

california educator

APRIL 2015 VOLUME 19 ISSUE 8

*CODING IS COOL

Computer science is not just a game

PAGE 14

*Hazardous harvests

Salinas educators join efforts to improve agricultural pesticide safety

PAGE 36

*The New Dogs of Reading

How our canine four-legged friends are helping kids learn

PAGE 42

PLUS Day of the Teacher Poster inside back cover



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- 3 *Feedback*
- 4 *Ask Dean*
- 7 *CTA Online*
- 8 *Editor's Note*
- 52 *Calendar*
- 54 *Extra Credit*



36

Hazardous Harvests

While California has some of the strictest regulations in the nation regarding use of agricultural pesticides near schools, most laws are about shielding people and schools from acute, not long-term, exposure.

14

Wired for Coding

Students of all ages are finding out that coding is more than just game play. It's also a fun way to learn more about computer science.

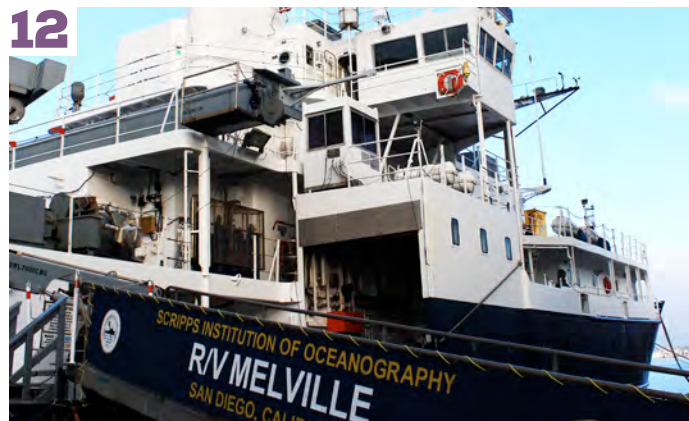
FEATURES



Bailey Parker says reading dog Maji "listens so well."

PLUS

2015 Day of the Teacher Poster
Inside Back Cover



Know&Tell ☎

- 10 **Tech tips:** The new USB-C connector
- 11 **Quotes & Numbers:** In the news
- 12 **Sharing:** Teacher at Sea Carmina Ramirez
- 13 **Contest:** Educators are everywhere

Perspectives 👁

- 20 **Point/Counterpoint:** Full-day kindergarten
- 21 **Profile:** Agriculture instructor Holly Egan
- 22 **Awareness:** Talking about race
- 24 **Common Core:** New focus on language

Advocacy ♥

- 28 **Legislation:** Charter school bills
- 30 **Bargaining:** Statewide advocacy activities
- 31 **Organizing:** Nightmare in Redding charter school
- 34 **Bargaining:** Professional development in Madera

Learning ⚙

- 42 **Education trends:** Reading dogs
- 44 **Assessment:** Learning over testing

CTA&You 🎓

- 48 **Honored:** ESP of the Year Janet Eberhardt
- 50 **Awards:** CTA Human Rights Award winners
- 51 **Conferences:** Recommendations and grants



YOUR OPINIONS AND LETTERS ARE WELCOME! There is a 250-word limit, and all letters will be edited. If you send photos or other materials, identifications and permissions are required. Letters must include your name along with your address, daytime telephone number or email address. Email editor@cta.org.

Is the Educator digital?

The question "Print or digital?" on the cover of the March *Educator* should be applied to the magazine itself. Why are you still killing trees, wasting energy, and spending dues money unnecessarily to send us hard copies, when many of us would much prefer a Web link to an online version of the magazine? Nearly every other publication in the U.S. has had at



least a digital option, if not a digital-only presence, for a decade or more. One would think that the *Educator* could at least catch up with (if not stay ahead of) the curve when member dues are being spent wastefully. It's high time for CTA to join the 21st century.

Jon Stark

Fremont Education Association

Editor's Note: The Educator has been online since 2008 and is available at educator.cta.org. Archives can be found at cta.org/educator. If you would like to receive a notice when a new issue is available, please send an e-mail to editor@cta.org.

Parent grateful for IFT grant

I am so thankful for the CTA Institute for Teaching grant to Colfax Elementary School. Your funding has made a wonderful difference to our school and to my children in particular.

We live in a very tiny town with a wonderful school. I have three children who each started kindergarten here. They are currently in eighth, seventh and third grades. I love that Colfax Elementary is a K-8 model, and have been happy that my children were able to learn in a small environment. The downside to this has been less diversity in the learning options.

Now, thanks to our wonderful teachers and your amazing support, Colfax Elementary has been able to offer a variety of wonderful learning options for our children.

My children have been able to take art courses, computer animation, math, cycling and bike repair. They have had so many other options, too. My daughter is finishing up a class where she did a study of a book while learning origami. On Thursday, they will take a field trip to a local oncology department to present an origami crane mobile they made for the patients. I find that amazing.

Thank you so very much.

Tammy L. Colon

Colfax

Editor's Note: Members can find more stories like this and apply for CTA's Institute for Teaching grants at teacherdrivenchange.org.



Second-career teachers

An interesting article in the February magazine. So many skilled men and women adding skills to the classroom! I, too, am a second-career teacher looking toward retirement. I only have 19 years in public education, and while a pension was not the reason I changed professions, I was shocked when I was told about the Windfall Elimination Provision after I started teaching. I was not counting on living on my Social Security, but my retirement planning was.

The article says: "Switching to a teaching career may become even more common in the future, as the need for new educators rises." Are future second-career teachers advised of the Social Security reduction? Perhaps if the need is great, legislators will be forced to deal with this unfair act.

Shayna Powell

Desert Sands Teachers Association

Editor's Note: The Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) reduces the earned Social Security benefits of an individual who also receives a public pension from a job not covered by Social Security. Find out more about the WEP and the Government Pension Offset, which reduces a deceased spouse's benefits, at www.cta.org/wepgpo.

When did high-stakes testing take the place of learning?

When the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was signed into law by President Johnson in 1965, it was a key component of his “War on Poverty,” and was designed to deliver new resources to schools that served low-income students and to help close achievement gaps for students of color.

In its initial stages ESEA allocated a billion dollars a year to schools with high concentrations of low-income students. This was momentous legislation and a huge step in a federal effort to close the achievement gap. That original ESEA bill contained over 17,000 words. When you print it out, it’s over 40 pages long. But in all those words and pages, do you know what phrase doesn’t appear a single time? *Standardized tests!*

You also won’t find the words “failing” or “sanctions” or “AYP” anywhere. The word “testing” appears only once, and that’s only in the context of testing new educational ideas — in other words, encouraging innovation and taking risks.

In fact, there is not a single reference in the original ESEA to any of the awful things we have come to associate with No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top.

Between 1965 and today, the country’s whole approach to determining what’s important in teaching and learning has shifted to the simplistic idea that a test scores tells it all.

The overreliance on test scores has been and is a disaster. It has undermined quality learning, narrowed curriculums and scuttled important subject areas. NCLB hijacked testing from what it was intended to do — to provide feedback to educators and help guide and differentiate instruction. At its

height, NCLB required 17 high-stakes tests per student during a K-12 time period. Teachers aren’t opposed to testing. After all, we invented it. It’s an important tool that we use and will always use. But using high-stakes standardized testing to label and punish our students and schools isn’t fair, and it must stop with the reauthorization of ESEA.



Do you have an issue or topic you’d like Dean to address? Let us know. Email editor@cta.org.



“There is a role for charter schools in California’s education system, and that role should be performed to the same high standards of integrity, transparency and openness required of traditional public schools.”

“As California continues to transition, transform and revitalize our public schools with the Common Core State Standards, old student assessment methods must make way for the new, and that takes time.”

Fortunately, the national fascination with test scores seems to be waning, and more and more parents are joining educators who have long been fed up with the unnecessary pressures on their students. We need to make sure Congress is listening.

We are at a major crossroads in this state and in this country with standardized testing, and as I write this, Congress is debating and moving quickly on the reauthorization of ESEA.

Your representatives need to hear from you about what must be included. Tell Congress that there must be opportunities for all students, no matter where a student lives, and they must give our students more time to learn and educators more time to teach by cutting back on high-stakes testing.

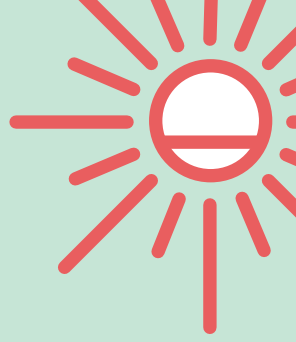
Please join me in making sure Congress gets it right this time. Visit www.getESEArigh.com today and add your experienced voice to our nationwide advocacy efforts.

Dean E. Vogel
CTA PRESIDENT



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- Teaching Online Certificate
- Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Professional Certificate
- Professional Development/Salary Point Coursework

For more information, please contact Morgan Appel,
Director of Education at: (858) 534-9273 or mappel@ucsd.edu

extension.ucsd.edu/education

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WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST PET'S NAME?

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CTA/NEA membership dues for the fiscal year (Sept. 1, 2014, to Aug. 31, 2015) are \$824, including a \$20 voluntary contribution (see www.cta.org/contribution for details). Up to \$18.35 of CTA annual dues is designated for CTA/ABC political activities to support state and local candidates and/or initiatives and is not deductible for income tax purposes.

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

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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; to ensure that the human dignity and civil rights of all children and youth are protected; and to secure a more just, equitable, and democratic society.

#CTATopTweet

Use this hashtag in your tweets and we'll select our favorites for each issue of the *California Educator*.

Viral video 📺



"We're changing the world!" Fortuna High School's *Change the World Project*, supported by a CTA Institute for Teaching grant, lets every senior develop a unique service project. www.youtube.com (search for Change the World Fortuna)

Most popular post 📊



MAR 16 👍 174 likes ✉ 49 shares

More top tweets 🐦

@vlynch5969

Last session of Good Teaching Conference. CCSS on text complexity with narrative & informational text. Great ideas!

@eenriquez05

Super fun, interesting science experiments with everyday materials with George Lightholder at GTC.

@fresnota

Over 200 parents, students, county partners & teachers **#StandWithStudents!** Our collective voice will be heard!



@AngelicaSleiman

Do schools revolve around using educators' existing strengths?

Favorite comments 💬

Theresia Rogerson | MARCH 25

I've been in several elementary schools this past week and teachers are the saints!

Lynn Eyer | MARCH 24

I'm glad that California is realizing that charter schools are designed to rip off the public education funds.

Lynda Bossert Gordon | MARCH 21

Writing strategies for K-2 was wonderful (at CTA's Good Teaching Conference).

Dennisse Santana | MARCH 18

I would love to work with a smaller class size! A district that averages our enrollment, and then states that we need to wait a few weeks to level out, is outright unfair to our students.

Suzi Tornberg | MARCH 18

CTA is working with legislators to change testing requirements. What we can do to help is contact our lawmakers and educate them on how overtesting is decimating our education system. Please call your senators and reps to help CTA and NEA.

Debbie Rogers Hardin | MARCH 16

Thank goodness for unions!

Renee Lucas Haugen | MARCH 14

Testing isn't bad when it is used to actually assess STUDENT progress and is used to inform instruction. It is not an effective tool for assessing schools or teachers.

What's new at cta.org

1

www.cta.org/poetry

April is National Poetry Month

You're a poet, but you don't know it, but your feet show it, they're Longfellows! Henry Wadsworth Longfellow isn't the only poet we'll be celebrating this month – join in!

2

www.cta.org/ctatrainings

Trainings, trainings and more trainings

From Communications to Women's Leadership, CTA offers a variety of trainings that provide tools and techniques to enhance educators' professional development.

3

www.ctamemberbenefits.org/dd

Do you need to update your beneficiaries?

The CTA Death and Dismemberment (D&D) Plan is an automatic benefit available to eligible CTA members at no additional cost. Register/update your beneficiaries today.

4

www.cta.org/optout

Can parents opt their children out of state-mandated testing?

The answer is YES. CTA's legal team has developed a handy Q&A that should help if or when the "opt out" question arises in your classroom.

5

www.teacherdrivenchange.org

Bolster your school project with an IFT Grant

Have a project that will improve student achievement? Does your project address the needs of diverse or at-risk students? Apply for an IFT Grant! Deadline is April 30.

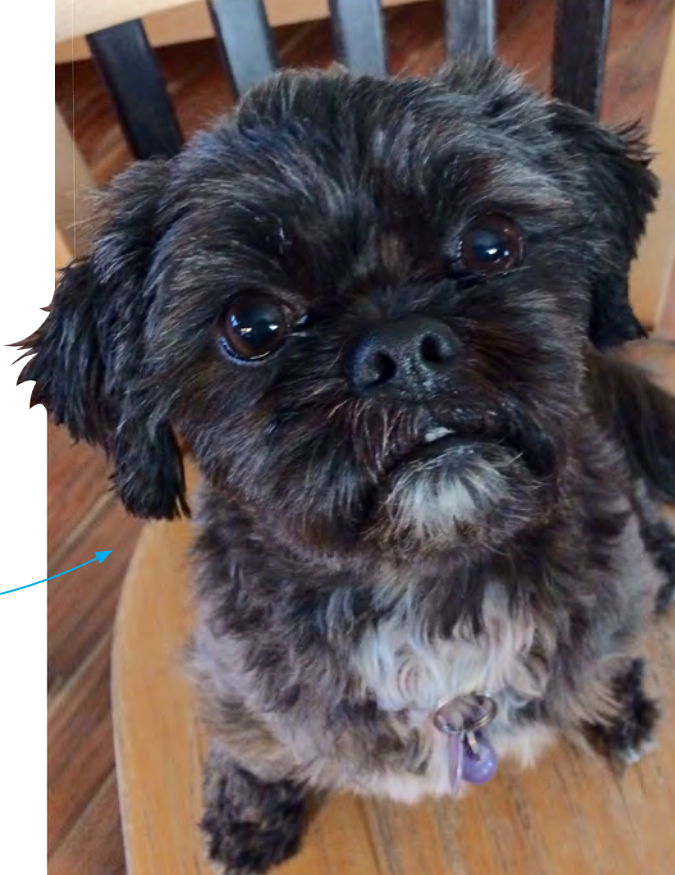
Change is good.

