communities large and small will organize together to win in 2025 and beyond



The State of California's Public Schools

A CTA survey of TK-12 educators

By Julian Peebles

“Too many educators are spread thin and aren’t able to make ends meet financially, and are working in a public school system that continues to be underfunded year after year.”

—CTA President **David Goldberg**

AS CALIFORNIA CONTINUES to endure a statewide educator shortage, low wages and a lack of resources for public schools is compounding the issue — with four in 10 teachers saying they are considering leaving the classroom, according to a new report commissioned by CTA.

Conducted by GBAO Strategies, the *State of California's Public Schools* surveyed more than 2,000 TK-12 public school educators across the state this school year, providing new insights about the ongoing shortage and increasing difficulty of recruiting and retaining California teachers. The

report shows the impacts of financial pressures for educators, who are crunched by below-market wages and high health care costs:

- 84% of teachers surveyed cannot afford to live near the schools where they work.
- 81% say their salaries are not keeping up with rising costs for groceries, childcare and other necessary expenses.
- 80% have concerns that they would not be able to cover an unexpected cost.



Top Issues for CA Educators

More than three-quarters of surveyed educators report the following as serious problems facing their school:



Schools are **underfunded**



Classrooms are **overcrowded**



Educator **pay is too low**



Educators **can't afford housing near their workplace**



There is a **shortage of resources, staff, and training to support students**, including students with disabilities

"As costs continue to rise, I find myself putting my own health needs aside — I simply don't have the extra budget."

—Kristina Caswell,
Natomas Teachers Association

4-in-10

surveyed California educators are considering leaving education in the next few years, and **77% say financial strain is influencing their decision.** More than half of all educators know of coworkers who have left education due to financial strain.



More than **1-in-3** **younger educators are considering leaving (35%), and 92% cite financial reasons.**



- 69% cite high, out-of-pocket costs for often inadequate health care benefits eating into their paychecks.

"Too many educators are spread thin and frankly aren't able to make ends meet financially and are working in a public school system that continues to be underfunded year after year," CTA President David Goldberg said during a news conference held in January.

Sacramento-area transitional kindergarten teacher Kristina Caswell says these exorbitant health care costs in addition to rising housing and daycare expenses have tightened her family budget to the point where she "thinks twice before paying for a prescription." While she enjoys her job and loves her students and families, Caswell said the financial pressures are difficult to navigate.

"As costs continue to rise, I find myself putting my own health needs aside," says Caswell, a member of Natomas Teachers Association. "I simply don't have the extra budget."

Not only are educators across the state struggling to find housing and pay rent, 91% of those who do rent say that they

can't afford to buy a home, according to the report. Carolina Sanchez Garcia, a transitional kindergarten teacher in San Diego and a single parent with five children, had a difficult time finding affordable housing in one of California's most expensive housing markets. At one point, she commuted daily from across the border in Mexico to be able to house her family.

"My union helped me obtain affordable housing. I was fortunate. I'm very grateful to have a union," says Sanchez Garcia, a San Diego Education Association member. "Across the state, many teachers are struggling to find a place — any place — for their families to live."

The report also shows a number of alarming concerns educators have about California public schools:

- 84% of educators surveyed said inadequate resources for students provided by the state and school districts were a major concern, while the same number (84%) cited a lack of school funding.
- 68% specifically mentioned a lack of support for mental

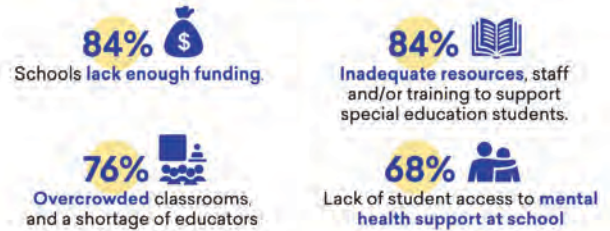
health issues. The report notes that California is failing at providing students with access to school counselors, with the state ranking 48th nationally for these crucial supports.

- 76% said overcrowded classes and a lack of staffing was a serious issue, with California ranking among the top five states nationwide with the largest average class sizes.

"For more than 46 years, schools have been operating in a deficit in large part due to the passage of Prop. 13 and shifting investment in our schools into profits for corporations," Goldberg said. "California's students, schools and communities deserve a more stable and robust funding system to support an equitable education for all. This includes creative revenue-raising solutions that apply the great wealth of this state to our educational system."

View the full State of California's Public Schools report at cta.org/document/the-state-of-ca-public-schools. Watch a video of the press conference, and a video excerpt of remarks by Natomas Teachers Assn. member Kristina Caswell, at youtube.com/CaliforniaTeachers. ■

Educators said the following are somewhat or very serious issues at their school:



Despite the financial strain educators face, nearly every educator surveyed (93%) has purchased school supplies with their own funds, to ensure that their students have what they need.



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▼ Parents, students and educators spoke out against school closures in Franklin McKinley School District in San Jose, where the board voted in February to close three schools.



ORGANIZING TO FIGHT SCHOOL CLOSURES

Educators' collective action keeps our schools open

By Julian Peebles

"NOT ONLY DO school closures not save the school district money today, but they will also cost the district more tomorrow," says Cassandra Curiel, president of United Educators of San Francisco (UESF). "If students, families and educators are not leading these discussions, then the district is setting itself up to fail because we're the ones in classrooms every day."

Communities are under attack across California as school districts consider closing schools to "solve" budget problems caused by declining enrollment, expiration of COVID funding and inadequate funding from the state. Claiming that schools must be closed to balance district budgets and avoid a "loss of local control," superintendents in San Jose, Oakland, San Francisco, Vallejo, Sonoma County and Imperial

Beach are taking their communities through school closure processes while educators organize and work to lift community voices against closures.

School closures are disruptive and cause short- and long-term harm to students, families and communities. Despite what school district administrators tell parents and communities, research shows that closing schools doesn't actually save any money, according to Chris Jackson, Oakland Education Association (OEA) second vice president.

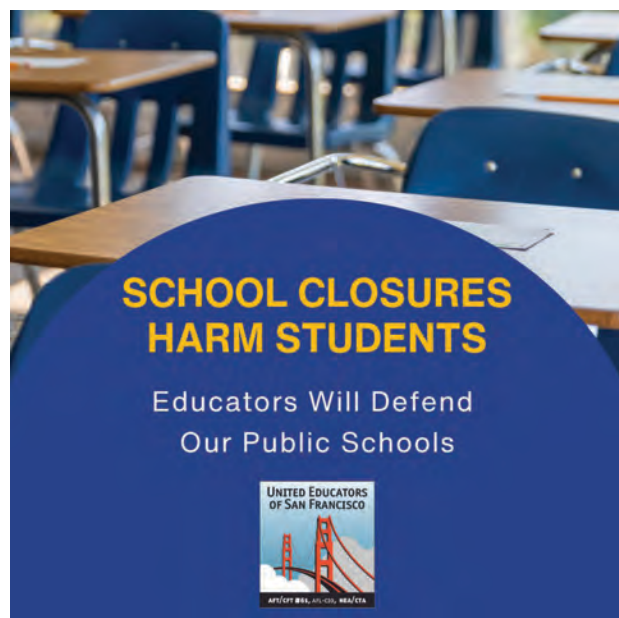
"In fact, they destabilize communities," says Jackson, a high school science teacher. "What we've been hearing most from parents is that they've lost trust in the process and the school board. That's where OEA is coming in to fill that gap,

"Charter school encroachment is one of the top reasons that closing schools in our area is so difficult. And when charters locate in the district, it's not just the initial drain, it's an ongoing drain."

—Alum Rock Educators Assn. President
Sandra Rivera

from parents is that they've lost trust in the process and the school board. That's where OEA is coming in to fill that gap,

▼ UESF members fought off school closures earlier this school year and are now organizing against the district's massive layoff proposal.



"Our members are demanding fully staffed schools and fully funded education. We've been doing more with less every single year, and we can't continue to do that. It's morally objectionable."

—United Educators of San Francisco
President **Cassandra Curiel**

talking with our parents and community and providing guidance about what school closures actually do to our communities."

Here's how educators are organizing in locals across the state to center to fight school closures and center students and families in these discussions:

SAN FRANCISCO: **Educators fight off closures, organize for next battle**

"Our members are demanding fully staffed schools, fully funded education in California and for fully funded IDEA (the federal law regarding special education funding) — the need continues to grow and we are here to serve our students," says UESF's Curiel. "We've been doing more with less every single year and we can't continue to do that. It's morally objectionable."

UESF members are organizing for the schools their students deserve following a late-2024 school closure process paused just before the former superintendent resigned. Curiel says the new superintendent has not expressed her feelings on closures and UESF members don't have much confidence in the district moving forward. While the school closure fight is currently on hold, UESF leaders have pivoted to a layoff fight — Curiel says the district intends to reduce about 500 positions, through early retirements to avoid layoffs.

When closures were still on the table, UESF leaders went to all the impacted schools (those targeted for closure and those that would receive their students) to engage members and gather

information about what parents and families were being told at sites. Since there hadn't been a lot of outreach by the district, Curiel says that families were relying on educators to help them navigate the process and amplify their concerns.

"Our members did a lot of outreach — even at schools that were not impacted — ensuring that solidarity is an action," Curiel says. "We said 'even if your school is not on the (closure) list, your students, school and colleagues will be impacted, so we have to take action.'"

UESF organized a broad coalition of stakeholders, issuing a public statement about the long-term harmful impacts of school closures, emphasizing the need for additional support for schools and families during any transition. With 40,000 students at 120 sites, Curiel says any attempt to close schools in San Francisco needs to place the needs of the community at the center of the discussion.

Curiel says a major concern of school closures is who they will impact and how. With high reliance on local public transit, closures can impact programs, change enrollment patterns and affect other logistics.

"One thing you have to understand about school closures is those students aren't going away. Everyone has to go somewhere else," Curiel says. "Closures change what make San Francisco schools special."

Curiel had a conversation last year with the president of the teachers union in Seattle to discuss how they might work together with leaders in other major West Coast cities to



▼ Union educators and the Oakland community organized and defeated a school closure proposal in December.



"I was in college when my science textbooks were created. My books are older than my students, but the district says it spends millions on books every year."

—Oakland Education Assn.
second Vice President
Chris Jackson

fight against school closures and for robust public education funding. Much like the famous union quote "an injury to one is an injury to all," Curiel says any closure affects every student.

"Any school closure is going to impact the district overall," Curiel says. "It could impact so many different sectors of our city in a lot of different ways."

