

california

# educator

DECEMBER 2019 / JANUARY 2020  
VOLUME 24 ISSUE 3

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Teachers  
of the Year**  
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**PHOENIX  
RISING**

Healing after  
natural disasters

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## THE INNOVATORS

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PROFESSIONAL  
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THESE EDUCATORS IGNITE  
A LOVE OF LEARNING  
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**DO A  
DIGITAL  
DETOX**  
PAGE 13

# New Job. Fresh Start.



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Relief      **Sweet Benefits.**      Preparedness  
Reliability

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# california educator

VOLUME 24 ISSUE 3



## #WeAreCTA

### OUR VOICE, OUR UNION, OUR PROFESSION

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

#### MAGAZINE

##### TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

Meet the educators who represent the best of the profession. **PAGE 54** [californiaeducator.org](http://californiaeducator.org)

##### A BEAUTIFUL MIND

Wil Beshears earns NEA award for teaching excellence. **PAGE 46** [quotationals.org](http://quotationals.org)

##### PHOENIX RISING

Educators deal with students' and their own post-traumatic growth after disasters. **PAGE 30** [californiaeducator.org/teaching-through-trauma](http://californiaeducator.org/teaching-through-trauma)

##### STUDENT STATUS CHART

Erin Castillo's mental health check-in chart helps kids express how they feel. **PAGE 14** [teacherspayteachers.com](http://teacherspayteachers.com)

#### DIGITAL

##### REGISTER TO VOTE!

Go online to register for the March primary before Feb. 18, 2020. **PAGE 41** [sos.ca.gov/elections](http://sos.ca.gov/elections)

##### OUR SCHOOLS, COMMUNITIES

Get behind the Schools & Communities First initiative: Join the campaign now. **PAGE 38** [schoolsandcommunitiesfirst.org](http://schoolsandcommunitiesfirst.org)

##### SOCIAL MEDIA DETOX

A little curation can make your digital life — and your life — better in the new year. **PAGE 13**

##### GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Tell legislators to support S. 42 to expand background checks for gun purchases. [educationvotes.nea.org](http://educationvotes.nea.org)

#### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

##### GOOD TEACHING CONFERENCE

Do not miss CTA's premier PD offering. GTC North (San Jose, Feb. 7-9) and South (Garden Grove, March 13-15). **PAGE 9** [ctago.org](http://ctago.org)

##### TRAUMA-SENSITIVE SCHOOLS

Conference on creating such schools using research, evidence-based practices. San Francisco, Feb. 14-16. [learningandthebrain.com](http://learningandthebrain.com)

##### SPRING CUE 2020

Edtech is front and center at this annual conference in Palm Springs, March 19-21. [cue.org](http://cue.org)

##### CCA'S WINTER CONFERENCE

Focuses on collective bargaining. [cca4us.org](http://cca4us.org)

#### MEMBER BENEFITS

##### ARTS & MUSIC GRANTS

Educators get an assist from California Casualty **PAGE 56** [calcasmusicartsgrant.com](http://calcasmusicartsgrant.com)

##### ACCESS TO SAVINGS

Up to half off dining, movies, theme parks; up to 81 percent off hotels and cruises. [CTAMemberBenefits.org/access](http://CTAMemberBenefits.org/access)

##### INSURANCE DISCOUNTS

Exclusive deals and benefits for members' home and autos. [CTAMemberBenefits.org/insurance](http://CTAMemberBenefits.org/insurance)



**ABOVE:** The educators we highlight in our Innovation Issue; from left: Juan Padilla, Sherinda Bryant, Jennifer Barry, Dennis and Daniel Gibbs, Rebecca McKinney, Jorge Perez, Somphane Hunter, James Genshaw. Story on page 17.

# THE INNOVATORS



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Our 2019-2020 Innovation Issue celebrates educators' creativity and dedication, with a tip of the hat to a few standouts.

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## PHOENIX RISING

The impacts of natural disasters are long-lasting and far-reaching. How are educators helping students — and themselves?

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## Time to Put Schools & Communities First

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**Photos this page:** Clockwise from top left, high school educator James Genshaw teaches the Yurok language; a sign in Paradise, rebuilding after the Camp Fire; CTA members show support.  
**Cover photo (by Jay Ortiz):** Sixth grade science teacher Juan Padilla; headline font courtesy Gene Buban.



