

# california educator

WINTER 2026 VOLUME 30 ISSUE 3



# 'WE CAN'T WAIT' *IN ACTION!*

**Fund Our Schools**  
Gathering signatures to get the Prop. 55 permanent extension on the ballot  
**PAGE 16**

**Community Schools in the Contract**  
Locals bargain language to ensure community schools' sustainability  
**PAGE 29**

Educators in San Francisco and across the state build their power  
**PAGE 21**

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OUR VOICE, OUR UNION, OUR PROFESSION

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

**MAGAZINE**

**SCAM HURTS KIDS**

Districts rob Twin Rivers, Natomas classrooms of nearly \$118 million. **PAGE 38**  
[bit.ly/3LUGqXa](https://bit.ly/3LUGqXa)

**A WIN FOR STUDENTS**

Monterey County locals, community fight back against a corporate charter school network. **PAGE 40**

**CTA RECOMMENDS**

Our union's State Council recommends June Primary candidates. **PAGE 46**

**TOP TEACHER**

NEA Foundation honors Wendy Brill-Wynkoop. **PAGE 49**  
[neafoundation.org](https://neafoundation.org)

**DIGITAL**

**READY TO RISE UP**

"The State of California's Public Schools" finds members ready to strike. **PAGE 12**  
[f](#) [ig](#) [yt](#) [ts](#) [b](#) [cta.org](https://cta.org)

**FIGHT FOR FUNDING**

The Prop. 55 permanent extension must win to avoid massive cuts to schools. **PAGE 16**  
[f](#) [ig](#) [yt](#) [ts](#) [b](#)  
[cta.org/prop55extension](https://cta.org/prop55extension)



**PUT IT IN WRITING!**

Locals successfully bargain Community Schools language into their contracts. **PAGE 29**  
[f](#) [ig](#) [yt](#) [ts](#) [b](#)  
[cta.org/communityschools](https://cta.org/communityschools)

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**WOMEN LEADERS**

CTA's inaugural women's leadership conference will empower and uplift female members. April 10-12, San Diego. **PAGE 8**  
[cta.org/conferences](https://cta.org/conferences)

**APPLY FOR GRANTS**

CTA's Institute for Teaching grants can bring your ideas to life. Deadline to apply: April 2. **PAGE 11**  
[cta.org/ift](https://cta.org/ift)

**FOR BIPOC MEMBERS**

Interested in CTA leadership roles? Apply by April 8 to the Ethnic Member Early Identification and Development program. **PAGE 11**  
[cta.org/emeid](https://cta.org/emeid)

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*Photo: The We Can't Wait campaign heats up - After an historic four-day strike in February, United Educators of San Francisco members reached agreement with the district to invest in schools and students. Story on page 26.*



## Gathering Signatures for Prop. 55

One-on-one meetings, a little competition help chapters' efforts to qualify the permanent funding extension for the ballot **PAGE 16**

## A Case Study in Building Power

The We Can't Wait campaign grows stronger with lessons learned from the UTR strike **PAGE 21**



## Put It in Writing!

Why it's critical for locals to bargain Community Schools language into their contracts **PAGE 29**



### In the Know

- 7 Calendar
- 9 News & Notes

### Spotlight

- 12 **CTA REPORT:** "The State of California's Public Schools"

### Feature

- 26 **WE CAN'T WAIT:** Locals statewide take actions to demand the schools our students deserve

### Advocacy

- 37 **STATE BUDGET:** Increased education funding, withheld Prop. 98 monies.
- 38 **SKIM SCAM:** Twin Rivers, Natomas districts illegally divert \$118 million from classrooms.
- 40 **PUBLIC SCHOOLS WIN:** Monterey County locals, community defeat corporate charter network.
- 43 **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:** Our union's 2026-27 legislative platform.
- 43 **BARGAINING ROUNDUP:** News from locals around the state.

### Our Union

- 46 **ENDORSEMENTS:** CTA State Council recommends candidates for the June Primary.
- 47 **AWARDS:** Opportunities for CTA awards, scholarships.
- 48 **CTA BOARD:** Annual expenses.
- 49 **HONORED:** Wendy Brill-Wynkoop receives NEA teaching excellence award.
- 50 **PARTNERSHIP:** CTA, California Casualty celebrate 75 years.
- 51 **CALM APP:** Healthy habits.
- 52 **ART TO WIN:** Leverage the power of art to make gains for students, educators.

Photos, from top: Cajon Valley Education Assn. leadership discusses signature-gathering for the Prop. 55 permanent extension; United Teachers of Richmond on strike in December (credit: Brooke Anderson, @movementphotographer); the four pillars of Community Schools as seen in one of several new CTA videos. Cover photo: United Educators of San Francisco on strike in February; credit: Jeff Rosenberg, On the Line.



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## CTA Year in Review

Check out our union's short video, CTA Year in Review Sept. 2024–Aug. 2025. You'll see just a glimpse of the many impactful actions and bargaining wins by our locals, and our statewide victories for members' rights and in the continuing fight for safe and stable schools, including at the legislative level. Find the video at [bit.ly/4rsQ9TI](https://bit.ly/4rsQ9TI) or use the QR code. In addition, the CTA Annual Report, Sept. 2024–Aug. 2025, can be found at [cta.org/annualreport](https://cta.org/annualreport).



## Parity for Adjunct Professors

As an adjunct instructor teaching English, I am happy... impressed... very surprised... that some adjuncts are finally getting some pay for all the extra time spent that was unpaid ("Part-time Long Beach City College Faculty Win Landmark Ruling," May 2025). I spent hundreds of hours grading essays and research papers without earning anything except for many letters, emails and notes of gratitude from hard-working students.

JOY HANCOCK  
*Mt. San Antonio College  
Faculty Assn.*



## This Issue's Mini-Poster

The inside back cover of this issue contains a mini-poster by Miriam Klein Stahl that you can put up in your classroom or other public space. It is one of several designs created by teacher-artists and community-engaged professional artists as part of the We Can't Wait campaign ([wecantwait.info](https://wecantwait.info)). "Teachers need strong unions to support the work of providing our students with our best selves so they can be their best selves," says Stahl. See story on page 52.

### connect with us

For our full social media directory, see [cta.org/social](https://cta.org/social).

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### MISSION STATEMENT

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

### EDITORIAL INFORMATION

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

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

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

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\*\* Automatic or electronic payments using your checking account and routing number are not considered purchases. By providing your payee with your debit or credit card number, your posted automatic payments will be counted as eligible purchases. Some bill payments will meet the monthly requirement for an ACH debit or credit transaction. Debit card cash-back amounts, cash advances on credit cards, and checks do not count towards qualifications. 2/2026



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# Meeting the Moment

**STRIKING FOR STUDENTS** works! Since our last issue, United Teachers of Richmond educators went on strike and won a groundbreaking agreement. This included fully employer-paid health care, support for their students, and more.

On the heels of that successful strike, 6,000 members of United Educators of San Francisco won their own powerful agreement, including fully employer-paid health care, after a four-day strike that brought the entire San Francisco Bay Area community together. These actions have been electric, mobilizing thousands of educators, families and community to take to the streets to demand safe, stable schools for our students. Our winter of powerful solidarity has cemented this powerful truth: When we strike we win!

Chapters across the state have also shown that being ready to strike will also yield powerful victories. San Diego Education Association won standard-setting language to protect against layoffs and Apple Valley educators turned out in high-energy actions in the High Desert to win a strong tentative agreement during fact-finding. Educators in Sacramento, Dublin, Oakland, Soquel and more are building pressure in their contract campaigns — this is a movement for public schools that can't be beat.

These campaigns are built on years of work. And as our statewide survey of CTA members shows us, they have been ignited by common issues that educators are facing everywhere — in small towns, suburbs and big cities. Understaffed schools, pay that's not keeping up with our cost of living, and out-of-pocket costs of benefits soaring for far too many of us. In that survey, 80% of educators said that schools don't have enough resources to meet the needs of students.

The survey showed that we're also united in our vision to win: 83% of educators say they are willing to strike to improve pay; nearly 70% say they are willing to strike to improve staffing levels for special ed, for counselors and nurses, and for smaller class sizes. This is true across the state and across political parties.

We are becoming a strong fighting union by the day!

In real time, we are seeing how these contract campaigns build structures that will power our statewide campaign to protect and strengthen public school funding, as well. While our governor boasts about California being the fourth largest economy in the world with the most billionaires, he also proposed a state budget to withhold \$5.6 billion dollars from Prop. 98, the constitutional



amendment that guarantees a minimum annual funding level for K-12 schools and community colleges. We will fight hard to reclaim those promised funds for our students. And just like local chapters winning at the bargaining table, we'll win here, too.

We are ready to meet this moment. We're going to fight for new revenue to ensure our schools are fully funded. We're building the power we need to get a permanent extension of Prop. 55 on the ballot and then win in November. We will cement Community Schools as the model of public education in California, and we will win funding to bring more educators into the workforce.

We will fight to win justice for working mothers and secure paid pregnancy leave — a basic right in almost every other country. We can no longer tolerate a system that forces women to choose between their careers and caring for their own babies.

We are 310,000 members strong in every community and every legislative district in the state. We have the power to make the changes we want and need.

We are navigating heavy times, with severe attacks on public education and violent ICE raids harming communities across the nation. Every day I read the headlines and hear from fellow educators about how we are all fighting back. There is hope in our union. There are bright stars of resistance, solidarity and love. There are the goodness and bravery of people who blow whistles in the face of heavily armed injustice and state terror. I see the goodness of so many educators in the nation and across our state who are fighting back.

We are the ones we've been waiting for. Let's keep up the fight, take care of each other — and let's keep winning for our students and communities.

**David B. Goldberg**

CTA PRESIDENT



# Rooted — in Humanity

**THE AMAZING** human banner formed by United Educators of San Francisco members and allies during the strike differed from other banners shot on the same beach in recent months by its message, of course. It also differed because the original photo showed vertical “roots” under the word STRIKE — representing roots to our communities, who support educators’ fight to improve teaching and learning conditions, and roots that connect us to the earth and humanity.

The labor movement is intrinsically connected to both earth and the people on it by advocating for safe environments, sustainable jobs and community well-being. Our union is a force for dignity, social justice and economic equality, which are at the heart of educators’ demands in California and beyond, and fuel our We Can’t Wait campaign. Read how individual locals’ actions, and specifically the strikes for our students, strengthen the WCW campaign (“**A Case Study in Building Power,**” page 21, and the companion story, page 26).

Our union’s aim to gain stable funding for schools and students is driving locals’ efforts to get the Prop. 55 permanent extension on the ballot; it asks all members to join in, as we describe in “**Sign Here: Gathering Signatures to Qualify Prop. 55 Permanent Extension,**” page 16.

Similarly, the benefits of community schools are borne out by research and data as well as day-to-day observation in classrooms and on school campuses. Our work to grow and sustain the community schools movement in California involves more educators and leaders advocating for community schools, and bargaining language into local contracts to ensure a continuing process (“**Put It in Writing!,**” page 29).

▼ Photo: Andres Amador



Despite codifying contract language and passing laws, however, ongoing vigilance is crucial. For example, data recently obtained by our union revealed that school districts illegally diverted nearly \$118 million from Twin Rivers and Natomas schools over six years (“**Districts’ Skim Scam Robs Students, Classrooms,**” page 38).

And when Monterey County locals heard that a deep-pocketed and well-connected charter school network intended to open a series of schools in their area — undermining the stability and quality of education in multiple districts — they sprang into action: The CTA chapters spearheaded a coalition of parents, community members, labor allies and district administrators to fight back, defeating the charter application and avoiding harmful cuts to already-strapped school budgets (“**Big Win for Public Schools and Students,**” page 40).

In a time when schools are chronically underfunded, students are short-changed and the cost of living continues to rise astronomically, more and more educators are understanding that taking action — including going on strike — is necessary for change (“**The State of California’s Public Schools,**” a CTA report, page 12).

We take action for our students and our schools, for our communities and ourselves, for earth and humanity. Our roots go deep.

**Katharine Fong**

EDITOR IN CHIEF  
[editor@cta.org](mailto:editor@cta.org)

# CALENDAR

## FEBRUARY: *Black History Month*



### BLACK LIVES MATTER AT SCHOOL

**IN 2026** the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, which founded Black History Month, marks "A Century of Black History Commemorations." In addition, the Black Lives Matter at School movement focuses on sparking critical reflection, honest conversation and impactful actions around issues of racial justice in school communities through its Week of Action in early February, Year of Purpose and Lifetime of Practice.

BLM@School urges everyone to participate in ongoing actions and reflection. Educators, for example, can reflect on their own work in relationship to antiracist pedagogy and abolitionist practice, challenging themselves to center Black lives in their classrooms. For resources, ideas and curriculum guides, visit [nea.org/blacklivesmatteratschool](https://nea.org/blacklivesmatteratschool) and [blacklivesmatteratschool.com](https://blacklivesmatteratschool.com).



### National Women's History Month

Women's History Month began in 1978 in Santa Rosa, initiated by the county Commission on the Status of Women to address the lack of women in K-12 curricula. This year the theme is "Leading the Change: Women Shaping a Sustainable Future" — honoring women who reimagine and rebuild systems to ensure long-term environmental, economic, educational and societal sustainability. International Women's Day is on March 8 and calls attention to pressing issues such as gender parity.

Educators: Check out NEA's resources including "50 Years of Women's Labor History" ([nea.org/womenshistory](https://nea.org/womenshistory)), and classroom lesson plans at [womenshistory.org](https://womenshistory.org). And join educators from around the state at CTA's inaugural Women's Leadership Conference, April 10–12 in San Diego; [cta.org/event/26wlc](https://cta.org/event/26wlc).

## MARCH: Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

In the 2023–24 school year, approximately 14% of California's public school students received special education services, according to statewide enrollment data. With the right supports, these students can be included in and contribute to all areas of school and community life. Read CTA's position on education for those with developmental disabilities at [cta.org/our-advocacy/special-education](https://cta.org/our-advocacy/special-education).