ALUM ROCK: Advocating for students as district closes seven schools

"Charter school encroachment is one of the top reasons that closing schools in our area is so difficult," says Sandra Rivera, president of Alum Rock Educators Association (AREA). "And when charters locate in the district, it's not just the initial drain, it's an ongoing drain. We're now going to have six relatively empty campuses, where new charters are a possibility."

The damage of unchecked charter school proliferation is on full display in East San Jose's Alum Rock Union School District, where more than 4,000 students who live in the district attend charters. This has resulted in rapidly declining enrollment and a December board decision to close seven schools at the end of this school year. She says AREA members are focused on student wellness and safety, lifting their voices on the school consolidation committee to center student concern, like walkability to schools.

"It was our voice trying to make sure there was the least amount of family impact and building the strongest communities possible out of these decisions," Rivera says. "We have many lanes of traffic students will now have to cross. To have the kids

walking further is not an ideal situation. We asked about bus-ing, and at first they said no but at the last board meeting, they were considering a shuttle bus to help get students to and from school safely."

Budget issues and declining enrollment in Alum Rock are compounded by another impact of charter school proliferation: Alum Rock has a higher percentage of students in special education (about a third) than most districts because of charters' established practice of "cherry picking" general education students and leaving students with special needs to public schools. This costs the district about \$32 million a year.

"In public education, we provide services to everyone," Rivera says. "Part of what makes it really hard for us in Alum Rock is that charter schools offer 7:30 a.m. until 6 at night care for the children. I've been trying to work with the district to provide something comparable — so parents stay in our district."

Rivera says AREA's priorities now are resilience and healing, coming together as educators for their students.

"What happened is really difficult. We understand and want our students to know we are going through it with them," Rivera says. "We want to be the example and advocates for how to heal, move forward and emerge stronger than we've ever been before."

Rivera says educators are eager to try new approaches with fewer campuses, working to forge new partnerships and obtain more focused resources for their students.

"We're trying to highlight and showcase all the resources we have available at neighborhood public schools," Rivera says. "We want our families to commit to our public schools so there won't be any further drain."



IS YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT CONSIDERING SCHOOL CLOSURES?

Take a proactive approach if your school district is considering school closures (often called “consolidations” by districts). Reach out to your local leadership and CTA primary contact staff to learn more about how you can help your union support your students and school community. Here are some good practices:

- Emphasize the impact on students, families and communities. District discussions about closures often leave out the people who will be impacted most. Lift student and community voices on your platforms and use input opportunities to call for more attention to these impacts.

“The way to fight school closures is with the community it directly impacts — on the closure level and the receiving level,” says UESF President Cassandra Curiel. “This is a justice issue — we need to be in solidarity with students, families and communities who are under attack.”

- Don’t let the district decontextualize and describe closures with jargon. School closure discussions focus on numbers and data, stripping out their role in our neighborhoods. Take every opportunity to amplify the value these special places have to students and families (and be sure to call them closures).
- Shine a light on layoffs. Districts avoid talking specifically about potential pink slips until closure decisions have already been made by the school board. Lift and share that school closures often come with layoffs of educators and classified employees, which is devastating for students and school communities.

“We’re only as strong as our collective voice,” says AREA President Sandra Rivera. “One voice saying something is different than 500 voices saying something. If we say it together and we stand together, our voice will be heard.”

- We Are CTA. Approach school closures in your community collectively with other CTA locals. Show up for each other and your students. Reach out to neighboring locals for support and to share information. Contact fellow locals around the state fighting closures to learn more about how they’re fighting back.
- Be mindful of charter encroachment. When public schools are closed and create significant distance between remaining schools, charter schools often pop up and siphon students away from traditional public schools. As school closure plans are being developed, pay attention to empty areas created by proposed school closures and call out potential charter encroachment in your school district.

“We’re concerned about charter encroachment because closures will leave large areas without a neighborhood school nearby,” says SWTA President Vanessa Barrera.

▼ Franklin-McKinley’s closure committee meetings were sparsely attended at first, then became crowded as the final recommendation approached.

OAKLAND: Educators and community defeat school closure proposal

“We know that Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) plays fast and loose with the numbers and with public process,” says OEA’s Chris Jackson. “We as educators know the money is in the district.”

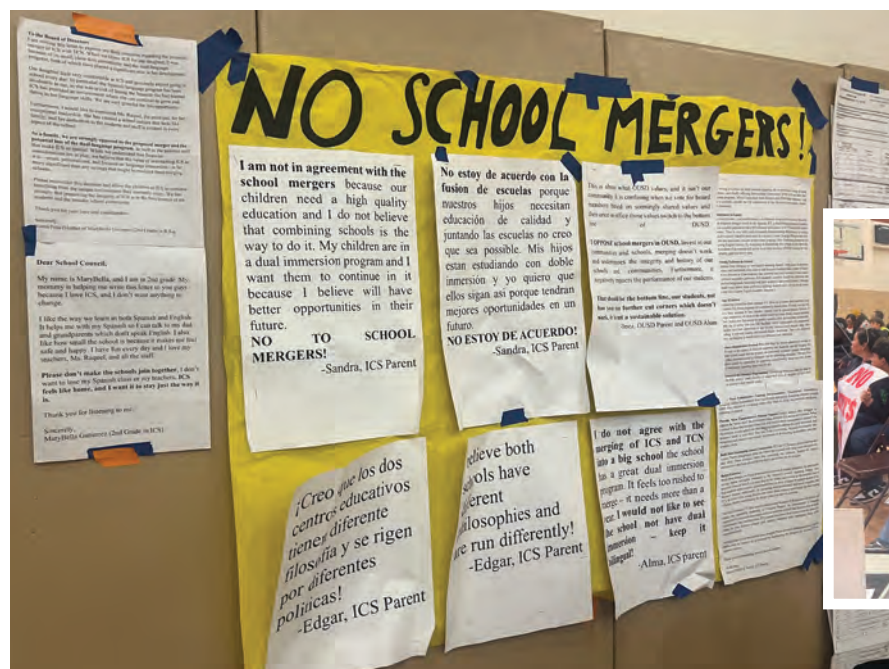
The power of educators and community united for students was on full display in December when OEA and district families rose up to fight back against a consolidation proposal that would have seen five schools close — winning when district officials opted to back off the plan, for now. Jackson says OEA expects the district to resume the process with community meetings in spring with the goal of another school closure proposal in fall or winter.

“It was a lot of hard work from our community and parents to get the decision to delay, and it was really a stress test,” says Jackson. “We were able to talk with parents and community about the kind of impacts these closures were going to have and see how far they were willing to go to fight them.”

OUSD’s declining enrollment issues are self-inflicted, Jackson says, with decades of unchecked charter school proliferation draining neighborhood public schools of students, ushered in by charter school industry-funded school board members. OUSD’s repeated school closure attempts have further caused families to leave the district, Jackson says.

“We saw in 2022 that OUSD violated state law in the way they closed schools, with no community process and barely a public process,” he says. “We’ve had to live with that for the past three years with those schools being closed, ➔

▼ Oakland Unified officials claimed their school closures were “mergers,” but educators and community members saw through the district’s spin.



▼ Despite regular attempts to close schools in Oakland to solve budget problems, Oakland Education Association leaders say the closures haven't saved any money.



those communities being devastated and watching our families leave the district. This time around, when the district sang the same song, everybody knew what beat it was, which made it possible to counteract the district’s message because we already heard it.”

Jackson says OUSD has a history of understating its financial health, starting every school year projecting a massive deficit and then somehow ending the year with a surplus. This lack of transparency and history of misdirecting resources — OUSD spends more on consultants and middle management than comparable school districts — has OEA educators challenging the district’s bloated budgeting.

“When they say they have a \$95-million deficit, we’re very skeptical,” says Jackson, noting that the district budgets substantial amounts for textbooks and materials annually, yet seems to never have new materials. “I was in college when my science textbooks were created. My books are older than my students, but the district says it spends millions on books every year.”

Moving forward, Jackson says OEA will continue to be engaged in the community process to center students and community, lift educator voices and fight unnecessary school closures. This in addition to OEA’s participation in CTA’s We Can’t Wait campaign along with other CTA locals throughout California.

“Our priority is to make sure we have fully staffed schools that are safe for our kids, that our school sites are fully funded and our budget process is transparent,” Jackson says.

IMPERIAL BEACH: Educators opposing unnecessary closures

“Our district isn’t in a deficit, but our superintendent is planning ahead,” says Southwest Teachers Association (SWTA) President Vanessa Barrera, about South Bay Union School District. “He’s saying ‘we don’t want to be like Oakland, which has to close schools because they don’t have any money.’”

SWTA members, who organized late last school year and were able to delay a school closure decision that had been developed with very little public input, are leading efforts to advocate for students and stop the closures as the superintendent tries yet again. Unlike the other districts, South Bay Union is trying to pre-emptively close one to three schools, which Barrera says would upend local communities and potentially exacerbate declining enrollment issues.

Barrera is speaking out against the closures and visiting school sites (using a CTA President’s Release Time Grant) to keep members informed about the situation and potential impacts.

▼ The Imperial Beach community is rallying to stop the South Bay Union School District superintendent from closing schools when there is no financial reason to do so.



“Our biggest concern is that if they close schools, it’s going to leave that community without a school — the nearest school is 36 minutes walking distance for those kids,” Barrera says.

While SWTA is not officially part of the district’s committee examining school closures, Barrera says she is in the room, ensuring the discussions don’t stray into matters that should be addressed in bargaining. Members are also speaking up for students and parents, especially with relation to safety issues.

Meanwhile, the district is giving mixed messages about the closure proposal, telling the committee one thing and the public another, Barrera says, causing SWTA to organize and collaborate with parents, community members and their local CSEA chapter. Barrera is concerned about current and long-term impacts of any closures — research shows school closures usually result in a 10% loss of students — which includes layoffs and the potential need for more closures.

“Because our superintendent is not only talking about closures but also reorganization of our entire district, I am worried we’re going to lose more students and impact our declining enrollment even more,” she says. “We are organizing around the school closures and our ongoing bargain ... we are the voice for our students and families who might not always know their rights, so it’s our job to advocate for them.” ■



PRO TIPS FOR ORGANIZING AGAINST SCHOOL CLOSURES

“Educate yourself. Remember that we are the voice for our students and families who might not always know what their rights are, so it’s our job to advocate for them.”

—**VANESSA BARRERA**,
SWTA president

“Everyone has to be talking with families — and with the same messages, too. It’s so important for the local to provide clarity and some easy-to-communicate and understand talking points, to get aligned with the community.”