Just ask Dulcie.

I hear “kissy” sounds, turn and see a businessman getting down on his knees to talk to Dulcie. My Humane Society dropout has that effect on people. I’m getting used to friendly banter aimed at my dog, not me. Her mellow disposition has helped me meet friends. Quite different from my previous rambunctious and yippy pet. We’re actually in service dog training now, and after reading the story on page 42 where four-legged friends transform reluctant readers to enthusiastic ones, I think I’ll sign her up for the Reading Education Assistance Dogs program.

Now, I’ve been lucky to be editor of this magazine since March 2012. And during that time I was able to help usher in a magazine redesign to share more of your stories and good works. I couldn’t have done it without my talented colleagues in the CTA Communications Department and you. You were there with rave feedback, and sometimes a good scolding, for content changes or the handling of some issues. I’m pleased you’ve appreciated the standing articles, like this month’s Point/Counterpoint on all-day kindergarten (page 20) and the Tech Tips on cameras, apps and cellphones. When you read about the new USB-C connector, know you heard it here first because it is literally hot off the press, technically speaking (page 10).

With your help, we’ve always done an excellent job exploring instructional issues and educational trends, but there’s so much more that can impact our students. Like pesticide use near schools (page 36), which poses a great danger to students and educators forced to spend their days dangerously close to hazardous harvests. And we’ve covered personal interest items, too, like dressing for success and getting healthy. My favorite change? It’s that the education professionals, CTA members like you, are accepting invitations to share their expertise by writing articles. Topics ranged from advice on working with parents to instructional strategies to this month’s seafaring adventure (page 12).



I’m reminiscing because this is the last Editor’s Note I’ll be writing. Now, my love of magazines came from my friend Jane Hazard, a true expert on the printing process. I still love the ink smell of magazines right off the press. I love storytelling, and I missed helping members tell their own stories. So I’m heading “back into the field” and will work with local chapters on communications and grassroots organizing.

So, thank you for your suggestions. You provided word and math problems for the Extra Credit page (54). The “*Educators* are Everywhere” contest (page 13) was a hit, so we’re doing it again, and next month you’ll see the results of the *Educator* Journalism Contest.

A new editor will soon take on this magazine, and I look forward to my continued work with CTA members. Maybe I’ll take Dulcie with me when I work in Region II. The *Educator* will continue telling the wonderful story of you. I hope each of you continues sharing your story with us, and with your friends, neighbors, students, parents and policymakers. Those stories are what cause the changes we want and need to ensure every child gets the quality public education they deserve.

Cynthia Menzel
EDITOR IN CHIEF
editor@cta.org

Know&Tell

Grants, awards, contests, resources and tips to share



Experiencing a Sea Change

One teacher conquers
her fear to gain a new
perspective of STEM

SEEING HOW SCIENTISTS SOLVE PROBLEMS IN THE FIELD WAS A VALUABLE LESSON FOR **CARMINA RAMIREZ**, ASSOCIATED CALEXICO TEACHERS (LEFT), WHO JOINED 37 OCEANOGRAPHERS FROM THE SCRIPPS INSTITUTION OF OCEANOGRAPHY ABOARD THE R/V MELVILLE FOR A SUMMER OF RESEARCH. READ MORE ON PAGE 12.

USB-C

The latest USB connection standard to rule them all

by Terry Ng

UNIVERSAL SERIAL BUS (USB) PORTS are by far the most common type of peripheral connection. If you own a laptop, desktop, mobile phone or even a tablet, you've most likely encountered the USB connection cable without even knowing it. They're used to connect devices like printers, hard drives and keyboards, and even to charge your smartphone after a day of being out and about.

The newest USB connection is called USB-C. You'll see it first on Apple's latest MacBook, but it won't be unique to Apple laptops. In time, you'll see it spread to everything that currently uses the older, larger USB connector.

USB-C is a great upgrade to current USB technology, and although it may take a bit to become as popular as current USB connections, it'll certainly simplify the way we work with devices when it does.

Again, this new technology was just announced. If Apple is pushing it, chances are it's going to spread fast. We figured this is a perfect time to get our readers up to speed on it. Remember — you read it here first.

What's different about the new USB-C connector?

It's more powerful.

The bidirectional power output of USB-C can reach up to 100 watts, which is why Apple is using it as a charging connector for their new MacBook. Being able to charge a peripheral or host device means cutting down the amount of wires currently needed to make devices work.

It's faster.

Thanks to USB-C's use of the new USB 3.1 standard, data transfer speeds will reach up to 10 gigabits per second, which is two to 10 times faster than previous USB connectors.

It's tiny.

About one-third the size of the USB connectors you're currently using. USB-C cables will feature the same connection on both ends, allowing for reversible plug orientation. That means you won't have to worry about plugging it in upside down.

Quotes & Numbers

WE COMB THE MEDIA DAILY for the best quotes and statistics about public education. If you discover a quote or stat you think we should highlight, send it along with your name to editor@cta.org.

Compiled by Mike Myslinski

"Each student is an individual and has different gifts. Please be bold, be strong, and help our kids to find their special gift."

—Paraeducator **JANET EBERHARDT**, United Educators of San Francisco, in her March 6 speech after NEA named her 2015 National Education Support Professional of the Year. (Read more about Eberhardt on page 48.)

"People will quibble about precipitation levels and look at 1924 and 1977 as technically having less precipitation than now. That is nothing to have a party about, because there are millions more people than there were, relying on that water."

—**FELICIA MARCUS**, chair of the State Water Resources Board, in a March 23 radio interview about California entering its fourth year of severe drought.



"These are incredibly important studies, and I think we'd make a big mistake if we didn't look at them carefully and re-examine some assumptions. The idea of teachers maxing out in five years was so contradictory to what we know about other professions."

—**SEGUN EUBANKS**, director of teacher quality for NEA, in a March 24 *Education Week* story about new studies showing that educators keep growing and their skills do not plateau after their early years on the job.

"The good thing about science is that it's true whether or not you believe in it."

—New York astrophysicist **NEIL DEGRASSE TYSON**, in a recent "60 Minutes" profile.

"Real education should consist of drawing the goodness and the best out of our own students. What better books can there be than the book of humanity?"

—United Farm Workers leader **CÉSAR CHÁVEZ**, who died in 1993 and would have turned 88 on March 31.

The Numbers

228,019

POUNDS

Total pounds of certain agricultural pesticides known to cause cancer applied within a quarter mile of public schools in 15 California counties in 2010. (See story on page 36.)

\$172,860

DOLLARS

The average bonus paid to Wall Street securities employees in 2014, according to the New York state comptroller.

\$440,000

DOLLARS

Amount former LAUSD Superintendent John Deasy was paid last year, while the typical educator in the district was paid about \$75,000, the *Los Angeles Daily News* reported March 20.

8 trillion

GALLONS

Estimated minimum gallons of water used annually to produce Coca-Cola products, as noted in the March issue of *Harper's Magazine*.

\$10,700

DOLLARS

Amount of cash in a mother's wallet found by two Gavilan View Middle School students in Salinas and returned to the school office. The girls found the wallet Feb. 5 in a campus bathroom, and it was soon reunited with the grateful owner, the *Californian* newspaper reported.



I was a terrified teacher at sea

by Carmina Ramirez,
Associated Calexico Teachers

“I am a science teacher, and I am terrified of the ocean.”

That was the first line in my application for the Teacher at Sea program, which began my adventure in the Pacific this summer. I learned about this National Science Foundation-sponsored program for teachers when I attended a workshop at the Birch Aquarium at UC San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla.

The Teacher at Sea program provides an opportunity for educators to spend 30 days on a research vessel and participate in real-world, interdisciplinary research toward understanding and protecting the world's oceans and resources.

When I received the news that I had been chosen as the Teacher at Sea, I felt incredibly lucky and horrified at the same time. I had nightmares of a giant octopus lifting the ship out of the water, as well as massive waves wiping out everyone on deck. Fortunately, none of that happened. Instead, I got to work with and learn from a group of incredibly knowledgeable human beings whose determination inspired me on a personal and professional level.

For one month, I was part of a team of 37 oceanographers and 23 crewmembers on board the R/V Melville. The team of researchers from California Current Ecosystem Long Term Ecological Research

(CCE-LTER) was led by Mark Ohman, director of the CCE-LTER site, and cruise chief scientist Mike Landry, both from Scripps. Their research focus was on the effects of rising temperatures along the California coast, one of the most productive ecosystems in the world.

As the Teacher at Sea, my duty was to assist with the deployment and recovery of nets, as well as to maintain a bilingual blog about my experiences. I offered to write it in Spanish for the largely Spanish-speaking audience in the Imperial Valley and the city of Calexico, where I have worked as a science teacher for over a decade.

I was so excited to begin writing the blog and to get to know everyone, but during those first three days, the motion of the waves was very rough on me. My body kept trying to stay balanced while walking through the hallways of the vessel. Instead, I would bump into the walls while trying to hold on to the nearest chair or table to keep me from falling. In the restroom, I felt so thankful for all the bars that surrounded the walls, especially when I took a shower!

It was a lot to get used to, but before I knew it, my body had adjusted. I was no longer fighting the sensation of being on a waterbed when I tried to go to sleep. I even found it soothing. After being on the vessel for a few days, my fear of the ocean was gone. Its size was humbling, its motion mysterious, and I had no other way to feel but being part of it. I was ready to embrace the experience, and I did.

I carried with me a Canon DSLR, a GoPro video camera strapped around my chest, and a small notebook. Because I was prepared with my equipment, I was fortunate enough to capture some incredible images of sea life. One amazing sight was the day Kyra Rashid, graduate student, and I spotted a giant sunfish. I screamed when I saw it from deck while my left hand took over photographing. At that moment I realized that my camera had become an extension of myself. On another occasion, Dr. Ohman and I used the GoPro camera attached to a 15-foot pole to film remarkable gelatinous zooplankton called salps, as they drifted by underwater.

For those 30 days, I was surrounded by the most determined and adaptable individuals I have ever met. Research was happening 24 hours a day, and some scientists only slept three or four hours at a time. Every minute was very valuable, so I volunteered to help as much as I could, and I asked many questions to understand the methodology of the experiments and the questions behind the research that was taking place.

Many of the scientists came from other countries such as France, Spain, Colombia, Germany and

Denmark. Plankton ecologists, geochemists, physical and biological oceanographers, microbial diversity experts, and seabird/marine mammal observers, as well as computer software engineers, worked in unison to solve problems. The expertise and knowledge on our ship was impressive, and I learned new things every day.

Seeing how scientists work and solve problems in the field was the most valuable lesson for me. I understood the importance of the interrelation of scientific silence and discussion. The silence allowed the translation of deep thought about a specific problem, and the discussion collected many people's

ideas, allowing them to solve problems together.

“Seeing how scientists work and solve problems in the field was the most valuable lesson for me.”

This gave me a new perspective of what STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) really means in the classroom. It was clear to me that students need to model what scientists do. It takes time to come up with good ideas, and it is imperative

to work together to form solutions. Students must be exposed to real-life scenarios and be taught how to interpret data. Similarly, students need to know about the importance of long-term research and how we use it to make models that could help us prepare for changes in our environment.

Many times we teach students that science is a procedure that ends with a quick answer. But in reality, science is a process, and it may take months and even years to collect and analyze data.

The content knowledge that I have gained is invaluable to me. In many ways it surpasses the experiences I had at my university. I was taught by experts in their professional environment, and that gave great meaning to the journey. Out at sea, I observed a universe of life in a single drop of ocean water. I became determined to continue to teach about the ocean, its diversity, and the impacts that humans have in this marvelous world and resource.

Teachers can use the bilingual blog that I composed (cce.lternet.edu/blogs/2014) for science content in biology, Earth science, and environmental science. Other content areas such as English and Spanish may utilize the blogs for literacy purposes. Furthermore, there are science lessons and videos available through the CCE-LTER website composed by me, and all past participants of the Teacher at Sea program.

From left to right: **Christine Timmons**, Sweetwater EA, in Italy and Croatia. **Gloria Matoba**, Torrance TA, in Paris, France. **Brent Duka**, Moreland TA, in Washington, D.C.



Announcing the second **“Educators are everywhere!”** **PHOTO CONTEST**

Are you traveling or volunteering this summer?
Bring us along this summer, send a selfie, and win school supplies!

LIKE YOU, CARMINA RAMIREZ’S summer plans involved adventure. Even though she was terrified of the ocean, she took to the sea so her learnings could make her a better teacher.

CTA members are traveling everywhere, and because educators are everywhere, we thought it might be fun again to take your *Educator* along. Yes, we mean your CTA magazine.

Take a photo of yourself with your magazine between now and July 21 and send it in. You may win school supplies! Three \$50 gift cards for school supplies will be awarded.

Here’s what to do:

- While on your interesting or fun travels, take a photo with you and your favorite *Educator* magazine.
- **BONUS:** If you’re traveling over the summer like Carmina for the classroom, include a paragraph about how your travels and experience will improve teaching/learning. It may become a story for this magazine!
- Email your selfie and a brief description of what we’re seeing, with your name, local chapter and current email address, to editor@cta.org.

That’s it!

Entries will be accepted through July 21, 2015. All entries submitted will be reviewed. Judging considerations include creativity, location, distance, and applications to the classroom (and celebrity sightings, of course!).

Have fun on your summer travels.

Go Online



For details and to see last year’s submissions, go to
www.cta.org/educatorsareeverywhere.



for coding!

by Sherry Posnick-Goodwin



STEM teacher **Kelly Rafferty** and kindergartners at Santa Rita Elementary School in Los Altos (in the heart of Silicon Valley) watch Bee-Bot maneuver to the right spaces after the youngsters program him correctly. Rafferty says that even in kindergarten, youngsters are ready to learn coding.



Lele Wang programs Bee-Bot at Santa Rita Elementary School in Los Altos.

The kindergartners eagerly gather

around a smiling yellow and black robot named Bee-Bot. Kelly Rafferty asks them to roll the dice and send Bee-Bot to the corresponding square on a checkered plastic sheet. Students take turns pushing Bee-Bot's button in correct sequences to enter various commands. To their delight, Bee-Bot blinks and beeps as he inches toward his destination in a series of moves left, right, forward or back.