## NEW! Women's Leadership Conference

**APRIL 10-12** CONFERENCE *The Westin, Gaslamp District, San Diego.* Mark your calendars! The inaugural CTA Women's Leadership Conference is dedicated to empowering and uplifting female CTA members. It will focus on the issues, challenges and opportunities most important to women in education, equipping them with the tools and strategies to thrive and grow. ▶ [cta.org/conferences](https://cta.org/conferences)

## New Educator Weekend — South

**FEB. 20-22** CONFERENCE *Hilton OC, Costa Mesa.* CTA's NEW is for educators in their first three years in the profession. It has everything you need to be successful in your first years of teaching, including sessions about classroom management, lesson plans and ideas, connecting with your union, student loan forgiveness information, member benefits, project grants and more. ▶ [cta.org/conferences](https://cta.org/conferences)

## CCA Winter Conference

**FEB. 27-MARCH 1** CONFERENCE *Hilton OC, Costa Mesa.* The Community College Association's conference highlights advocacy, lobbying and contract enforcement issues. It also offers the California Leadership Academy and the Grievance Flash Academy. ▶ [cta.org/conferences](https://cta.org/conferences)

## Read Across America Week

**MARCH 2-6** EVENTS  
Read Across America Week spreads the love of reading in students of all grades. Bring in special guests from the community to read aloud. Find new and recommended books at NEA's Read Across America calendar, with 12 months of books, authors and teaching resources that promote diversity and inclusion, and through CTA's California Reads program. ▶ [nea.org/readacrossamerica](https://nea.org/readacrossamerica) and [cta.org/careads](https://cta.org/careads)

## Cesar Chavez/ Dolores Huerta Awards

**MARCH 6** 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](https://cta.org/scholarships)

## CTA/NEA Retired Issues Conference

**MARCH 12-13** CONFERENCE *Hilton OC, Costa Mesa.* Learn how CTA/NEA-Retired is protecting your future and watching legislation that affects your benefits. ▶ [cta.org/conferences](https://cta.org/conferences)

## Equity and Human Rights Conference

**MARCH 13-15** CONFERENCE *Hilton OC, Costa Mesa.* This conference affirms CTA's mission to protect the civil rights of all people and secure a more equitable, democratic society. Speakers and workshops address diversity and social justice. ▶ [cta.org/conferences](https://cta.org/conferences)

## NEA National Leadership Summit

**MARCH 13-15** CONFERENCE *Hyatt Regency, Chicago.* Develops activist leaders and prepares them with the knowledge and skills necessary to lead thriving associations. ▶ [nea.org/leadershipsummit](https://nea.org/leadershipsummit)

## Good Teaching Conference — South

**MARCH 20-22** CONFERENCE *Hyatt Regency OC.* Keep your skills up-to-date and learn new ones at CTA's GTC-South, which supports excellent teaching and learning practices for classroom teachers via peer-to-peer instruction. ▶ [cta.org/conferences](https://cta.org/conferences)

## NEA ESP Conference

**MARCH 27-29** CONFERENCE *Hilton, Anaheim.* The nation's premier professional development opportunity for education support professionals enhances ESPs' skills and knowledge. ▶ [nea.org/espconference](https://nea.org/espconference)

## IFT Grant Program

**APRIL 2** APPLICATION DEADLINE  
CTA members with innovative education ideas and projects can apply for \$5,000-\$20,000 grants from CTA's Institute for Teaching, designed for PK-12 teachers and certificated support staff, ESP members and college instructors. Proposals are reviewed through the lens of IFT's strength-based equity matrix. ▶ [cta.org/ift](https://cta.org/ift)

## EMEID Leadership Program

**APRIL 8** 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 14, and the Emerging Leaders Program at CTA's Summer Institute July 15-19. ▶ [cta.org/emeid](https://cta.org/emeid)

## NEA Aspiring Educators Conference

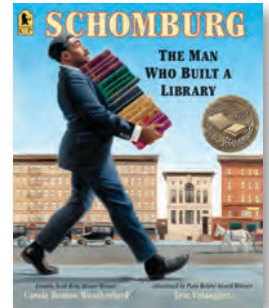
**JUNE 28-JULY 1** CONFERENCE *Denver.* Future educators can connect with colleagues from around the country, learn about their profession, and act on important education issues affecting public schools and communities. Registration opens in May. ▶ [nea.org/professional-excellence/conferences-events](https://nea.org/professional-excellence/conferences-events)

# New Year, New Reads



**START OFF 2026** with a few good books for your students. CTA's California Reads initiative just came out with a new list of teacher-vetted books for all ages, including the three mentioned below. See the full list and get your exclusive 20% discount on all titles at [cta.org/careads](https://cta.org/careads).

*Schomburg: The Man Who Built a Library* (Carole Boston Weatherford, author; Eric Velasquez, illustrator; grades 3–7) tells the true story of Arturo Schomburg, an Afro-Puerto Rican law clerk whose quest to correct historical narratives to include Black contributions stemmed from a childhood experience where a teacher claimed Black people had no history. He became a key figure in the Harlem Renaissance, which celebrated living artists. But Schomburg also dedicated himself to uncovering the past, building a collection of African diasporic art and literature that was bought by the New York Public Library in 1926 and became the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. An inspiring read about the power of preserving one's heritage.



*What Do You Celebrate: Holidays and Festivals Around the World* (Whitney Stewart, author; Christiane Engel, illustrator; grades Pre-K–3) is a kid-friendly guide featuring whimsical illustrations of traditions across world cultures throughout the calendar year. Fourteen holidays are showcased including Holi, Purim, Halloween and more. The book includes culturally authentic arts and crafts activities, such as a Brazilian Carnival mask and Japanese Cherry Blossom Festival springtime poetry reading. A wonderful tool to introduce holidays and traditions in a meaningful way to young children.

*With the Fire on High* (Elizabeth Acevedo, author; grades 8–9) is a novel about teen mom Emoni Santiago, who balances the heavy responsibilities of motherhood and supporting her *abuela*. The kitchen is her only escape, where she creates magical and creative dishes. While Emoni believes her dreams of becoming a chef are impossible, her passion eventually demands to be recognized. An emotionally gripping narrative about resilience, familial love and the courage required to pursue one's talent despite immense challenges.



A March 2026 pick from NEA's Read Across America calendar

## Read Across America

March 2 is Read Across America Day, but educators can celebrate a world of diverse readers with CTA- and NEA-recommended books, authors and teaching resources year-round. California Reads books are a good place to start (see above); in addition, NEA offers an annual calendar with three books — one for young, middle grade, and young adult readers — featured every month. Check out [nea.org/readacrossamerica](https://nea.org/readacrossamerica).

# Survey: Unions Are Good for Workers, People Feeling Affordability Crisis

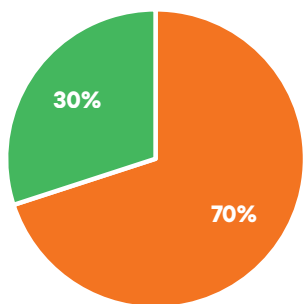
A recent statewide survey, "Californians and Their Economic Well-Being," found that seven in 10 Californians approve of labor unions and think that labor unions are mostly a good thing for workers. Overwhelming majorities also agree that it is important for workers to organize so that employers do not take advantage of them. The annual survey of 2,306 California adult residents was released by the nonpartisan Public Policy Institute of California in November.

Other highlights: 30% of Californians say they or someone in their household have cut back on food to save money in the past year. Nearly 70% expect bad times financially for the state during the next 12 months. In addition to support for labor unions, Californians support a public health insurance option and increased government spending on job training programs.

Some 80% of Californians, and majorities across partisan and income groups, agree that voting gives people like them some say in what the government does.

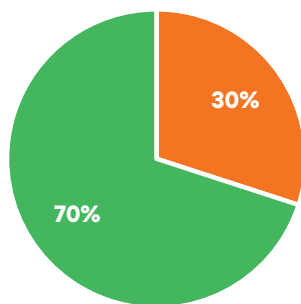
For the full report, visit [bit.ly/PPICsurvey\\_2025](https://bit.ly/PPICsurvey_2025).

**7 in 10 approve of labor unions**



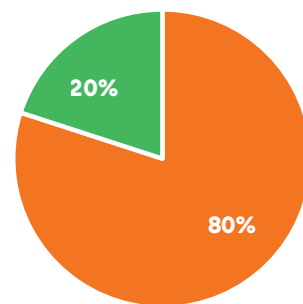
Californians overwhelmingly agree that it's important workers should organize so employers don't take advantage of them.

**3 in 10 have cut back on food**



30% say that they or someone in their household cut back on food to save money in the past year - for lower-income residents it is more than 50%.

**8 in 10 agree that voting gives them a say**



A majority agree that voting gives them a say in what government does; similar shares say most elected officials don't care what people like them think.



◀ Ruth Jensen Youth Art Month Award 2025: "Woc Yhc Nurc" by Haley Swenson, East Bakersfield High; teacher Ryan Rickard, Kern High School Teachers Assn.

## Salute the Arts in March and Beyond

March is Arts Education Month. Arts education helps develop critical thinking, social-emotional skills and creativity, which positively impact overall academic performance and well-being. Students learn to communicate and express themselves and build confidence and resilience. Cultivate their love and talent for music, dance, visual and fine arts, performance and much more. Resources include [nafme.org](https://nafme.org) and [caea-arteducation.org](https://caea-arteducation.org).

▼ The 2025-26 EMEID cohort pictured at January State Council with CTA officers and executive director.



## Grow Your Leadership Skills With EMEID

Applications for CTA's 2026 Ethnic Member Early Identification and Development (EMEID) program open on Feb 20. The deadline to apply is April 8, 2026.

EMEID identifies BIPOC CTA members who are interested in expanding their roles in our union. 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 more.

EMEID builds on existing CTA/NEA programs, trainings, conferences and events and incorporates interaction and coaching from participants' chapters, CTA and NEA leadership and CTA staff. Accepted participants must attend the orientation on July 14 and the Emerging Leaders Program at CTA's Summer Institute, July 15-19. Visit [cta.org/emeid](https://cta.org/emeid) for details and to apply.

## Congress Renews Critical Funding for Rural Schools

As a result of an organizing effort by educators, Congress passed the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) Reauthorization Act in December. This renews critical funding to support rural counties with school resources, road maintenance, wildfire mitigation, public safety and other community needs.

Rural schools educate one in five public school students — more than 7 million students, plus another 2.5 million attending rural schools in districts not designated "rural" by the Census Bureau. An NEA story reported that for some communities, the lack of sustained SRS funding has taken a devastating toll. Educator shortages are especially acute in rural communities, where salaries and working conditions make it difficult to recruit and retain. Rural school districts are often communities' largest employers, so educator and funding shortages disproportionately impact local economies. NEA President Becky Pringle noted that SRS funds directly support students' curricular needs. "Our kids deserve rich and varied curricula. They need science labs and music. They need sports and art."

## CTA Institute for Teaching Grants

Don't miss this opportunity to bring your ideas to life! The Institute for Teaching grant program puts resources directly into your hands, helping you create learning experiences that truly serve your students and schools.

Applications are now open for Educator Grants, awarded to PK-12 teachers and certificated support staff, ESP members and college instructors. Deadline to apply is April 2, 2026.

Here's what's available:

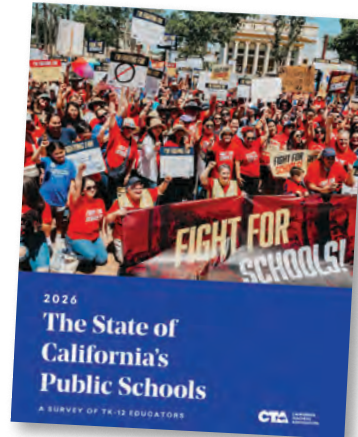
- **Individual Grant:** Up to \$5,000 for individual educators to impact a classroom or group of students
- **Team Grant:** Up to \$20,000 for teams of two or more educators to make an impact across multiple classrooms or school sites within the same CTA local chapter.

For more information, examples of previous grant projects, and to apply, visit [instituteforteaching.org](https://instituteforteaching.org).





The State of California's Public Education



## The State of California's Public Schools

*In our new report, members cite underfunding of schools, cost of living as serious concerns — and are willing to strike to improve conditions*

**FOR THE SECOND** consecutive year, our union has released the “State of California’s Public Schools,” a survey of 2,000 members on a range of economic and workplace issues. (Read the full report at [bit.ly/3ZKaxDR](https://bit.ly/3ZKaxDR).)

Similar to last year, members expressed concerns about resources in the classroom and being able to afford basics such as groceries, health care and household bills. This year’s survey also highlighted members’ willingness to take collective action to address these issues, including a strong willingness to strike.

Members also continued to convey a strong resilience and commitment to public education and their students, with 77% saying they still love their job. Survey highlights:

- 88% of educators surveyed say that **insufficient funding for California schools** is a serious issue, an eight point increase from 2025.
- 80% believe that California **schools don’t have enough resources to meet student needs**, a three point increase from 2025.
- 84% report **insufficient resources**, staff, and/or training **to support special education students**.
- 78% highlight **overcrowding** in classrooms as another serious issue.
- 73% report a **serious educator shortage** at their schools.
- More than half note the increase of immigration raids as a

The following issues were underscored in this year's survey, compared with last year's, illustrating just a few of the ways that educators and public schools are functioning under increased attacks on resources and public education:

Percentage of educators reporting the following as **serious issues**

Percentage point increase from 2025 saying the issue is **very serious**

<b>88%</b>	Insufficient funding for schools	<b>+8</b> points
<b>88%</b>	Low pay for educators	<b>+4</b> points
<b>78%</b>	Overcrowded classrooms	<b>+2</b> points

Concerns about layoffs and school closures **rose 6 percentage points** in the last year alone.

**“Teachers should not have to fight for the basic safety and supplies they need to do their jobs.”**

—CTA President **David Goldberg**



## Educators Are Willing to Strike

Our 2026 member survey revealed clear willingness by educators across the state to strike over important issues.


- 83% are **willing to strike to improve educator pay**, which is essential for stable, thriving schools.
- 72% are **willing to strike to lower health care costs**.
- Nearly 70% are willing to **strike for improved staffing levels for special education, student support staff like counselors and nurses, and to enable smaller class sizes** to ensure students get the classroom support they deserve.
- 62% would **strike to stop layoffs and school closures**, which impact local access to quality education.

serious problem in their school communities. On average, attendance in three Central Valley counties dropped by 22% following raids in early 2025.

In addition, teachers are increasingly worried about affordability for themselves and the families of their students:

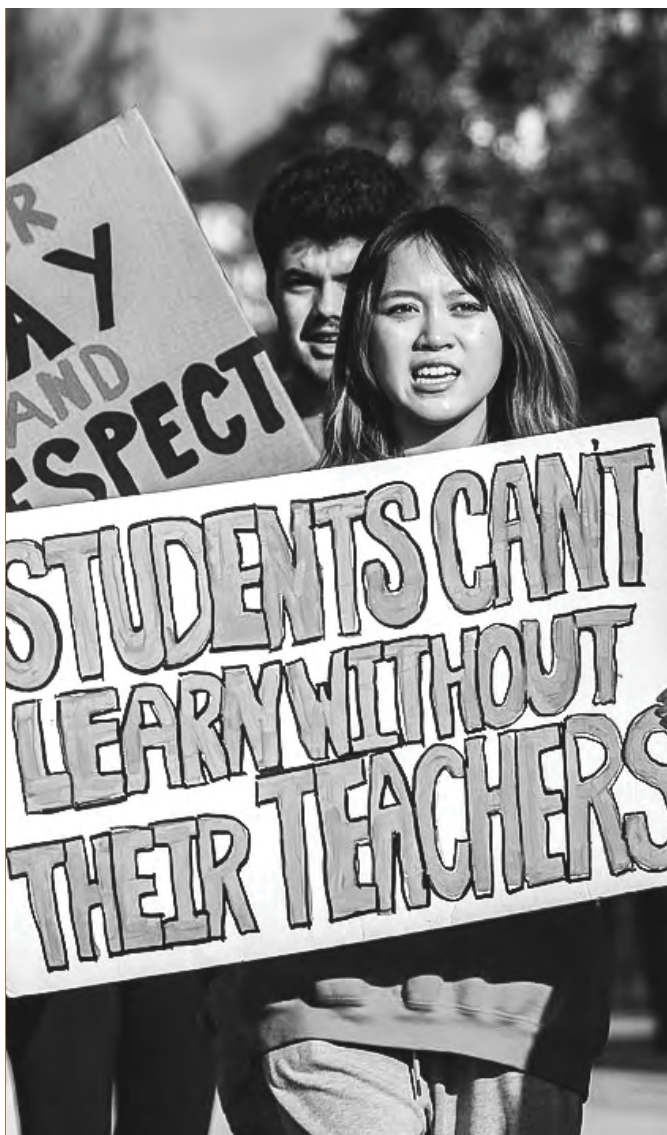
- 86% indicated that the **cost of everyday goods and services has increased more than their salary**.
- 83% of educators are concerned about **affording the basic cost of living expenses**, like gas, groceries and electric bills.
- 82% indicate **housing affordability is a problem** for educators at their school.
- More than 75% say they have students who **lack stable housing**.
- 75% say **out-of-pocket health care costs are too high**, which is five percent higher than in 2025.
- 71% teach **students who lack reliable access to meals** and 45% have purchased food for students who experience hunger or are food insecure.