—**CASSONDR CURIEL**,
UESF president

“Communication, especially face to face, is key. This year, I have been to every school site multiple times. I am at the staff meetings, in the lunchrooms, listening and offering suggestions and advice. Build connections with community in creative ways: food drives, boy and girl scouts — do these things so people see us as part of that space.”

—**SANDRA RIVERA**,
AREA president



When Disaster Strikes, Our Union Is Here

Educators come together in wake of L.A. wildfires

By Julian Peeples

UNION EDUCATORS SHOWED that an injury to one is an injury to all in January, coming together to support each other and the greater Los Angeles community after devastating wildfires that destroyed more than 18,000 structures and chased 200,000 from their homes.

In all, 19 school districts closed and a dozen schools were destroyed in the Palisades and Eaton fires. Our union mobilized immediately, with local associations in the impacted areas supporting members on the ground and CTA coordinating relief efforts to help support those in need.

“During this challenging time, I’ve been so proud of our union,” CTA President David Goldberg said. “I’ve been so moved by how we’ve carried on together, wrapped our arms around each other for support, reached out to check on our colleagues, students and neighbors, and helped raise money and provide mutual aid.”

In Pasadena, it’s estimated that 10% of school district staff lost their homes, as well as one in six students. As students, educators and community process their grief and start their recovery, United Teachers of Pasadena President Jonathon Gardner told the New York Times that the months ahead will be unpredictable.

“There’s not going to be anything resembling normal for the rest of the semester,” he said.

Arcadia Teachers Association (ATA) President Kevin

Fox says six of the local’s members lost their homes while as many as 12 endured significant evacuation situations, where it was unclear how soon they would be able to return. Fox says that ATA utilized their existing site representative structure to identify members in need, so they could let the school district know. Using phone trees and word of mouth, ATA members donated personal necessity days to their impacted colleagues and donated and collected items and other resources for those in need.

“The outpouring of support was gratifying. It made me feel so happy about all the work we’ve done over the years,” Fox says. “More than winning a raise, this made me feel good about us — about turning our attention to each other and our needs instantly. It just means the world.”

Members of Rosemead Teachers Association (RTA) came together to support one of their own whose neighborhood was severely impacted. While the member’s home was safe, she was unable to return for a lengthy period, according to RTA President Cami Case. The outpouring of support included gift cards, cash, clothes for work and even a dress for Lunar New Year.

“Someone cooked for her for two weeks and another member brought her coffee,” Case says. “During this awful disaster, we got to see the good in people. There are people who care and love and it’s a good example that we all can learn from.”

Teacher serves on search team in Sierra Madre

"EVERYONE IS RALLYING around and supporting each other and I'm just glad I can do my part," says Carolyn Grumm, second grade teacher and member of Arcadia Teachers Association. "I just felt lucky that there was a way I could help."

For eight years, Grumm has helped lost and injured hikers as part of the all-volunteer Sierra Madre Search and Rescue team — a commitment that saw her thrust into a leadership role in ongoing rescue efforts for the Eaton Fire.

Grumm said her team was originally called to help with evacuations related to the Palisades fire and were enroute when the Eaton fire broke out and required their immediate assistance. At first, Grumm says the team helped evacuate seniors with mobility issues, providing initial response and support in their home area.

Her role then shifted when all eight of the Los Angeles area's search and rescue teams converged on the Pasadena area to do search and recovery and assist with the effort to reopen neighborhoods. Grumm was assigned a leadership role in a command post set up at the Rose Bowl, where she would work for the next 10 days helping guide a multidisciplinary team of 60 from a litany of public agencies through heavy 12-hour days.

"This was a massive event and not like anything we normally do, so it was like building an airplane while we were flying it," Grumm says. "I was able to develop procedures for how we were going to handle repopulating areas."

Grumm's class at Baldwin Stocker Elementary School was under the care of her mother, a retired teacher who volunteers there every day, while Grumm was "helping with the fire." Her students know about her volunteer job and Grumm says they are proud of her work.

"I hope they kind of feel part of what I did. It's good for them to know what volunteerism is and the importance of giving back to your community," Grumm says, noting that her school was closed for three days. "Hopefully my classroom is a safe and comfortable place for them to come back to. Having familiarity and routine is comforting for kids."

Grumm has felt supported by her union and her school district, saying that she has felt the power of community on a large scale, with people across the state asking how they can support and help.

▼ The Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Team; Grumm stands behind the van's open door.



▼ Grumm in her classroom pictured with her mother Coyla Grumm, a retired teacher who volunteers there every day.



"I hope [my students] feel part of what I did. It's good for them to know what volunteerism is and the importance of giving back to your community."

— Carolyn Grumm,
Arcadia Teachers Association

"Everyone in the area knows someone, had someone staying at their house or had to take showers at a friend's place. Even if you weren't impacted, there's so much going around and everyone is helping out where they can," she says. "I feel very supported by my school and my union. I feel that people are here and ready to help."



▼ Jones is faculty advisor for the Genshin Impact Club.



"Our union is always quick to offer support and updates, which made navigating local resources much easier than it might have been. It's a relief to be a part of an organization that supports us not just as educators but as people."

—Casey Jones,
former Rio Hondo College Faculty Assn.

Supporting community college students in recovery

Casey Jones is an adjunct faculty member at multiple community colleges in LA County, including Pasadena City College and Glendale Community College. She is the current social media consultant for Community College Association and a former bargaining team member for Rio Hondo College Faculty Association.

How has the Eaton Fire impacted the PCC community?

The fires reinforced how close we all are both in distance and also as a community. Pasadena Community College has a vibrant, diverse campus and it struck me how unified we were in terms of reaching out in the classrooms and the community to help and support.

How are you working to support impacted students?

I have several students who lost everything in the Eaton fire and that has collided with the time of year when letters of recommendation are needed and scholarship applications are due. It can be stressful on a normal day, let alone during a time of crisis. I believe that everyone is affected at some level, so flexibility and grace combined with giving all students space to express how they are feeling has been helpful for them as they try to regain momentum

academically. Thoughtful personal letters of recommendation not only help students to get those scholarships and acceptance letters but remind them that they are amazing — and while this is a defining event to be sure, they have what it takes to recover and create more incredible moments.

What advice do you have for educators supporting students and co-workers as they recover?

Stick to the schedule as much as possible and encourage students to collaborate in their communication about the events of January. This is basically true every semester but even more so when something extraordinary happens. Students are a great resource for one another and it's amazing to see how empowering it can be for students to help others succeed. In one of my public speaking classes, we took an inventory of what was needed and how we, as a class, could contribute, and that turned into a great exercise for student engagement. Flexibility, grace, communication and collaboration are great for educators too!

What has it meant to you for your union to come together to support educators, our students and communities?

CTA has been next level. Our union is always quick to offer support and updates, which made navigating local resources much easier than it might have been. CTA did a good job of navigating what was needed in the LA area while still staying connected with educators around the state. CTA has been a consistent presence, and I expect this will play out even more in the coming months. It's a relief to be a part of an organization that supports us not just as educators but as people.

Members elected to school boards share thoughts on how to help

As educators and students recover from the traumatic experiences, we asked two CTA leaders who are school board members in the burn areas to share their thoughts on how best to support students as they process and heal.

Telly Tse

GLENDALE SCHOOL

BOARD MEMBER

Beverly Hills Education Assn.;
former CTA Board Director



How are you supporting your educators, students and Glendale community as they recover from the wildfires?

At our last board meeting, my colleagues and I unanimously approved an agreement with our labor and management associations to provide extra days of paid administrative leave for employees directly impacted by the recent wildfires. It also provides greater flexibility for them to convert accrued sick leave into personal necessity days through the end of the 2025 year. In addition, we have been providing mental health services and maintaining regular communication with those directly impacted to ensure their immediate needs are met.

As a trustee and education leader, how can we best support our students as they process the experience?

Our students have endured a lot in recent years. First, a pandemic and now this. All our students have been impacted one way or another, whether it's from losing their home, temporarily evacuating from their residence or witnessing the smoke and fire in the sky. Our students should always be assured of the fact that no matter what happens, their school and their district is a place where they can feel safe and cared for. As a trustee and education leader, I work to ensure this happens by advocating for policies and actions that provide our students with all the resources they need to be academically successful and mentally healthy.

How does it feel as a CTA member and elected official to see your union family come together during this time?

It makes me happy and gratified. When school districts collaborate and work with their labor partners, good things happen. No one knows better what our students and communities need more than those who work directly with them. This includes our classroom teachers, instructional assistants, office managers, custodial staff, bus drivers and everyone in between. Any and every decision I make as a school board trustee must take into consideration their experiences and perspectives. The more educators and union members we have on school boards, the more likely we will see such collaboration happen in school districts across the state and nation.



Dr. Randa Wahbe

CITRUS COLLEGE BOARD

OF TRUSTEES MEMBER

United Faculty of North Orange County
Community College District;
CCA Vice President

How are you working to support students and staff recovering from fires?

Immediately after the fires erupted, the president of Citrus College communicated with trustees and our campus community about the resources available to the campus community. As a trustee, I am using those resources to assist community members, as well as members, students and families in other communities and districts.

As a community college professor, how would you recommend supporting students impacted by the fires?

It's important to let our students know about the resources that are available to them. Often, they need our help with completing forms for relief and support, like for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) resources. The fires were devastating in a way we've not seen in our area before. With so many of our neighbors going through unthinkable times, there's a heaviness in our community. We have to support the devastation and its ramifications. Seeing so many community members step up to help in myriad ways has served to buoy our neighbors.

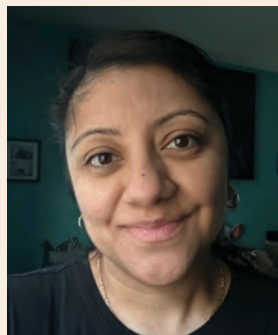


Palisades ESP helps students' recovery as she embarks on her own

FOR WENDY NAJERA, Pacific Palisades has always been like a second home.

As a child, she accompanied her mother and grandmother when they worked as nannies for families there. While they lived in South Los Angeles, Najera attended Palisades Elementary, Paul Revere Middle and Palisades High schools. A member of Palisades ESP United, Najera currently works as a paraprofessional at Palisades Charter High School, which was destroyed in January in the Palisades fire.

The school switched to a full virtual format on Jan. 22, and Najera works with her students on Zoom every day now. She says while most of her students remember virtual classrooms from during the pandemic, there are a lot of factors to how well they are taking the sudden shift in



Wendy Najera

format. Many students are still displaced from their homes, living in hotels and with family — one of Najera's students Zooms in from New York despite the three-hour time difference.

"Some kids don't mind being online; they actually prefer it," she says. "But some don't and a big chunk is students in Special Education — they're the ones that are really suffering."