It looks like child's play, but the youngsters who attend Santa Rita Elementary School in Silicon Valley are actually learning the basics of coding. In its simplest terms, coding is using computer language to tell the computer what to do, step by step. Bee-Bot looks like a toy, but he can remember increasingly sophisticated commands and is helping the children learn sequencing and problem-solving skills that will serve as a foundation for computer programming later on.

"I like this," says Sara Perekhodnik, a kindergartner coding with Bee-Bot. "It's so fun."

Rafferty is a STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) teacher for her district who visits the classrooms of fellow Los Altos Teachers Association members to teach coding with Bee-Bot, his "big brother" Pro-Bot (in the guise of a race car), and other programmable gadgets.

Coding in kindergarten? Really?

"They can handle it," says Rafferty with a smile. "By the time these students are in second or third grade, they'll be writing their own programs in Scratch or ScratchJr."

(Scratch, along with the junior version, is a free programming language where participants can create their own interactive stories, games and animations.)

Coding, once a college-level course, is now de rigueur in some K-12 classrooms. While President Obama urged public education to put its

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17



Why the need for coding?

IN CALIFORNIA, there are 78,000 open jobs for computer scientists, but only 4,800 computer science college graduates this year, according to code.org co-founder Hadi Partovi. And every state in the U.S. needs more computer programmers than schools are producing.

Currently, 56 percent of California public high schools don't offer a single course in computer science or programming. There are very few advanced courses. This is not the case everywhere. In China, every child must learn computer programming.

To incorporate computer science into public schools, the state Legislature recently passed Senate Bill 1200, which allows (but does not mandate) the University of California to count computer science toward the math requirement for UC admission. Also passed was Assembly Bill 1764, which allows high schools to count computer science toward graduation requirements.

It may be the home of Silicon Valley, but California is doing little to prepare students for computing jobs, say critics. K-12 schools have no curriculum standards to follow for computer science. It is not part of the Common Core or Next Generation Science Standards. While high school enrollment has risen 15 percent since 2000, the number of classes in computer science or programming fell by 34 percent, reports the *San Jose Mercury News*, and the number of teachers assigned to those courses fell by 51 percent.

Not everyone agrees with the importance of teaching coding to youngsters. Robert Ruiz, technology arts teacher at Lawrence Jones Middle School in Rohnert Park, says it may be a fad with little benefit.

"I don't think it has value for 90 percent of students," says Ruiz, Rohnert Park-Cotati Educators Association. "We did the Hour of Code, and kids enjoyed it, but I'm not sure they grasped why they were doing it. The average person doesn't need to know coding. They can create their own website without knowing coding. To me, what's more important is that students know how to use Google Documents, Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint to create papers and presentations for high school, college or the workplace."



Robert Ruiz, technology arts teacher at Lawrence Jones Middle School in Rohnert Park, helps student Aidan Janosa create a presentation that does not require coding.

While Ruiz does not think coding should be emphasized in elementary or middle schools, he would like to see it offered as a high school elective for students considering a career in computer science.

Others, however, see coding as something vital to prepare even very young students for the future.

"I'd like to see it be part of every school's curriculum before high school, so students will be more likely to sign up for these classes in high school," says Allison Smith, a teacher at Brentwood Academy, East Palo Alto.

"I'd especially like to see more girls encouraged to take classes in coding," adds Smith, Ravenswood Teachers Association. "We need computer programmers badly in the Bay Area and throughout California. We are hiring thousands of them from other countries, because we don't have enough programmers here, even though it's a well-paying job. It's very important that students have exposure to this, so they can make an informed choice about whether it's a career they would like to pursue."



Michelle Soto, standing, helps Andrea Gonzalez with coding during the “Techie Club” at Brentwood Academy in East Palo Alto



Maria Mack teaches computer basics at Millswood Middle School in Stockton.



Angie Hoffman went from working at Zynga to teaching at Balboa High School’s new Game Design Academy.



collective big toe into the world of computer programming via the Hour of Code, a few teachers have jumped in with both feet to transform the profession.

For those unfamiliar with Hour of Code, tens of millions of students of all ages participated in the event as part of Computer Science Education Week in December. Hour of Code is designed to demystify computer science and show that anybody can learn the basics. The nationwide campaign, sponsored by code.org and csedweek.org, included free tutorials by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg and Microsoft mogul Bill Gates.

Equity in access

While Los Altos School District has the resources to teach coding to children during instructional time, that’s not the case in many low socioeconomic communities, writes Dan Lewis, author of the article “Computer science: It’s where the jobs are, but schools don’t teach it,” *San Jose Mercury News*.

“In part, it’s an issue of equity and access,” writes Lewis, a founding member of the Alliance for California Computing Education for Students and School

(ACCESS). “When computer science is offered, it’s usually in the more affluent suburban schools where Latino and African American students are underrepresented.”

At Brentwood Academy, just 15 minutes from Los Altos in the low-income community of East Palo Alto, Allison Smith attempts to level the playing field with a before-school “Techie Club” that meets in the computer lab daily. Students became interested after the Hour of Code online lesson. Recently, students created their own version of a Flappy Birds game with ScratchJr.

Some students are English learners, but they understand the visual language of computer programming, says Smith, Ravenswood Teachers Association.

“I have a lot of students who struggle in school, and you’d think they wouldn’t want to spend more time in here, but they show up early to be in the programming club. Soon they will be creating their own programs and apps. Often these kids don’t have computers at home. But they will attend high school with students from wealthier communities, so it’s important they can compete.”

Fifth-grader Mark Pacheco is wired about the coding club.

“It’s cool to learn these things. We make our own games or programs. And you can get a job from it, too.”

Students in Maria Mack’s seventh-grade computer basics class at Millswood Middle School in Lodi look forward to “Code Fridays,”



where they watch videos on code.org and then re-enact what they've learned on computers, by moving blocks or solving puzzles with number codes and sequencing. Mack loves that coding encourages collaboration and critical thinking, reinforces mathematical concepts and is fun.

"They start with learning how to move an object, and then progress to creating shapes or adding colors or sounds," explains Mack, Lodi Teachers Association. "They can type in a code where something will move, or type in another code that becomes a shape. In time, they will create their own games and apps."

"My students were born in the digital age, and this is their world," she adds. "They are on the cutting edge and fortunate to have this opportunity."

Computer science is not just a game

"We're going to start our final project, designing 'twitch' games," says Angela Hoffman, whose students are creating video games at Balboa High School in San Francisco. "Twitch games have twitch mechanics where you think fast, show dexterity and have quick reactions, unlike strategy games."

Hoffman has purple hair, carries a piñata unicorn, and seems to be having as much fun as her students, who started out this year doing simple projects with Snap!, a visual drag-and-drop programming language using blocks, and have since moved on to JavaScript. As part of the school's Game Design Academy, the course counts toward UC admission and is the most popular elective on campus.

Hoffman is a digital game designer whose credits include The Sims and FarmVille. Zynga, her longtime employer, partnered with the San Francisco Unified School District to pilot the game design course and paid for the computers. Zynga and the Department of Children, Youth and their Families in San Francisco are paying Hoffman's salary, which went from six figures to that of a teacher. And Hoffman has never been happier.

"I feel like I've finally found my calling," says Hoffman, United Educators of San Francisco. "I get to combine my love of games and my love of working with kids into the ultimate dream job."

It may be about games, but Hoffman takes it seriously.

"It's more than a game. If you're going into any field — restaurant management, health care, or working as a mechanic — your job touches technology. I don't care if students get a degree in computer science, but we should make kids unafraid of computer technology. It will help their understanding of math. I tell kids that I am terrified of math, but I've found a way through games to make math interesting and fun, and now I'm much better at it."

Hoffman constantly tells her students she wants them to "fail" because they will learn by doing so.



Allison Smith works with Jairo Equihua while Corey Walker works with Ludwen Rodales on coding during morning "Techie Club."

"When I say that, half the class freaks out. But I tell them the story about how the creators of Angry Birds made 52 games that failed and were

about to go bankrupt, when someone drew that little red bird. Were those 52 games really failures? No, they learned something from each wrong reiteration and had to improve 52 times. So I tell my kids to just put something on the screen and make it happen until it finally works."

Her students pick topics for their twitch games out of the piñata that include themes such as "When bunnies attack" and "Baked goods as weapons."

"This class is pretty hard," muses Julia Adelantar, a junior. "But it's something I've always wanted to learn because I like games so much." She pulls her hair and lets out a mock scream of frustration because her project is not going smoothly.

"Just test it over and over and over again," says Hoffman. "Test it until it feels *fun*." ■

To learn more about coding, check out:

- Hour of Code and beyond — code.org
- Coding in the Classroom: 10 Tools Students Can Use to Design Apps and Video Games — teachthought.com
- Scratch Overview — vimeo.com
- Scratch Curriculum Guide Draft — harvard.edu
- 15+ Ways of Teaching Every Student to Code — edutopia.org
- Bringing girls on board — girlswhocode.com

Perspectives

Members' opinions and practical advice, plus guest columns and reviews



Black Lives Matter

Equity and Human Rights participants take part in a courageous conversation

LA TOYA BROWN (LEFT), MT. PLEASANT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION, AND GARIESHA ROBERTS, STUDENT CTA, JOINED IN A CONVERSATION ABOUT RACE IN AMERICA WITH OTHER PARTICIPANTS AT CTA'S EQUITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONFERENCE. LEARN MORE ABOUT HAVING THESE COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS IN YOUR SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY ON PAGE 22.

Should students be in all-day kindergarten?

Yes.

This is my third year teaching full-day kindergarten. For

the two years I taught half-day kindergarten, I remember a helpless feeling at the end of each day. I worried about the components of my lesson plan that were skipped or overlooked. There just wasn't time.

The full-day kindergarten daily routine starts with phonemic awareness, independent work and breaks. It is relaxing and peaceful. Each subject is taught fully, and we are never rushed.

The demands of education placed upon a teacher are tremendous across grade levels. Spending adequate time with students to teach concepts is essential. Critical thinking, independent reading and math circles are just a fraction of concepts tackled throughout my day. I wouldn't be able to complete them if I had only half of the time.

My students enjoy full-time kindergarten, because I have the time for lessons filled with songs, videos and manipulatives. As health becomes more of a focus in schools, I take many "Brain Breaks" throughout the day, which are designed to give movement opportunities to students, in addition to two recess breaks.

I never stress about implementing my lesson plans with the full-day schedule. However, if I could change anything about the full-day model, it would be to implement teacher prep time. That is the only component I miss. During my time as a half-day teacher I used the second part of my day to prep for my work week. That time is not provided to full-day teachers, but it is essential.

As a single mother myself, I will be enrolling my own child into full-day kindergarten next year. It's a relief knowing that he will spend his day learning in a classroom with a safe environment during my work hours and that he will be learning at an unrushed pace.

Christal Smith, San Bernardino Teachers Association, teaches full-day kindergarten at Emmerton Elementary School.



With increasing pressure to boost test scores, many schools switched from half-day to full-day kindergarten classes. Some believe it is a better way to prepare students for first grade. Others believe it's too much.

Two kindergarten teachers share their viewpoints.



No.

I have been teaching kindergarten for 20 years with experience in half day, full day and extended day. I am against full-day kindergarten. I think we are pushing too much curriculum on these 5-year-olds.

I know that there are kindergarten teachers who feel there isn't enough time in the day to teach students everything they need, but I think having full-day kindergarten will push the expectations and benchmarks even higher. We have pushed curriculum down to lower ages and expect more from children, and it has put too much stress on them. They start to dislike school. When I taught full-day kindergarten, I found that students just shut off after a certain time in the day. Research shows that any gains students make in a full-day kindergarten program are lost after first grade.

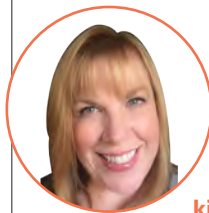
I know many politicians and big business moguls are worried about how we compare to other nations, which is related to pushing curriculum down and upping the testing pressures every year. In Finland, students don't even start school until they are 7, and they are doing great in multinational comparisons. So full-day kindergarten isn't the answer.

In Palo Alto, we have "extended day kindergarten," which extends the day for half the class at a time to fit in a little bit more curriculum. Students in this program leave 40 minutes before primary students and an hour before intermediate students. This works well for a great majority of students.

I hear the argument: "If kids aren't in kindergarten all day, they're just in day care, so they may as well be in school." But I would rather they be somewhere they can play, explore, relax and be kids. They will be in school for at least another 12 years. So let's let 5-year-olds be 5-year-olds.

I hear the argument: "If kids aren't in kindergarten all day, they're just in day care, so they may as well be in school." But I would rather they be somewhere they can play, explore, relax and be kids. They will be in school for at least another 12 years. So let's let 5-year-olds be 5-year-olds.

Teri Baldwin, Palo Alto Education Association, teaches extended kindergarten at Addison Elementary School.





IN HOLLY'S WORDS

It bothers me... that the typical American doesn't understand what we do today, and that the next 30 years in agriculture is going to make or break our country and influence

the world. One California farmer feeds 155 people in a year. Of those, 30 are overseas. So we not only feed ourselves, but people in other countries. To be "ag literate" is to understand the influence that agriculture has on society. I guess you could say that's a huge basket of information.

What's cool about ag biology is... it is very hands-on, where students learn by doing. Curriculum follows state standards and satisfies the life science requirement for UC and CSU. And there are great job opportunities in agribusiness — not only farming and ranching and ornamental horticulture, but also in marketing and sales. It can be a great career path.

People shouldn't be scared... of genetically modified plants or selective breeding of animals. For example, you don't have to put a pesticide on corn if it has been genetically modified with a component that keeps insects from attacking. It's just moving DNA from one plant to another. Through natural breeding of chickens, they grow faster and use less feed. A chicken you buy in the grocery store today eats half of what a chicken did in the 1950s and yields more meat through selective breeding. Plants and animals need to become more efficient so we can feed our society.

Future Farmers of America is... more than just about raising animals. We also focus on leadership and personal success. We go all over the state and sometimes to the Midwest to attend conferences. After being in FFA, some students go out and start their own business or find employment in the ag business.

And floral design class... is not just flower arranging. It actually meets the art requirement for going to a university. And it's fun, too.