As the Trump administration and its Republican-led Congress continue attempts to dismantle public education and withhold vital resources, California teachers also have increasing concerns about student safety, access to resources and how to ensure fully staffed and stable classrooms long term.

“Daily, California teachers are on the front lines of trying to protect their students from the brazen attacks on public education by the Trump administration and the persistent budget shortfalls in their district. For these teachers, it’s not a question of commitment, skill or resilience; it’s a matter of chronically underfunded schools and attacks on our 

**“For teachers, it’s not a question of commitment, skill or resilience; it’s a matter of chronically underfunded schools and attacks on our communities.”**

—CTA President David Goldberg



communities,” said CTA President David Goldberg. “Teachers should not have to fight for the basic safety and supplies they need to do their jobs.”

California teachers have growing concerns about working and learning conditions inside their schools. Not only are educators struggling to make ends meet, they are avoiding critical home

## Critical Staffing Issues Persist

**73%** report a **serious educator shortage** at their school

**84%** report **insufficient resources, staff, and/or training to support special education students**

**68%** say there are **serious issues with student access to mental health support** at school



Over half of educators know coworkers who **left careers in education because of financial strain**

**28%** of educators say they **have taken on a second job** or “gig” work to make ends meet this year

Even though the vast majority are satisfied with their job...

**40%** are considering leaving education in the next few years

and

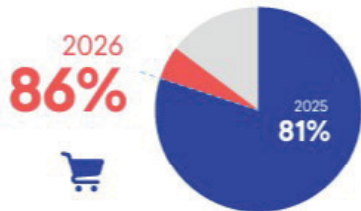
**45%** cite the influence of **financial strain** on their decision

and car repairs, skipping significant family events or vacations, reducing or delaying retirement benefit contributions and tightening their family budgets.

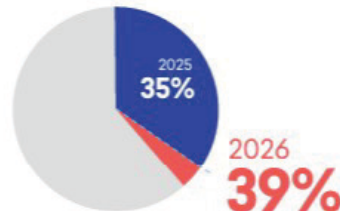
“There’s a long-held but outdated belief that California public school teachers have generous health care benefits, but the reality is that some teachers pay as much as \$1,500 or more per

# Financial Sacrifices and Troubling Trends

“The costs of everyday goods and services increased more than my salary over the past year.”



“I reduced retirement contributions due to financial strain.”



One-third of educators are living paycheck to paycheck, a 2% increase from last year.



**3-in-4 educators feel that their out-of-pocket healthcare costs are too high, a five percentage point increase from last year.**

A lack of affordable healthcare is a critical issue for educators. Rising healthcare premiums, increases to co-pays and relentless attacks on Medicare and the Affordable Care Act by the Trump administration are intensifying this crisis.

**61%** of educators report concerns about affording healthcare costs

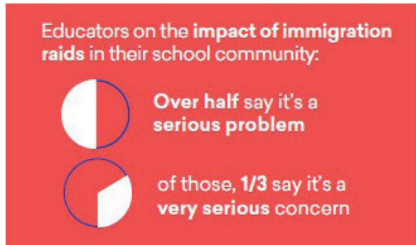
**1-in-3** delayed or skipped medical care to save money

## Classroom Communities Under Attack

Federal immigration policies are accelerating fear and uncertainty in California’s schools, where **1 million students have an undocumented parent, and nearly half (45%) of all children have at least one immigrant parent.** We asked educators about the atmosphere in their schools when it comes to this issue.

### ICE and Border Patrol Raids

Recent escalations and targeted raids are intensifying fear and anxiety among families, which has a ripple effect on the safety and mental health of students. Notably, absences rose 22% in three Central Valley counties following raids earlier this year.

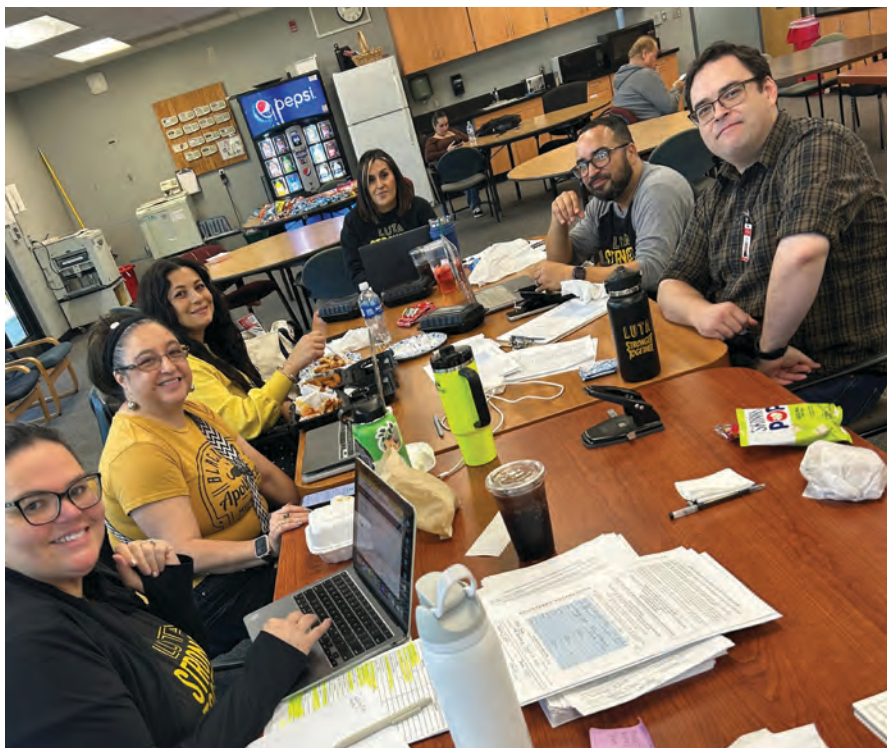


**Our 2026 member survey revealed clear willingness by educators across the state to strike over important issues.**

month in out-of-pocket costs while districts regularly try to cut benefits,” said Goldberg. “California, as the fourth-largest economy in the world, still doesn’t even have paid pregnancy leave for teachers, forcing them to pay out-of-pocket for substitute teachers during their absence. It’s no secret that there is a teacher shortage, and compounding issues like the lack of paid pregnancy leave and current affordability crises directly impact people’s ability to stay in the profession.”

The survey also revealed that educators see working together as the solution to these critical issues. While we’ve seen organizing and strike readiness in the massive statewide 80,000-member-strong We Can’t Wait campaign, the survey signaled an even greater share of CTA members are willing to take action in their union. For example, 83% are willing to strike to improve educator pay and 72% are willing to strike to lower health care costs (see page 13).

For more information about **#WeCantWait**, visit [wecantwait.info](http://wecantwait.info). ■



◀ LUTA organized a signature-gathering site blitz at Lincoln High School, its largest site. Leaders met with members during prep periods and lunch to talk about Prop. 55 and collect signatures.

*“That’s 15% of our budget. [That’s] one in six of our colleagues who will lose their jobs unless we pass an extension.”*

—CVEA Site Rep **Daisy Delacruz**, on the impact of not passing Prop. 55

# Sign Here: Gathering Signatures to Qualify Prop. 55 Permanent Extension

**One-on-one meetings, a little competition key to local chapters’ success**

By **Julian Peeples**

“AS I WAS GOING from school to school collecting signatures, our members were waiting and ready, sometimes standing in line to sign the petitions!” says Margaret Palmer, president of Lowell Joint Education Association in Whittier. “I had teachers asking me how we were going to win and offering to walk precincts and work to pass the extension.”

The movement to pass a permanent extension to Proposition 55 this year is rolling strong, with locals across the state putting in the work to gather the roughly 875,000 signatures needed to qualify the initiative for the November 2026 ballot. Without a voter-approved extension before 2030, our public schools would lose \$14.6 billion in funding, which would impact students and schools in every district in California (find out how much your district stands to lose at [cta.org/Prop55Extension](http://cta.org/Prop55Extension)).

Amid continued attacks by the Trump Administration and related uncertainty of federal education funding, it’s even more important to permanently extend this state funding and avoid widespread cuts to our public schools. Even with the Prop. 55 funding today, school boards and district administrators are adopting a misguided austerity mindset and turning to extreme and unnecessary cuts at a time when our students need their schools to be safe, stable and fully staffed.

“Make no mistake: This is a critical fight for our public schools — the impact of Prop. 55 expiring would be devastating,” says CTA President David Goldberg. “That’s why it’s so important for all of us to get involved now and be prepared to carry a permanent extension to the finish line in November. Our students and communities are counting on us!”

PROTECT SCHOOL FUNDING

# PROP 55 EXTENSION

JOIN OUR FIGHT >>>

## WHAT IS PROPOSITION 55?

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

## WHY IT'S IMPORTANT



### FUNDING

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



### TAXES

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



### EDUCATION CUTS

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

## Our Fight for School Funding

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

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

Take action with our union now to secure permanent funding:

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

Educators in their local unions across the state are collecting signatures every day to qualify the crucial initiative — and building a massive movement from Eureka to El Cajon to ensure victory on Election Day for California schools. Here's a look at how some local unions are working to meet the goal of collecting signatures from 85% of their members and building structures at every school site to organize and win.

## LINCOLN: Site Blitz Success Example of Growing Power

"There were times in the past that this would have been a tough ask due to needing to work on our site rep structure," says Kadie Collette, president of Lincoln Unified Teachers Association (LUTA). "We have spent a few years working on that."

LUTA organized a signature site blitz at their largest site, Lincoln High School, after the union's executive board identified that the site needed additional support with collection. In early January, LUTA's Executive Board members used release time to have targeted meetings with members to talk about Prop. 55 and collect signatures, creating a schedule and breaking into teams to reach members throughout the day.

"We jumped in and helped our largest school site — it was amazing! We visited teachers on their prep periods and lunch, and had one-on-one conversations," Collette says.

A We Can't Wait power-up local, LUTA has been organizing, developing relationships and building power over the past few years, flipping their school board and winning at the bargaining table. It all starts with a leadership team that refuses to leave any members behind and



▼ Lowell Joint Education Association members are all-in for the Prop. 55 extension - one of the first locals statewide to reach signature goals.



approaches their collective goals for their students and schools relentlessly.

“We listen to what our members want, and we fight to win those things to help them be better teachers,” says LUTA Vice President Tiffany Fuhrmeister. “We have learned that no doesn’t always mean no, and we just keep working and chipping away on important things. Our eyes on the prize is making things better for our teachers so they can serve our students.”

Lincoln Unified would lose \$12.6 million in funding if Prop. 55 expired, which Collette says LUTA leaders have been repeating during their asks to members to help support and participate in the campaign (including a fun video they posted to YouTube). Site reps will continue following up with members until they reach their goal, and the LUTA executive board plans to text members who have not yet signed. Collette says she’s not surprised by the success of the blitz because LUTA leaders know their sites and have been organizing to win, whether it’s on Election Day or to defend their contract.

“In between signature gathering, we also filed two demands to bargain, initiated one grievance and informally represented a member over an evaluation,” she says.

**LOWELL: Local Reaches Signature Goal, Eyes 100%**

Lowell Joint Education Association (LJEA) members were waiting in lines to sign Prop. 55 petitions when President Margaret Palmer visited school sites in December, as the local was one of the first in CTA to reach the goal of collecting signatures from 85% of members.

The 32-year transitional kindergarten teacher says LJEA’s

campaign started last year when its representative council adopted a resolution of support. Palmer said LJEA understood the importance of the campaign and also took it as a challenge. “It took us two weeks, but we did it,” exclaims Palmer. Palmer credits CTA’s Local President Release Time grant for a big part of the success, allowing her to visit all six schools regularly and build with her members at each site. She let educators know when she was coming, leaving with a stack of signed petitions.

“It was just about utilizing the time I had and my relationships with the teachers,” Palmer says. “The neat thing about meeting in the lounges is that they were filled with classified employees as well, who wanted to know what was going on — so I ended up gathering signatures from about 30 classified employees, too.”

Aiming for 100%, Palmer is planning follow-up visits to collect signatures from the members remaining who have yet to sign. With almost a quarter of their school district budget at stake with a Prop. 55 extension, Palmer says her members know that services for Lowell students are on the ballot this November.

“There aren’t extras to cut, so it would have to come from programs and supplies,” she says. “I can’t even imagine what that would look like.”



LJEA Pres. Margaret Palmer

**CAJON VALLEY: It’s All About School Site Structures, Relationships and Organizing**

“The success of our effort reflects the strength of our internal communication structures, the dedication of our site representatives, and the trust members have in their association’s leadership,” says Cajon Valley Education Association (CVEA)

▼ Left to right: Cajon Valley EA Site Rep Baha Hashemian, President Stephen Davidson and other CVEA leaders discuss signature-gathering strategy.



President Stephen Davidson. CVEA site reps organized a signature collection blitz in December that resulted in almost two-thirds of their nearly 900 members signing petitions, in an effort that Davidson says was the result of a deliberate, structured and relationship-based approach. CVEA asked site representatives to lead the charge in engaging members and building a local movement for the campaign.

CVEA Site Representative Daisy Delacruz says the school district losing \$21.8 million in Prop. 55 funding without an extension would be catastrophic for the district and community.

“That’s 15% of our budget, which impacts our students, our classrooms and our peers,” she says. “This is one in six of our colleagues who will lose their jobs unless we pass an extension.”

CVEA is also utilizing a combination of communication tools, including digital outreach through Hustle and direct follow-up with members who have not yet signed. Delacruz is inputting data to track progress toward the 85% signature goal.

Davidson says CVEA will use these same organizing structures that made their initial outreach successful as the campaign progresses, utilizing site reps to provide clear and consistent information and create easy, accessible ways for educators to participate.

“Most importantly, we will center the campaign on the impact to students and classrooms, so that members remain motivated by the shared goal of protecting educational quality and stability in our district,” Davidson says. “By staying organized, transparent and member-driven, we believe we can sustain momentum and help secure a successful outcome in November.”