Najera says it's been meaningful to see her union come together to support fellow educators who are recovering from the fires.

"I think it's amazing [that] our CTA family took immediate action to come together and support us," Najera says. "We may never meet any of them in person but they still took the

time, energy and resources to pitch in and help us stay afloat, emotionally and physically."

"I've been so proud of our union — how we've carried on together, wrapped our arms around each other, reached out to check on our colleagues, students and neighbors, and helped raise money and provide mutual aid." —CTA President **David Goldberg**



Help Fellow Members

CTA members are working hard to support their students and families impacted by January's devastating wildfires in Los Angeles County — even as they suffer from life-changing losses themselves. Help us share the healing power of our solidarity and visit cta.org/LAwildfires for links to donate to the CTA Disaster Relief Fund, as well as GoFundMe accounts set up to support affected CTA members.



Share Your Wildfire Story

Have a story about your experience in the LA County wildfires? Did you get much-needed support from your local or were you working to help fellow educators and our communities during this time of need? Record a video and share your story with us at stories.cta.org.

"Their impact on students and public education, the union and labor movement, and our greater society has been deep and enduring."

—CTA President **David Goldberg**



SOCIAL JUSTICE CHAMPIONS

CTA recognizes members' work to lift up students, communities

EACH YEAR, our union honors members, CTA chapters and Service Center Councils with CTA Human Rights Awards. The awards celebrate the diversity of racial equity and social justice work that CTA members create, challenge and participate in. From creating safer spaces and environments for their students and school sites, to programs that help address needs of the whole child, our awardees make the world a better place and strengthen our bonds within CTA and with our students and communities.

"We recognize the outstanding contributions our 2025 Human Rights Award winners have made in uplifting racial and

social justice in their classrooms and schools and in their communities," said CTA President David Goldberg. "Their impact on students and public education, our union and labor movement, and our greater society has been deep and enduring"

This year's awardees will be honored at a gala dinner at the Equity & Human Rights Conference on March 8 in Santa Clara. To view awardees' acceptance videos, visit youtube.com/CaliforniaTeachers. To learn more about CTA's Human Rights Awards, visit cta.org/awards.

The 2025 honorees:



African American Human Rights Award in Honor of Lois Tinson

Awarded to a CTA member whose activities have helped to achieve significant progress on behalf of equal opportunity for African Americans; Lois Tinson was CTA's first African American president.

ERROL GARNETT

COMMUNITY SCHOOL SITE COORDINATOR

Alvord Educators Assn.

Errol Garnett, or "Mr. G.," has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to advancing human rights and empowering underserved communities, particularly African American youth. His multifaceted efforts as an adoptive parent, education advocate and community leader make him an exemplary candidate for this Human Rights award.



As adoptive parents, Garnett and his wife have opened their heart and home to children in need, providing them with stability, love and opportunities they may not have otherwise had. This dedication to improving young lives demonstrates Mr. Garnett's belief in the fundamental right of every child to grow up in a nurturing environment.

Garnett's creation of the Greatness Within program showcases his vision for systemic change. This initiative advocates for, honors and educates African American students, addressing the unique challenges they face in the education system. By empowering these students to recognize their inherent potential and providing them with resources and mentorship, Garnett is actively working to dismantle barriers and promote equal educational opportunities.

This year, Garnett chose to leave his high school math classroom to become the Community School site coordinator at Alvord Unified School District's most impoverished community school. In this role, he bridges the gap between schools, families and community resources, ensuring that students and their families have access to vital support services.

Garnett has also established other community partnerships to add to the lasting and transformative impact of the community schools in his district. He hosts monthly food drive events that are open to the entire community. He brings up everyone around him and encourages new and existing community members to become more involved.

In addition, Garnett is an elected member of his local executive board and actively recruits members of historically marginalized communities into leadership within his local. He is part of the CTA Cadre program and focuses his efforts on promoting CTA's Human Rights programs not only to his local but statewide.

American Indian/Alaska Native Human Rights Award in Honor of Jim Clark

Awarded to a CTA member whose activities have helped to achieve significant progress on behalf of equal opportunity for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

DONNA FERNANDEZ

M. ED (POMO), HIGH SCHOOL MATH TEACHER

Santa Rosa Teachers Assn.

National Board Certified Teacher Donna Fernandez, Pomo from Elem Indian Colony, is a secondary mathematics educator at Piner High in Santa Rosa. She is committed to equitable educational opportunities for Native youth, focusing on mathematics while preserving cultural heritage. She is not only transforming individual lives but also contributing to the larger goal of equity in education and representation in STEM fields. She does this by fostering collaborative teamwork and connecting students with the cultural and mathematical relationships that surround them, cultivating an inclusive environment where all students can see themselves as mathematicians.



In addition to her impactful classroom teaching, Fernandez is co-director of the Alliance for Indigenous Math Circles (AIMC). Through AIMC, she empowers Indigenous students and educators by integrating mathematics with cultural understanding and identity, making mathematics a tool for self-expression and community growth.

Among Fernandez' many accomplishments:

- Planning and directing with AIMC mathematicians the annual week-long math camps to blend experiential learning through math circle problems with cultural and STEM activities at Navajo Preparatory School in Farmington, NM, and at the California Indian Museum and Cultural Center in Santa Rosa. These camps promote the connection between mathematics and Indigenous traditions, fostering a sense of pride and belonging among participants while providing students with hands-on, culturally relevant mathematical experiences.
- Serving as a teacher representative on the Santa Rosa City Schools Indian Education Committee where they do fun family math nights for the community.
- Creating math lessons that center on Indigenous mathematical knowledge to strengthen students' identity and sense of belonging in mathematics.
- Partnering with the American Indian Science and Engineering Society to implement Native Financial Cents to build participants' financial capability.
- Speaking and presenting at multiple professional and cultural events about Indigenous mathematics education.

Fernandez has devoted almost two decades to the Indigenous community, uplifting native students to dream, excel and achieve academic excellence through mathematics.

Cesar E. Chavez and Dolores Huerta “Si Se Puede” Human Rights Award

Awarded to a CTA member whose activities have helped to achieve significant progress on behalf of equal opportunity for Hispanics/Latinos/Chicanos.

RON GOCHEZ

HIGH SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER

United Teachers Los Angeles

Ron Gochez embodies dedication to education, social justice and community empowerment. As a teacher at LA's Maya Angelou High School and advisor to the MEChA club, he has mentored thousands of students, fostering pride in their cultural heritage and active citizenship.



In his classroom and beyond, Gochez consistently delivers a culturally relevant curriculum that uplifts the histories, identities and contributions of Indigenous, Latina/o/x and Chicana/o/x communities. By integrating culturally affirming materials and pedagogy, he ensures that students see themselves reflected in their education. His work extends to professional development for educators, helping colleagues adopt inclusive and equitable teaching practices that resonate with diverse learners.

A significant milestone in Gochez's career is his involvement in the 2014 resolution that established Ethnic Studies as a graduation requirement for the LA Unified School District. This initiative positioned LAUSD among the first districts nationwide to recognize the need for an inclusive curriculum that reflects diverse voices and histories, enhancing students' understanding of their identities and promoting healthy dialogue among communities.

A 20-year teacher and passionate advocate for academic freedom, Gochez defends the rights of educators to teach truthfully and encourages teachers to resist pressures that may seek to dilute their curricula.

He has been a steadfast advocate of immigrant families, taking bold steps to shield his community from the threat of ICE raids. He has collaborated with local organizations to establish rapid response networks and legal assistance programs, ensuring vulnerable community members have the support they need during moments of crisis. His efforts have fostered a sense of security and solidarity, empowering families to remain united and thrive despite external challenges.

Gochez excels in promoting solidarity among Black and Brown communities, recognizing their shared struggles. Through community engagement initiatives, he cultivates understanding and respect, empowering students to celebrate differences while uniting for common goals. Gochez's legacy is testament to the transformative power of education and the importance of standing up for justice and equality.

CTA Member Human Rights Award

Awarded to an individual who has promoted human and civil rights in areas such as building meaningful family, school and community partnerships and helping eradicate discrimination at their school site.

OSCAR PINTO 8TH GRADE TEACHER

El Monte Elementary Teachers Assn. (EMETA)

Among his many efforts for students, schools and his communities, Oscar Pinto helped create an Ethnic Studies proposal in his district with a more inclusive and diverse curriculum. He recently co-created an Equity and Human rights team in his local to help advocate for it and his school district's diverse population.



Pinto has specifically focused on providing support to students who are newcomers and those who are part of the LGBTQ+ community by offering a safe space during lunchtime. Students and staff know they can count on him to advocate for social justice, speak up, hold others accountable and be a good friend and listener.

As well as teaching and serving as EMETA secretary, Pinto is an advocate and organizer for environmental justice. He works with various organizations such as the Clean Air Coalition to combat environmental racism in La Puente and surrounding communities. He has held workshops and spoken at public hearings to voice his concerns against a toxic battery smelter in Industry, CA, educating communities nearby about lead, arsenic and the dangers of other heavy metals and ways people can mitigate exposure or remediate contaminated soil.

For the past few years, he has volunteered to collect soil samples from houses within a two-mile radius of the smelter. These and other samples are transported to and tested at a University of Southern California lab; results are mailed back to each resident. (Pinto helped secure a \$10,000 grant to pay for testing.) Pinto then clearly and concisely communicates with community members about their results and what they can do if their soil is contaminated.

Pinto ties his environmental and social justice work with the work he does as a union leader and classroom teacher. He promotes critical thinking in his classroom and encourages students to be advocates for their community and to be agents of social change — and models this important work himself.



CTA Peace and Justice Human Rights Award

Awarded to a member who has promoted peace and justice within their school and community in areas such as inspiring youth to study and get involved in peace and justice issues and participating in relevant community activities.

GREG LAWSON ELEMENTARY TEACHER

North Cow Creek Educators Assn. and human rights advocate for the Shasta Cascade Service Center Council

Greg Lawson was the first teacher to bring an awareness of history from multiple perspectives to a classroom at North Cow Creek School in rural Northern California. Previously, fourth grade students' study of California history began with a minor mention of the Native Californians from the textbooks, which did not include any local tribes.

In addition to designing and implementing curriculum about issues of peace, justice and international understanding, Lawson has promoted these issues along with cooperation and awareness of other nations of the world in Shasta County and beyond for many years. Before serving as president of North Cow Creek Educators Assn., he was involved with iAct, an anti-genocide educational nonprofit. Lawson was moved to write a song the first time Camp Darfur came to Redding, called "For the Camps." (He made an album with this name and has since written many more songs.)