# Our Students Are Counting on Us

*Schools and Communities First will advance opportunity for all*

**2019 MOST DEFINITELY** was the Year of the Educator — and I've got a good feeling 2020 will be too!

It seems like 2019 was one solidarity-fueled victory after another — at bargaining tables, on picket lines, in our classrooms, and in the halls of the State Capitol, where CTA's advocacy made history for our students. And how do we celebrate? By harnessing this **#RedForEd** momentum to secure billions in funding for education and community services and passing the Schools and Communities First (SCF) initiative in the November 2020 election.

SCF closes corporate property tax loopholes to reclaim \$12 billion annually for our schools, community colleges and public services. For more than four decades, corporations have avoided paying their fair share, causing California's school funding to fall behind. SCF will only change property taxes for commercial and industrial properties, exempting and protecting all residential and agricultural property owners. SCF would affect only those superwealthy corporations exploiting the current system.

This inequity as a result of corporate greed has had a catastrophic impact on our schools and communities, felt disproportionately in communities of color. While wealthier school districts can often offset funding cuts with private donations and parcel taxes, the vast majority of schools (especially in our black and brown communities) are unable to prevent significant impacts to students, creating a public education system where the quality of your school often depends on where you live.

Calling out inequity like this is a big part of how I first got involved in CTA. When I started teaching in Elk Grove, there was a street that divided the city's haves and have-nots, with vastly different life experiences for the people on either side. After pointing out this disparity in a *Sacramento Bee* article, I was invited to a meeting with the associate superintendent, who wanted to hear more. I explained the differences between schools in the north and the south that seemed obvious to me but not to him. It was an eye-opening experience for both of us.

This lit a fire inside me to ensure that all students have the same opportunities and resources, regardless of their ZIP code. This is why I'm so excited about SCF and our opportunity to continue undoing the effects of chronic underfunding, so our students and families have the resources they need to thrive.



***"I'm excited about our opportunity to continue undoing the effects of chronic underfunding, so our students and families have the resources they need to thrive."***

We're currently gathering the signatures needed to qualify this important initiative for the ballot. If you haven't yet signed a petition, please do! And visit [schoolsandcommunitiesfirst.org](https://schoolsandcommunitiesfirst.org) for information to share with your friends, family and neighbors.

It's going to take all of us working together to win this fight. We know that corporations are going to spend millions to keep this scam. But they don't have what we have — educator power! Let's work together to pass SCF and usher in a new era for California public education. Our students are counting on us.

**E. Toby Boyd**

CTA PRESIDENT

@etobyboyd

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CTA/NEA membership dues for the fiscal year (Sept. 1, 2019, to Aug. 31, 2020) are \$916, including a \$20 refundable contribution (see [cta.org/contribution](http://cta.org/contribution) for details). \$20.78 of CTA annual dues is designated for CTA/ABC political activities to support state and local candidates and/or initiatives, and \$15.00 of CTA annual dues is designated for independent expenditures, totaling \$35.78 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.

**CALIFORNIA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION**

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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.

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[extension.ucsd.edu/induction](http://extension.ucsd.edu/induction)



# ANGELS IN OUR MIDST

**THE NUMBER 2020** carries a little extra meaning into the new year. 20/20 indicates clarity and sharpness of vision, always a good thing. And numerologists say 2020 is an “angel” number because 2 resonates with relationships and the purpose of life, and 0 is associated with spiritual growth, so angels are ready to help us unlock our potential and make a better world.

Sounds a lot like teaching to me.

Consider the educators we highlight in our cover story (“**I is for Innovator**,” page 17). Each is hyper-focused on creating immersive learning environments for their students that build real-world skills and foster ingenuity — making a better world, indeed.

By teaching Yurok, a Native American language once nearly extinct, James Genshaw is keeping alive an entire culture for his students, instilling pride in their heritage and confidence in their identity. Somphane Hunter’s cooking classes are about health and nutrition, but also community and family bonding. Rebecca McKinney uses her energy and inventiveness to build relationships with students — who learn Next Generation Science Standards along the way.

Truly, all the educators in this issue are innovators, from the **2020 California Teachers of the Year** (page 54) to NEA Foundation’s 2020 Award for Teaching Excellence recipient Wil Beshears (page 46) to the Cultivating Teacher Leaders network, which is strengthening the educator pipeline from student to leader (page 44). They all possess a vision of how students (and fellow educators) can best learn, and the resourcefulness to bring their ideas to fruition.



