

July 23, 2025

## CTA-AE News This Month!

Hola AE familia,  
¿Como estamos?

My name is Gabriel Mendoza Jr., the newly elected President of CTA Aspiring Educators, writing to you all as someone who believes, with every ounce of conviction, that public education can and must be the spark that transforms this state and this country.

Right now, we are standing at a breaking point. Classrooms are underfunded. DEI is under attack. Students are being failed by a system that was never built to serve us all. And yet, districts, universities, local, federal, and state governments ask us to do more with less. They tell us to be quiet. To accept their attacks. To standby. But we are done waiting.

That is why, as President, I am proud to announce the launch of the Stronger Schools, Stronger California campaign, a movement led by us, the next generation of educators who refuse to be silent while our students are left behind. This campaign is our line in the sand. It is about demanding what we know our communities deserve: equity, funding, justice, and respect.

We know what is on the chopping block, Title 1, IDEA, Pell grants, DEI, and we know who will be hurt the most if we do not act. But let me be clear: we are not powerless. We are the voice of the future.

This campaign, just as our mission statement, is more than words. It is about showing up, in school board meetings, at the Capitol, in classrooms, in our union, and in our communities—from the coast to the classroom. It is about reclaiming education as a human right and a collective responsibility.

So I ask you all, are you ready to build a stronger union together?

AE's, let's move with purpose. Let's lead with corazon. Let's rise as one.

Stronger Unions. Stronger Members. Stronger Schools. Stronger California. Stronger us.

Con Todo,  
Gabriel Mendoza Jr.  
2025-2026 CTA Aspiring Educators President

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## Message from the Executive Vice President

Dear CTA-Aspiring Educators Community,

My name is Queen Udofia, and I am honored to serve as your Executive Vice President for the 2025–2026 term. I step into this role with deep conviction and an unwavering belief that we deserve more than visibility—**we deserve voice, power, and purpose**. Leadership, at its core, is not about position. It is about presence. And I want you to know: **I see you, I stand with you, and I**

welcome you.

As aspiring educators, we carry a unique responsibility—not just to dream of change, but to build it. That requires more than enthusiasm. It demands:

- **Substance over soundbites**
- **Accountability over applause**
- **Inclusion that is real—not performative**
- **A vision grounded in the truths our communities live every day**

We are not here for optics. We are here to do the work.

Let this be the year we stop asking for space—and start taking it.

Let this be the year we stop waiting for inclusion—and start creating it.

Let this be the year we lead—not for show, but for real.

Whether you have been involved for years or are just finding your voice, there is a place for you here. And not just a seat at the table, but rather a role in shaping the table itself!

Together, let's build a union that doesn't just say it represents all of us, but one that actually does.

**I am not here to fill a seat—I'm here to move the room.™**

**CTA-AE... let's gooo!**

In service, in truth, and with power,

Queen Udofia

Executive Vice President

CTA-Aspiring Educators

2025–2026

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## 2025 CTA Summer Institute: July 15, 2025

At CTA Summer Institute, Aspiring Educators were not just trained to be effective union leaders—they were reminded of who we are, where we have been, and where we are going as a *union*.

CTA-AE Statewide Board Members Giselle Reyes (REAC Director), Sofia Reynoso Sandoval (State Council Representative), and Gabriel Mendoza, Jr. (President) grounded themselves in the histories that have brought the labor movement forward and asked bold, necessary questions about the future we are building together.

Gabriel attended the Emerging Leaders Strand, where he explored what it means to lead with vision, courage, and strategy in a moment of political urgency.

“This week was a fresh reminder that leadership extends beyond titles, but is centered on the importance of showing up—showing up with purpose, heart, and vision. In the Emerging Leaders Strand, I was pushed to think critically about the history of our union, how we build power, how we sustain movements, and how we make sure that our members are not left behind. As Aspiring Educators, we are not here to play it safe, we are here to challenge systems, demand dignity, and to organize for the schools our communities deserve. Stronger Members. Stronger Union. Stronger us.” - Gabriel Mendoza Jr. | CTA-AE President

Sofia and Giselle participated in the Organizing Stand, where they dove deeply into movement-building, campaign planning, and member mobilization.

“Being able to attend Summer Institute was truly an invigorating experience! I had the pleasure of attending the Organizing Strand, where I learned so much from our incredible facilitators and educators. And of course... the food and music were fantastic!” - Sofia Reynoso Sandoval | State Council Representative

AE's learned that **unions raise that standard for all**, and that our work must be **reciprocal, not transactional**. We do not show up just to teach—we show up to transform, to organize, to demand better.

From the **We Cannot Wait Campaign**—which calls for *fully staffed schools, increased educator pay and benefits, and no cuts or school closures*—to deep conversations about respect, dignity, and power, we faced the hard truth: educators are being asked to give everything while receiving so little. But we are not afraid.