When the 2008 Olympics track and field trials were being held, Lawson was invited to sing at a protest against Chinese investment with the dictator of Sudan, who was leading the genocide against black Africans in the Darfuri region. His songs have been used by anti-genocide groups in the U.S., Africa and Europe. He has presented Darfur fundraiser concerts with the local Genocide No More nonprofit.

Creating awareness and educating people on human rights and justice in a very conservative part of California is not an easy task. Lawson has worked at this for 20 years. He is a founding member of The Shasta Beloved Community, a member of the Shasta County Citizens Advocating Respect (formerly Shasta County Citizens Against Racism; the name was change after a gay couple was murdered in their bed), and The Anti-Racism Task Force. His presence at Redding Pride, Juneteenth and The Sikh Center's International Day with a CTA booth are just a few of things he did this last year.



Human Right Award for LGBTQ+ Advocacy in Honor of Nancy Bailey

Awarded to a member whose activities have helped achieve significant equity and equality for the LGBTQ+ community. Nancy Bailey was founder of CTA's Gay and Lesbian Caucus.

PHILIP CHARLES CRAWFORD

LIBRARIAN Association of Carmel Teachers

When Carmel High School students are asked how the school recognizes and celebrates everyone, they say the library is the hub for celebration of all people. As the school librarian, Philip Crawford manages the library and organizes special activities. Among his accomplishments:

- Established a formal process and committee for responding to challenged books: Crawford's district-wide initiative demonstrates his dedication to promoting diverse perspectives and ensuring that LGBTQ+ voices and stories are represented in the curriculum and K-12 libraries.
- Feminist Club founder and advisor: Crawford's role as the advisor to the Feminist Club showcases his commitment to gender equality and advocacy for the rights and well-being of the LGBTQ+ community. He is committed to fostering a more inclusive and accepting environment within Carmel High School.
- Be Yourself Club advisor: As advisor of the Be Yourself Club, Crawford supports and empowers students who are exploring their identities and fosters a sense of belonging. This directly contributes to a more inclusive and accepting school culture for LGBTQ+ students.
- Social Justice Student Advisory Group: As founder and facilitator of this group, Crawford actively engages with students in discussions and initiatives related to social justice, including LGBTQ+ issues.
- Solidarity March for Sexual Assault Awareness: Crawford's establishment and role as co-organizer of the annual march shows his dedication to addressing issues of sexual assault and harassment, which are often intertwined with LGBTQ+ experiences. This initiative contributes to a safer and more supportive environment for LGBTQ+ individuals.
- Sexual Assault/Harassment Task Force faculty participant: Crawford's participation in the task force highlights his commitment to addressing and preventing sexual assault and harassment within the school community. This is especially important for LGBTQ+ individuals who may be at higher risk for such experiences.
- Estrenando member (Assn. of Carmel Teachers equity team): Crawford's involvement on the ACT equity team demonstrates his commitment to equity and inclusivity, which includes addressing the unique challenges and needs of LGBTQ+ students and staff in CUSD.



Human Rights Award for Women's Advocacy

Awarded to a member whose activities have helped to achieve significant progress in women's rights.

SHELBY ANDERSON

HISTORY TEACHER Laguna Beach Unified Faculty Association

Shelby Anderson embodies a relentless dedication to dismantling gender bias and expanding women's history. She has done this by developing transformative educational programs, such as her authorship of a WWII women's military service lesson and her co-lead-ership of a professional development series with the National WWII Museum.



Anderson recently collaborated with the museum's Educator Advisory Council on the "What's In Your Footlocker" lesson. It featured profiles of five servicewomen, including a Native American, African American and Japanese American. The lesson highlights their motivations for joining the service, job experiences, and the unique challenges they faced, such as segregation and discrimination. By emphasizing inclusivity, the lesson broadens students' appreciation of history and encourages them to view these servicewomen as veterans and pioneers of equality.

In Anderson's classroom, lessons go beyond traditional approaches by incorporating hands-on and discussion-based methods that deepen students' empathy and understanding. Her focus throughout her curriculum is on underrepresented groups, primarily women from all ethnic backgrounds.

Through living history, she teaches students about women's military service wearing her original WWII women's uniforms, including those from the Women's Army Corps, The Women's Naval Reserve and more. Anderson's passion for servicewomen's contributions challenges traditional male-centric narratives of wartime and helps reduce bias against studying women's military history.

Anderson is also working to bring a Women's AP U.S. History course to fruition and contributing her knowledge of women's military service during WWII to the curriculum. She has co-authored a lesson plan for the UC Irvine History Project on the Mendez et. al v Westminster case that desegregated schools in California during WWII, years before Brown v. Board (to be published).

Her commitment to teaching through a human rights lens helps ignite a passion for social justice among students and educators alike. By nurturing understanding and advocacy, Anderson is shaping a new generation that recognizes and champions the rights of all who served, ensuring that their stories are told and honored.

Pacific Asian American Human Rights Award

Awarded to a member whose activities have helped to achieve significant progress on behalf of equal opportunity for Pacific Asian Americans.

WEI-TSU LOH SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST

president of Associated Pomona Teachers, CTA Asian and Pacific Islander Caucus member

As president of Associated Pomona Teachers (APT) for three years, Wei-Tsu Loh inspires others and empowers them to do the work necessary to make change. Loh has prioritized political activism, equity and a working relationship with the district board. During her tenure, APT successfully negotiated a 20% increase in educator pay. Among her other accomplishments:



- Bilingual programs: Loh revitalized an APT committee for educators involved in the district's Dual Language Immersion Program (now at four schools and growing) and worked with the district to ensure that the educators are supported and able to provide the education students deserve.
- Educational equity: Loh created a program where members of the APT executive board are connected with a board member from their trustee area. The pairs meet to discuss issues of importance for all Pomona students, allowing educators to have access to decision-makers. For example, Pomona has a growing Asian community, and this program helps address their needs.
- Involvement in the community: Loh attends multiple community events, including those for nearby CTA locals, on behalf of students and CTA. She is collaborating with the district, parents and educators to create a community schools steering committee and get relevant training for the team. She is also working with the district to make sure a community schools grant is used to better Pomona schools and provide students alternatives to gangs.
- Political activism: Loh lobbies at the State Capitol, representing CTA and advocating for students, educators and communities – particularly in the BIPOC communities. She is a leader in the Inland Communities Organizing Network tackling housing shortage issues in Pomona.
- Representational equity: Loh faced backlash for the ethnic diversity of APT's executive board., but she is dedicated to ensuring that all voices are heard. She has encouraged the district to expand its Ethnic Studies program and is actively involved in CTA's Asian and Pacific Islander Caucus.





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Feature

Students with Exceptional Needs Human Rights Award

Awarded to a member whose activities have helped to achieve significant progress on behalf of equal opportunity for students with exceptional needs.

LEE WYGAND

DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING ITINERANT TEACHER

Riverside County Office Teacher's Assn.

Lee Wygand is a fierce champion and advocate, both within their own local and statewide, ensuring equitable education for students with hearing loss and diverse needs. With a steadfast dedication to addressing the unique challenges faced by these students in mainstream classrooms, they have significantly impacted educators, parents and administrators alike.

By crafting inclusive educational strategies, Wygand not only empowers students in the classroom but also advocates for their broader needs. By emphasizing that students with hearing loss deserve support regardless of their academic performance, they challenge misconceptions and foster environments where all learners can thrive without undue fatigue or barriers. Their expertise is sought out by other educators and union representatives.

Through their presentation "The Unique Needs of the Deaf or Hard of Hearing Student in the Mainstream Classroom" Wygand illuminated the critical distinction between loudness and clarity in teaching practices. Their workshop, which debuted at the 2021 CTA Special Education Conference, has since become a staple at multiple CTA conferences. Receiving consistent five-star ratings, their sessions equip educators with actionable strategies and inspire ongoing dialogue about accessibility and inclusion.

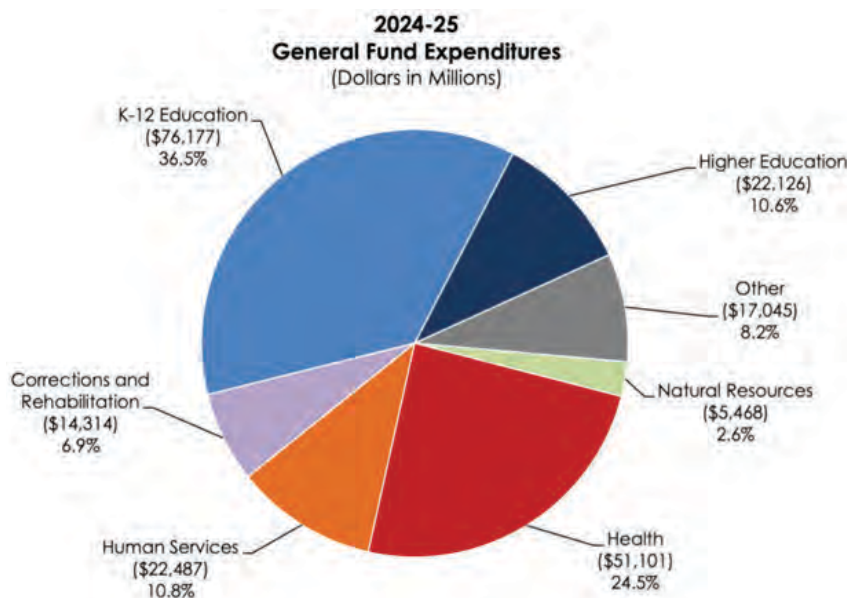
Wygand is innovative in developing and sharing resources: In 2013, they created a bilingual dice game in English and Spanish to help students learn the parts of the ear. This free resource, available on Teachers Pay Teachers, has been downloaded over 750 times, demonstrating its widespread impact and utility for educators.

Additionally, Wygand goes beyond conferences and the classroom by educating parents about their child's rights, ensuring families are equipped to advocate for equitable opportunities.

As a credentialed educator for both Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) students and those with moderate to severe disabilities, Wygand exemplifies the power of specialized expertise. Their leadership in establishing the DHH+ classroom with Riverside County Office of Education in 2014 set a benchmark for inclusive education, ensuring students with complex needs receive the tailored instruction and care they deserve.



▼ This year's proposed budget includes funding increases and a 2.43% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) to the Local Control Funding Formula.



Governor Proposes Historic Investment in Public Schools

Our union commits to defending guaranteed public education funding

By Julian Peebles

OUR UNION APPLAUDED historic investments in public education while remaining cautious about the lack of full funding guaranteed by Proposition 98, in response to Gov. Gavin Newsom's initial 2025–26 state budget proposal in January.