Angels are surely at work when traumatic events unfold at schools, from natural disasters to gun violence. Educators rushed to protect students during the recent school shooting in Santa Clarita — “That’s what we do,” says Kaitlin Holt, who sheltered dozens of students while tending to one girl’s gunshot wounds (“**Calm During Crisis**,” page 48).

In “**Phoenix Rising**” (page 30), educators set aside their own needs to help children and youth recover from calamitous wildfires and other natural disasters that continue to trigger difficult memories and emotions. While putting on a positive face for their young charges, they turn to one another for support. “We’re all trying to take care of our basic needs and each other,” says Shelly Kiefer, a teacher in fire-ravaged Paradise.

Fremont educator Erin Castillo developed a simple chart that allows students to express their mood on a given day (“**Teacher Trending**,” page 14). Choices range from “I’m great” to “I’m in a really dark place.” The chart demonstrates to students that she cares and helps her gauge if an individual needs help.

So are educators angels? Pretty darn close, I’d say. But first and foremost they’re professionals, and they rightly take pride in what they do. Despite the pain of loss and displacement, for example, Paradise students’ core subject test scores have substantially increased. “We didn’t shy away,” says teacher Annie Finney. “We kept teaching them.”

Happy 2020.

**Katharine Fong**

EDITOR IN CHIEF

[editor@cta.org](mailto:editor@cta.org)

# EDUCATORS

## Create Your Professional Growth Path

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TO ENHANCE YOUR TEACHING SKILLS

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Visit [SanDiego.edu/EducatorsPrograms](https://SanDiego.edu/EducatorsPrograms)

*Prior district approval is highly recommended and the responsibility of the student if using course units towards salary advancement, credential renewing, and/or recertification. Not all courses may qualify in your local school district.*

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#### **Online Self-Paced:**

Offering you the perfect blend of accessibility, convenience and flexibility for you to control your learning pace. You will use course textbooks, manuals, assignments, digital tools, and exams to learn and earn credit.

#### **Online Fixed-Date:**

This format offers a convenient, yet rigorous style of learning that allows you to structure your education to suit your schedule. Online courses have fixed start and finish dates, but as an online student, you will have access to your digital classroom at any time.

#### **Classroom:**

These courses are offered in a traditional classroom where you can connect with your instructor and classmates in a live setting. This learning environment facilitates communication on a given subject in real time, enables immediate feedback, and fosters interaction with the instructor and like-minded classmates.





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



In the *CTA Bulletin* recently, we asked educators: **If you could go back in time, what advice would you tell yourself before your first day on the job?** Sample responses:

“Connect with each child individually. Find out their interests and try to incorporate them into lessons. Make each child feel like a star. Each has something special to give.”

—**MICHELLE FREIBERG**, *Murrieta Educators Association*

“It’s more important to keep the engagement and energy of a lesson than to follow the lesson as it was planned. Give yourself five years to get really good at this. It gets much easier after that!”

—**GINA DEVORE**, *Central Teachers Organization*

“Listen and learn from those around you. Students need to know you care before they will care about what you teach.”

—**DARIN JONES**, *Corona-Norco Teachers Association*

“Be yourself. Kids know when you’re being genuine.”

—**PHYLLISANN ESCOBAR MORTEN**,  
*Fillmore Unified Teachers Association*

“Let kids see you vulnerable at times. When they realize you have a whole life away from school, they tend to cut you some slack. And you’re going to need that good will.”

—**SAMANTHA WEISS**, *Palos Verde Faculty Association*

“Take care of yourself and your health. If you have a family, don’t let them feel like they’re second to your students.”

—**MARY LOTZ**, *Fremont Unified District Teachers Association*

“1. It’s OK to say no. Be mindful of your priorities. 2. Get to know your union site rep. 3. Make sleep a priority. You’ll get more work done, and its quality will increase.”

—**DENA VANDEVENDER LUDWIG**,  
*Torrance Teachers Association*

“Don’t forget to laugh, and remember that very little will go as planned.”

—**JEANINE EDGINGTON**, *United Teachers Los Angeles*

*CTA Bulletin* is sent every other week to your inbox. Email [WeAreCTA@cta.org](mailto:WeAreCTA@cta.org) to get on the list.

From our story on Manolo Lopez, who, with CTA support, cleared his name after five years.