- “Attacks on working people are bipartisan—but we have nothing to fear.”
- “We are not an insurance company—we are a union.”

We were pushed to ask: *Can we leave this organization stronger than we found it?* Yes—because we are building strength in members and strength in teams that move together. We don’t avoid conflict. We don’t implode under pressure. We rise and we organize.

Educators cannot be disrespected any longer because we will find a way to shut it down.

Because *patriotism cannot replace pay*.  
Because *the love for our students should not replace dignity*.  
Because *todos estamos en la lucha*.

AEs left Summer Institute ready—ready to organize, ready to lead, and ready to demand.

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## Chapter Development Updates

CTA Aspiring Educator Chapters are at the heart of CTA-AE!

As we transition into the new school year, all existing AE Chapters will need to resubmit their Chapter Recognition paperwork. Regardless if you are an established Chapter or just starting out, please check out the instructions below.

There are 5 easy steps to becoming a CTA-AE Chapter:

1. Fill out the Chapter Recognition Form below and at: <https://bit.ly/CTA-AE25ChapterRecognition>;
2. Show proof of official club status on campus;
3. Show proof of elected leadership, ie: Chapter President;
4. Show proof of at least one advisor, ie: faculty in your campus School of Education; and
5. Share your governing documents, ie: Chapter By-Laws – we have samples you can use!

In addition to all the benefits of being a CTA-AE Member, recognized CTA-AE Chapters receive additional benefits.

Please see below for [5 reasons to become a CTA-AE Chapter](#):

1. Sponsorship to attend CTA-AE’s events like our Fall Event on November 8 - 9, 2025 or Spring Event and Representative Assembly on April 18 - 19, 2026;
2. CTA-AE gear like t-shirts, tote bags, pens, pencils;
3. Access to scholarships and awards for school through the [CTA Foundation’s Scholarship Programs & Awards](#);
4. Opportunity to meet with CTA-AE Chapters across the state and with [NEA Aspiring Educators](#); Members and Chapters across the nation; and
5. Voting rights at CTA-AE’s Representative Assembly.

Link to charter chapter: <https://bit.ly/CTA-AE25ChapterRecognition>

If you are a member whose chapter has not yet been recognized or are unsure, feel free to contact [cta-ae@cta.org](mailto:cta-ae@cta.org).

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## REAC Director Updates

As part of the Racial Equity Affairs Committee, our intention this year is to strengthen our students, especially our BIPOC (black, indigenous, people of color) communities by building equitable, safe, and collaborative campuses for our union members to advocate for their needs both at the local and state level all throughout California. Our goal for this year is to uplift our

union members to share their stories, stand together in unwavering solidarity, and continue to ensure our stories are heard whether that's through education, legislation, or out on the streets.

The REAC Directors,  
Elias Antunez, Giselle Reyes and Jennifer Kay Garcia

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## NEA Aspiring Educators Report

### Aspiring Educators Make Waves at NEA Conference in Portland!

From June 28 to July 1, aspiring educators from across the country gathered in Portland, Oregon for the National Education Association's Aspiring Educators Conference. For four electric days, we connected, collaborated, and created lifelong memories. And yes, the vibes were immaculate. California was proud to be there—and we're already looking ahead to next year.

This year's conference centered on a powerful truth: *Our work as educators is inherently political*. From AB540 protections to ICE raids, access to education is on the line—and it's on all of us to take action. As one speaker put it: *"You may not care about politics, but politics cares about you."*

NEA Executive Director Kim Anderson reminded attendees, *"I didn't know what I was doing—I just knew something was wrong and I needed to help them."* She challenged us to ask who holds power, whose stories are told, and whose are left out. NEA President Becky Pringle drove it home: *"You're not the future of our union. You're the NOW."*

Our California contingent participated in amazing workshops including,

- Racial Literacy Circles: Hip-Hop Edition with Sandjata Sekou
- Pitch Perfect: Project Pitch
- Storytelling Power Hour with Mary Ellen Flannery & Brenda Alvarez

Let's make sure California has an even stronger presence next year! Scholarships are available, including the [Jack Kinnaman Scholarship](#) for aspiring educators.



We came. We saw. We conference-d. But more than that — we grew, we connected, and we rose to the moment.

Everyone can do something. Let's figure out what *you* can do—and do it together.

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## 2025 NEA Representative Assembly Report

Dear CTA Aspiring Educators,

Que tremendo honor to represent California's aspiring educators at this year's National Education Association (NEA) Representative Assembly (RA), as both a delegate and in my role as CTA-AE President. This year's RA was truly historic. Not only did delegates fulfill all of our essential governance responsibilities, but we also participated in a powerful Day of Teaching, Learning, and Organizing for Power, designed to help us build the skills and strategies needed to confront the challenges of today's political landscape and the attacks made by this Administration onto our profession.