"We are excited to see so many transformative education initiatives supported by CTA members come to fruition in this state budget, including investments in transitional kindergarten, school nutrition and professional development," CTA President David Goldberg said. "However, we are concerned that the proposed budget does not allocate the full funding guaranteed by Prop. 98."

Goldberg said that despite a promising economic outlook, some school districts have already started issuing layoff notices to educators.

"We will work to ensure there are no layoffs to educators and school employees this year, especially as we face a budget with higher than anticipated revenues for our state," Goldberg said. "Layoffs are devastating and chaotic for educators, students and communities. In this moment, more than ever, our schools must continue to be safe and stable

centers for our students and communities."

Highlights of the budget proposal include:

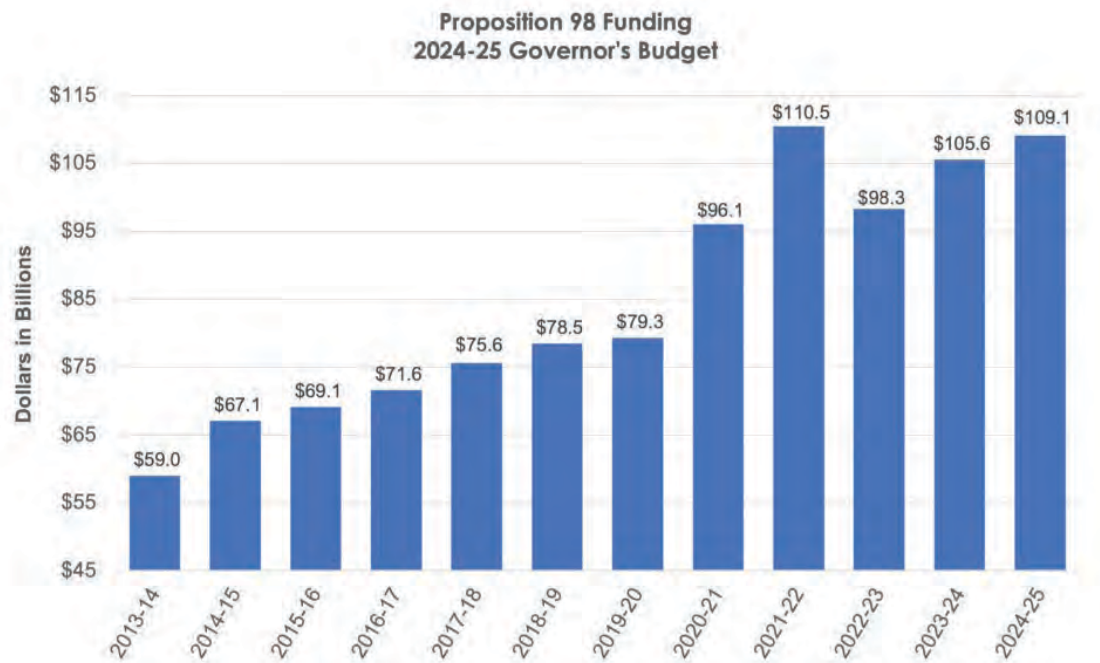
Prop. 98: The Prop. 98 minimum funding levels for public schools and community colleges are projected to be \$119.2 billion in 2024–25 and \$118.9 billion in 2025–26. These revised Prop. 98 levels result in an increase of \$7.5 billion over a three-year period. The governor proposes \$117.6 billion, instead of \$119.2 billion in 2024–25, \$1.6 billion below the calculated Prop. 98 level, with the stated intent to "mitigate the risk of potentially appropriating more resources to the Guarantee than are ultimately available in the final calculation for 2024–25." Potential adjustments will be evaluated in the May Revision.

"In the coming months, our union will carefully monitor the required funding levels for schools and community colleges to ensure full funding is provided to our students in a timely manner, without unnecessary delay," said Goldberg.

Per Pupil Spending for TK–12 Education: Per-pupil funding totals \$18,918 in Prop. 98 funding (\$564 above the 2024 Budget Act) and \$24,764 per pupil when accounting for all funding sources (\$138 above the



▼ Our union remains cautious about the state budget proposal, especially the lack of full education funding guaranteed by Proposition 98.



“In the coming months, our union will carefully monitor the required funding levels for schools and community colleges to ensure full funding is provided to our students in a timely manner, without unnecessary delay.”

—CTA President **David Goldberg**

2024 Budget Act).

Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF): The budget includes a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) of 2.43% for the LCFF. When combined with student attendance adjustments, the budget includes an increase of \$2.5 billion in Prop. 98 funding for the LCFF. Total LCFF funding proposed for school districts, charter schools and county offices of education is \$84.8 billion in 2025–26.

Transitional Kindergarten (TK): Includes a total of \$2.4 billion ongoing Prop. 98 funding to support the full implementation of universal transitional kindergarten, so that all children who turn four years old by Sept. 1 can enroll in TK (providing access to roughly 60,000 additional children). The budget also provides an additional \$1.5 billion ongoing Prop 98 funding to support further lowering of the average student-to-adult ratio from 12-to-1 to 10-to-1 in every TK classroom.

Educator Workforce: Includes the following proposals related to the educator workforce —

- Provides \$150 million in one-time Prop. 98 funding to provide financial assistance for teacher candidates through a new Teacher Recruitment Incentive Grant Program.

- Allocates an additional \$100 million in one-time Prop. 98 funding to extend the timeline of the existing National Board Certification Incentive Program to support National Board Certified teachers to teach and mentor other instructional staff in high poverty schools.
- Includes \$50 million in one-time General Fund monies to support the existing Golden State Teacher Grant Program to support students enrolled in teacher preparation programs who commit to working in a high-need school site after program completion.

Literacy Instruction: Provides \$500 million in one-time Prop. 98 funding for TK–12 Literacy and Mathematics Coaches, which funds high-poverty schools to train and hire literacy, reading and mathematics specialists to support educators and provide interventions for students with the greatest need, including one-on-one and small-group tutoring.

Community Colleges: Total of \$14.8 billion for California’s community colleges, an increase of \$851 million from last year. Includes a 2.43% COLA for Student Centered Funding Formula apportionments.

Note: This budget is only a proposal and must be negotiated with the Legislature.

▼ President Joe Biden after signing the Social Security Fairness Act bill. NEA Vice President Princess Moss is at far left.



▼ President Joe Biden with CTA President David Goldberg at the White House.



HISTORIC WIN:

Social Security Fairness Act Signed into Law

40-year struggle ends with victory

By Julian Peeples

MORE THAN 40 YEARS of retirement inequity for many educators and public employees ended in January when President Joe Biden signed the Social Security Fairness Act into law, affecting about 2.8 million people nationwide.

The new law repeals the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), which slashed Social Security, pension and other retirement benefits for educators and other public workers in 26 states, including California. Impacted individuals will see an average increase of \$360 per month in Social Security benefits, depending on their employment history, and according to NEA will restore retirement benefits for millions of educators.

“When I hear about this astonishing victory over entrenched economic injustice, I feel both pride and gratitude for our union and the fierce teachers and allies who have been advocating to overturn this injustice for decades,” said Heather Zunguze, a member of Pacific Grove Teachers Association.

For four decades, public employees in many states have been subject to punitive and discriminatory measures that reduced their Social Security benefits. The GPO and WEP robbed educators of the retirement income they earned since 1977 and 1983,

respectively. In December, Congress finally voted to fully repeal the laws, ending a marathon of activism by union educators across the country.

CTA President David Goldberg joined NEA Vice President Princess Moss and a number of other union leaders at the White House for the bill signing. NEA President Becky Pringle said this fight was about fairness.

“These unjust Social Security penalties have robbed public service workers of their hard-earned benefits for far too long,” Pringle said. “They have hurt educators and their families — and damaged the education profession, making it harder to attract and retain educators. And that means students are impacted, too.”

This struggle has long been a priority for NEA and the victory only happened through the tireless advocacy of educators and other public service workers. NEA members made nearly half a million calls and sent emails to members of Congress, demanding they repeal these unjust laws. NEA and CTA members also lobbied lawmakers in Washington and in offices here in California, sharing their personal stories of

how these laws have unjustly penalized them and their families.

“I’m 83 and have sent so many emails and letters and made phone calls to my representatives in Congress and the Senate. I had almost given up hope that a repeal could be achieved,” said Susan Hanes, a CTA/NEA-Retired member. “Though I may not have many years to benefit, I’m thankful that younger educators and those still teaching — along with so many other public employees — will benefit into the future. I thank every one of those out there who helped pass the repeal.” ■

“Though I may not have many years to benefit, I’m thankful that younger educators and those still teaching will benefit into the future. I thank every one of those out there who helped pass the repeal.”

—83-year-old **Susan Hanes**,
CTA/NEA-Retired

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

CTA co-sponsored bills

By Julian Peebles

AB 65: Paid Pregnancy Leave for Educators Act

Our union is working hard with our partners in the Legislature to right a long-standing wrong and win paid pregnancy leave for all California educators. We've kept up the momentum from last year's push and are poised to fix our broken system that leaves educators without any paid disability related to pregnancy! AB 65 (Aguiar-Curry) will end a status quo that disproportionately discriminates against women. AB 65 will:

- Provide up to 14 weeks of pregnancy leave and help retain educators during a historic educator shortage.
- Stop public school educators from having to choose to get by with less pay or "schedule" pregnancies based on the school calendar.
- End the discriminatory practice of forcing women to deplete their leave balances to bear children.
- Close the \$100,000 gap in retirement that women earn compared to their male colleagues.

Add your name to support the passage of AB 65 (Aguiar-Curry), historic legislation that will finally give Paid Pregnancy Leave to educators at cta.org/pregnancyleave.

Status: Awaiting hearings by the Assembly committees on education and higher education.

TPA Workgroup Makes Initial Recommendations

The state workgroup studying the Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA) made preliminary recommendations, which were expected to be finalized by the State Board of Education at their February meeting. Our union has been collecting stories and submitted them to both the workgroup and state Commission Teacher Credentialing to be sure that educator voices are in the discussion.

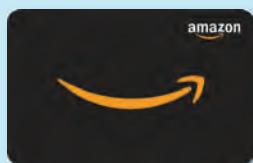
The stories have been incredibly powerful and spurred discussions about issues with the TPA and how the workgroup needs to address what educators are experiencing. Add your story at cta.org/TPAstory.