Cultivating students

by Sherry Posnick-Goodwin

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED on the way to work, Holly Egan tells visitors. At 7:15 a.m., a call from the district's transportation office reported that her school's bus driver had seen 15 bulls strolling down the highway. She immediately called her husband and son to round up the escapees and bring them back to the ranch.

"In a small town, everyone knows everyone, including the cattle," says Egan.

She's an agriculture instructor at Lassen High School, which serves a rural student population in Susanville. Her classes include ag biology, ag economics, and the art of floral design. Egan is also the adviser for the school's chapter of Future Farmers of America. And then there's the family business of raising commercial cattle and farming alfalfa.

Agriculture is more relevant than ever, and that's no bull, asserts Egan, Lassen Teachers Association, who has little patience for those who underestimate its value.

"If you want your children to eat and your grandchildren to eat, agriculture is *very* important. Our population is expected to climb to 9 billion by 2050, and now we're at approximately 6 billion. Who's going to feed everyone?" ■

Talking about Race ▶

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACIAL JUSTICE can be uncomfortable. CTA members participating in the Black Lives Matter training at CTA's recent Equity and Human Rights Conference in Burlingame knew that entering the room. They also knew how important it was to acknowledge the inequalities, the injustice and the opportunity gaps that are daily hurdles for black and brown people in America.

Members were there to talk about the Black Lives Matter movement, which began as a hashtag after George Zimmerman's acquittal for the shooting death of Trayvon Martin in 2013, and gained momentum after other police-involved shootings.

African American participants spoke of the fear in their heart every time their sons left the house, and the worry that their child could be killed for being black or 'in the wrong place at the wrong time.' They told of being dismissed by colleagues when they expressed an idea at school. They described the challenge of having to be an overachiever just to be taken seriously.

A Latina teacher talked of the challenges involved in educating family members, noting that at her school, some students are told not to play with Mexican or black kids. Another member noted that GLBTQ students are frequently victims as well.

What was clear at the end of the training: There is still much work to be done and many more conversations to be had in order for all of our students to feel safe in their communities. ■

In an effort to continue this conversation, the Educator sat down with Chauncey Smith, a Racial Justice Advocate for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of California, to find out how teachers can discuss racial justice in their classroom.



1. **Is it a good thing for schools and educators to become involved with the current movement for racial justice?**

Yes, at its heart, the current movement for racial justice aims to make the constitutional promise of equality a reality for all Americans, across racial lines. Seeing that today's youth will eventually be the adults who run our nation, their social development in furtherance of racial equity is pivotal. Because schools and educators spend a tremendous amount of time with youth, it would be great if they could integrate the movement for racial justice into the classrooms and everyday lives of our future leaders.

2. **What role can unions and CTA play in promoting the current movement for racial justice?**

Unions and the CTA can play a vital role in advancing racial justice by harnessing the collective power of their membership to advocate for reforms that push our society towards equality, fairness and justice. This year, the California Legislature is considering numerous measures that would reduce racial inequities in our state education and criminal justice systems. I would encourage unions to support them. In addition, they can participate in grassroots racial justice mobilization efforts.

3. **How can students benefit when their teachers share information about the current movement for racial justice?**

Students, as human beings, don't know or understand race and inequality until they have life experiences. Their exposure to the present movement for

racial justice can thus be beneficial by giving them a new frame of reference for understanding the complexity of the world in which they live. The current movement gives students a very unique opportunity to think about a problem (one outside traditional curricula that is very important), internally wrestle with it, and make deductions. Understanding how we interact with one another as human beings, and how structures impact our lives, is extremely difficult.

4. **What are some of the ways that teachers can incorporate the current movement for racial justice into curriculum and class discussions?**

A useful method would be to show students a video recording of recent protests and perhaps subsequent news reports, and then pose questions that encourage the students to make sense of what they've just seen, how it relates to their everyday lives, and how it relates to the history and future of our nation.

5. **Is there any “right” age to bring this up with students? Are there age-appropriate levels of managing this?**

Age-appropriateness is a factor to consider, and it's hard to determine because youth socially and emotionally develop at varying rates. I think a more important focus, when it comes to the present movement for justice and equity, is the strength of its cultural and historical relevancy. Movements like the present one don't come around too often. It has caught the hearts and attention of millions of Americans. This energy, emotion, and struggle for equity should be harnessed as a unique educational opportunity.

6. **What are the best resources for teachers who would like to do that?**

In terms of approaches to educational pedagogy and theory, I like the works of Paulo Freire, Pedro Noguera, Mica Pollock, Tyrone Howard, and Jeannie Oakes.

A second good source is whatever is currently relevant to the lives of students. Consider how it might relate to the underlying racial justice issues sought to be addressed. Alternative platforms, such as popular music, social media and news may help things resonate.

Third, consider educating students with evidenced-based concepts that help explain racial inequalities, such as implicit or unconscious bias.

Fourth, to provide historical context, and a more holistic understanding, it would be great to tie current protests and related reform efforts to preceding movements for racial equity. Touch upon, for example, emancipation,

reconstruction, and the civil rights movement. Have students ponder how MLK and leaders for racial progress before him would have viewed present struggles.

7. **Is the movement just for African Americans?**

At bottom, I'd say it's for the advancement of our nation's democracy, which includes people of varying demographic backgrounds. At the same time, it's important to recognize that those disproportionately suffering from the underlying social issues that have led to present movements in favor of justice are disproportionately black and brown. These voices are vital.

8. **Why is the movement controversial?**

Most movements to change societal status quos are often controversial. The civil rights movement was extremely controversial. People, as human beings, tend to want to hold onto long-held beliefs and systems, even if they are wrong and unjust, especially if there are benefits or privileges at stake.

9. **What is your response to those who say “all lives matter”?**

Yes, all lives do matter. But perhaps a better question may be, to what degree do varying lives matter in our present-day society?

The recent deaths of many black and brown people at the hands of law enforcement — such as Michael Brown in Ferguson, Eric Garner in New York City, Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Alex Nieto in San Francisco, and both Ezell Ford and a homeless man named Africa in Los Angeles — reflect an all too familiar story, one which indicates that the lives of people of color are still less valued despite the tremendous progress since our nation's founding.

10. **What is the best way for educators to initiate a conversation about race and social justice?**

Ask difficult questions and speak frankly.

Coming Next Month

We visit classrooms to see how members have turned recent race-related tragedies into teachable moments.

Common Core brings language out of the shadows

by Kenji Hakuta

A FEW YEARS AGO, I visited a middle school classroom in which a teacher introduced the day's lesson about rational and irrational numbers. When the teacher wrote the topic on the board, a student in the back of the classroom enthusiastically exclaimed, "It contains the word 'ratio.'" The teacher noted the comment, said "OK," and moved on with the lesson plan — a missed opportunity for deeper learning of both content and language.

In focusing on learning that is "fewer and deeper and more connected," California's Common Core State Standards are changing how that teacher would respond today. These standards were written to prepare students to be "college and career ready." They do so in part by placing an explicit and implicit emphasis on language as it relates to contemporary life.

That's what makes them especially important for our students who are immigrants and children of families speaking languages other than English. This group makes up at least 40 percent of our state presently, and is growing. Many of these students are classified as English learners and fall under the scrutiny of the system

for their academic performance and their progress in learning English.

What's different now is that the new standards privilege how language is used. The new mathematics standards, for example, call for students "to understand the reasoning of others" when they discuss key mathematical concepts. How would this play out in classrooms? In the situation I described above, the teacher would have taken the opportunity to discuss what students think of this observation and gotten the class to deepen its understanding between ratio and the concept of number rationality.



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What does “ratio” have to do with rational and irrational numbers? An irrational number, by definition, is a real number that cannot be written as a simple fraction, or ratio. For example, π is irrational because it cannot be expressed as a fraction. But is this student just observing a coincidence in the string of letters, or is he trying to think of how ratio is related to the concept of rational and irrational numbers?

Asking the student to explain why the words are related would lead not only to a deeper understanding of the lesson, but would potentially engage students who are attuned to the structure and reasoning behind new words — it’s actually interesting to observe that the word is “irrational” and not “irrational” — a lesson in word structure.

Language is pervasive in our lives, and like fish in water, we often do not appreciate its role in our lives. Teachers and monolingual students do not see the role that English plays in their lives, but students who come

from other languages constantly see it. This is particularly true of oral language, another new emphasis of the CCSS.

Under the new standards, learning academic content has become inseparable from an English language development class. Math teachers are now teachers of the language of mathematics, history teachers are now teachers of the language of history, science teachers are now the teachers of the language of science, etc.

All this, in the long run, is good news for the 1.5 million-plus English learners in the state — a group of students who must succeed in order for the state as a whole to succeed. But it’s also good news for all students, because English learners tend to be the most sensitive, both positively and negatively, to how the language environment shifts in their classrooms. The Common Core requires more uses of rich language

during academic instruction, which is something that all students need in order to succeed in futures that require greater collaboration and communication among our citizens. ■

Kenji Hakuta is Lee L. Jacks professor of education at Stanford University.

**ALL THIS, IN THE LONG
RUN, IS GOOD NEWS FOR
THE 1.5 MILLION-PLUS
ENGLISH LEARNERS
IN THE STATE.**

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Advocacy

News from the legal, legislative, bargaining and education policy fronts



Advocating for Charter School Accountability

Educators join legislators to introduce bills to ensure charter school transparency

“We think these bills are commonsense remedies and practical measures for every school — including charter schools.”

UTLA/NEA VICE PRESIDENT **CECILY MYART-CRUZ** STOOD ON THE STEPS OF THE CAPITOL IN SUPPORT OF CTA CO-SPONSORED BILLS THAT WILL HELP ENSURE CHARTER SCHOOL ACCESS, ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY FOR THE SAKE OF ALL STUDENTS. READ MORE ABOUT THESE BILLS ON THE NEXT PAGE.

Assembly Member Hernández emphasizes that his AB 787 specifies that all school employees, whether at a “traditional school or charter school, in a physical classroom or online classroom ... have equal employment rights.”

Proposed Legislation

CTA is co-sponsoring four bills designed to provide students and educators at charter schools with the same opportunities provided at traditional public schools.

SB 322 (Leno) requires charter schools to follow traditional public school admissions criteria, comply with suspension and expulsion provisions, and collect student turnover and teacher rollover data.

SB 329 (Mendoza) requires changes to charter school oversight as it relates to bidding; provides that charter petitions can be denied based on financial, educational or staffing impacts on the other schools in the district.

AB 709 (Gipson) requires a charter school to be transparent and accountable in its operation and use of funds.

AB 787 (Hernández) ensures charter school employees can continue to unionize and belong to the local union.



Lawmakers, educators propose comprehensive changes

to boost charter accountability, transparency, and fair access to all students

SENATORS MARK LENO (D-San Francisco) and **Tony Mendoza** (D-Artesia) and Assembly Members **Roger Hernández** (D-West Covina) and **Mike Gipson** (D-Carson) and representatives of CTA, the California Federation of Teachers, the California Labor Federation, and charter educators spoke out on the Capitol steps on March 25 in support of measures that would increase fiscal and governance accountability at these schools, shore up protections for employees organizing a union, and ensure unbiased access to all students.

“All students should have the opportunity to attend a quality public school, and all schools, whether they are charter or traditional schools, should be held to the same high standards. Student success shouldn’t depend on what their ZIP code happens to be,” said CTA President Dean E. Vogel.

Educators from California Virtual Academies (CAVA), a network of online charter schools, let legislative staff know that their efforts to advocate for their students were being stymied by corporate governance of the schools. They cited efforts by CAVA management to quash their efforts to form a CTA chapter, something vital for their pro-student advocacy in the face of threats.

“Student success is secondary to profits, and voicing concerns is dangerous at an ‘at will’ institution. Teachers have been fired, not renewed, or had their assignments reduced because of their advocacy,” CAVA teacher Sarah Vigrass said.

The news conference came less than a week after CTA and its partners held a briefing for lawmakers’ staff members that focused on a new report that spotlights holes in current state law that have allowed many charter schools to engage in discriminatory admission practices and have let corporate charter operators profit unconscionably at the expense of students. The report, from the Annenberg Institute, cites a critical need for transparency and greater accountability at the state’s growing number of charter schools. ■



Charter school statistics

1,184

EXISTING CHARTER
SCHOOLS IN CALIFORNIA

87

NEW CHARTER SCHOOLS
OPENING IN 2014–15

9%

ESTIMATED PERCENTAGE
OF STUDENTS ATTENDING
CHARTER SCHOOLS

Renewed attacks on educators' rights

WAVES OF CTA MEMBERS have been in the state Capitol, explaining why a new round of “education reforms” would hurt students in their classrooms.

The CTA members also warned legislators that so-called “reform” measures introduced by Assembly Republican Caucus Chair Kristin Olsen (R-Modesto) would make it difficult to attract and retain high quality educators best equipped to make school and classroom decisions that ensure student success.

Olsen introduced bills that mirror the attacks on educators brought forth by the plaintiffs in the *Vergara v. state of California* lawsuit, which is pending appeal. The bills undermine experience and do away with due process rights; extend the new teacher probationary period; and change the evaluation system to include standardized test scores. ■



Photo by Len Feldman

CTA presses for ethnic studies bill

UTLA/NEA Vice President **Cecily Myart-Cruz** and student Moriela Pizarro of the Alisal Dream Academy in Salinas testify to the Assembly Education Committee in support of AB 101, a CTA-backed measure emphasizing the importance of ethnic studies. The bill was introduced by Assembly Member Luis Alejo (D-Watsonville).

The bill would require the State Board of Education to adopt a model curriculum framework and require all districts with grades 7-12 to offer an elective course on ethnic studies.

As part of the process, the state superintendent would be empowered to create an Ethnic Studies Advisory Committee, the majority of whose members would be classroom teachers and university professors teaching the subject.

The measure cleared the Assembly Education Committee on a 6-1 vote and is slated for an April 15 hearing in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

CTA members at the Capitol ▼



Three California Virtual Academies (CAVA) charter teachers — **Jen Shilen**, social sciences; **Sarah Vigrass**, elementary; and **Debbie Scoltock**, high school math — told legislative staff they were committed to telling the story about CAVA because change is needed. “Students are not getting the education they deserve, and teachers are having problems trying to teach,” Shilen said.