## **WALNUT VALLEY:** Building Union Power with Friendly Competition

“When people sign the petition, they’re taking ownership over it and

## **Prop. 55 Extension:** Advice on Engaging Fellow Members

“Focus on clarity, structure and relationships. Clearly explain what Prop. 55 does, what would be lost without it and how it affects students and classrooms. Use trusted site leaders to deliver the message, set clear timelines and make participation simple. Combine peer-to-peer outreach with consistent follow-up and always connect the campaign back to your shared commitment to students and public education.”

—STEPHEN DAVIDSON, *Cajon Valley EA*

“It’s important to start early. I made a TikTok video about why Prop. 55 is important — educating our young members!”

—DAISY DELACRUZ, *Cajon Valley EA*

“Ask for help from members you know are down for the cause, target meetings or PD that have large numbers of teachers in one place as a first pass. Log signatures and identify people who have not signed and do a second pass with one-on-one conversations. Make sure you work with your CTA staff — they are invaluable.”

—KADIE COLLETTE, *Lincoln Unified TA*

“I was president 20 years ago and we didn’t have release time. I see such a difference now that I do. Having that time and getting face-to-face with my members, that’s where it’s at. To any president who doesn’t currently have release time, get that CTA grant, go out and talk to your members because that’s been a gamechanger for us.”

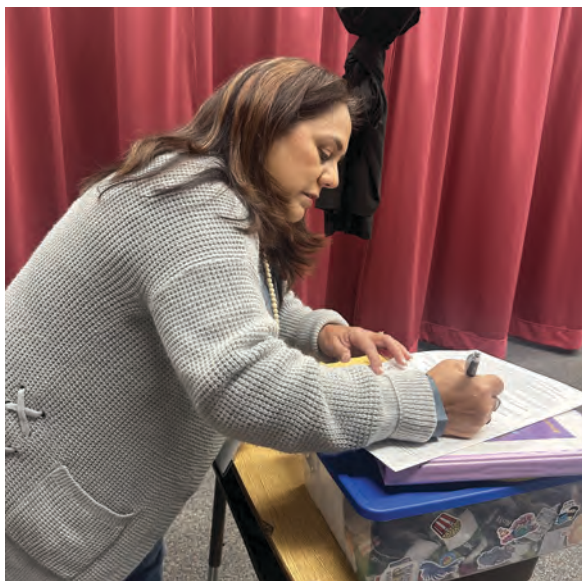
—MARGARET PALMER, *Lowell Joint EA*

“What worked really well was running our signature gathering campaign in conjunction with a day of action, so we were already in our members’ ears.”

—JOSHUA HENNESS, *Walnut Valley EA*



▼ A CVEA member signs the Prop. 55 petition.



▼ A screenshot from LUTA's video for members about the importance of signing the Prop. 55 petition.



▼ Joshua Henness



*“With [CTA’s Local President Release Time grant], I’ve been able to do site visits and talk to members about Prop. 55. It’s been invaluable.”*

—WVEA President  
**Joshua Henness**

building a vested interest in it,” says Joshua Henness, president of Walnut Valley Educators Association (WVEA). “Then, members become more comfortable as ambassadors for the initiative and talk to their neighbors and families.”

In Walnut Valley, educators organized a Prop. 55 extension signature-gathering drive in conjunction with a districtwide Day of Action late last year to continue building a buzz for the campaign. With two main asks for the event — wear red and sign a petition — site reps set out to gather across the district.

“There was a little bit of friendly competition going on — we had one elementary school that had 100% of members sign with one member who was on leave even coming in to sign. Between our three middle schools, there were only eight members who didn’t sign,” Henness says. “Our reps are why we did so well, because they know their sites. We have great site reps who attend our meetings and care about representing our members.”

With \$20 million at stake, Henness says WVEA members know just how much it would impact their students and community if we fail to extend Prop. 55. Henness says it would mean drastic cuts to programs, services and people.



CVEA site rep Daisy Delacruz

“It would leave kids under-resourced,” he says. “We’re a very high achieving school district and we have high expectations for our teachers and students — and without those funds, we’d be making it so they can’t achieve to their highest ability.”

The initial drive during the Day of Action resulted in 73% of WVEA members signing Prop. 55 extension petitions. Henness plans to do targeted follow-ups with members who have not yet signed — a task made much easier with the Local President Release Time grant, which provides Henness with an ultra-precious resource for any

union president: time.

“With that time, I’ve been able to do site visits and talk to members about Prop. 55,” he says. “It’s been invaluable.” ■

▼ The United Teachers of Richmond strike; photo: Brooke Anderson, @movementphotographer.



# UTR Strike: A Case Study in Building Power

**#WeCantWait** locals support and learn from each other as they demand the best for students and educators

By **Jonathon Mello**

**AFTER A HISTORIC** 98% strike vote, United Teachers of Richmond (UTR) members held the line for four days in December, winning big for educators and students. But this wasn't just a local contract win. It was the first real-time test of the power of coordinated campaigns in the We Can't Wait (WCW) movement and a demonstration of how collective power can force a district to prioritize students over hoarding reserves — and end a culture of managed decline.


UTR members stood tall in the first WCW strike, leading the way for over 80,000 educators in 32 school districts fighting for more than 1 million students. By aligning contract expiration dates, coordinating site structure building and structure tests, WCW locals are maximizing their power, moving from isolated fights to a coordinated campaign that has the power to make our classrooms the priority in local district budgets and set the stage for winning the state funding our students deserve in the fourth-largest economy on the planet.

In Richmond, this strategy was put to the first big test, and the results provide a blueprint for CTA locals across the state.

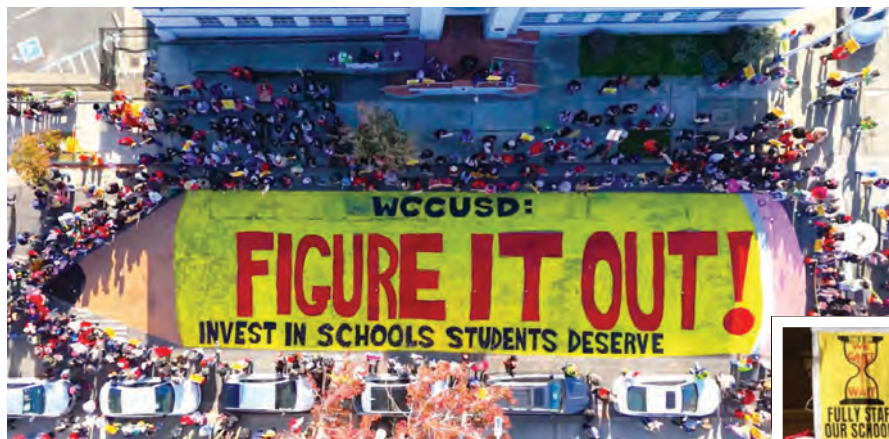
## Districts: Figure It Out

The strike was driven by educators' refusal to accept the status quo of instability in their classrooms. After years of battling chronic understaffing, where students endure weeks without a permanent teacher and preschoolers who need critical support have no access to speech language therapists and other federally mandated special education services, they stood up and said "The time is now!"

Insufficient pay has led 1,500 educators to leave the West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD), which includes Richmond, in the last five years. Over 70 vacancies left students sitting in classes without permanent teachers, forced to learn from laptops instead of people who are trained to help them learn and thrive.

Over the course of the strike, the mantra of "Figure it Out!" grew into a rally cry by educators, students and parents. As UTR President Francisco Ortiz pointed out, "We are governed by the same funding formula and the same rules as every other district in California. We 

▼ On the last day of the UTR strike, educators and community painted a 100-foot street mural in front of district offices. Photo: Courtesy @dpl19 Dennis Ivan Perez Bravo.



*“We sounded the alarm bells, we filed the complaints, we rolled up our sleeves at the bargaining table for almost a year but still the district refused to work with us to solve the crisis.”*

—UTR organizing chair **Sam Cleare**.

face the same state budget landscape.

“Yet other districts have figured out how to staff their schools. Other districts have figured out how to retain experienced educators. Other districts have figured out how to honor the work of school employees so that students have stability.”

“We sounded the alarm bells, we filed the complaints, we rolled up our sleeves at the bargaining table for almost a year but still the district refused to work with us to solve the crisis,” said UTR Organizing Chair Sam Cleare.

For Ortiz, the strike was a matter of necessity. “We struck not out of desire, but out of duty,” Ortiz said. “We feel the harm caused when the district refuses to listen. For too long our students have gone without the stable staffing they need and it doesn’t have to be that way.”

### Support from students, parents, community

Engaging students, parents and community early is a critical lesson from the UTR strike. In addition to pulling all stakeholders together to address students’ urgent needs through regular communication and actions, UTR held events such as a joyful art build open to all to help create visually impactful messages



Sam Cleare

— and become a part of the campaign. This built solidarity to fight back against the district’s distorted messaging.

District attempts to characterize the strike as disruptive or harmful could have generated fear and uncertainty. Instead, the community viewed the strike as a truly collective action in defense of public education. Picket lines and rallies were bolstered by support from parents, students, local elected leaders and members of Teamsters Local 856, who joined the strike after rejecting their initial tentative agreement with WCCUSD. Music and protest chants often accompanied the actions.

For years, the district would tell educators and students to wait for better conditions, a response that helped galvanize student support for the strike. Gian Maldonado, a junior at John F Kennedy High School who led a student walkout the day before the strike began, rallied students to support striking workers to improve conditions now, not later. “The district’s favorite word seemed to be ‘later.’ We’ll pay you better ‘later.’ Better working conditions will come ‘later.’ We’ll talk about safe staffing and a fair contract ‘later.’ We stand with teachers to make it clear that ‘later’ is NOW!”

Community solidarity shattered the narrative that strikes hurt

▼ UTR President Francisco Ortiz at a strike rally in December.



▼ In mid-January, multiple #WeCan'tWait locals came together for a strike-ready art build in Sacramento.



*“The We Can’t Wait campaign is rooted in support for one another, we are committed to having each other’s back and supporting each other the best we can.”*

—UTLA statewide organizer  
**Denisha Jordan**

our students. Jen Grey, a parent of two district students, joined the line for every day of the strike, and described it as a beautiful civics lesson for her children. “I think you’re showing us what love looks like with its work boots on,” Grey said. “I’m honored to stand with you. I’m grateful my children get to learn from you.”

Tashii Johnson, parent of a student with special needs in Richmond, emphasized that the fight for safe and stable schools was a fight for students’ civil rights. “When we continue to lose our most dedicated and talented educators, that is NOT a budget issue — this is a system failure!”

## **#WeCan'tWait locals' solidarity and assistance**

Collective, cross-local organizing assistance in the We Can't Wait campaign served as both direct support for UTR and — perhaps more significantly — as an opportunity to build campaign muscles to use in ongoing struggles and in the fights to come.

This strategy has been in the works since the WCW campaign began. Together, WCW member organizers have been creating a powerful network that shares resources and staff, collectively organizes and plans, builds capacity in individual and groups of

locals, and supports and learns from each other.

“UTR had never gone on strike before, so they were able to tap into resources from WCW locals with strike experience, such as UTLA and Oakland Education Association,” said Denisha Jordan, a WCW statewide organizer and UTLA member. “I was on the ground with UTR as a strike zone captain, and when questions came up, I could help troubleshoot right there.”

She knows UTR members appreciated the WCW help they received. “I wore my UTLA shirt to show UTR members that Los Angeles stands with them,” Jordan said. “They realized they had support from all throughout the state.”

The strike was a learning experience for many WCW locals’ members as well. Longtime San Diego Education Association leader Sarah Darr is relatively new to her role as statewide campaign organizer. “SDEA hasn’t had to get strike-ready in 30 years, so it has been essential to walk through

the steps together with other locals and think about how those steps might look for us,” said Darr, as SDEA was gearing up for a one-day strike in late February that was settled on Feb. 12. “UTR’s insight on messaging was particularly timely as we navigated our district’s response to our strike vote. →



Denisha Jordan



## We Can't Wait!

The #WeCantWait movement involves 32 local unions representing more than 80,000 members who support more than 1 million students in California. By aligning contract expiration dates and coordinating site structure building, these locals are maximizing their collective strength, moving from isolated fights to a powerful unified campaign. The goal is to make our classrooms the priority in local district budgets and set the stage for winning the state funding our students deserve in the fourth-largest economy in the world. Visit [wecantwait.info](http://wecantwait.info) for more.



▲ Educators and allies at a San Diego Unified school board meeting in late January; SDEA educators reached agreement with the district in February, after authorizing a one-day strike. Photo: Natalya Hamilton.

### Related Reading

- “The Art of Organizing: United Teachers of Richmond,” California Educator ([cta.org/educator/posts/the-art-of-organizing](http://cta.org/educator/posts/the-art-of-organizing))
- “How to Strike and Win,” Labor Notes ([labornotes.org/strikes](http://labornotes.org/strikes))
- “California Educators Sync Up Negotiations for More Leverage,” Labor Notes ([bit.ly/4kw7atJ](http://bit.ly/4kw7atJ))

“With UTR as the first WCW local on strike, the rest of us have seen what it takes to go from building to strike-readiness, to planning and pulling off a successful strike. The fact that member leaders from so many WCW locals traveled to Richmond to offer support was a powerful demonstration of our solidarity.”

Darr, Jordan and other WCW core local statewide organizers meet several times a month, updating each other, offering advice and seeking more ways to collaborate.

“Effective coalition building takes time,” Darr said of working with her counterparts in other WCW locals. “Over the last year and a half, we have inspired one another with effective and creative ideas for building strong site structures, planning campaign actions, and holding strike votes.”

“The We Can’t Wait campaign is rooted in support for one another, we are committed to having each other’s back and supporting each other the best we can,” Jordan said. “We act like the bridge between individual local campaigns and WCW — making sure connections between them are always present.”

▼ Sarah Darr, left, with Stephanie Wagner, UTR site rep at Grant Elementary School in Richmond.



*“Over the last year and a half, we have inspired one another with effective and creative ideas for building strong site structures, planning campaign actions, and holding strike votes.”*

—SDEA statewide organizer  
**Sarah Darr** on the #WeCantWait support network

## Building power as we move forward

The powerful combination of strong picket lines and community, political and #WeCantWait support led to UTR members achieving big contract wins, including fully paid family health insurance and a substantial wage increase that together will help end the staffing crisis in West Contra Costa County schools.

The UTR strike proves that we can overcome anti-strike fear that is pushed aggressively by districts and anti-education forces by infusing real joy into our struggles — through powerful solidarity but also by incorporating art and music and community into our organizing as a critical part of a successful strike.

UTR would not have achieved a victory of this scale without using the ultimate leverage tactic for our union, which is withholding our labor and going on strike. One key lesson from UTR is that while we don't always have to strike to win, there are things we can't win without a strike. This is a blueprint not just for winning the resources our students deserve but also for overcoming the forces of austerity in our districts, our counties and at the state level. ■



Richmond parent Jen Grey wrote a poem for UTR educators during the strike and read it at a UTR rally:

## Somewhere between Day 2 and Hope

*A child's mind is inarguably shaped by the method of their education. But their character- the way they might go on to wield it- that is built upon the values lived and modeled by their teachers. It's upon that thought I set my sights- as we navigate this labor strike, as we grieve the loss and mourn the cost of our students missing school. For, I attest, they are learning. Their teachers are teaching. A different lesson, in a heartbreakingly beautiful way, that could break me if I wasn't so damn inspired... My children joined the picket line without an ounce of fear. A culmination of the education they have received this year: 'Protect What You Love.' Up the hill. Against the odds. Despite the chaos. Through the fog. See darkness as an oath towards dawn. Be what love looks like with its work boots on.*



# From San Diego to NorCal, Educators Say ‘We Can’t Wait!’

Locals are organizing to win for students and public schools

By Julian Peebles

**UNION EDUCATORS** are organizing, taking action together across the state and saying “We Can’t Wait!” for the safe, stable and fully staffed public schools students deserve.