Being surrounded by thousands of passionate educators from across the country reaffirmed just how deeply committed we are as educators to advancing equity, strengthening our union, and securing a future for public education that is safe, inclusive, and just for all students.

Throughout the Assembly, I witnessed courageous leadership, rigorous debate, and bold action. From policy decisions to innovative initiatives, energy and passion filled the room. I am proud to share the following highlights and key outcomes that I believe will shape our work moving forward.

**HIGHLIGHT:** New Business Item 42 - Establishing a National Scholarship Fund for Aspiring Educators

One of the most exciting proposals introduced this year was New Business Item 42, which was referred to the appropriate NEA committee, to create a national scholarship program that would find at least two Aspiring Educators to attend every official NEA conference annually. The scholarship is intended to cover registration, lodging, transportation, and potential additional funding to support more aspiring educators. This initiative is a meaningful step towards investing in the next generation of education leaders. I remain vigilant and look forward to seeing how this develops.

### **Leadership and Inspiration:**

The keynote speeches were more than just words, they were calls to action that moved through the room and reminded us of our shared hope.

Becky Pringle, our NEA President, spoke with fire and grace, calling on us to, *"use our power to take action that leads, action that liberates, action that lasts"*. Her voice didn't just speak, it ignited. Reminding us that leadership is not about waiting; it is about stepping forward, even when the road is steep.

Building on that momentum, Ashlie Crosson, the National Teacher of the Year, reminded us that, *"Now more than ever, we are tasked with building a better future."* She spoke to the strength and resilience of our union and affirmed our collective ability to rise to this moment—for our students, our colleagues, and our country.

At the Assembly, delegates also elected Dr. Tia Mills and Bill Farmer to the NEA Executive Committee, whose leadership will guide the union into the future.

### **Innovations in Assembly Structure:**

A major change at this year's Assembly was the adoption of a new debate format, grouping New Business Items into six thematic "buckets." This structure allowed for more focused and productive discussions centered around NEA's core values. These buckets included elevating the profession, advancing equity and justice, growing the union, strengthening democracy, promoting peace, and managing NEA operations.

### **Advancing Equity and Educational Excellence:**

- **ADOPTED | NBI 6:** NEA will develop a micro-credential based on prior research to equip educators with targeted strategies to support experienced multilingual learners in

developing academic language proficiency and existing English language development services.

- ADOPTED | NBI 10: NEA will create and distribute a toolkit to assist locals in providing information and steps for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) members to explore employer-based sponsorship options, strengthening support for immigrant educators.
- ADOPTED | NBI 47: NEA will establish a working group, consisting of at least five educators within their first seven years in the profession, to plan a nationwide conference focused on professional development tailored to early career educators.
- REFERRED | NBI 8: NEA will develop research surveys targeting Asian American and Pacific Islander educators to identify and track best practices that increase recruitment and retention of AAPI educators.
- ADOPTED | NBI 12: NEA will promote and celebrate National Black Teacher Appreciation Day on May 7, 2026, using existing media platforms to honor Black educators and grow the Black teacher pipeline.
- ADOPTED | NBI 14: June 2 will be recognized annually on the NEA calendar as “Piper Day” starting in 2026. NEA will publish articles highlighting Alice Piper’s 1924 landmark California Supreme Court case that challenged racial segregation decades before Brown v. Board of Education.
- ADOPTED | NBI 22: NEA will actively support the nationwide implementation of K-12 curriculum mandates including Asian American and Pacific Islander history, heritage, and contributions to promote racial justice and counter anti-Asian bias.

#### **Union Strength & Worker Rights:**

- ADOPTED | NBI 1: NEA commits to strongly supporting unions in aligning contract expirations to amplify collective bargaining power. The union will work with state and local affiliates to dismantle no-strike laws where they exist, restore collective bargaining rights, secure fair contracts, and organize alongside the broader labor movement in advance of International Workers’ Day, May 1, 2026.

#### **Defending Democracy & Civil Rights:**

- ADOPTED | NBI 58: NEA declares its support for mass democratic movements opposing authoritarianism, including the “No Kings” movement and efforts resisting federal overreach against states like California. NEA stands with activists defending democracy, free speech, civil rights, labor, and due process.
- ADOPTED | NBI 59: NEA opposes attempts to revoke birthright citizenship by reverting to pre-civil rights “states’ rights” legal frameworks aimed at denying citizenship to children of immigrants. The union will organize alongside other groups to resist these attacks.
- ADOPTED | NBI 63: NEA opposes Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) actions targeting student leaders and will defend students’ rights to free speech, dissent, and organizing—especially in opposition to policies affecting marginalized groups including LGBTQ+ students.
- ADOPTED & REFERRED | NBI 39: NEA will no longer use, endorse, or publicize materials or programs from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), reflecting a reassessment of organizational partnerships.