Delta Service Center Council Chair **Mike Patterson** introduces himself to a key staff member for Assembly Member Beth Gaines (R-Rocklin) during a visit with a team of educators from the area.



Maggie Ellis, right, president of the Elk Grove Teachers Association and a classroom teacher, and a member team talk to Assembly Member Jim Cooper (D-Elk Grove), foreground, about the unmet needs of the classroom, overly large district reserves, and the already in place expedited process for adjudicating misconduct charges leveled at teachers.

BARGAINING UPDATE

➔ See what's happening statewide at www.cta.org/bargainingupdates

Community outlines how to stand up for Fresno students

Participating in the district's Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) meetings was OK, but **Fresno Teachers Association** leaders wanted more stakeholder engagement, so they held a series of three "Stand with Students" community meetings. Some 465 parents, educators, students and community members talked about improving public education, answering questions about academic achievement, social and emotional supports necessary for students to succeed, and school safety concerns. Attendees were asked to join a task force to make the recommendations a reality. Some 200 volunteers will meet on April 14 to review recommendations, some of which are mandatory subjects of bargaining, and plan how to make improvements happen.

Lucia Mar teachers prepare to strike, file charges against district

Lucia Mar Unified Teachers Association members voted overwhelmingly to authorize LMUTA's executive board to call a strike in the event a contract settlement is not reached. Members and supporters continue rallying to convince the district not to impose its "last, best final" offer of 2 percent, a figure far lower than what the district can pay and what is needed to begin to make Lucia Mar more competitive with neighboring school districts.

Meanwhile, LMUTA filed unfair labor practice (ULP) charges with the Public Employment Relations Board against the school district over numerous items, including threats to illegally stop payment

for health benefits, refusal to bargain changes to terms of employment, unilaterally changing leave authorization policies, interfering in protected activities (legal union actions), threatening and coercing members in attempts to stop them from participating in protected activities, and violating mediation confidentiality by publicly disclosing proposals discussed during mediation.

"These illegal actions by the district are only making it more difficult to achieve a settlement, and violations like this are a terrible example for students and our community," says LMUTA president Donna Kandel.

At press time: An eleventh hour tentative agreement between the Lucia Mar Unified Teachers Association and the Lucia Mar Unified School District prevented a strike.

Adding to bad faith bargaining, Santa Rosa educators seek 'malfeasance' investigation

Hundreds of **Santa Rosa Teachers Association** members jammed school board meetings to demand the district stop allocating scarce classroom funds to outside consultants and use Proposition 30 funds for class size reduction and retaining experienced teachers.

Santa Rosa educators receive no district contribution to medical benefits and are among the lowest in total compensation in Sonoma County. Many highly qualified and experienced teachers are fleeing to nearby districts. Now at impasse, SRTA is asking for a 5 percent pay hike that includes the district paying a portion of teach-

ers' medical benefits for the first time in nearly a decade.

At the request of SRTA President Amy Stern, the district is launching an independent investigation regarding Santa Rosa City Schools Superintendent Socorro Shiels withholding from the school board a November letter sent to the trustees outlining how the district can save \$2 million annually on student bus transportation costs. SRTA is filing unfair labor practice charges for withholding information and stalling bargaining.



Fight for 5!

San Diego Education Association members have five bargaining goals: Protecting planning time; attractive pay and benefits; lower class sizes; more counselors, nurses and special education support; and more elementary student enrichment classes. While some tentative agreements (TAs) have been achieved, SDEA members continue their *Fight for Five* campaign with after-school rallies.



Candy Woodson describes the pain of losing her job without warning at the Academy of Personalized Learning in Redding, while fired colleague **Mark Youmans** listens.

'DREAM SCHOOL' BECOMES THE **NIGHTMARE** BEFORE CHRISTMAS

by Sherry Posnick-Goodwin

Some things are worth fighting for,

say educators who teach — or once taught — at the Academy of Personalized Learning. They include respect, dignity, fairness, and the right of students to receive a quality education.

And then there are basic workplace rights like lunch breaks, fair pay, and not being subjected to bullying or harassment in a hostile work environment.

Unions were formed in the 19th century to protect workers from such abuse. And it is the same for a group of brave charter school teachers who formed their own CTA chapter to defend themselves from mistreatment — and preserve the quality of a school they care deeply about.

It hasn't been easy. A few were fired in retaliation for unionizing. But the battle isn't over, say members who believe they will prevail against an administrator who fired workers for no apparent reason right before Christmas, without informing them they had been terminated.

We'll meet some members of the Academy of Personalized Learning Education Association (APLEA). They may be a brand-new CTA chapter, but they have lessons to teach all CTA members about standing up for what's right in the face of tyranny,

discrimination and cruelty — as well as demonstrating exactly why unions are as relevant today as they were a century ago.

"I loved it," says Candy Woodson, recalling her early days at the Academy of Personalized Learning (APL). "It was a great place."

At first it felt exciting and innovative at the Redding charter school, which combines traditional classroom activities with online curriculum and independent study in a "blended" learning environment for K-12 students. It was filled with like-minded teachers who wanted the very best for their students, says Woodson, who taught art, special education and other classes.

She never worried about the paragraph on the school's website stating all staff are considered "at-will employees," which means they can be fired without due process or just cause — even if it's on the whim of an administrator having a bad day. She believed, like other teachers who put their heart and soul into making the school succeed, that her hard work and loyalty would be valued and that she would never be treated so callously.

She no longer believes that, after being fired without just cause.



The school was originally called Modoc Charter School. Like many charters, it promised teachers freedom, creativity, and an opportunity to make a difference in young lives. Teachers were eager to teach at the Shasta County campus. They were told they didn't need a union because they would be treated well. And they believed that to be true, until the behavior of school director Patricia Dougherty became increasingly abusive.

Dougherty, who declined an interview request for this article, reminded teachers constantly of their at-will status. Teachers say that she would talk aloud in the hallway about how she felt like firing certain employees. Every day, teachers increasingly feared their jobs were on the line.

Teachers say that if they called in sick or had an emergency, Dougherty refused to hire substitutes and said it was their responsibility to find a colleague to cover for them. Teachers say she increased class sizes substantially without warning. Some were dismayed to learn that the school had a pay scale that was not based on seniority, hours worked or even evaluations, but instead decided by Dougherty without explanation. One full-time teacher was shocked to learn that she was making nearly the same salary as a half-time teacher.

Teachers were considered to be full-time, half-time, or somewhere in between based on the number of independent studies students they oversaw. And if Dougherty was unhappy with teachers, she withheld new students, say teachers. In one case, a teacher went from a full-time position to half-time, with his pay slashed.

"I had half of my 26 students graduate or move away last year, and Dr. Dougherty didn't give me any more students, leaving me as a half-time teacher," says APLEA member Mark Youmans, who has taught a number of classes including geography, U.S. government, economics and geography. "That is one of her ways of pushing a teacher to quit without actually dealing with them in a professional manner."

Teachers say they worked without lunch breaks, despite school ending between 4 and 5 p.m. Several said they were only allowed 10 minutes to eat lunch.

"Worst of all, we felt like we had lost our voice," says Youmans. "Our opinions were not being valued when it came to curriculum, class structure or schedules. There was no sense of fairness. There were no rules. No one was ever evaluated. And we heard we were 'at-will employees' over and over again like it was a mantra."

Youmans, like Woodson, was also fired without just cause.

Wendy McBroom:
Mistreated teachers
need to stand up
for themselves
and their students.



Over time, the school became a hostile environment, says Wendy McBroom, a Spanish teacher who describes APL as a place where teachers keep their heads down in the hallway and scurry to class to avoid hostility.

Indeed, what started as a "dream school" founded by teachers six years ago gradually became a nightmare. Things became so unbearable that teachers reached out to CTA to form their own union. The teachers filed with the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) in November, and in December the school board voted to recognize their chapter. Twenty-one teachers out of 31 signed the petition to unionize.

Shortly after the new CTA chapter was recognized by the school board (which Dougherty serves on), five teachers who joined the union were fired. It was before a contract could be approved — and members are still without a contract.

"All we want is a fair contract, fair and equitable treatment for all staff, and a say in decision making," says McBroom, who serves on the organizing team. "That's all we want."

A very unmermy Christmas

It happened the Friday before Christmas. The five teachers who were fired didn't even know it at first. They learned they no longer had jobs by being locked out of school and email access. Some call it the actions of the Grinch who stole Christmas.

All education professionals deserve a voice in determining their working conditions and shaping educational policy. New member organizing — including charter school workers — is essential if CTA is to fulfill its goal of providing a quality education for all.

From the CTA Strategic Plan, "Our Union, Our Future"

"I was shocked to discover I was one of the five positions terminated from APL staff," says Christy Vail, an art and computer teacher. "The manner in which the victims of the cuts were notified is vicious. On Friday, Dec. 19, five teachers discovered their passwords and email no longer worked, which kept some of us from finishing our work for the fall semester. In addition, key fobs to enter the school building had been deactivated. Letters of termination were not received until Dec. 22 and 23. In other words, teachers were unable to fulfill their duties before being notified of their termination. Why would our principal pursue such a cruel action just days before Christmas if this wasn't a personal attack?"

Not only was this unfair to teachers, it devastated students who were unable to say goodbye to teachers or receive all of their grades for work submitted. Woodson comments that fired teachers never got to complete their grade books, and one of her students who had earned an A instead was given a C.

After the firings, school employees and community supporters held a protest outside the school, accusing the district of union busting.

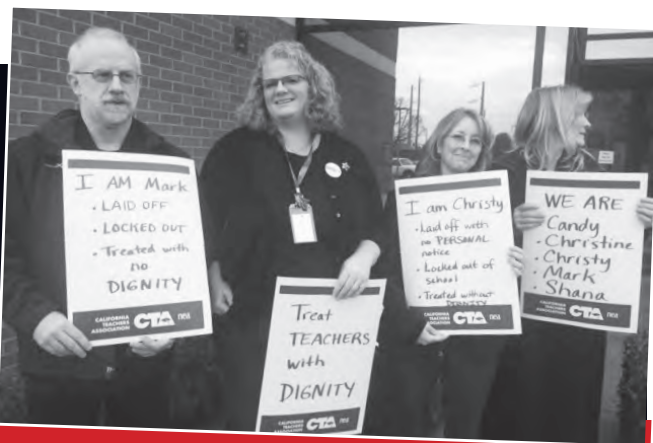
Student Destiny Latta, who calls Vail an "excellent teacher," distributed a petition asking the school to bring all of the teachers back.

"I hope they are all reinstated and my voice can be heard," says Latta, a senior.

Blaming it on the budget

School officials claim that a \$400,000 budget shortfall and a drop in attendance from 481 to 440 students made it necessary to eliminate five jobs. However, there is no evidence of a shortfall in the school's budget, and there was actually a \$63,000 surplus at the end of the school year, asserts Jennifer Tarabochia, CTA staff in Redding.

On the picket line, from left, is **Mark Youmans**, who was fired; **Wendy McBroome**, organizing committee; **Christy Vail**, who was fired; and **Cindy Silva**, organizing committee.



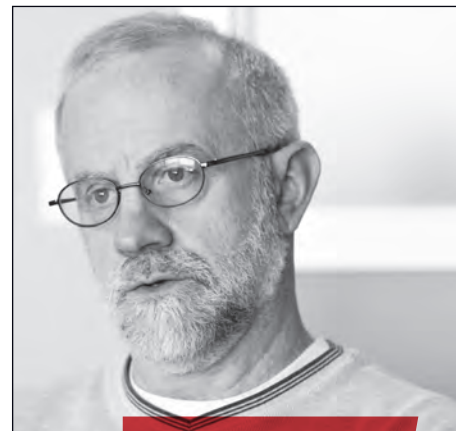
"To say the timing of APL's sudden financial woes is curious would be an understatement," says Vail. "In August, we had a surplus, and in December, a deficit. Strangely enough, the deficit was announced after a supermajority of APL teachers, including myself, voted to join the union."

The district claims it wanted to save money, but the terminated employees were not put on a call-back list — and since their firing, the district has hired new non-union employees to replace them.

"Since the five were terminated, APL hired others to take over our classes," says Vail. "One teacher was brought from half time to full plus benefits, which actually cost the school more than if they had kept me."

Vail was a half-time employee with no benefits.

"My letter of termination says nothing about calling me back once enrollment increases," she says. "This, along with the timing of the suddenly discovered budget crisis, just days after the announcement of the union, leads me to believe this termination is personal and punitive due to the formation of APLEA."



Mark Youmans:
Teachers lost their "voice"
and weren't valued
as professionals.

Teachers vow to continue fighting

Some might say teachers were fired for joining a union. Others may argue that they would have been protected from being fired if they'd belonged to a union from the beginning. But one thing is clear: The fight is far from over, and CTA is standing firmly by this fledgling chapter that has displayed such heart.

APLEA has not disbanded. With the assistance of CTA staff, members filed two unfair labor practice charges against the district with PERB, and plans are under way to file a third.

Youmans has no regrets about his decision to join the union. He was not treated with respect or kindness, and he says if the treatment of staff did not improve, he could not continue to work in such a toxic environment.

McBroome, who is still teaching at the school, says the fight for respect and fair treatment is worth it. There are some things, she says, that are just worth fighting for.

"I have full faith that CTA will help us," she says. "I feel fully supported. It doesn't mean I'm not scared to lose my job — I am. I'm afraid many more excellent teachers could lose their jobs. But it's been worth the struggle to join CTA and speak as one voice."

She adds, "It's important to stand up for the students in your school. It's important to stand up for each other. It's important to stand up for yourself."

Editor's note: To contact APL school board members or school director Patricia Dougherty, visit the school website at www.ourapl.org. ■

Madera teachers discover formula

for successfully bargaining professional development

by Cynthia Menzel



Left: The “Google Classroom” was presented by **Jamie Smith**.



Above: “Elements of Art in Elementary” was presented by **Sheila Kincade** (left).

IF YOU HAD ASKED MADERA TEACHERS two years ago about collaborating on a professional development project with the Madera Unified School District, they would have scoffed. Loudly. After all, they were on the verge of a strike over increasing class sizes, loss of staff, pay and benefit cuts, and top-down dictates.