On the heels of the inspiring strike victories by United Teachers of Richmond in December (see previous story) and United Educators of San Francisco in February, several WCW locals are currently at impasse and preparing to strike for the resources their students deserve. Here’s an update:



## United Educators of San Francisco (UESF)

After 11 months of bargaining, UESF members went on strike on Feb. 9 for the first time in 50 years. In an incredible show of strength and unity, thousands of educators, families and community members walked picket lines, marched in the streets and rallied in the rain. On Feb. 13, UESF reached a tentative agreement with San Francisco Unified that will give educators fully funded health care, improved wages, special education supports, sanctuary and housing protections for SF Unified families and more.

The historic strike built an unbreakable solidarity across the city that made clear what we can do when we join together to fight.

“None of this would have been possible without the thousands of you who showed up to our board actions, signed petitions to commit to our campaign, wrote letters to our Board of Education, and showed up to support your big bargaining team,” UESF leaders said. Follow UESF on Facebook at [@UESF61](#) and Instagram at [@unitededucatorsofsf](#).

## United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA)

More than 94% of UTLA members voted early this year to authorize a strike after 11 months of negotiations yielded little progress. Educators are demanding a living wage, among other critical issues. With bargaining at impasse, UTLA is organizing to win the resources and supports all Los Angeles students deserve.

UTLA won an agreement on healthcare, which members ratified last month.

Follow UTLA on Facebook and Instagram at [@UTLANow](#).



### Natomas Teachers Association (NTA)

NTA members continue organizing for the teaching and learning conditions all Natomas students and educators deserve, with 98% voting in February to authorize a strike.

NTA's negotiations have been at impasse since December, with educators fighting for the safe, stable schools their community needs, and competitive wages and benefits that will recruit and retain educators in the district. Members have been picketing outside schools and school board meetings, rallying with parents and community to demand better from school district officials.

NTA kicked off the new year by collaborating on the regional art build in January to create signs and banners as they prepare to strike.



### Soquel Education Association (SEA)

Soquel educators have declared an impasse in contract negotiations after months of stonewalling by the Soquel Union Elementary School District.

47% of Soquel educators are considering employment elsewhere for the next school year, yet the district continues to refuse to invest in its teachers. Educators are being asked to shoulder crushing healthcare costs, in many cases in excess of \$1,700 a month out-of-pocket, while being offered a 0% pay raise. While living in the most expensive part of the country (Santa Cruz), Soquel educators are among the lowest compensated in the state.

SEA members are organizing, demanding that the district put Soquel students first and calling for a fair, competitive contract now. Follow SEA on Facebook at [@SoqueIEA](#)



### Twin Rivers United Educators (TRUE)

TRUE educators continue to organize for a fair contract, voting near-unanimously to authorize a strike for the safe, stable schools their students deserve.

Negotiations with the school district have been at impasse since December, following months of stalled negotiations where the district refused to present fair and meaningful proposals for TRUE members.

TRUE is committed to fighting for smaller class sizes, recruiting and retaining high-quality educators, and fully paid health benefits because investing in staff is investing in students. Educators across Sacramento are organizing together for public schools; among other actions, they held a successful art build in January.

Stay current on TRUE's contract fight on Facebook at [@TRUEassociation](#) and Instagram at [@WeAreTRUEUnion](#).

▼ Madera Unified Teachers Assn. proved that when you organize and fight, you win! After more than a year of bargaining and a month of mediation, Madera educators won a 12.5% increase in salary, additional employer contributions to health benefits, and more. The win came after MUTA organized educators from every school site, as well as parents and community members, and made it clear they were ready to do whatever it took to win a fair contract.



### We Can't Wait Victories!

These WCW locals recently organized, built power and negotiated contracts as they continue the fight for the safe, stable and fully staffed schools all students deserve:

- Anaheim Secondary Teachers Assn.
- Duarte Unified Education Association
- Lynwood Teachers Association
- Madera Unified Teachers Association
- San Diego Education Association
- Southwest Teachers Association



▼ WSTA participated in an art build along with other Sacramento-area locals.

### West Sacramento Teachers Association (WSTA)

West Sacramento teachers held a strike authorization vote in February; 96% of members participated and 97% voted in favor.



WSTA educators are fighting for wages that keep up with the rising cost-of-living and skyrocketing health insurance costs. Members, students and community came together in January for a massive rally and to call on school district administration to keep West Sacramento teachers with West Sacramento students.

Keep up with their fight on Facebook at [@WSteachers](#).

### Oakland Education Association (OEA)

OEA members were expected to vote to approve a strike in mid-February as school district administration continues to refuse to prioritize educator recruitment and retention. Educators held a huge rally at a school board meeting in January to demand safe, stable and racially just schools where all Oakland students can thrive and educators can stay. Stay up to date on their struggle on Facebook at [@OaklandEA](#)



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◀ Far right: Central Unified Teachers Assn. members Alex Mejia, community schools site committee member, and to her right Judee Martinez, Teague community schools site coordinator and CUTA bargaining advisory team for community schools member. Others pictured: Betty Barajas, Teague classified community schools member (far left), school/district administrators and a community partner.

# Put It in Writing!

*Community Schools language in your contract ensures a continuing process that benefits students, families and educators*

**COMMUNITY SCHOOLS CONTINUE** to make a big impact on students, educators and communities up and down the state. In addition to results showing marked improvement in student learning and well-being in just one year — as documented in a recent report by the Learning Policy Institute (see Resources box) — community schools and their shared decision-making model are effectively bringing together multiple interest-holders to chart the path to student success.

Through regular and meaningful discussion and assessment, interest-holders have equal voice and include students, families, community partners, district administrators — and educators. While each community school is unique, reflecting the needs of its students and families, CTA locals whose members teach and work in thriving community schools are seeing the value of shared governance and are bargaining community schools' memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and language into contracts to ensure systems and structures stay in place.

“For Pittsburg Education Association, this was an important priority, as PEA sought a formal commitment from the management team to work collaboratively with educators as partners

in the transformation of our schools,” says President Celia Medina-Owens. PEA had to fight for their MOU; the process took eight months and involved member actions and help from student families and community.

*“Management was hesitant to sign a binding document because of the shared leadership component. PEA had to take actions — we rallied; we spoke to the school board and brought in families, community and educators to speak.”*

—PEA President **Celia Medina-Owens**

Community schools are supported by the California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP), which has invested \$4.1 billion statewide since its launch in 2021. As funding could expire in the next few years, the issue of sustainability of community schools looms large and makes it all the more important to codify in chapter contracts.

The path to the bargaining table looks different from local to local. Below are the unique stories of five CTA locals' community schools journeys that led to the bargaining table, by five areas of focus:

- 1. Get informed and take the lead to chart your path.**
- 2. Strategize and implement what works best for your local and each site.**
- 3. Build member and other interest-holder support.**
- 4. Negotiations: Take necessary actions, hold district accountable.**
- 5. Sustaining community schools.**



▼ WETA Organizing Chair Allyson Banales-Pfeifer, President Julie McCarty and Human Rights and Equity Chair Alie Mercado.



1

## Get informed and take the lead to chart your path through trainings, other locals' experience

**Whittier Elementary Teachers Association**, with 310 members, has a Community Schools MOU in place. Its K-8 district has 11-12 total sites (the virtual learning academy is separate). "We jumped in with eight community schools at once, two are middle schools," recalls WETA President Julie McCarty. "We got a state Implementation grant in April 2022, but the first year we spent planning instead of implementing because this was all brand new to us."

According to McCarty, WETA leadership with community schools stems from its ongoing participation in various CTA and NEA programs. "In summer of 2022, four of us went to CTA Summer Institute's Community Schools strand not knowing anything. It completely changed our direction. We learned how to take the lead and make shared decision-making a sustainable model. We went back to the district with so much knowledge.

"The following CTA Summer Institutes we sent a large group of educators, including our program specialist and many of our site coordinators. We've held strategy sessions with CTA staff. We've learned from other locals. We hope to send another team this year to Summer Institute. We truly feel that this is one of the most valuable trainings offered for community schools."

In addition, WETA has participated in

- The Community Schools strand at CTA Issues Conference (now CTA Organizing Academy).
- NEA's Social & Racial Justice Conference.
- NEA's Community Schools Benchmark Academy.
- A CTA social and racial justice workshop in Whittier, which included district administrators.

WETA has also sent different teams — including classified staff, who are community schools' community liaisons — and district administrators to multiple sessions of NEA's National Community Schools Learning Lab in Anaheim.

▼ The Teague Elementary temperature-controlled food pantry.



2

## Strategize and implement what works best for your local and each site's unique needs; use other locals' MOUs or articles as models

The almost-900 members of **Central Unified Teachers Association (CUTA)** work in a school district just outside of Fresno. The district started with one community school, then added five more. "The first school is further along, with a food pantry in a temperature-controlled building, and a clothing closet," says CUTA President Laura Bolton. "Some of our community schools are really rural, there are no community resources nearby, so they look different than those closer to city areas.

"We achieved a signed Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) agreement on community schools with our district on Sept. 30, 2025. It is four pages and focuses on shared decision-making and governance.

"We attempted to bargain for three years to get an MOU approved. We had a ton of turnover in the district office, with two superintendents and two interim superintendents, so there were a lot of stops and starts. We used a CTA template

▼ Roosevelt Elementary in Fresno celebrated Diwali Art Night as a community schools collaborative event.



from one of the community schools trainings early on — essentially a demand to bargain.

“One superintendent was open to community schools and applied for state funds. CUTA had applied for an NEA community schools grant and was approved, and we used that



Laura Bolton

for trainings. We started with one site, which already had a strong relationship with the community center and the church across the street. Now we have six sites — all with the SOP agreement in place.

“An assistant superintendent came up with the SOP idea, and we wrote it collaboratively for the community schools site leadership teams. We [also] started an SOP handbook — a how-to, with procedures in place.

“We put the SOP in the handbook and inserted a section that

states it cannot be changed without the permission of CUTA or the community schools steering team. We signed the document so it's binding and enforceable. And CUTA did not have to give up bargaining rights to put the agreement into the contract later.

“The SOP is accessible to the community, parents, students, etc. and in that way holds the district accountable.” CUTA's leadership and work with the SOP also serves as an example that other locals can follow.

### 3

## Build relationships with your members and other interest-holders (parents, community partners and district)

**a.** Chris Anderson, Stockton Teachers Assn. **Stockton Teachers Association (STA)** has 1,942 members and has been working on community schools since the CCSPG grants started in 2022. The Stockton school district received implementation grants for 20+ schools (out of 55 sites) in the first round. Additional schools were added in the next round for a total of 41 community schools — “and other schools are lined up,” says STA President Dr. Chris Anderson.

Sites that implemented community schools first have hired coordinators and are in the process of ensuring functioning steering committees. At the district level, the steering committee is meeting regularly and includes all labor interest-holders. The district is still working on getting parent and community groups engaged.

“Our school board passed a resolution supporting community schools, and STA is currently working on community schools contract language that matches what's in the resolution.



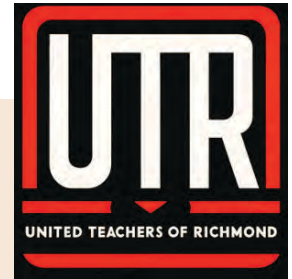
Chris Anderson

“When I went to the first community schools steering committee for our district, I looked around the table and said, ‘Where is the rest of labor?’ We have nine different units in our district. Everybody needs to be a part of this; every unit and stakeholder needs to be represented.

“We had to educate everyone about community schools, so that they know the grant money is to pay for coordinators — who are not just extra office workers — and to build teams and work with parents. It's about the site using the existing funds and community resources that they might not be taking advantage of. That is the needs and assets assessment: What are the needs at each school — a gym? Tutoring sessions? Classes for parents so they can support students in their learning? Food support?”

Continued on Page 33





## A Sample: UTR's Community Schools Contract Language

Article 53 of United Teachers of Richmond's current contract contains community schools language. "Support Collaborative" is the local and West Contra Costa Unified School District's term for the community schools steering committee. An excerpt:

### Section 2. District Community Schools Support Collaborative

WCCUSD will model a community schools engagement ethos at all levels of this work. At the district level, the WCCUSD Community School Support Collaborative shall be formed. The Support Collaborative shall make decisions and provide all participating schools with a robust set of universal supports focusing on community engagement, positive school climate, and they key goals of the district's Instructional Focus Plan. The Support Collaborative will decide how funds are allocated and make policy decisions based on district date.

The Support Collaborative shall consist of 20 members composed of partners that share a commitment to support the purpose and creation of a Community School model in WCCUSD.

1. The WCCUSD Support Collaborative (Support Collaborative) shall
  - a. support Community Schools operations with planning, technical assistance and additional resources to support site level community school operations,
  - b. support messaging around WCCUSD's community school implementation and strategy, and
  - c. design and support implementation of a Needs and Asset Assessment and Community Schools implementation rubric by April 2023.
2. There shall be four co-chairs: WCCUSD, UTR, a parent who is not an employee or contractor with the District, and another member from the following groups: other bargaining units, funders, or community. The fourth co-chair shall be selected by majority vote of members of the District MDAC, DLCAP, CAC, and AASAT committees. Each co-chair shall appoint 5 members to the Support Collaborative. The Support Collaborative shall consist of membership from labor, relevant community organizations and advocacy groups, funders, parents and students. The co-chairs shall (1) set the schedule of the meetings and determine the agenda, (2) help to lead critical projects of the Support Collaborative and (3) allocate matching resources towards the initiative.
  - a. Support Collaborative members will agree to serve on the committee for one year coinciding with the District's fiscal year. Members may serve more than one year if a party reappoint them.

## Resources

- For more about **NEA's National Community Schools Learning Lab** in Anaheim, email Sean Fleshman, NCSLL Lead, at [nclslearninglab@gmail.com](mailto:ncslearninglab@gmail.com).
- Learning Policy Institute report "**Community Schools Impact on Student Outcomes: Evidence From California**," Sept. 2025, [learningpolicyinstitute.org](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org).

*“We had to educate everyone about community schools, so that they know grant money is to pay for coordinators – who are not just extra office workers – and to build teams and work with parents.”*

—STA President  
**Dr. Chris Anderson**

*Continued from Page 31*

Medical support? There is no one answer for all sites.

“With a shared leadership model, these are the cookies on the plate, so how do we use them? The funding will be gone in five-to-seven years. We front-load what we want and need and then taper it down, so at the end, it’s part of your school plan.”