## BEAT THE BULLIES

The article about the auto shop teacher who had been wrongfully treated by administrators (“A Fighter Wins,” October/November) made me think about all the teachers I have had the honor of mentoring over the years and the powerless feeling we all felt when a teacher gets on bad terms with an administrator. The harmful effect of administrators who bully instead of support teachers is a cycle I see repeated again and again.

I encourage CTA to advocate for more teacher voice in administrator evaluation. In the same way teachers are held to high standards, we should have a voice in protecting the support we deserve to help students achieve their academic best every day in our classrooms. When I think about the countless hours, sleepless nights and stress administrators with a hidden agenda place on teachers and our unions, and how that undermines our professional prestige, I am outraged.

**ARPINE OVSEPYAN**

*Glendale Teachers Association*



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**#OurVoiceOurUnion #WeAreCTA**

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

December 2019 / January 2020

# CALENDAR

For our full listings, go to [californiaeducator.org/calendar](http://californiaeducator.org/calendar).

## A Must for New Educators

**ARE YOU IN** your first three years of teaching? CTA's New Educator Weekend (NEW) is for you. NEW has everything you need to be successful, with sessions and electives on such topics as:

- Classroom management
- Navigating IEPs and special education areas
- "What I wish I knew my first years of teaching"
- Common Core, state standards, assessments and pedagogy
- Student loan forgiveness programs for educators

You'll leave inspired, motivated, and with knowledge you can use on Monday morning in your classroom. Sign up for NEW (North) at Marriott Santa Clara, Feb. 21–23. Keynote speaker is **NICHOLAS FERRONI**, a high school teacher and social activist who is driving a national dialogue about education reform.

Cost for CTA members: \$49; nonmembers: \$570. Hotel cut-off: Feb. 7. Find the list of workshops, as well as a sample letter to share with your principal about the value of attending NEW, at [ctago.org](http://ctago.org). #CTANEW

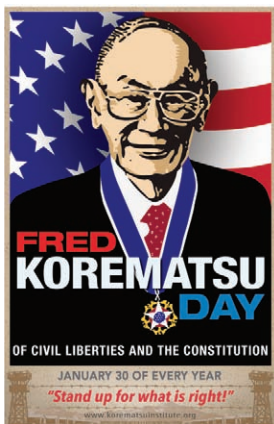


# 2020

HAPPY NEW YEAR

## Happy New Year!

**CTA WISHES** all educators and their students and families a happy new year, full of joy, and great teaching and learning.



## "DON'T BE AFRAID TO SPEAK UP"

**JAN. 30 IS** Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties. In 1942, after refusing to go to U.S. incarceration camps for Japanese Americans, Korematsu was arrested and convicted of defying government orders. The Supreme Court ruled against his appeal in 1944, arguing that military necessity justified incarceration. In 1983, key intelligence documents were discovered that showed Japanese Americans had committed no acts of treason to justify mass incarceration, and Korematsu's conviction was

overturned. Go to [korematsuinstitute.org](http://korematsuinstitute.org) for a Teacher's Guide and Digital Curriculum Toolkit.

## GANG AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

**CALIFORNIA RECOGNIZES**

January 2020 as Gang Awareness and Prevention Month and encourages cities and constituents to observe it with appropriate programs and activities to prevent future gang activity and honor those who lost their lives due to gang violence.

See story, page 40.

Carlsbad educators represent at 2019 Good Teaching Conference South.



## LGBTQ+ Safety in Schools

**JAN. 10** APPLICATION DEADLINE

The LGBTQ+ Safety in Schools Program in Honor of Guy DeRosa offers scholarships up to \$2,500 to self-described LGBTQ+ educators and grants up to \$2,500 for projects promoting respect for LGBTQ+ persons. ► [cta.org/scholarships](https://cta.org/scholarships)

## CTA Human Rights Awards

**JAN. 10** NOMINATION DEADLINE

Given to CTA members, chapters and Service Center Councils to promote programs for the advancement and protection of human and civil rights. Any active CTA member, chapter, caucus or Service Center Council may nominate. ► [cta.org/awards](https://cta.org/awards)

## CTA State Gold Awards

**JAN. 10** NOMINATION DEADLINE

Given to individuals or organizations whose leadership, acts and support show they are true friends of public education, educators or students. Any CTA member may nominate. ► [cta.org/awards](https://cta.org/awards)

## Issues Conference

**JAN. 17-19** CONFERENCE

Tropicana, Las Vegas. Brings together local leaders and activists to organize on issues, this year on the Schools & Communities First initiative. Hotel cut-off: Jan. 3. ► [ctago.org](https://ctago.org)

## CTA Scholarships

**JAN. 31** APPLICATION DEADLINE

Scholarships up to \$5,000 are available to CTA members, their dependents and Student CTA members. ► [cta.org/scholarships](https://cta.org/scholarships)

## RA State Delegate Candidacy

**JAN. 31** FILING DEADLINE

Candidates for NEA RA state delegate must submit a declaration of candidacy. See page 60.