On March 14, however, the Madera Unified Teachers Association, in collaboration with their school district, presented a Professional Development Academy for 210 educators that addressed virtually every academic discipline in the K-12 school curriculum.

The idea of a teacher-led professional development day came from Common Core Steering Committee union facilitator and MUTA vice president Amanda Wade. The district’s Common Core Steering Committee is the result of negotiations between MUTA and the district.

“Creating the Common Core Steering Committee wasn’t easy,” says MUTA President David Holder, who was a strike coordinator two years ago. “We were turned down for many months. You need to know what’s happening politically to help make change happen.” He credits

the political momentum of Proposition 30 passing and the change in school funding that brought in the LCFF and the LCAP with bringing the district officials along. “We are stakeholders. That means teachers and the association are at the table more so than ever. Public education will improve if people doing the job are at the table.” Ultimately, the Steering Committee became an ongoing memorandum of understanding (MOU).



David Holder

Adding to the “waves of change” were the tide shift from explicit instruction to facilitated learning as part of the Common Core State Standards, and the selection of Wade as a participant in the Instructional Leadership Corps (ILC), a partnership between CTA and Stanford University to produce professional development on Common Core implementation. Holder also credits CTA’s strategic plan for its focus on classroom teachers.

Knowledge of these moving parts helped union members on the Steering Committee have more discussion



$$\begin{aligned}
 &\text{Prop. 30 passing} \\
 &+ \\
 &\text{Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)} \\
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 &\text{Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP)} \\
 &+ \\
 &\text{CTA Strategic Plan} \\
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 &\text{Common Core State Standards} \\
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 &\text{Instructional Leadership Corps} \\
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 &\text{Madera Professional Development Academy}
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around professional development, which also became part of the bargain. “We knew what we wanted professionally. Trying to be reasonable, we calculated how much it cost to get a unit of credit, time and money, and then built in a buffer for the unexpected.” They settled for \$600,000, which came to about \$500 per member.



Amanda Wade

Holder says the resulting CCSS Steering Committee and the PD Academy mark a complete shift in the district’s thinking and vision. “It’s more cooperative and teacher-centered. The teacher is the expert and primary mover. All other staff are to support the teacher so the students are successful.”

This is a culture shift from being reactive to proactive, he adds. The “waves of change mean teachers have to step out of their comfort zone and make their voices heard” on instructional and professional issues, he says. “Political changes opened doors. Are educators willing to walk through? In Madera, we said yes.”



Teacher-led workshops were hands-on and collaborative.



Linda Tolladay and Jacob Mortier, Madera Instructional Leadership Corps members, were also presenters.

That led to the PD Academy, which receives rave reviews from members like Paula Hill, who says, “The infusion of new ideas for applying instructional strategies utilizing Common Core standards has helped me to feel that I am using best practices in my daily student instruction.” Other members say they appreciated learning from peers, rather than outside consultants.

Instructional Leadership Corps member Amanda Wade, also a strike coordinator back in 2013, coordinated the Academy. Madera ILC colleagues Jacob Mortier and Linda Tolladay and ILC teachers Ben Avila and Laura Bolton, Central Unified Teachers Association in Fresno, were among the 24 classroom teacher presenters.

School board members also participated in the Saturday sessions. “Board members are changing their perspective of MUTA and teachers,” Holder says. “They see we’re about improving teaching and giving every kid a quality education. That’s a change from board members who didn’t really like us two years ago during the bargaining.”

MUTA’s advocacy and community engagement efforts are ongoing. “Did we win everything? No. Did we get close? Yes,” says Holder. “We’re on the right path as long as we’re willing to stand our ground.” ■



CTA President's letter demands State make agricultural pesticides safer

"Immediate action is needed to reduce the health threats from pesticide use near schools. Limiting pesticide exposure for children, who are the most vulnerable to health risks of pesticides, is of paramount importance." Read the full CTA letter and a 10-page call to action from pesticide reform groups:

www.cta.org/pesticidehazard.

Hazardous Harvests

by Mike Myslinski

IN HIS FOURTH-GRADE CLASSROOM at Creekside Elementary in Salinas, Josh Ezekiel has a poster tacked up on the wall titled "How to Build Community" with suggestions for activities like gardening together, using the local library, knowing your neighbors. It also advises students to simply "ask a question" to learn about their neighborhoods.

In the wake of recent studies about agricultural pesticide dangers to public schools and children in Monterey and other California counties, the question that Ezekiel, CTA and others are asking is: Why isn't the state doing more to protect schools from the toxic crop chemicals?

Salinas is a hub of California agribusiness. The state produces nearly half of all fruits and vegetables in the U.S., and California's agricultural production was valued at \$46.7 billion in 2013, when the sector employed an estimated 348,900 people. The industry fuels the state's economy, but at what cost to the safety of local schools and communities?





Salinas teacher **Josh Ezekiel** says pesticides can threaten his students and community. (Photo by Mike Myslinski.)

“This is about protecting my community,” Ezekiel says. “Down the block from my home in Salinas, we have fields where they grow lettuce and strawberries. When you’re talking about hazardous fumigants used in the fields, not only are my students in danger, but I’m in danger, too.”

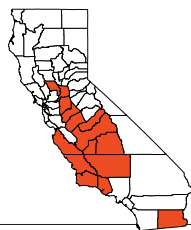
How Ezekiel and other teachers mobilized on this issue, with the help of the Monterey Bay Central Labor Council and other stakeholders, is a blueprint for how concerned communities statewide can push back for more pesticide protections.

Sparking renewed community interest in the decades-long controversies over pesticide dangers was an April 2014 report co-sponsored by the California Department of Public Health. The study of 2,511 K-12 public schools documented agricultural pesticide use in 2010 near schools in 15 counties where applications of fumigants and other chemicals were heaviest. (See infographic.)

California has some of the strictest regulations in the nation regarding use of agricultural pesticides near schools, the report notes, but most laws are about shielding people from acute, not long-term, exposure. It also warns that even though most pesticides are applied before and after school hours, their “chemical persistence can have implications for chronic exposure risks and delayed or chronic health outcomes.”

Pesticides can drift, despite lawful use by growers, and endanger nearby schools and cities. CTA members and California Federation of Teachers (CFT) activists made that point during an August 2014 labor coalition news conference held in front of the Salinas courthouse to draw attention to the state report.

They demanded an increase in the size of Monterey County buffer zones around schools where highly hazardous pesticides are used; 72-hour notification before dangerous pesticides are used near schools; a public, online database tracking pesticide use; air monitoring and annual state studies of pesticide application near schools, child care centers and other sensitive sites; and getting farmers to use less toxic alternatives to soil fumigation and organophosphates, which they want phased out by 2020.



STATE REPORT:

PESTICIDE USE

near California public schools

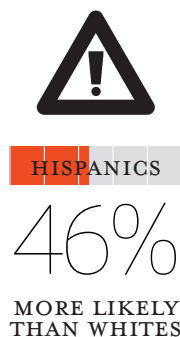
Proximity

More than **500,000 students** in the 15 counties attended school within a quarter mile of some kind of hazardous pesticide use, and 118,000 of those students went to 226 schools where the heaviest use of toxic pesticides deemed “of public health concern” — at least 319 pounds that year — was within a quarter mile.



Exposure

Hispanic children were 46 percent more likely than white children to attend schools where dangerous pesticides were applied nearby — and 91 percent more likely than white kids to be in schools in the highest quartile of pesticide exposure.



Prevalence

Monterey, Fresno, Tulare and Ventura counties had some of the heaviest use of pesticides near schools in the state.



Toxins

Nearly **540,000 pounds** of pesticides of concern were applied near these California public schools in 2010. The 144 different pesticides included known carcinogens, reproductive and developmental toxicants, neurotoxins, toxic air contaminants and nerve cell inhibitors.



Source: “Agricultural Pesticide Use Near Public Schools in California.”
See the full report and FAQs here: www.ehib.org/page.jsp?page_key=1040

The same demands were then made in an urgent resolution passed by the Monterey Bay Central Labor Council that noted: “More than one in four Monterey County children attended schools within a quarter mile of highly hazardous pesticide use in 2010 — more than for any other schoolchildren in California.” Labor Council Executive Director Cesar Lara wrote an October 2014 column for the Salinas *Californian* newspaper about new state air sampling data showing alarming levels of fumigant pesticides — especially cancer-causing 1,3-D, known by the trade name Telone — detected at the Salinas airport and Ohlone Elementary in Watsonville.

The local activist educators are part of a coalition now meeting twice a month at the Monterey Bay Central Labor Council offices in Salinas and the CFT offices in Watsonville at gatherings run by Mark Weller, a community organizer with the Oakland-based group Californians for Pesticide Reform. Having teachers involved is key, he says.

Alisal Teachers Association President

Estela Mercado-Rodriguez is concerned about pesticides because many of the parents of her kindergarten students work in fields like this one, near her Salinas school.

(Photo by Mike Myslinski.)

FROM
STATE
REPORT



CHEMICAL PERSISTENCE CAN HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRONIC EXPOSURE RISKS AND DELAYED OR CHRONIC HEALTH OUTCOMES.

“I think it’s extremely important because farmworkers have for decades been trying to get the ear of Sacramento,” Weller says. “With other organizations and people like teachers unions and school administrators and parent teacher organizations getting involved, that will finally make a headway to getting some real regulations that help make things safer.”

He says the coalition is preparing for upcoming local hearings to be held by the state Department of Pesticide Regulation about possible new restrictions under consideration. The report does not predict health impacts to students, but includes a call for ongoing surveillance of pesticide use near schools and an online database that’s publicly accessible about pesticides applied on school properties.



Virginia Causey

Ezekiel’s colleagues in the Alisal Union School District in Salinas tell of those who have died of cancer in recent years, saying that it’s hard to connect pesticides directly to those cases.

Estela Mercado-Rodriguez, president of the Alisal Teachers Association, has heard about studies linking certain pesticides to autism in children. She has taught kindergarten for 12 years at Frank Paul Elementary, a short distance from the fields, and says two of her 29 students are on the autism spectrum. But again, exact cause is hard to pin down, she says.

“Children do seem less focused,” she says of her students, many of whom have parents who work in the fields. “As kindergarten teachers, I think we definitely see that.”

Two colleagues at nearby Fremont Elementary, Aniceto Cortes and Virginia Causey, talk quietly about various school employees and other Salinas friends stricken with cancer over the years. Cortes has no autistic students

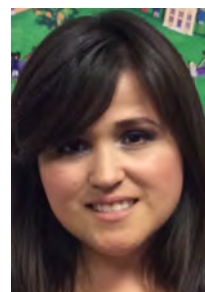
among his 29 kindergartners, but has heard of others in the district. “I probably need to educate myself more” about pesticides, he says. “I’m suspicious.”

Causey says she will raise the safety issue with colleagues in numerous local school districts as chair of the CTA Central Coast Counties Service Center Council, serving educators in Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Benito counties. “You can’t have a child learning if they’re exposed to pesticides,” she says. “It can affect how students learn. Some of the pesticides are neurotoxins. They affect the brain. It’s a strong concern of teachers.”

Salinas native Karina Curiel, vice president of the Gonzales Teachers Association, has taught for nine years in Gonzales Unified and grew up in this fertile valley, worrying about pesticides.

She will never forget how her fourth-grade teacher had her class write letters to the editor of the local paper in the early 1990s about the chemicals used on the agricultural fields that at the time bordered her school, where tract homes exist now. Her letter was published.

“The letter said we were all concerned about pesticides,” Curiel recalls. “We were worried about things like kids having to go over the fence to get a ball and exposing themselves to pesticides.”



Karina Curiel

BAD CHEMISTRY



Which pesticides are dangerous to schools, communities

by Mike Myslinski

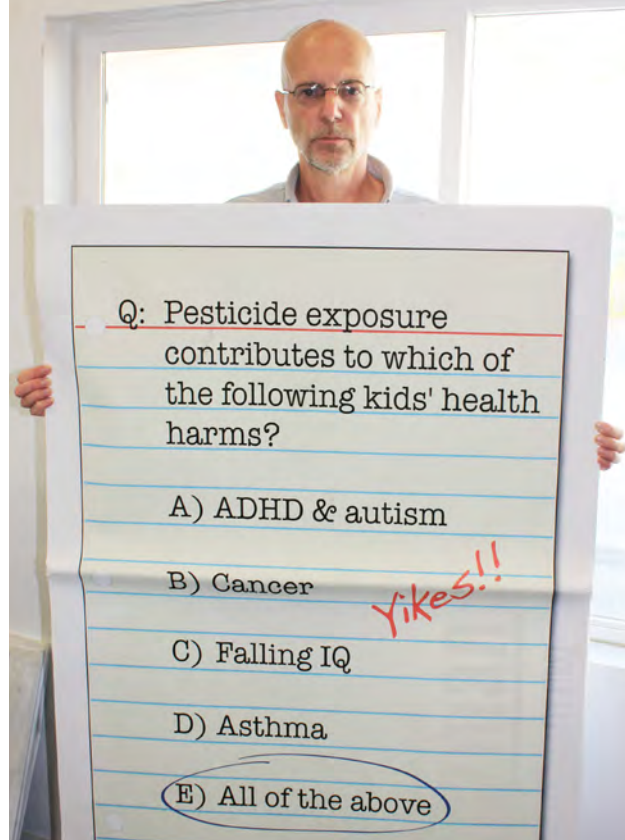
SOME OF THE TOP 10 poisonous agricultural pesticides used near public schools in California are especially dangerous for how they can damage young children's brains and nervous systems, a 2014 state report and a review of recent studies shows.

The top three pesticides, by pounds applied within a quarter mile of public schools in 2010, were the fumigants chloropicrin, 1,3-dichloropropene (or 1,3-D), and methyl bromide, according to the 2014 California Department of Public Health study "Agricultural Pesticide Use Near Public Schools in California." The one that ranked eighth, chlorpyrifos, is a brain toxin and nervous system poison banned for home use in 2001 by the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

Fumigants have the potential to drift after application. The state allowed Salinas Valley growers to exceed limits for the use of the carcinogenic fumigant 1,3-D for more than a decade, putting communities at risk for cancer, according to an investigative series of stories by Oakland-based Center for Investigative Reporting published in November 2014. The series is about how California's \$2.6 billion strawberry industry is hooked on using dangerous fumigants which have been linked to cancer, developmental problems and ozone depletion.