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BARGAINING ROUNDUP

Compiled by **Julian Peeples**



El Camino Strike Leads to Victory

Union educators at El Camino Real Charter High School-UTLA (ECR-UTLA) voted to ratify a new contract agreement by an overwhelming 98% on Feb. 17, following a strike that began the week before and a tentative agreement reached over the Presidents' Day weekend.

The strike saw educators, parents, students and other community members out on the picket line, often in driving rain. Educators had been working without a contract since July 2024.

"School management has committed to fairer wages and other wins that benefit our school community," said Kate Rechner, a Special Education English teacher on the union's bargaining team. "We, alongside parents and students, are more united than ever and will continue to fight for the school we envision ECR can be."

The agreement includes a salary increase of 19% over three years. The Woodland Hills school's board of directors was scheduled to vote to approve the contract at their meeting on Feb. 27.



Moreno Valley at the Table

Moreno Valley Teachers Association's (MVTA) bargaining team gave us a look behind the curtain while they were in caucus during bargaining, awaiting a counterproposal from the school district. "MVTA is fighting for the schools our students deserve at the bargaining table, making the district sweat it out," the team said.



VIRTUAL EDUCATORS: Improved Health

The members of **California Virtual Educators United (CVEU)** and iQ Teachers Association (iQTA) scored a big victory in August, winning improved health care benefits after their employer made unilateral changes to their plans.

Charter management informed the locals that they had changed the company providing their payroll and benefit services, which impacted bargainable items like benefits offerings and even pay dates. While the locals had grounds to file Unfair Labor Practice charges, CVEU chose to address the issue at the bargaining table — negotiating lower out-of-pocket costs for the new plans and adding bonuses for the disruption caused by the change in pay dates (\$1,500 for each CVEU member and \$2,250 for each iQTA member).

CVEU President Nicole Piper said forcing the employer to bargain and make concessions will hopefully give them pause when considering future unilateral changes.

"When employers try to bypass the bargaining process, we must stand strong and hold them accountable," Piper said. "We chose to fight at the table — and we won. By forcing them to negotiate, we secured lower out-of-pocket health care costs and financial relief for our members. This victory sends a clear message: Unilateral changes will not go unchallenged. When we stand together, we don't just push back — we push forward."



PASADENA:

Fighting back against layoffs

United Teachers of Pasadena (UTP) rallied in late-February to fight a layoff proposal that saw 115 educators get pink slips at a time when the entire community is reeling from January's devastating fires. (Visit cta.org/LAwildfires for links to donate to those in need.)

"This is going to cause instability and disruption for our students," said UTP President Jonathan Gardner. "We think this is terrible for our students because it's going to raise class sizes and reduce critical support positions."

UTP is currently in bargaining to win additional resources for their students, improve teaching and learning conditions, and increase educator recruitment and retention. Among the items they're currently working to win: class size caps, higher wages, an increase in prep time and a special education article in their contract.

UTP members are working to continue victories at the table that has seen them negotiate a 25% wage increase over the past three years.



DUARTE:

Educators wary of district's mismanagement

Members of **Duarte Unified Education Association (DUEA)** are battling an administration that is mismanaging their school district. According to DUEA, the district was forced to resubmit its budget due to erroneous calculations; had a solvency plan rejected by the Los Angeles County Office of Education because it relied on negotiable concessions; underreported their Unduplicated Pupil Percentage by 5% and was the subject of multiple negative reports that showed management problems and suggested an administrative reorganization. At the same time, educator wages are among the lowest in the surrounding area.



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CTA Heads Into a Year of Change

January State Council sets the course for 2025 and beyond

▼ State Council delegates sing along to “I Am Willing.”



TO OPEN THE January 2025 State Council of Education, delegates, officers and others sang along to “I Am Willing.” The song, by artist and activist Holly Near, speaks of hope and resilience — and of carrying on together — in the face of suffering and change.

CTA President David Goldberg then led a moment of silence to acknowledge those who lost their lives, loved ones, homes or were displaced by the devastating Los Angeles fires. He expressed his pride in our union members reaching out to support and care for affected colleagues, students and neighbors.

In his speech to delegates, Goldberg noted that as broader changes threaten our schools and communities, “we are prepared to stand up against any attacks on our students, public education and workers’ rights.” These include attacks on immigrants and LGBTQ+ students and educators, and continuing efforts to defund and destabilize public education.

While Goldberg said recent victories, such as the passage of

the Social Security Act, wins at the bargaining table and successful actions and strikes, give us hope, much work lies ahead, including the “We Can’t Wait” campaign that launched in February: “We can’t wait to fully staff our schools, we can’t wait for competitive wages and benefits, and at this moment, more than ever, we can’t wait for safe and stable schools for our students and communities.”

CTA’s African American Caucus played a video in honor of Black History Month in February. Titled “Resilience and Solidarity: Black Women in the Labor Movement,” the video focused on multiple Black women leaders and unionists, including CTA’s own past and present leaders.

On Sunday, special guest NEA Vice President Princess Moss briefly spoke to delegates about the challenging time, especially as wildfires burned. “Your NEA family is with you,” she said. “This is what families do — we stick together. You are not alone, we stand with you.”





State Council election results:

- **ERIKA L. JONES** for
CTA Secretary-Treasurer
- **MATTHEW SEYMOUR** for
NEA Board, District 4
- **MALLORIE EVANS** for
NEA Board, District 6
- **ERIKA ZAMORA** for
NEA Board, District 13
- **MARK NORBERG** for
CTA/ABC Committee, District I
- **JASPER DALEO** for
CTA/ABC Committee, District P
- **GINA GRAY** for
CTA/ABC Committee, At-Large

Council passed the following bylaw amendment:

CTA Bylaw Amendment — Article VII — Officers — Section 3 — Election and Term of Office (CTA Org Handbook)

SECTION 3. Election and Term of Office. The election and the terms of Executive Officers shall be as follows: The President, Vice President and Secretary-Treasurer shall be elected by the State Council of Education at the meeting preceding its Annual Meeting for a three-year term beginning June 26. A person may be reelected to the same office for a subsequent three-year term, but no person shall serve more than two full three-year terms in the same office.

PROVISO: Current Officers, if reelected to a three-year term in 2025, may serve only that single three-year term in their respective offices.

The next State Council takes place in Los Angeles April 4–6.

*"I am open and I am willing
To be hopeless would seem so strange
It dishonors those who go before us
So lift me up to the light of change"*

From "I Am Willing," by **Holly Near**

▼ NEA Vice President Princess Moss and CTA President David Goldberg at State Council.



▼ CTA's African American Caucus, with NEA Vice President Princess Moss, at the caucus' observance at State Council weekend.



African American Caucus Observance

CTA's African American Caucus held an observance on Saturday evening during January State Council. The presentation continued the theme "Resilience and Solidarity: Black Women in the Labor Movement," introduced earlier during the general session. Attendees watched a condensed screening of "Invisible Warriors: African American Women in World War II," a documentary that featured present-day interviews with a few of the 600,000 Black "Rosie the Riveters." Filmmaker Gregory Cooke was on hand virtually for a lively Q&A.

Candidate for CTA President

David Goldberg

Member, United Teachers Los Angeles; CTA President

As a third-generation teacher, it has been the biggest professional honor of my life to be your CTA President. I have spent more than a decade serving CTA members. Witnessing the incredible work that CTA members do, guided by the love for our students, in every corner of our state inspires me to no end. As a CTA officer, I have worked hard to ensure that the voices of everyone have been included in CTA's democratic processes and will continue that work. It is at our schools and worksites, after all, where our real power lies, and I have been committed to uplifting how critical it is that our resources are used to build on our collective power. In my first term we have invested millions of dollars in local unions through organizing grants, building coalitions in locals across California, supporting efforts to fight layoffs, working tirelessly to build truly transformational community schools.

I know many of us are looking ahead to 2025 — many with mixed emotions. I can't help but reflect on the power of our union and what we've accomplished together in 2024. In this election season alone, we knocked on 500,000 doors and talked to voters in communities across California — from small towns to big cities. What we heard on the front porches of Californians is as true today as it was yesterday: we all prioritize the well-being of our students and communities. We are prepared to stand up against any attacks on our students, public education, workers' rights and our broader communities that may come. We're committed to fight for the future we all deserve. As a union of 310,000 educators, we have the strength to fight for our students, our schools and our communities.

As President, I will stay committed to modeling Responsive Leadership, developing Strong Locals, Fighting for Improved Classroom Conditions, and Building Strong Community Alliances for Economic and Racial Justice from the smallest chapters to our largest urbans. The last few years have reminded us of the enormity of the struggles ahead. Together we can build a union that increases worksite power, solidarity and collective action across locals, and broad multi-racial coalitions within our communities in order to win what we all deserve. Now it is up to us to continue to win over our colleagues to becoming active members in our union. Let's build this union together!



Goldberg

Candidate for CTA President

Greg Bonaccorsi

Member, Fremont Unified District Teachers Association; immediate past CTA Director, District B (2015–2024)

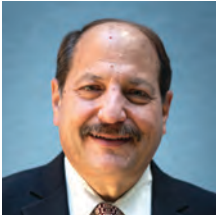
As public-school educators, we hold the key to unlocking the hopes and dreams of our students and in engaging our communities in a way that is truly transformative. This is why I became a classroom teacher. Like you, I wanted to make a difference.

I have been active in my local from the very start of my career. From Site Representative, Executive Board member, Vice President and President, I have dedicated myself to working hard on behalf of our dues-paying members. This has expanded into Service Center Chair, NEA Director and CTA Director. I am currently teaching full-time high school Algebra and Geometry. This has helped to prepare me to be your next CTA President.

Our members are the life blood of CTA and the power behind our union. I have always advocated for member engagement and listening to diverse voices. Together, we can create a stronger, more effective CTA — where every member has access and opportunity to gain experience professionally and to become effective leaders. We can strengthen our resolve by committing to the union values underscored in the CTA Organizing Plan. This is how we build stronger local chapter governance, organize our members and build bridges within our communities.

For my community, I am a lifelong resident of Fremont in the East Bay of the San Francisco Bay Area. My father taught social science in the Fremont Unified School District, my mother was a registered nurse, and my older brother and I attended our public schools. After earning both a degree in biology and a teaching credential from Cal Poly Humboldt in Northern California, I returned home and was hired by my hometown school district as a middle school science and high school math teacher and am now in my 35th year.

As your CTA President, I will fight for our vision of a strong union and be an active proponent for public education. I will use my energy and enthusiasm for our profession to do whatever it takes to get the job done. I am passionate about advocating for our members and our students. I will fight against anyone whose goals are to destroy public education. Lastly, I commit to building a cohesive team with the Officers and the Board of Directors to meet the challenges that lie ahead. No matter where you educate students in California, I will represent you.