**b. United Teachers of Richmond (UTR)**, with approximately 1,500 members, was among the first locals in the state to bargain community schools language into its contract. Even before that, UTR worked with interest-holders to ensure multiple voices were captured: The local, its district and several community partners worked on the CCSPP application together and after funding was received, all three parties worked on language that was codified in a contract article in the 2022–23 school year. The article expires in 2031.

“Some district officials didn’t understand why this had to be in the contract, since we were in agreement,” says Cathy Baker, UTR’s Elementary Director currently on special assignment as an NEA/CTA Community Schools support specialist. “An assistant superintendent who felt this way at the time recently told me, ‘Now I get it.’”

UTR’s contract article has served as a model for other locals. “It stipulates that each community schools site must have a community schools director — a full-time, paid position that is open to all, including educators, district staff and community partners.”

Baker notes that many UTR members serve as community schools teacher leads, positions that offer educators stipends and time while they continue to teach.

Almost 30 of 54 sites in West Contra Costa are community schools, a mix of elementary, middle and high schools. UTR is currently starting to address the sustainability of community schools, engaging the district and community partners in discussion.

▼ Food distribution at a Pittsburg community school.



4

## **Negotiations: Take necessary actions, hold district accountable**

**c. Pittsburg Education Association (PEA)** boasts 98% union membership, with 604 members. All 13 schools in its district are community schools. Nine schools have CCSPP grant money; four are funded through their Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) process.

Pittsburg schools and students have seen impressive gains in literacy, math and science assessment scores following adoption of the community schools model, and were honored for their accomplishments in October at a press event by State Superintendent of Schools Tony Thurmond.

“We bargained CS language in an MOU and got it signed on April 11, 2024,” says PEA President Medina-Owens. “Now we’re focused on implementation and enforcement.”

“It took eight months to get the MOU signed. Our district had passed a resolution making a commitment to community schools, but management was hesitant to sign a binding document because of the shared leadership component. PEA had to take actions — we rallied; we spoke to the school



Celia Medina-Owens



▼ Community Schools teams in Whittier packing up boxes of food to get ready for food distributions.



board and brought in families, community and educators to speak.

“We also continued to work with the management team to educate them on community schools — what they are, how we and they envisioned them and our goals to change the systems.

“We held meetings with them and CTA and NEA. We were moving at the speed of trust. We borrowed language from Natomas Teachers Association for our MOU and reached out to Natomas again for their revised MOU.

“We had a lot of challenges, and we continue to have challenges and work through them. We now have a working relationship with the district.”

At the October press event, Medina-Owens attributed community schools’ shared governance for their success. “We know that when educators and support staff are empowered to collaborate with school and district leadership, we can focus on the students and their individual needs and everyone thrives.”

**b. Whittier Elementary Teachers Association** (WETA) bargained its first Community Schools MOU in 2023.

“When we first went to the district about community schools, we were shut down,” says WETA President Julie McCarty. “We kept pushing them, inundating them with info about the state grants and community schools. [Admin finally applied for a grant,] then our superintendent and SpEd director told us that we’d received \$10.4 million over five years.

▼ In mid-January, PEA and neighboring Antioch Education Association sponsored a Crepes & Community Schools event; attendees played community schools-themed bingo based on CCSP grant language.



It was an exciting moment.

“But the district had problems with shared governance, shared decision-making and how to spend the money. It was hard to get our superintendent to go to anything — he went to the Anaheim Learning Lab but didn’t stay the whole time, same at steering committee meetings. School board members attended, including one who was opposed to community schools; the Lab opened her eyes. WETA had to keep updating the board on the value of community schools.

“During MOU negotiations, we really had to fight. It was not a pleasant environment. The turning point was having CTA staff with WETA meeting with the district’s team. We were able to turn things around in our favor, with strong language that Montebello and Alhambra locals had used, for our MOU. For example, our language specified that community school site coordinators could not be used for other jobs.”

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



5

## Sustaining community schools' practices and relationships

**a. Pittsburg Education Association** President Celia Medina-Owens says, "We're looking at the sustainability of community schools practices that we are implementing, meaning will we continue these practices when the funding runs out? Our vision is to change systems within our schools, even without state funding, so the services we provide are sustainable.

"At our one comprehensive high school — with 167 PEA educators and 3000+ students — a sustainable practice is the community closet where families can get food and clothing; it's a hub for families to support literacy and treat anxiety. This is not funded by grants — we use LCAP funds. Other community schools use grant money to provide glasses to students, so we have to think how to continue this service."

**b. Anaheim Secondary Teachers Association (ASTA)** has been at the forefront of the community schools movement in California for years — so much so that the NEA-funded National Community Schools Learning Lab is run through ASTA in collaboration with the Anaheim Union High School District. (NCSLL hosts CTA locals and community schools teams from around the country in multi-day trainings.) Currently, three-fourths of district schools are community schools; plans to transition the rest to community schools in the next year, funded by the district, are underway.

▼ A Dexter Middle School (Whittier) post about its community schools steering committee.



ASTA, with 1,125 members, secured its community schools MOU in January 2023. "The MOU will last the length of the [five-year] CCSPP grant," says ASTA President Geoff Morganstern. "We also are working to extend to year six of the grant with our existing funds so the sustainability discussion will be for the 2027–28 school year. We'll then recommend that we update the MOU once all interest-holders collaboratively decide what sustainability will look like."

For the MOU, ASTA and the district formed a subcommittee of the community schools steering committee to make language recommendations for both parties to consider at the bargaining table.

"Contract bargaining is historically between the union and the district. We pitched the subcommittee idea to the district in the spirit of community schools and collaborative leadership — to use the community schools process to create collective bargaining. This also helps build parent and community relationships, as we are not excluding them from something so central.

ASTA's relationship with the district as a result of community schools work helps both parties get through tough challenges, as with the 2023–24 layoff fight. The work also strengthens family and community support for ASTA's goals.

"We use our contacts and relationships to build support. We were very successful in fighting layoffs by engaging our community, and now through the We Can't Wait (WCW) campaign. After talks with ASTA and the district, the school board passed a resolution supporting WCW. [Relationships] help us get further down the road because the board and community are familiar with and generally supportive of the goals."





## CTA & Community Schools

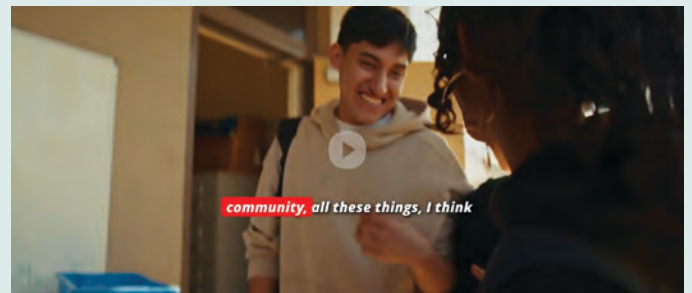
Our union is committed to helping grow and support California community schools, in partnership with the state, school districts, students, families and communities. Read more of our coverage of our union's work and find resources at [cta.org/communityschools](https://cta.org/communityschools).

View our new community schools videos! Visit [youtube.com/Californiateachers](https://youtube.com/Californiateachers) to watch our new short videos that convey information and thoughts about community schools from a community schools coordinator, students and a parent.

▼ Screenshot from a new CTA video showing the four pillars of community schools.



▼ A scene from an Anaheim community school video, one of several new videos produced by CTA.



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# State Budget: Education Funding Increase, Threats to Prop. 98 Integrity

## Historic funding paves way for locals' success at the bargaining table

By Julian Peebles

**GOVERNOR NEWSOM'S** proposed budget provides increases in education funding due to a better-than-expected economic outlook, with Proposition 98 guaranteed education funding projected at \$125.5 billion — though it withholds \$5.6 billion in Prop. 98 funds in what amounts to a dangerous shell game for funding for our public schools. This means that while there is more money for education in the proposed budget this year, our schools may not get *all* the funds we are owed.

The budget proposes a 2.41% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for the Local Control Funding Formula for school districts, county offices of education and charter schools in 2026–27. Similarly, a 2.41% COLA is proposed for California community colleges.

The proposal includes \$1 billion in ongoing Prop. 98 funding to expand community schools across the state, as well as an additional \$2.8 billion in one-time funding to help fund statewide priorities, like educator recruitment and the Literacy Roadmap, and address rising costs.

Regarding the \$5.6 billion in withheld funds, our union has successfully fought to defend Prop. 98 funds in the past and will continue to do whatever it takes to ensure that public education receives every dollar guaranteed by law.

“We call on the governor to stand with educators and communities and protect funding promised by Prop. 98,” CTA President David Goldberg said. “It’s time for lawmakers to stop protecting corporations and the wealthy and do the necessary work of raising the revenue needed to fully fund schools, health care and all public services.”

California voters passed Prop. 98 nearly four decades ago to enshrine funding for public education into our constitution and ensure our schools would have a guaranteed level of resources. The governor’s budget proposal violates this promise once again — last year, \$1.9 billion in Prop. 98 funds were withheld, balancing the state’s budget on the backs of California students. The \$1.9 billion is budgeted to finally be dispersed to districts this year. It is separate from the \$5.6 billion proposed to be withheld this year.

Stay up to date on the state budget as legislators and the governor negotiate a path forward over the coming months at [cta.org/budget](http://cta.org/budget). Gov. Newsom will release an updated budget by May 14. The California Legislature must pass the budget bill by June 15.

“While this proposal is merely the first step in the budget process, we know that



### Community College Budget Proposal Highlights

**Student-Centered Funding Formula (SCFF):** 2.41% COLA for the SCFF.

**Enrollment Growth:** \$31.9 million ongoing Prop. 98 funding to support a 0.5% enrollment growth, and an additional \$55.3 million ongoing Prop. 98 funding to further support a 1% enrollment growth in 2025–26.

**Categorical Programs:** \$30.6 million ongoing Prop. 98 funding to support a 2.41% COLA for select categorical programs.

**Payment Deferral:** Fully repays deferrals for the SCFF in 2026–27.

**Student Support Block Grant:** Provides \$100 million one-time augmentation for the Student Support Block Grant.

school districts often weaponize these announcements to issue unnecessary layoff notices, justify cutting programs and the closure of beloved neighborhood schools and refuse to make investments to recruit and retain educators,” Goldberg said. “Educators and our communities deserve better. We demand that school districts hold steady and commit to providing stable learning environments to students.” ■

▼ Screenshot from a Twin Rivers United Educators video about the skim scam that has diverted funds meant for classrooms.



# Districts' Skim Scam Robs Students, Classrooms

*Nearly \$118 million illegally diverted from Twin Rivers, Natomas schools over six years*

A **"SKIM SCAM"** in Twin Rivers and Natomas unified school districts, with rubber-stamp classroom-spending waiver approvals by the Sacramento County Office of Education (SCOE), has diverted nearly \$118 million from classrooms over the past six years.

Data recently obtained by our union revealed the scam. In early January, CTA President David Goldberg sent a letter to State Attorney General Rob Bonta, State Superintendent Tony Thurmond and State Controller Malia Cohen demanding a fiscal audit and investigation of SCOE.

In Twin Rivers alone, nearly \$116 million has been diverted from classrooms by SCOE's systemic approvals of unjustified classroom spending waivers.

California Education Code Section 41372 mandates that unified school districts dedicate at least 55% of their budget to classroom instruction — a law designed to ensure districts put students first. Twin Rivers Unified School District (TRUSD) failed to

meet this spending requirement for six consecutive years, diverting a total of \$115,931,201 away from classroom instruction between the 2019–20 and 2024–25 school years.

Natomas Unified School District also engaged in a similar waiver skim scam for school years 2022–23, 2023–24 and 2024–25, totaling more than \$1.5 million in diverted funds.

*"Skim scams like this hurt students and keep classrooms from being fully resourced. For the district administration to repeatedly request spending waivers without meeting the 55% threshold is a violation of California's educational code."*

—TRUE President **Brittoni Ward**

"Skim scams like this hurt students and keep classrooms from being fully resourced, which has prolonged impacts," said Brittoni Ward, Twin Rivers United Educators (TRUE) president. "For the district's administration to repeatedly request spending waivers without meeting the 55% threshold is a violation of California's educational code. And for SCOE to approve the districts' often unsubstantiated claims is not only negligent, it's dangerous."

To qualify for a waiver, TRUSD claimed their teacher salaries exceeded those of comparable districts. However, to validate this claim, they are legally required to provide specific comparison data on salaries and

▼ Documents recently obtained through public records act requests establish that TRUSD administrators diverted \$115,931,201 from their state instructional support budget intended for students over the last six school years. As a result, every day, students experience larger class sizes, a shortage of support staff, and dozens of classrooms without permanent, credentialed teachers.

School Year	% Spent On Classrooms, Contrary to 55% Requirement	Amount Underspent on Classrooms
2019-20	52.99%	\$6,113,808
2020-21	48.23%	\$22,704,030
2021-22	47.46%	\$26,873,972
2022-23	46.76%	\$32,305,573
2023-24	51.16%	\$15,110,818
2024-25	51.95%	\$12,822,998
<b>Total Denied to Students</b>		<b>\$115,931,201</b>

*“Over the last six years, SCOE has allowed millions to be skimmed from Sacramento County classrooms. These violations disregard the law, and signals to every district in California that classroom funding statutes can be ignored with impunity.”*

—CTA President **David Goldberg**

The administrator explicitly states, “The 51% is the new norm % for TRUSD due to the large amount of S/C [Supplemental/Concentration] funds that we receive and low % is used towards instructional teachers and aides.”

This admission — that violating the Education Code is the “new norm” — apparently raised no concerns among SCOE staff, confirming that Superintendent Dave Gordon rubber stamped the malfeasance.

The lack of oversight extends beyond TRUSD. For example, the Natomas Unified School District applied for a waiver in 2023–24 based on a “serious hardship to the district,” but without any supporting documentation beyond the following paragraph:

“NUSD usually meets this criterion; however, *due to spending the remaining of the pandemic-related grant funds* [emphasis added], the ratio of teacher salary and benefits to the total expenditures decreased to 54.38%.”

Natomas Unified offered no proof that having to spend pandemic-related grant funds and meeting the statutory minimum would cause the district “serious hardship.” Superintendent Gordon’s staff approved the waiver, depriving Natomas students of \$1,065,721 worth of classroom services during that school year. In 2022–23 NUSD diverted \$453,680 from classroom instruction funds. (In 2024–25 the district applied for a waiver but ended up not needing it.)

“Over the last six years, SCOE has allowed millions to be skimmed from Sacramento County classrooms,” said Goldberg. “These violations disregard the law, and signals to every district in California that classroom funding statutes can be ignored with impunity. This systemic negligence must be investigated to stop future violations. Sacramento students and families deserve no less.”

Both TRUE and Natomas Teachers Association (NTA) are fighting back against the skim scams. As We Can’t Wait locals, both are in contract negotiations with their districts and gearing up for possible strikes if their demands for students, schools and educators are not met. Visit [wecantwait.info](http://wecantwait.info) for more. ■

benefits. A review of applications from 2019–20 through 2024–25 shows that SCOE approved them despite TRUSD consistently failing to provide the mandatory proof outlined below:

- 2020–21: Failed to provide any comparability data.
- 2019–20 & 2023–24: Failed to provide health and welfare contribution data. Additionally, salaries did not exceed benchmarks at the beginning, average or maximum levels.
- 2022–23 & 2024–25: Failed to provide health and welfare contribution data.