Some resources about California pesticide hazards:

- **Autism and pesticides:** Pregnant women who lived near fields and farms in California where pesticides were used had a two-thirds increased risk of having a child with autism spectrum disorder or other developmental delay, according to a study unveiled in June 2014 by researchers at the UC Davis MIND Institute. Find out more: www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/publish/news/newsroom/8978
- **"Generation in Jeopardy" report:** The free 40-page report "A Generation in Jeopardy: How pesticides are undermining our children's health and intelligence" looks at numerous scientific studies about pesticides contributing to childhood diseases and disorders. Find out more: www.pesticidereform.org/article.php?id=395
- **CHAMACOS study:** Pregnant Salinas Valley women exposed to organophosphate pesticides gave birth to children with lower IQs and "poorer cognitive functioning" who had increased risk of attention problems at a young age. This ongoing study of 601 women by the Center for the Health Assessment of Mothers and Children of Salinas (CHAMACOS) began in 1999 and is coordinated by the UC Berkeley Center for Environmental Research and Children's Health. Find out more: cerch.org
- **Strawberry industry probe:** The darker side of the highly profitable California strawberry industry, which supplies nearly 90 percent of the nation's strawberries, is exposed in this November 2014 series of stories by the Oakland-based Center for Investigative Reporting. Find out more: beta.cironline.org/investigations/strawberries
- **Californians for Pesticide Reform:** Some Monterey County educators are working with this Oakland-based coalition of 185 public interest groups dedicated to environmental issues and protecting public health. Find out more: www.pesticidereform.org



Fast-forward. Recently, Curiel showed her third-grade students at La Gloria Elementary a YouTube video about pesticide dangers. The video shows historical clips of people claiming that the infamous insecticide DDT, banned in the U.S. in 1972, "was actually healthy for you," and a *Time* magazine ad from 1947 hailing the wonders of DDT, illustrated with dancing farm cows and the caption "DDT is good for meeeeee!"

Curiel, who lives in Salinas near strawberry and lettuce fields, cares deeply about the community. She knows of three teachers and another school employee in Gonzales district who fought cancer, along with two others in nearby Chualar, where the crop fields end only a few feet from the playground equipment at the elementary school.

"There's a lot of research that shows that pesticide use can have not only immediate effects but also future ones," Curiel says. "There needs to be safer solutions to managing crops. Our future depends on it." ■

Community organizer **Mark Weller** with Californians For Pesticide Reform holds a protest sign used by Monterey County teachers.



Aniceto Cortes

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* **The Pawfect Reading Partner**

Reading Dogs are helping reluctant readers

VOLUNTEER **KELLEY MATTHEWS**, WITH **MATTIE**, HELPS **BRANDON WARREN** WITH HIS READING. MEET MORE OF THE FURRY BOOK-LOVERS AND THE STUDENTS THEY ARE HELPING ON THE NEXT PAGE.

Gigi Gopen reads with the help of Catie (the dog) as teacher Emily Sanders listens in Manhattan Beach.

Linda Guill says hello to a reading dog in her Redding classroom.



Has reading gone to the DOGS?

by Sherry Posnick-Goodwin

KINDERGARTNER GIGI GOPEN USED TO BECOME ANXIOUS when asked to read simple words aloud in class. But today, sitting on the floor of the Pacific Elementary School library in Manhattan Beach, she reads in a cheery, confident voice. She eagerly turns the pages of *Pig Has a Plan*, a children's book about a swine who just wants to sleep all day.

What has transformed Gigi from a reluctant reader to an enthusiastic one? The answer is Catie, a Portuguese water dog sitting quietly by her side.

The black and white canine is the perfect audience for a beginning reader. That's because Catie listens. She doesn't judge. She is soft, fluffy and cuddly. And Catie is so patient, she can hear children read about pigs again and again, without losing any interest whatsoever. Catie listens even when she is napping like Pig, the protagonist in the book by Ethan Long.

Catie is part of a new breed of canines who are professional "reading dogs." They are specially trained and must pass strict tests to ensure they will be calm, patient and reassuring to youngsters who sometimes struggle to get their words right. The dogs are brought to schools by dedicated volunteers like Gwen Brock, who owns Catie and fellow reading dog Brinkley, also a Portuguese breed. Brock is a member of READ (Reading Education Assistance Dogs), an organization with the mission of enhancing children's love of reading through the use of therapy animals.

Thanks in part to visits from Brock's dogs, children like Gigi are becoming confident readers, relates kindergarten teacher Emily Sanders, Manhattan Beach Unified Teachers Association (MBUTA).

"Animals can be so comforting," she explains. "Something about them — and reading to them — just makes everyone feel good."

Brock agrees. "It's a win-win-win situation," she says. "The teacher wins. The students win. We volunteers win. And it doesn't cost anything."

Go Online



For more information on the READ program or to find a reading dog near you, visit www.librarydogs.com/all-around_dogs.html.

Brock and fellow READ volunteer Kelly Matthews also provide Pacific Elementary School teachers with “progress reports” to show areas where students are doing well or struggling, which teachers call an added bonus.

Gigi says she looks forward to Mondays when Catie comes to visit.

“I like reading to her because she’s sweet,” says Gigi, petting her gently. “And I’m teaching her new words.”

MBUTA members noticed the reading dogs help children who are having a rough time.

Lisa MacKenzie with first-grader **Liam Blair**, a student with autism, and her reading dog **Neeka**, an Alaskan Malamute, in Elk Grove. (Photo by *Claudia Briggs*.)

“The children just love coming here,” says Sondra Abrams. “It takes away their apprehension or sense of ‘I can’t do this.’”



Lanissa Patterson says the dogs provide her students an opportunity to practice what they learn in class. She encourages them to go home and read to their own pets or stuffed animals for fun.

READING DOGS ROCK IN REDDING

Pausing to give a visiting pooch an air-smooch on a Redding morning is kindergarten teacher Linda Guill at Cypress Elementary School. The Redding Teachers Association member loves the dogs as much as her students do.

Katy Yoder, program director for READ (part of the Prescription Pets Therapy Group), has arrived with other human volunteers plus Fiona, a Boston terrier, and Maji, a Golden retriever. Her chapter has 30 dog-owner teams working in schools or public libraries.

Bailey Parker, 5, says reading to a dog is her favorite thing to do.

“He listens so well,” she explains.

Yoder says some students have increased by a few grade levels in Redding, and credits reading dogs with being part of the reason. One student with dyslexia wouldn’t read in class or in the library, but managed to do so in the presence of reading dogs.

“They really help the kids learn to read. They like it better than recess,” says Guill with a smile. “When I retire, I’m going to find a dog and do this.”

READING TO ROVER NOW THE RAGE IN ELK GROVE

Lisa MacKenzie doesn’t need volunteers to bring reading dogs to her K-6 classroom for children with special needs. That’s because she has three reading dogs of her own. There’s Clipper and Hobiecat, both Portuguese water dogs, and Neeka, a malamute. She brings them in separately or two at a time.

“My students see reading to them in a different light,” says the Elk Grove Education Association member. “Instead of ‘Oh, I have to read to a teacher,’ it’s ‘Yay, I get to read to a dog!’”

Her dogs had formal training through Therapy Dogs International’s Tail Waggin’ Tutors program, so they know how to behave when they are read to, says MacKenzie, an inclusion education specialist at John Ehrhardt Elementary School. That means being attentive, calm and sweet.

“Clipper is ultrasensitive,” she confides. “He can pick up when someone is not feeling well, stressed out, anxious or sad, and make himself part of the healing process. He will nudge and give a child attention so they know he’s there. And research shows that the comfort of having an animal nearby lowers blood pressure and stress levels. As a teacher of those with special needs, it also helps me develop rapport with them and reduce anxiety about academics and social issues.”

In Redding,
Sadie Vierra
reads to her four-
legged volunteer.

Reading to a dog, she adds, makes kids want to do their best and work their tails off.

“There was once a nonverbal, selective mute student. One day he stood up in front of the class and told everyone in the class the rules about Clipper. It was the first time I ever heard him talk. It’s amazing, but sometimes dogs can accomplish things that teachers can’t.” ■





CTA assessment and
testing recommendations
to the State Board
of Education

Part of an ongoing series

CTA actions put learning over testing

Educators are redefining testing
and accountability. Now what?

by Cynthia Menzel

THIS IS THE YEAR educators are redefining testing and accountability. On the cusp of the new Smarter Balanced testing, CTA's State Council voted at its January meeting on a set of six recommendations designed to help guide the State Board of Education (SBE) in upcoming decisions about assessment and testing.

"The goal of CTA's recommendations is that assessments are used to improve student learning and instruction, not as a comparison or ranking tool," says CTA President Dean E. Vogel. "We're moving to multiple measures of student learning that are decided at the local level — and that should be the focus of federal and state tests and improvement efforts."

The recommendations from State Council were presented to the SBE at its March meeting, and the board's final decisions closely mirrored the State Council recommendations (see chart).

At that meeting, the SBE voted to postpone creating a new Academic Performance Index for another year, which means we get a reprieve from scores being used for high-stakes accountability purposes until 2018. And better than just a reprieve, the SBE also voted to include multiple measures in whatever form the new API takes, and affirmed that those decisions should be made locally.

It means that in accordance with the Local Control Funding Formula and the Local Control Accountability Plans, "we are moving beyond test scores and are returning decisions about local schools to local communities. We will be able to develop

Recommendation

Delay adopting the Academic Performance Index (API) for one year.

SB 1458 altered the API, changing criteria by which schools are held accountable. Scheduled to take effect in 2016, these changes cannot be implemented until one year after adoption by the State Board of Education (SBE). Now in the second year of the new standards, educators are working without textbooks that have been aligned and the resources they need. Districts across the state are at different stages of implementing CCSS and preparedness to administer the statewide assessments.

Limit the weights of statewide assessments in the API.

Weightings and indicators should be locally determined with teacher participation.

Determine local indicators for the Academic Performance Index (API).

The selection and use of accountability indicators should be based on the needs and growth of student learning over time, should indicate what local educators say is important, and should ensure API elements are aligned to and support Local Control Accountability Plan priorities. The primary purpose of testing here is to support learning, not to impose high-stakes consequences.

Eliminate decile rankings.

Using decile rankings as a metric to understand the relative performance of schools is misleading. While AB 484 sunsets the decile rankings, the SBE will set state performance goals and decide how to report and monitor school performance at the statewide level.

Change SBAC performance recommendations (cut scores).

The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) cut scores are not aligned with California standards, and will therefore misrepresent student achievement.

Eliminate the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE).

The exam is not aligned to current standards and has outlived its usefulness in the state accountability system.

a more meaningful assessment of how our schools are impacting students," Vogel says. This has the potential to be a major shift in the long-standing abuse of and overreliance on test scores.

Now, this year, state test scores will be shared first with teachers and then with parents. "That gives us an opportunity to talk about what those scores mean and what they don't mean, not only with parents but with the rest of the public," Vogel says.

"As educators and students adjust to the new Smarter Balanced tests, including the technology, we need to remind everyone that this is a transition period. Textbooks and other materials aren't

State Board Action

SBE approved. Delaying the API another year gives teachers a full year of teaching new standards, helping students prepare for the new state tests, and developing a system based on multiple measures of student progress, such as student attendance, graduation data and student readiness.

The API was suspended, so no action is expected until next year.

Education and advisement in process. Many educators don't understand that the SBAC system is part of the new school funding formula, which sets higher academic standards, gives local schools and communities more control over spending decisions, and provides more resources to students with the greatest needs.

No discussions at this time. No new decile rankings have been computed since AB 484 took effect on Jan. 1, 2014. The Legislature seems willing to wait and see what actions the SBE will implement in three years.

At the state level, the SBAC assessment window opened March 10 in California, and the issue of the cut scores is tabled for now.

CTA took a "Support" position on SB 172 (Liu), which would suspend CAHSEE.

aligned to the new standards." English textbooks are not even approved yet by the SBE.

And when it comes to the computer-based tests, a recent report shows that 30 percent of our schools don't have the hardware or computers to give the tests, he added.

Twenty-five percent don't have the bandwidth or network capability. Fifty percent don't have the software to give the tests, and 70 percent don't have adequate technical support or training for instructional staff. This is the story we must tell to parents. ■

This spring's testing and a parent report card

In March, students in grades 3-8 and 11 began taking part in California's new statewide assessments in English language arts/literacy and math. These computer-based adaptive tests replace the paper-based, multiple-choice assessments.

Students in grades 3-8 and 11 are taking the new California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), which replaces the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program.

The online tests allow students to demonstrate their ability to write analytically, think critically and solve problems, along with their knowledge of facts. Intended as an academic checkup, the tests are designed to give teachers timely feedback they need to improve instruction.

Like the new academic standards, the new tests are fundamentally different from the old exams. Scores will not be used to determine whether a student moves on to the next grade. Rather, the results will focus on the needs of students and support for teachers and schools. Like class assignments and report cards, these tests provide one more way to assess student progress.

A Parent Student Report Card will share this year's test results with parents this summer. That means members need to be ready to discuss what the report card means with parents in the fall. "This year's test results will establish a baseline for the progress students make over time," says Assessment and Testing Committee Chair Jennifer Pettey. "Next year the scores will represent growth. This accountability measure is not about one score — it's about scores over time that show growth for each individual student."

"Parents, and anyone else, should not use these results for comparisons or rankings," Pettey adds.



Jennifer Pettey

Can parents opt their children out of state testing? Yes.

And educators have a right to inform parents. A parent must submit a written request to the school to excuse their child from state tests for the year. If the parent's request is submitted after testing has begun, any completed tests will be scored and the results will be reported to the parent or guardian and included in the pupil's records. CTA's Legal Department provides background at www.cta.org/testingfaqs.

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PHOTO BY MIKE MYSLINSKI

Janet Eberhardt, who was named the 2015 National ESP of the Year, said it was “better than winning Miss America.”