Bonaccorsi

Candidate for CTA Vice President

Jesse Aguilar

Member, Kern High School Teachers Assn.;
CTA Board Director

My name is Jesse Aguilar. I'm a high school art teacher from Bakersfield and a candidate for Vice President. I've served on the CTA Board of Directors for the last 7 years. I've served on State Council for 20 years. Prior to being elected to the Board, I served as Vice President to the Kern High School Teachers Association and represented CTA as a liaison to the California State Board of Education.

I am the son of farmworkers. My dad picked cotton and fruit in Kings County. My mom picked grapes and onions in Kern County. I understand what it's like to not have enough. I understand what it's like to be seen as less than. I know what it's like to be stereotyped, to be caricatured, to be the target of racial tropes. I also know what it's like to persevere, to grow confidence in a drought of support, and how to not let the bitterness of bad circumstance poison the possibility of a better tomorrow.

I'm an unlikely candidate. I've been an unlikely candidate my whole life. Sometimes, the unlikely ones are exactly the people we need: the people who see the answer when nobody else can; the folks who see the world differently; the folks who see worth in those constantly overlooked and understand that our strength lies in our members and that every one of them has value.

I represent educators from the largest high school and elementary school districts in the state to the smallest rural schools; educators dealing with crime and gang violence to educators dealing with transportation and access to mental health care; educators from basic aid districts to districts on federal land to districts serving Indian reservations. The political climate of the area is conservative with undercurrents of progressivism. Home to both Kevin McCarthy and Dolores Huerta. Home to the United Farm Worker movement. The landscape grows perspective and life experience. The political climate sharpens the ability to grow relationships with people who are different in thinking and belief.

I believe I can bring a new perspective to the office of Vice President. I can bring a new world view, a new understanding, a new awareness that isn't present now. I can give voice to the many that feel they aren't being heard and make visible the many that feel they aren't being seen.

Now, is the time for an unlikely candidate.



Aguilar

Candidate for CTA Vice President

Leslie Littman

Member, Hart District Teachers Assn.; CTA Vice President

It has been an honor to serve as your CTA Vice President these past two years. I am proud of the work done with David and Erika to implement a vision that focuses on organizing, advocacy and member engagement. We've spent the past 18 months working to build strong locals with organizing and president release time grants, supporting chapters in their bargaining campaigns to improve educator compensation and working conditions, and canvassing to elect school board members who will focus on what students and educators need and not on politicizing public education. Knowing that our ability to fight against the toxic anti-public educator narrative rests with our collective power, over \$60M dollars was allocated for chapters to organize school sites and build community coalitions. Strengthening our collective power will help us build upon past victories and set up new ones.

We are at a critical moment in public education. While education funding has increased in years, it by no means is enough. Educator workloads have become unmanageable, resulting in burnout and few willing to enter the profession. Many teachers today are feeling acute levels of stress and are considering leaving the profession. No teacher should have to work a second job, as many do, just to make ends meet. California needs a sustainable solution to school funding to address these and other issues. If reelected, working to renew Prop 55 to ensure current funding doesn't drop would be a top priority.

In the hopes of increasing recruitment and retention of educators, I've spent the past 18 months focused on implementing the recommendations from the Teacher Pipeline workgroup. Looking for ways to offset the financial barriers to enter the profession, I've served on a workgroup with key state partners to develop a toolkit for launching teacher apprenticeships in the state, spoke in support of the Golden State Grant program that provides grants to BIPOC and low income teacher candidates, served on the teacher residency technical assistance council, and supported the legislation and workgroup efforts to eliminate the TPA.

If reelected Vice President, I hope to continue working together with you building an even stronger CTA, one where we continue the fight for equity and equality in public schools, continue to support and empower locals, continue to develop new pathways into our profession and into our union, and continue to build the schools that our students and educators deserve.



Littman

Candidate for CTA Secretary-Treasurer

Erika Jones

Member, United Teachers Los Angeles;
CTA Secretary-Treasurer

As your current CTA Secretary-Treasurer, I am so proud of the work we have collectively done. We have invested more resources into all locals, building on the foundation that both David Goldberg and Leslie Littman laid while they served as my predecessors. Continuing and increasing the investment in our members has been key to helping locals build power, from our presidents release time program, to our strategic planning and site visit grants, to increasing member opportunities for involvement, we have listened to your needs and acted.



Jones

When I first ran for this position, I wanted to increase access and understanding of our CTA budget, I said “I want each of you to look at the CTA budget and see a strong, clear budget that uplifts your priorities and voices, all while interweaving programs, departments, governance and staff support.” Together we are showing just that. We had an amazing budget cycle with record responses to the budget survey and in-depth conversations at our budget forums. Members voiced that we needed more money for ABC and more opportunities to attend conferences and the 2024–2025 budget reflects those priorities and more. There is always room for improvement, but this shows we are on the right track.

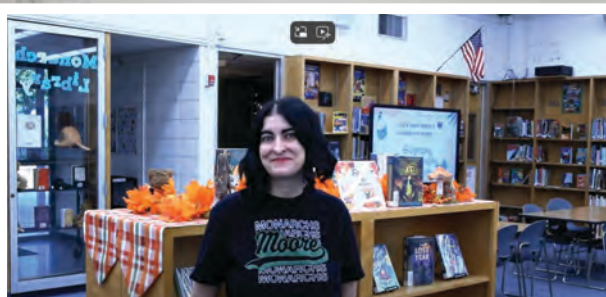
As we look at the challenges ahead, we need real solutions to our state funding crisis. We need educator supports such as increased wages, affordable housing and paid maternity leave just to name a few. We have many struggles ahead of us and our collective strength will be critical in winning the schools our students deserve, where educators are respected, heard and valued while all students thrive.

I have partnered with you, worked alongside you and I hope to continue as your CTA Secretary-Treasurer. Our fiscal health is a critical part of our strength and advocacy. This job is definitely more than minutes and budgets, it’s about understanding CTA from every angle, being a voice for those not in the room and having a vision for where we need to be. As your current officers, David, Leslie and I have that vision and would be honored to continue to work with you.

Notes:

- At January’s State Council of Education Erika Jones was reelected as CTA Secretary-Treasurer by acclamation (Jones was unopposed and elected by a voice vote). She will take office on June 26.
- Candidates are listed in accordance with the 2024-25 CTA Alphabet.

▼ Jenann Elias modernized her library media center with an adaptable layout where students can collaborate, create and learn independently.



▲ Left: Elias in the current school library, which she said has not been updated in over 40 years. Right: Overview of the new space.

A Dream Space Takes Shape

By Amy Peruzzaro

CONGRATULATIONS TO JENANN ELIAS, Redlands Teachers Association member and one of the winners of the third annual \$40,000 KI Classroom Furniture Giveaway. Elias, a librarian at Moore Middle School in San Bernardino County, entered her design in the giveaway in 2024 and was one of four selected from more than 500 entries across the country.

Using KI's Classroom Planner tool, Elias designed her dream space. She modernized her library media center by incorporating an adaptable layout where students can collaborate, create and learn independently. The flexible open space is designed with various zones for different activities like quiet reading nooks and collaborative workspaces as well as creative areas for makerspace or media labs. The

enhancements help to make the library more energetic and appealing to students who may not have found the old layout and furniture welcoming.

"We need a way to bring the library to the 21st century to meet the needs of our students," Elias explained. "And helping create a dynamic and modern library space will not only attract students but foster a culture of curiosity and collaboration essential for educational growth."

Moore, a Title 1 school, has about 1,000 students. Its library serves students both before and after school, during lunch, and during the school day.

To learn more about Elias' winning design and the KI Classroom Furniture Giveaway, visit [ki.com](https://www.ki.com) and search for "classroom furniture giveaway".

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- The Daily Calm and the Daily Trip offer two different styles of meditation narration, about 10 minutes each day.
- Calm understands that many people find mental health support through physical activity and started a format that speaks to that: The Daily Move is mindful movement, super accessible physical movements to make the mind/body connection.
- The Daily Jay is about 7 minutes long and is a motivational and wisdom-inspired session to help start your day on the right foot.

The Dailies are some of Calm's most popular ways to get started with the app and are the first content items you see at the top of the home screen when you open it. Sign up for your free CTA Calm subscription at CTAMemberBenefits.org/Calm. Questions? Call 650-552-5200 or email MemberBenefits@cta.org.



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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**

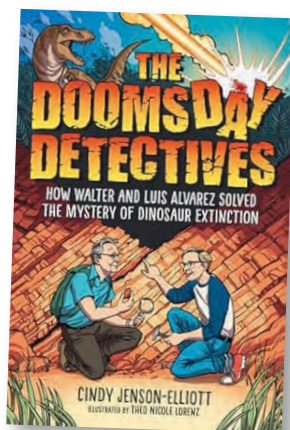
▶ **Echoes of the Chumash**

Fourth grade teacher and Santa Maria Elementary Education Association member Lynne Latronica has written her first book, *Dakota's Mission*. Unable to find historical fiction during the era of the California missions told from a Native American perspective, Latronica set out to write a coming-of-age story of a young Chumash girl that she could use in her classroom. This well-researched novel is told from the girl's perspective, offering a nuanced look at the devastating impact of Spanish colonization on California's indigenous people while remaining age appropriate. Dakota's journey of self-discovery and her people's struggle for survival will resonate with young readers, sparking important conversations about history, culture and resilience.



▶ **Dinosaur Discoveries**

In *The Doomsday Detectives*, San Diego Education Association member Cindy Jenson-Elliott narrates the true story of how the Cuban-American father-son team of Luis and Walter Alvarez, a physicist and geologist respectively, uncovered the cause of dinosaurs' extinction. This engaging middle-grade book, illustrated by Theo Nicole Lorenz, blends graphic novel elements with compelling text. It highlights the collaborative nature of scientific discovery, showcasing how the Alvarez duo, along with scientists worldwide, collected and analyzed data to solve this enduring mystery. Jenson-Elliott's expertise in science education and children's literature is apparent; read more about her work at cindyjensonelliott.com.



▶ **Questioning the Herd**

Redlands Teachers Association member Susan Cortz has written *Alpaca Poe & Cricket*, the second book of her Adventures of Alpaca Poe series. When a big dog arrives on the Humming Oaks Farm, chaos ensues among the alpacas. The herd fearfully labels a visiting dog as dangerous based on hearsay, but Poe the alpaca questions their assumptions. Despite the risk, Poe bravely ventures out to meet the dog himself to find out the truth. This heartwarming story encourages young readers to challenge biases, question information sources and promote acceptance, making it a valuable tool for developing crucial SEL skills.

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