As we return to our classrooms, campuses, and communities, the work ahead of us is clear and urgent. The 2025 NEA Representative Assembly reminded us that we are not just educators, we are organizers, advocates, and defenders of justice. The decisions made, the voices raised, and collective vision shaped at the Assembly have reaffirmed our power to create meaningful change.

For California’s aspiring educators, this is our moment to lead with boldness, to build bridges across difference, and to demand a public education system for every child. From coast to classroom, let us carry this momentum forward, because the fight for equity, democracy, and dignity in education is far from over. We are just getting started.

In Solidarity,

**Gabriel Mendoza Jr - (he/his/el)**

2025-2026 CTA-AE President

Undergraduate Student | Class of 2025  
University of California, Berkeley

In other NEA news, we were especially proud to see **California's own Valle Gonzalez** honored as a Human and Civil Rights Award winner! [Learn more about Valle's inspiring story.](#)



## A Message from Your New CTA-AE Communication Editor

2025–2026 School Year

Hi CTA-AE Community,

I'm excited to step into the role of **Communication Editor** for the 2025–2026 school year! As an aspiring educator myself, I know how important it is to feel **connected, informed, and supported**—and that's exactly what I hope to bring to you through our newsletters and updates.

This year, my goal is to:

- Keep you in the loop about **events, resources, and opportunities** within CTA-AE
- Share **stories, highlights, and tips** from aspiring educators across California
- Cover **topics that matter**—both inside and outside the classroom
- Help build a **strong, inclusive, and uplifting community** of future educators

🗣️ Also—we want to hear from YOU! We're considering starting a **CTA-AE TikTok account** to share behind-the-scenes moments from conferences, campus events, and member experiences. If that's something you'd love to see, take a moment to let us know in our quick survey: [Tiktok Interest Survey](#).

Whether you're just starting your journey or preparing to lead your own classroom, this space is for you. Keep an eye out for monthly updates, and don't hesitate to reach out with ideas or content you'd love to see featured.

Let's make this a meaningful and empowering year—together!

In solidarity,  
**Andrea Guevara**

Communication Editor | CTA-Aspiring Educators  
Instagram: cta\_aspiringed ~ Email: [cta-ae@cta.org](mailto:cta-ae@cta.org)

# Join CTA-Aspiring Educators

IN OUR UNION, WE HAVE THE POWER TO IMPROVE PUBLIC  
EDUCATION AND OUR COMMUNITIES

## Members of CTA-AE have access to the following benefits:

- 1 Networking, leadership, training, and professional development opportunities
- 2 Access to scholarships and grants from CTA specifically for CTA Aspiring Educators;
- 3 \$1 Million in liability insurance, low rates on auto, homeowners/renters insurance



## Start a CTA-AE Chapter

WE ARE A STATEWIDE ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO ADVANCING THE VALUES  
OF PUBLIC EDUCATION. WE STRIVE TO CONNECT ASPIRING EDUCATORS FROM  
ACROSS THE STATE AND PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
OPPORTUNITIES TO PREPARE THE NEXT GENERATION OF EDUCATORS.

## In addition to all the benefits of being a CTA-AE Member, turning your club into a CTA-AE Chapter comes with many benefits:

- 1 Scholarships to cover travel and hotel to attend our Fall and Spring conferences;
- 2 CTA-AE gear for your club, leaders, and members to support campus organizing;
- 3 Opportunity to meet with CTA-AE Chapters across the state and lead for Aspiring Educators across the state;
- 4 Opportunity to meet with NEA AE Chapters across the nation and lead for Aspiring Educators across the nation.



**JOIN CTA-AE TODAY!**  
[CTA.ORG/CTAAE](http://CTA.ORG/CTAAE)





# Frequently Asked Questions



## What is CTA-AE ?

The CTA Aspiring Educators Program is an affiliate of the [California Teachers Association](#) (CTA), which is an organization of over 300,000 public school educators dedicated to advancing the values of public education. CTA is the California state affiliate of the National Education Association (NEA), which is an organization of over 3 million public school educators across the county.



## What is CTA-AE's mission?

- 1 teacher quality,
- 2 community engagement,
- 3 diversity, and
- 4 advocacy.

These values guide us as we defend the future of our profession and advocate for better working conditions for educators, which means better learning conditions for our students.

## How do I become a member?



## How do I start a CTA-AE Chapter?



For more information visit us at: [cta.org/ctaee](https://cta.org/ctaee)

**JOIN CTA-AE TODAY!**  
[CTA.ORG/CTAAE](https://cta.org/ctaee)



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