“This failure to fund classrooms is a calculated administrative strategy rather than a budgetary necessity,” said Goldberg in his letter. “This is not a matter of fiscal hardship. Twin Rivers students have been bearing the weight of a six-year long funding siphon that SCOE consistently enabled.”

A recent email from a top TRUSD administrator indicates that TRUSD has no intention of trying to meet the 55% required expenditure.

► Multiple people lined up at the MCOE Board of Education meeting in opposition to the proposed charter schools; at the mic, CCA member and Hartnell Community College faculty Chris Zepeda.



# Monterey County: Big Win for Public Schools and Students

## Educators and allies defeat proposed charter schools despite backers' deep pockets

**IN A VICTORY** for public schools and students, the Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE) denied an application by Navigator Schools for a series of K–12 charter schools throughout Monterey County. The MCOE board cited potential negative impacts on existing public school programs and services that could be harmful to current students as the primary concern.

Navigator, a charter school network run by business and corporate heavyweights, operates four campuses in California and received a \$12 million grant from the Trump administration to expand.

Educators, administrators, parents, students, labor allies, community members from multiple county districts and local charter school leaders and educators packed the MCOE Board of Education meeting in mid-January to voice their opposition to the proposed charter. Speakers told the board that by fracturing educational resources, the proposed charter would lead to “reductions in staffing, programs and essential student supports” and undermine the stability and quality of education in districts across the county, especially for the most vulnerable students.

The board voted 6-1 against the charter. One trustee said, “the people have spoken.”

“This victory means more stability for our students,” said Monterey Bay Teachers Association (MBTA) President Rosalyn Book, who with a coalition of local leaders and community allies led the charge against the charter. “Our district alone had estimated that if the charter school was approved, then 120 employees and \$9–\$10 million would be cut from our budget. Now students have stability with teachers and school services.”



MBTA Pres. Rosalyn Book

### Protecting the most vulnerable

Oscar Ramos, president of the Salinas Elementary Teachers Council (SETC), noted that the charter school would harm the most vulnerable students in the county.

“My main concern is that I work with migrant families, and [charter proponents] failed to propose anything significant that’s going to support migrant students,” Ramos told a KSBW reporter. An MCOE staff report raised this issue as well, finding virtually no mention of migrant students in the petition for a county with one of the

▼ Left to right: MBTA members Brooke DiPaolo and Clarissa Murillo with Wendy Root Askew, Monterey County Board of Supervisors, District 4.



▼ SETC members Veronica Espinosa and Tiffany Kellogg rep their public schools.



highest populations of migrant students in California.

The MCOE report further identified similar concerns about funding and meeting the needs of vulnerable students, including migrant and indigenous students. It cited these issues and other unmet requirements in Navigator’s application.

The proposed charter school would have three locations in the county — Salinas, Seaside/Marina and Soledad/Greenfield. The MCOE report found that the application did not reflect a plan responsive to the needs of Monterey County communities and did not contain evidence of local community support. MCOE staff highlighted that the petition was largely the same as a petition recently approved by the Orange County Board of Education, and proposed programs duplicative of what was already offered by district programs in Monterey.

*“Our district alone estimated that if the charter school was approved, then 120 employees and \$9–\$10 million would be cut from our budget. Now students have stability with teachers and school services.”*

—MBTA President **Rosalyn Book**

## Locals lead opposition campaign

Area locals first heard about the proposed charter school on Dec. 3, 2025. MBTA, SETC and Alisal Teachers Association quickly formed a committee to coordinate the campaign to fight back against Navigator. The committee included other locals, parents, community and labor allies (including local CSEA and CFT chapters and the Monterey Bay Central Labor Council), local elected officials and district administrators. Because of end-of-year activities and holiday breaks, the time for action

was limited and organizers had to work fast before the MCOE board meeting on Jan. 14.

“It was a huge collective effort,” said Book, who is also chair of the Central Coast Counties Service Center Council. “We divided and conquered. We held one-on-ones with county board members and the MCOE superintendent of schools. We created a petition on Friday night at 5:30 for the board meeting the following Wednesday and managed to get

2,100 signatures. We used social media, and our connections to community leaders. Everything had to be very quick.

“It was a real lesson in strategic boots-on-the ground organizing. We had to be flexible day by day, hour by hour. On the day of the board meeting, we learned that Navigator was coming early — busing in their teachers, students and parents (many were

Navigator employees with children in their charters). So we had to tell our folks to get there sooner — and we had so many people that many were put in an overflow room.”

The overwhelming support for existing schools and their students resulted in the board voting to reject the charter proposal, emphasizing in its decision the need to use every resource to support existing neighborhood schools.

The decisive win protects existing local schools from financial instability and program cuts, and proves that strong organizing can beat big money. ■

## Charter Schools Increasingly Turn to Counties for Approvals

Countywide charter petitions, once rare, have been increasingly used by the charter industry in an effort to bypass critical reforms contained in AB1505, passed in 2019 with significant effort from CTA members and our allies.

Under AB1505, Districts can now consider the impact of a new or expanding charter on all students in the district, taking into account whether a new charter would cause a negative impact on existing programs and services and/or if they already offer a similar program that serves the same community.

By submitting petitions directly to the county, charter operators can bypass districts altogether. Our union, along with education and labor allies, has been vigilant in protecting students and public education against unrestricted charter expansion at both district and county levels.

# The Fight for Fully Funded Schools

## Our union's legislative platform for 2026 — and beyond



**OUR UNION CONTINUES** to fight for the schools our students deserve. This year, as determined by CTA State Council of Education and the Board of Directors, our legislative platform is **Fully Funded Schools**. This includes:

### Protecting Proposition 98

Approved by voters in 1988, Proposition 98 is a constitutional amendment that guarantees a minimum annual funding level for K-12 schools and community colleges. It ensures a steady financial base from California's General Fund and local property taxes, adjusted annually for enrollment and economic changes. Gov. Gavin Newsom's proposed 2026-27 State Budget withholds \$5.6 billion of Prop. 98 funds; Our union is actively fighting for every dollar that is guaranteed to our students.

### Securing new revenue

California, as a global economic leader, needs well-funded public services, yet unstable funding and federal cuts have left education and health care struggling. With corporate profits soaring while families face rising costs, policymakers must ensure corporations pay their fair share in taxes to support essential services. Our union is working on identifying creative ways to bring new revenue into the state to prioritize workers over corporate greed.

### Community Schools sustainability

Our union is committed to helping grow and support California Community Schools, in partnership with students, families and communities. In a year's time, according to a recent Learning Policy Institute study, students at

Community Schools have made major gains in academic achievement and social-emotional well-being. With a shared decision-making process unique to the needs of individual Community Schools, they are a model for public education. Our union will be fighting this year for long-term sustainable funding for Community Schools across the state.

### Establishing paid pregnancy leave

Our union is fighting for paid pregnancy leave, a basic right in most countries, to address the inequities faced by educators, the majority of whom are women. Currently, educators must use all sick time before accessing reduced pay, forcing many to return to work prematurely or face financial hardship. This discriminatory practice impacts their health, family planning, and retirement, where women already earn significantly less than male colleagues. CTA is sponsoring legislation to establish paid pregnancy leave for educators.

### Relief for school districts with emergency state loans

California's public education funding should prioritize today's students, not be drained to pay off decades-old financial mismanagement. Emergency state loans force districts to divert critical classroom resources toward debt repayment, penalizing current learners for past mistakes. By providing relief to school districts with emergency loans, we allow precious public education funding to focus on improving educational outcomes, reducing class sizes, and retaining high-quality teachers. Taking on this fight ensures that education dollars benefit the students currently in the classroom, rather than servicing the debts of the past.

“Educators devote their lives to their students; yet, when it comes to their own families, they have to constantly sacrifice because of the lack of basic supports such as paid pregnancy leave. In a field that is primarily women, we need to do better.”

Erika Jones, Kindergarten Teacher  
CTA Secretary-Treasurer

THE TIME IS NOW! #WeAre CTA

## Eliminating three-year budgeting

California is one of only five states requiring school districts to project budgets three years ahead, a speculative process that often leads to inaccuracies and undermines trust at bargaining tables. This outdated system allows districts to claim financial hardship, stockpile reserves, and avoid investing in students and educators. Reforming this process will help ensure that today's education dollars are spent on today's students.

## Teacher pipeline sustainability

Amid a national teacher shortage, investing in the teacher pipeline is essential to sustaining a diverse, qualified workforce. Programs like teacher residencies and the Golden State Teacher Grant program play a critical role in preparing, recruiting and retaining educators in high-need fields. Fully funding schools is key to supporting these efforts, addressing staffing shortages, and ensuring every student has access to a quality education.

For more about these issues, a primer on how CTA State Council of Education processes legislation, and to track the progress of related bills, visit [cta.org/our-advocacy/legislative-advocacy](https://cta.org/our-advocacy/legislative-advocacy).

# Bargaining Roundup

Compiled by Julian Peeples



## DUARTE:

### Educators Authorize Strike and Win Contract

After 15 months of organizing and building power that led to a near-unanimous strike authorization vote, Duarte Unified Education Association (DUEA) won an agreement in January that will improve teaching and learning conditions and help recruit and retain educators in Duarte.

DUEA members won a 2% salary increase for the 2024-25 school year and 2% for the 25-26 school year, as well as an increase the district's health benefit contributions, expanded prep time for elementary teachers, class-size reductions, the placement of Career Technical Education teachers on the certificated salary schedule and other contract improvements that support teaching and learning.

"After tough but respectful negotiations, we were able to reach a tentative agreement thanks to our members' unwavering support. This agreement represents real progress and a positive outcome for our educators, students and community," said DUEA President Heather Messner.





**INGLEWOOD:**

**Environmental educators organize for first contract**

Educators from four Los Angeles-area charter schools are organizing and rallying to win their first-ever contract in what has been a very lengthy fight.

The 135 members of Environmental Educators United (EEU) – educators at all four Environmental Charter Schools (ECS) in the South Bay – are demanding charter management settle a fair and enforceable first contract. After 19 bargaining sessions and mediation spanning over two years, the process has reached a critical impasse. Following the completion of state-mediated fact-finding, two final articles remain: compensation and grievances, including binding arbitration.

“A contract is only as good as its enforcement,” said Fabian Ponciano, ECS alum, veteran teacher and EEU Secretary. “By resisting binding arbitration, the board is asking the community to rely on voluntary self-accountability. Our educators are standing together because we know that fair and stable working conditions are the foundation of a healthy learning environment for our students.”

Educators are concerned that the school board’s continued silence on the bargain signals an intent to unilaterally impose contract terms – a move that could lead to a work stoppage, pending an official strike vote.

“We are here to demand that the board stop hiding behind their legal counsel and start trusting the professionals who keep their schools running. You cannot claim to value student success while denying the experts in the classroom their voice and rights,” said EEU President Lauren Pell. “Our students and communities deserve a resolution that protects and nurtures the high-quality education ECS is known for.”



**IMPERIAL BEACH:**

**Strike vote approval leads to contract agreement**

After more than 20 months of bargaining and an almost 20-hour fact-finding hearing, Southwest Teachers Association (SWTA) reached an agreement with South Bay Union School District that invests today’s dollars in today’s students and lays a foundation for the safe and stable schools our students deserve.

SWTA members won a 2% on-schedule increase and a 2% off-schedule payment for 2024-25 retroactive to July 2024, a 2% on-schedule increase for 2025-26 retroactive to July 2025, increases to the health benefits cap and a restructured salary schedule for speech language pathologists, school psychologists and school nurses.

During the lengthy bargain, SWTA organized educators and the community, building a powerful movement for the schools all South Bay students deserve.

“This agreement is more than just a contract; it is a testament to the power of our collective voice,” SWTA leaders said.



**CALBRIGHT:**

**Part-time faculty file intent to join union**

In mid-December, the united part-time faculty at Calbright College went public with their intent to unionize and join the Calbright Faculty Association (CFA) to fight for job stability, fair working conditions, equitable pay and benefits, meaningful inclusion in decision-making processes, and professional growth opportunities.

About 80% of part-time faculty submitted commitment cards to join the union, adding their names to their organizing committee’s letter asserting their right to unionize and expressing their



**APPLE VALLEY:**

**Educators reach tentative agreement on a contract that prioritizes students**

After incredible demonstrations of solidarity at multiple picket lines and the strength of 91% of members voting in support of striking, Apple Valley Unified Teachers Association (AVUTA) members reached an agreement with Apple Valley Unified School District on Feb. 12.

AVUTA members stood firm for smaller class sizes, especially in special education, so each student gets the one-on-one attention they deserve. In addition, AVUTA sought a fair salary increase that reflects the rising cost of living, allowing teachers to be compensated competitively with surrounding districts, and called for additional funding for health and welfare benefits.

Despite healthy reserves, the school district, located in San Bernardino County, had refused to invest in educator recruitment and retention, instead bloating administrator salaries and spending on outside consultants. This had created a situation where 77 educators resigned from the district in just over a year.



**REDLANDS:**

**Educators, ESPs unite to fight for their students and community**

Credentialed and classified educators are united in Redlands, rallying together as both Redlands Teachers Association (RTA) and Redlands Education Support Professionals Association (RESPA) are currently in difficult bargains with the district. Both locals have proposed a 3.3% salary increase while the district is refusing to budge from zero.

RTA President Stephen Caperton told the school board at a January meeting that the district is continuing a legacy of not paying educators fairly.

"Budgets are moral documents. Like the tide, a cost-of-living increase raises all budget lines, including salaries," Caperton said. "Over the years, this district has made a conscious choice to prioritize vanity projects and administrative growth over the quality of life of its employees and the learning conditions of its students."

hope that being included as partners in student success will make Calbright College even better. Calbright is an online community college with administrative offices in Sacramento.

The addition of currently unrepresented part-time faculty more than doubles the current size of CFA, and brings all education workers at Calbright College into one collective bargaining unit. Part-time inclusion into the full-time faculty contract will be a subject of bargaining immediately, which began last month.



# State Council Weighs In on June Primary

Our union's top policy-making body votes to recommend pro-labor and pro-public education candidates

**2026 IS A CRITICAL YEAR.** Public education is under attack, and we have the power at the ballot box to fight back and dedicate necessary resources to elect champions of public education and unions — from school board members all the way up to the California legislature and Congress.

At our CTA's January State Council of Education, 800 delegates voted to recommend candidates for the upcoming June Primary.

The highlight: Our union is all-in to elect longtime San Diego School Board member **Richard Barrera** as California's next Superintendent of Public Instruction.

As president of the San Diego Unified School Board, Barrera supported San Diego Education Association's (SDEA) successful fights for smaller class sizes, competitive wages and benefits for educators, investment and expansion of community schools, more opportunities for bilingual instruction, and expanded science career pathways in San Diego and beyond.

"Barrera's commitment to working families and

*CTA Recommends*  
**RICHARD BARRERA**  
FOR SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Richard Barrera is a fighter for public school education and unions. He is the best candidate for our students, schools, and communities.