CTA member Janet Eberhardt

is NEA's Education Support Professional of the Year *by Cynthia Menzel*

IF YOU'VE EVER MET JANET EBERHARDT, you know she's a fighter for student causes, a defender of human rights, and a champion of education support professionals (ESPs). She's also funny. So the comment “This is better than winning Miss America!” after being named the 2015 National ESP of the Year is not surprising, coming from this decorated CTA leader and activist.

“I never expected to win, particularly after seeing the accomplishments of the other nominees, many of whom I've admired over the years,” she says. “There are so many awesome paraprofessionals in the world.”

“Janet is an absolute dynamo,” said NEA President Lily Eskelsen García, who presented Eberhardt with a trophy, a bouquet of roses, and a \$10,000 check at the NEA Education Support Professionals Conference in New Orleans. “She makes us all want to work even harder for students and our communities.”

A community relations specialist and elementary

adviser in the San Francisco Unified School District, Eberhardt says she never intended to stick around for 29 years. “This position catches your soul, particularly if you have a heart for children. It helped me become the person I am today.”

Her job, she says, is twofold: “Addressing the needs of the student, and supporting the classroom teacher.



Eberhardt was presented the award and a \$10,000 check by the NEA Executive Officers.

IN JANET'S WORDS

Whenever a student sets foot into an educational setting, there must be a team approach to address what concerns that student.”

That also means working within the community. “I reach out to parents so they know I’m approachable,” Eberhardt says. “Part of building community is building relationships, so let them see your life is just like theirs. It’s just your job is about taking care of and educating their child. Parents need to see that connection. It builds trust.”

Her duties change at each school site, but essentially, she works one-on-one with students and their parents regarding conflict resolution. She facilitates a mentorship program, recruiting adults in the community to mentor students. She has created programs that promote reading and help students make positive choices regarding their personal lives. For these and her union activities she was also awarded a CTA Human Rights Award in 2012.

For her part, Eberhardt says, she recognized early on that to be effective in her job she had to immerse herself in the union, and that meant understanding what CTA stood for and could do. “Union means family. Solidarity. Substance. The glue by which you’re connected to your job,” she says. “Whenever you’re in need of someone, of support, union means you have somewhere to go.”

Eberhardt’s union leadership helped ESPs gain voting rights and be admitted as full CTA members. “Janet has worked tirelessly to gain equity and fairness for support professionals,” said CTA President Dean E. Vogel when she was named CTA’s ESP of the Year in 2014 (yes, you’ve counted three awards already). “She finds a way to get the job done, and she does it with class.”

In her acceptance speech, Eberhardt focused on the power ESPs have in the lives of their students and encouraged colleagues to “keep on keeping on” and “go the extra mile,” which is defined differently for each student. “Each student is an individual and has different gifts. Please be bold, be strong, and help our kids to find their special gift.”

We sat down with Janet back home to talk about her life as a paraprofessional. You can watch a video of the interview at www.cta.org/2015neaesps. Here are a few excerpts. ■

My life is full...

so I read mostly magazines like *Ebony*.

My mom, Cleo Dickson...

is my “shero,” and my dad, Wesley Dickson Sr., is my hero.

The favorite part of my day...

is when I am greeted by the students with such smiles.

I think paras and teachers should...

have the mindset that you are a team. Build your working relationship so it’s obvious to your students. Build community within your classroom.

My advice for paras is to...

know your contract, your job description and what is expected of you. From there, be active and involved. Be a voice for public education. Share your story — talk about the adventures in the school site. Be active in your union. Be a voice for your union and students.

My education includes...

a bachelor’s degree in industrial and personnel management, and a master’s degree in counseling, plus teaching credentials.



2015 CTA Human Rights Award winners

Standing: **Rebecca Harper**, **Thanh Nguyen**, CTA Secretary-Treasurer **Mikki Cichocki**, President **Dean Vogel**, Vice President **Eric Heins**, Maria del Socorro Velazquez (accepting for **Rafael Velazquez Cardenas**), and **Eleanor Evans**.

Seated: **Michelle S. Johnson**, **Susan Green**, **Peter Schlieker**, and **Tim Steele**.

CTA members honored for transforming communities, students

by *Mike Myslinski*

COMPASSIONATE AND DEDICATED educators from across California are winners of CTA's Human Rights Awards for their outstanding dedication to promoting and protecting human and civil rights.

"The sense of justice and community of these educators inspires them to go out and make a huge difference in the lives of their students," said CTA President Dean E. Vogel, presenting the awards at the CTA Equity and Human Rights Conference. Read more about these exemplary educators at cta.org/brawardswinners.

Rafael Velazquez Cardenas, *Hayward Education Association*, created a curriculum about the Latino history and culture based on students' needs. A born organizer, he involved parents and encouraged them to join his district's English Learner Advisory Committee and parent center, where they became more active in their children's education, regardless of their own ability to speak English.

Michelle S. Johnson, *Bakersfield Elementary Teachers Association*, is the second African American president of her chapter and its youngest. She actively engages the Bakersfield community in literacy activities such as Read Across America, and in community picnics, building partnerships for all students and educators.

Thanh Nguyen, *Garden Grove Education Association*, in 1992 helped found a nonprofit, SAP-VN (Social Assistance Program for Vietnam), that still provides children with orthopedic and cataract surgeries, wheelchairs, free meals and other support. Nguyen does fundraising, obtains donations of medical supplies, and travels to Vietnam annually to visit children who have received help from his program and see their progress.

Eleanor Evans, *San Diego Education Association*, served in many capacities in various ethnically diverse and LGBTQ organizations, and has been a strong voice bridging ethnic minority and LGBTQ issues. Thanks to her efforts to create a positive bond between CTA and the local NAACP, more than 500 school supply bags were distributed to students in kindergarten through college.

Big Pine Educators Association (Inyo County) partnered with the district and the Big Pine Paiute Tribe of Owens Valley to raise funds to establish an Alice Piper memorial statue. Native Americans were denied the right to attend public schools until the California Supreme Court ruled in Piper's favor in the landmark case *Piper v. Big Pine School District*. BPEA President Peter Schlieker accepted the award.

Tim Steele, *Big Pine Educators Association*, found a novel way to engage his students in the Common Core State Standards. About half of his students were Native American, so he focused on Alice Piper and six other Native American students who in the 1920s were denied access to the local Big Pine High School. The state Supreme Court in 1924 ruled in favor of Piper and the students. Steele's students researched and sought out community members who knew Piper, and came to understand the important history of Native American education rights in California.

Rebecca Harper, *San Bernardino Teachers Association*, fought on behalf of a Filipina teacher who was one of several recruited and hired from the Philippines, where she had been teaching for 24 years. She was fired in the middle of her first year of teaching and had no means of returning home to her family. Harper helped her complete her contract year, and she is successfully teaching in New York City.

Susan Green, *California Faculty Association*, *CSU Chico*, made the history of the United Farm Workers come alive by securing visits for students with Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the UFW with César Chávez. A tireless advocate for educators and unions, Green has testified many times on legislation in Sacramento concerning disadvantaged students, public education, immigrants and unionists.



◀ **Callie Neal**, *Riverside City Teachers Association*:
 “I teach high school English and am looking forward to a session on applying critical thinking in Common Core. I attended one on getting kids moving in class, activities that break up monotony and get kids active and re-engaged in the subject matter. I find it really helpful and have used similar strategies in my own classes, taking kids outside to read and act out Shakespeare, for example. This is a great conference and I wish more teachers could come!”

Go Online



CTA Incentive Grants provide funds for members to attend CTA professional development events and statewide conferences. Get application information at cta.org/conferences.



▲ **Andrea Wooldridge**, *Teachers Association of Norwalk-La Mirada*:
 “This is my first time attending and I think it’s fantastic. My site rep encouraged me to apply [for a CTA incentive grant] and I’m so glad I did. I’m a special day class teacher for grades 1-3. I attended a session on making books that included hands-on stuff that kids with special needs would get a lot out of. I also attended a session on writing opinion pieces, which is something our kids are doing. Students with special needs are doing Common Core, just like other students, so we need to learn as many strategies to help them as we can. I’m really impressed with the professionalism of this conference.”

Jerry Caneta, *Kern County Education Association*: ▶

“I came this time for the full-day Common Core workshop because our members have so many questions. Let me tell you, the session didn’t disappoint. I came away with answers that I’m already sharing on Facebook. Our district — the county office — had two in-services last year and they were pretty repetitive and not very practical, just the history of Common Core, that kind of thing. That’s fine for background, but teachers need to know what it really looks like and what we need to do to be prepared and make it work. CTA is really on the ball with that kind of training.”



MEMBER RECOMMENDED:

GOOD TEACHING SOUTH

by *Frank Wells*

OVER 1,500 MEMBERS ATTENDED the CTA Good Teaching Conference South in San Diego March 20-22, taking advantage of one of CTA’s most popular events and the opportunity to learn and share ideas with colleagues from all over the state. In addition to over 75 session topics to choose from, a well-attended full-day pre-conference session on Common Core focused on issues that carried over throughout much of the rest of the weekend. We caught up with three attendees to see what they were getting out of the conference.

CALENDAR 2015

**MAY 6** *Event***School Nurse Day**

Since 1972, School Nurse Day has honored school nurses on the Wednesday of National Nurse Week (May 6-12).

Find out more:

www.schoolnurseday.org

APRIL 24–26 *Conference***CCA Spring Conference and WHO (We Honor Ours) Awards**

Hilton Orange County, Costa Mesa

"Advocacy: Bending the Arc Towards Justice." The Community College Association's spring conference will highlight lobbying and contract enforcement issues. Find out more:

www.cca4me.org

APRIL 30 *Application Deadline***IFT Grants**

CTA Institute for Teaching's grant program demonstrates what teachers can do when they have the freedom to create and invent. CTA members can apply for strength-based Educator Grants up to \$5,000 and Impact Grants up to \$20,000. Find out more:

www.teacherdrivenchange.org

APRIL 30 *Event***El Día de los Niños**

El Día de los Niños (Children's Day) is a traditional festival in Latino culture. Many public libraries have events to promote literacy on this day.

Find out more: dia.ala.org

MAY 1 *Application Deadline***EMEID Leadership Program**

The Ethnic Minority Early Identification and Development Program identifies ethnic minority members who want to expand their roles in the organization. Participants are paired with a coach who assists them in defining goals and identifying appropriate steps to achieve those goals. Applicants will be notified by May 29. Find out more:

www.cta.org/emeid

MAY 5 *Event***National Teacher Day**

National Teacher Day is on Tuesday of Teacher Appreciation Week (May 4-8). Find out more:

www.nea.org/teacherday

MAY 10 *Application Deadline***Incentive grants for summer conferences**

Members attending the Presidents Conference (July 16-19) or Summer Institute (Aug. 2-6) can apply for grants covering transportation and fees, including materials, meals, and housing based on double occupancy. Specific grants are available for minorities, small chapter members, first-time participants, ESP, and participants in the Emerging Leaders Track and Member Benefits Strand. Find out more:

www.cta.org/conferences

MAY 13 *Event***California Day of the Teacher**

"California Teachers: Where School Innovation Begins." California's celebration, arising from legislation co-sponsored by CTA and the Association of Mexican American Educators, is patterned after the traditional Día del Maestro festival. Find out more:

www.cta.org/dayoftheteacher

MAY 19 *Event*
CTA ESP Day

Recognize the vital contributions of education support professionals during ESP Week (May 17-23).

Find out more: www.cta.org/esp

JUNE 1 *Application Deadline*
NEA Foundation Grants

The NEA Foundation awards grants to educators: Student Achievement Grants support improving academic achievement; Learning and Leadership Grants support high-quality professional development activities. Applications are reviewed three times a year.

Find out more: neafoundation.org

Six educators have received \$2,000 and \$5,000 grants from the NEA Foundation to fund classroom projects and professional development. Congratulations to:

- Jennifer Dickinson (Fairfield)
- Deborah LeAnce (Pomona)
- Megan Swanson (Calabasas)
- Debbie Maki (Camarillo)
- Sarah Breyer (Huntington Beach)
- Kristen Wells (San Diego)

Extra Credit solutions

1. Start by doing the necessary, then the possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible. (Francis of Assisi)
2. Never lend books, for no one ever returns them. The only books I have in my library are the books that other folks have lent me. (Anatole France)
3. When I was about ten years old, I gave my teacher an April Fool's sandwich, which had a dead goldfish in it. (Alan Alda)
4. I hate housework! You make the beds, you do the dishes, and six months later you have to start all over again. (Joan Rivers)

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Cryptograms

WHAT'S A CRYPTOGRAM? It's a phrase or quote that has been encrypted by simple letter substitution. The phrase "This is a cryptogram!" might turn into the encrypted phrase below.

G P M F M F O V J Z X G U T W J O T !

If you need hints to break the code, you can find them at the bottom of this page. In this example, your hint is U = O.

One way to break the code is to look for repeated letters and common words, such as *and* and *the*. The code is different for each cryptogram. We used [wordle.com](https://www.wordle.com) to create these cryptograms, which are all quotes by well-known people. Find the solutions on page 53.

1 ABINB DC FZMJT BPU JUGUAAINC, BPUJ BPU QZAAMDXU,
IJF ASFFUJXC CZS INU FZMJT BPU MYQZAAMDXU.
(HNIJGMA ZH IAAMAM)

2 JOHOG ZOJQ SVVIC, LVG JV VJO OHOG GOPMGJC PEOU.
PEO VJZK SVVIC Y ENHO YJ UK ZYSGNGK NGO PEO SVVIC
PENP VPEOG LVZIC ENHO ZOJP UO. (NJNPVZO LGNJRO)

3 AQFR K AWC WNYHP PFR ZFWBC YEL, K SWIF OZ
PFWXQFB WR WGBKE TYE'C CWRLAKXQ, AQKXQ QWL W
LFWL SYELTKCQ KR KP. (WEWR WELW)

4 N KFSU KMXRUAMHG! DMX YFGU SKU JUVR, DMX VM SKU
VNRKUR, FTV RNW YMTSKR BFSUH DMX KFEU SM RSFHS
FBB MEUH FCFNT. (OMFT HNEUHR)

HINTS 1. M = I; 2. J = N; 3. A = W; 4. N = L



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WHERE SCHOOL INNOVATION BEGINS



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