**CTA** CALIFORNIA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

public education is clear in his decades of experience," said CTA President David Goldberg. "With Barrera's partnership, educators increased their pay by more than 40% and protected fully paid family benefits. His leadership proves that when elected leaders partner with educators, students win."

Recommendations for other critical statewide races include:

- California Lieutenant Governor: **Josh Fryday** (D)
- California Secretary of State: **Shirley Weber** (D)
- California Attorney General: **Rob Bonta** (D)
- California State Controller: **Malia Cohen** (D)
- California State Treasurer: **Eleni Kounalakis** (D)
- California State Insurance Commissioner: **Jane Kim** (D)
- California State Board of Equalization, 2nd District: **Sally Lieber** (D)
- California State Board of Equalization, 3rd District: **Mike Gipson** (D)

*Note: CTA's recommendation process is continuing; for the latest updates, see [cta.org/our-advocacy/election-2026](https://cta.org/our-advocacy/election-2026).*



## Our Union's Recommendation Process

Our recommendation process involves interview teams of local educators from throughout the state, who interview candidates and evaluate them on a variety of criteria, including:

- Their positions on and vision for K-12, community college and higher education issues.
- Their historical support for public education, students and educators, in such areas as education funding, budget stability, safe schools and campuses for all students, collective bargaining, educator professional rights, charter school accountability, and equal access to higher education.
- Their viability for success in the office that they are seeking.

Teams then make their recommendations to the CTA Board of Directors for discussion before being brought to CTA State Council, which debates and makes final recommendations.

## NEA/CTA Elections

Here are NEA/CTA election results from January State Council:

### Paula Merrigan

for NEA Board of Directors, District 3  
*Term of office: Sept. 1, 2026, to Aug. 31, 2029*

### Vanessa Barrera

for NEA Board of Directors, District 10  
*Term of office: Sept. 1, 2026, to Aug. 31, 2029*

### Meg E'amato

for CTA Board of Directors, District M  
*Term of office: Jan. 25, 2026, to June 25, 2027*

# CTA Awards & Scholarships

**OUR UNION RECOGNIZES EDUCATORS** and members of the community who promote quality public education and impact their students and community. Awards include effective communications by and for local chapters, strong social justice and human rights work and more.

For the full list, including details and application information, visit [cta.org/awards](http://cta.org/awards). Here are some of the opportunities coming up:

### CTA César E. Chávez and Dolores Huerta Education Awards Program

The program recognizes educators and their students who demonstrate an understanding of the vision and guiding principles embraced by Chávez and Huerta. Submissions include written essays and visual artwork.

**Deadline: March 6, 2026.**

### John Swett Media Awards

These awards celebrate outstanding coverage of community and campaign issues that have impacted California's public schools, community colleges and the labor movement.

**Deadline: March 20, 2026.**

### Gloria Pedretti Credential Candidate Scholarship

This scholarship was created by CTA/NEA-Retired member Gloria Pedretti and CTA/NEA-Retired to help potential educators in their credential preparation journey. For details email [CTA-Retired@cta.org](mailto:CTA-Retired@cta.org).

**Deadline: May 15, 2026.**

### Sharilynn Gardella Russo Memorial Scholarship

Named for former CTA/NEA-Retired leader and speech language pathologist Russo, these scholarships provide financial aid to students pursuing a college degree/certification in a speech pathology and/or audiology-related career in public education. For details email

[CTA-Retired@cta.org](mailto:CTA-Retired@cta.org).

**Deadline: May 15, 2026.**

### LGBTQ+ Safety in Schools Grant & Scholarship Program in Honor of Guy DeRosa

Named for CTA member and lifelong advocate Guy DeRosa, the grant program supports groups, projects and presentations that promote understanding of and respect for LGBTQ+ persons. The scholarship program supports LGBTQ+ active CTA and CTA/Aspiring Educators members enrolled in a credential or graduate program in public education.

**Deadline: May 29, 2026.**

### Communications Awards

These awards are designed to recognize and honor those CTA chapters, Service Centers and UniServs who communicate regularly and effectively with their members.

**Deadline: May 29, 2026.**



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**Annual Challenge Deadline:**  
**MAY 15, 2026**

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## Our Union



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Q (Higher Education) – Statewide  
Two At-Large Directors – Statewide

## CTA Board Expenses

Amounts represent a monthly average for fiscal year 2024–2025. During the reporting year, the normal and statewide activities include CTA Board meetings, State Council, Service Center Council meetings, Equity and Human Rights Conference, Good Teaching Conferences, various task force meetings and other business-related functions. Some differences in expenditures may be due to the widely varied geographical sizes of directorial districts, distances traveled for Regional, Service Center and other meetings, and the varied number of functions CTA Directors are responsible for attending. Expenses of Board members with partial-year service are averaged based on months served and delineated with an asterisk.

ABT (O)	\$5,487.90
AGUILAR (H)	\$8,667.09
AVILA (G)	\$3,764.31
BARTELL (M)	\$3,821.61
BERLIN (B)	\$3,389.34
BORDEN (P)	\$3,654.67
BRADFORD (N)	\$4,173.01
BUSHEE (I)	\$3,705.15
DER RAMOS (At-large)	\$6,340.50
ECCLES (K)	\$5,777.14
ELLIS (At-large)	\$6,016.69
GOLDBERG	\$3,161.16
GRANADO* (L)	\$6,426.86
GUPTON (E)	\$2,558.96
HARVEY* (D)	\$3,391.83
HOUSE (J)	\$3,367.80
JONES	\$5,233.62
LITTMAN	\$3,743.73
NORMAND (C)	\$3,698.08
PATTERSON* (D)	\$10,539.45
RUIZ (F)	\$7,919.13
SCHUSTER (CTA/NEA Coordinator)	\$4,365.61
SHEAFFER (Q)	\$4,685.33
TANG* (L)	\$4,095.08
WILLIAMS (A)	\$4,980.02



Wendy Brill-Wynkoop

# A Champion for Students and Educators

## Wendy Brill-Wynkoop honored for teaching excellence and advocacy work

**WENDY BRILL-WYNKOOP**, a member of College of the Canyons Faculty Association (COCFA), has been selected to receive the 2026 Travelers Award for Teaching Excellence from the NEA Foundation.

Brill-Wynkoop, a professor of photography and digital media at College of the Canyons in Santa Clarita, is one of 48 public school educators from across the country to be honored. The annual award recognizes excellence in the classroom, leadership in the teaching profession, community engagement, and commitment to expanding opportunities for all through public education.

"These exceptional educators exemplify the heart and soul of public education," said Sara A. Sneed, president and CEO of the NEA Foundation. "Their unwavering dedication to creating pathways to success for all students through high-quality learning environments and supportive teaching practices, even in the face of immense challenges, is both inspiring and essential."

"Receiving the NEA Travelers Award for Teaching Excellence has prompted me to reflect on my over 30 years of teaching and advocating for the profession," Brill-Wynkoop said. "It's thrilling to realize

that after all these years, my hard work has made a difference and that my colleagues, particularly my union members who are fighting alongside me, acknowledge the impact I have made."

A dedicated CTA member since 1997, Brill-Wynkoop has devoted her career to both teaching excellence and advocating for educators. She has served as a delegate to CTA State Council and on council's State Legislative Committee. She also previously served as COCFA president, where she led contract negotiations that secured salary schedule reform, lecture-lab parity, and improved working conditions for faculty.

She also helped the COCFA political action committee for more than nine years. "During that time she led a [successful] three-year Flip-the-Board campaign to elect a labor-friendly Board of Trustees," wrote COCFA Past President Nicole Faudree in a letter to NEA. "As a result, faculty secured a 15% salary increase over two years and saw the departure of the longtime college president, paving the way for progressive leadership."

At the statewide level, Brill-Wynkoop served as president of the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges from 2021 to 2025, working with policymakers to advance legislation that supports faculty and students. In 2021, she received CTA's statewide "We Honor Ours" (WHO) Award, and in 2025, she was honored with the CTA Higher Education Award at June State Council.

In the classroom, Brill-Wynkoop is a champion of experiential, student-centered learning. She has built partnerships with institutions such as the Getty Museum, giving students opportunities to learn from master photographers and to exhibit their work at prestigious venues. She founded the Parallax Student Photography Club and has led immersive field-study programs in Death Valley and the Eastern Sierra Nevada, creating impactful learning experiences for diverse students.

Brill-Wynkoop believes the power of teaching lies in guiding students to discover their potential and recognize that they have the power to change the world. "Witnessing the transformative journey of my students, from who they were when I first met them to who they have become, is more rewarding than anything else I could have done with my life."

This year's NEA Foundation honorees were celebrated at the 2026 Salute to Excellence in Education Gala, which took place on Feb. 13 in Washington, D.C.

For information about the Travelers Award for Teaching Excellence and to learn more about this year's awardees, visit [neafoundation.org](https://neafoundation.org).

# A Legacy of Trust

## CTA and California Casualty celebrate 75 years together

By California Casualty

**SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS** is more than a milestone... it is a legacy built on trust, shared purpose and a promise kept to generations of California educators. What began in 1951 as a simple idea to provide CTA members with affordable auto insurance has grown into one of the longest-standing, and most-utilized member benefit programs. Together, CTA and California Casualty have helped protect the people who make California's public schools strong.

Over the decades, our partnership has focused on one core belief: Educators deserve peace of mind so they can focus on their students and communities without being distracted by life's unexpected events. Today, CTA members rely on auto and home/renters coverage designed around their daily realities, from busy schedules to tight budgets. Group rates, flexible payment options and personalized service are all part of a program shaped specifically for educators and their families.

### Service that shows up in everyday moments

While major disasters often highlight the strength of our partnership, most members experience California Casualty through the everyday challenges that come with owning a car or a home. A cracked windshield before a morning commute. A fender bender in the school parking lot. A roof leak at home during parent-teacher conference week. In these moments (large or small) our representatives work quickly, personally and compassionately to resolve issues so educators can stay focused on what matters most. Reliability in the everyday is one of the quiet ways this 75-year partnership truly comes to life.

### Standing strong when it matters most

The real test of any partnership, however, is revealed when everyday protection must rise to meet extraordinary events. When wildfires and other catastrophic events disrupted the lives of educators across California, California Casualty was there in neighborhoods, schools and community centers offering hands-on support, listening and helping members navigate sudden loss.

From the Oakland fire to the Camp and Woolsey fires to



California Casualty



CALIFORNIA  
TEACHERS  
ASSOCIATION

the challenging 2025 fire season, our team has shown up with calling efforts to potentially affected policyholders, on-site claims assistance, immediate solutions and corporate giving to disaster relief funds. We continually refine procedures and policies to ensure CTA members receive priority attention when they need it most.

### Investing in classrooms, communities

Our commitment extends far beyond insurance coverage. Through programs such as Classroom Makeover Grants, Music and Arts and Athletic Grants, Impact Teen Drivers, educator recognition efforts and various giveaways, California Casualty invests directly in the experiences of students and the well-being of those who serve them. These are not symbolic gestures... they are meaningful investments grounded in the belief that educators deserve partners who champion their work.

### Relationships that last

Much of this impact is delivered through our California Casualty advocates, who travel to school sites, attend CTA events and meet one-on-one with members. Their presence ensures that CTA educators always have a trusted guide to turn to, whether they need help understanding coverage or navigating a claim. Relationships built over time keep this partnership personal, accessible and deeply rooted in the school communities we serve.

### A future built on trust

As the demands on educators grow, strong partners matter more than ever. CTA continues to champion the resources, protections and advocacy educators need to thrive. California Casualty continues to safeguard what matters most at home. After 75 years, this partnership remains a living legacy... one grounded in service, strengthened by trust and ready for whatever comes next. ■

*California Casualty is CTA's endorsed auto and home insurance provider.*



### Activate Your Calm Account Today!

If you haven't activated your free CTA Calm account, it takes less than a minute. Visit [CTAMemberBenefits.org/Calm](https://CTAMemberBenefits.org/Calm). If you have any questions, call Member Benefits at (650) 552-5200 or email [MemberBenefits@cta.org](mailto:MemberBenefits@cta.org).

# Build Healthy Habits That Make a Difference

**WHAT IS ONE** small but meaningful change you can make in your life today? It might be committing to doing a few gentle stretches between meetings, or deciding to drink more water. Whatever you choose, you'll be taking an important step forward — because small changes can have a big impact.

The Calm app can help you stay on track with these healthy habits, which can improve your well-being over time. Here are a few Calm series, programs and tools to get started (search for them on the app).

- **Build Habits That Actually Stick** – In this habit formation series with Dr. Julie Smith, a renowned clinical psychologist, you'll explore 10 different sessions with guided mindfulness tools that suit your needs—from getting back on track with your goals to aligning with your future self.
- **Mental Health Reset: Just One Step** – Take 'Just One Step' for 30 days to reset your mental health and wellbeing. Head to [calm.mn/reset](https://calm.mn/reset) for more info, free resources and daily emails to support your journey.

- **Building Resilience** – Tools and techniques to help you bounce back from setbacks, develop grit, perform under pressure and more.
- **Jump Start Your Day** – In this 5-minute session with Mel Mah, you'll gently wake up with some light stretches in bed before you get up and start your day.

It all starts with building healthy habits today — but the rewards will last for years to come.

▼ Oakland Education Assn. art build in January



## Arts Organizing to Win

*We Can't Wait campaign leverages the power of art to make gains for students, educators*

▼ Sac City Teachers Assn. art build in January. Photo: @movementphotographer



▼ Printout from the Arts Organizing to Win toolkit



**ON THE FACING PAGE** you'll find a mini-poster that is one of multiple designs created by teacher-artists and community-engaged professional artists as part of the We Can't Wait campaign.

We Can't Wait is comprised of 32 educator locals that have joined together to coordinate their contract bargaining on common issues, and involves 80,000 educators in 32 districts serving 1 million students across California.

Saying "we can't wait" any longer for the schools students deserve, locals are bargaining for improved class sizes, more resources for students, better wages and benefits, and greater stability for school communities *at the same time*, supporting each other as they do it. (See story on page 26, and check out [wecantwait.info](http://wecantwait.info) to learn more.)

Art builds are integral to organizing, whether for WCW or other campaigns. Educators and allies including students and community come together to create meaningful visuals and messaging to use in rallies, pickets, school board meetings, strikes and other actions. Impactful visuals and powerful messaging that are rooted in local communities tell our stories, win community support, and present a unified front that fosters unbeatable solidarity.

WCW has sponsored art builds with locals throughout the state, and plans for more in the coming months. They have been led by arts organizer David Solnit, who with his team created the **Arts Organizing to Win** toolkit at [bit.ly/arttowin](http://bit.ly/arttowin). In addition to showcasing poster/banner art, the kit offers tips on how to use the designs, background on WCW and organizing insights from artists and union members. You can order the artwork at [wecantwait.info/orderart](http://wecantwait.info/orderart).

The mini-poster at right is by arts educator and artist Miriam Klein Stahl and can be posted in your classroom, school hallway or any public space. "Teachers need strong unions to support the work of providing our students with our best selves so they can be their best selves," says Stahl. "We envision a better world and create that vision in our classrooms every day."



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IN THE  
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OUR  
STUDENTS  
DESERVE**



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