► [cta.org/racandidacy](https://cta.org/racandidacy)

## NEA Foundation Grants

**FEB. 1** APPLICATION DEADLINE

NEA Foundation gives Student Achievement Grants to improve academic achievement and Learning & Leadership Grants to support quality PD. Applications are reviewed three times a year. ► [neafoundation.org](https://neafoundation.org)

## National School Counseling Week

**FEB. 3-7** EVENT

"School Counselors: Helping Build Better Humans." Celebrate your counselor! They make unique contributions to education and can have tremendous impact on students.

► [schoolcounselor.org/nscw](https://schoolcounselor.org/nscw)

## Good Teaching Conference North

**FEB. 7-9** CONFERENCE

Fairmont, San Jose. Supports excellent teaching and learning practices for K-12 teachers, with workshops, opportunities for PD, and time to network. Hotel cut-off: Jan. 16.

► [ctago.org/CTAGTC](https://ctago.org/CTAGTC)

## CCA Winter Conference

**FEB. 7-9** CONFERENCE

DoubleTree San Diego Mission Valley. Community College Association. Focuses on collective bargaining. Bargaining teams are encouraged to attend. ► [cca4us.org/conferences](https://cca4us.org/conferences)

## Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarships

**FEB. 14** APPLICATION DEADLINE

MLK Jr. Memorial Scholarships up to \$6,000 are available to ethnic minority CTA members, their dependents and Student CTA members.

► [cta.org/scholarships](https://cta.org/scholarships)

## CTA/NEA-Retired Conference

**FEB. 27-28** CONFERENCE

Marriott, Irvine. Learn how CTA/NEA-Retired is protecting your future and watching legislation that affects your benefits. Hotel cut-off: Feb. 12.

► [ctago.org](https://ctago.org)

## Equity and Human Rights Conference

**FEB. 28-MARCH 1** CONFERENCE

Marriott, Irvine. Offers greater understanding of diversity, equity and social justice. Incentive grants deadline: Jan. 6. Hotel cut-off: Feb. 12.

► [ctago.org/CTAEHR](https://ctago.org/CTAEHR)

## Good Teaching Conference South

**MARCH 13-15** CONFERENCE

Hyatt Regency Orange County, Garden Grove. Excellent teaching and learning practices for K-12 teachers. Incentive grants deadline: Jan. 6. Hotel cut-off: Feb. 20. ► [ctago.org](https://ctago.org)

## NEA ESP Conference

**MARCH 20-22** CONFERENCE

New Orleans. Enhances ESPs' skills and knowledge so they can positively impact student achievement, organize, advocate, and build community relations. Online registration deadline: Jan. 31.

► [nea.org/esconference](https://nea.org/esconference)



“United States of Inequality: 2020 and the Great Divide” is a yearlong series by Capital & Main ([capitalandmain.com](http://capitalandmain.com)), the California-based online publication that reports on economic, environmental and social issues. It examines how tens of millions of Americans increasingly struggle to make ends meet, and how this reality will affect one of the most consequential elections in U.S. history.

Stories already published include a timeline chronicling why income equality has worsened and 10 shocking facts; among them (at right):

## The Facts About Inequality

- An estimated 43.5 percent of the total U.S. population — 140 million people — are either poor or low-income.
- The median white family has 41 times more wealth than the median black family and 22 times more wealth than the median Latino family.
- CEO compensation has grown 940 percent since 1978, while typical worker compensation has risen only 12 percent during that time.
- More than 30 percent of black children and over 26 percent of Hispanic kids live in poverty.
- Three men own as much as the bottom half of Americans.
- The richest 5 percent of Americans own 66 percent of the nation’s wealth.
- U.S. men have three times more than women in retirement savings.

### Coming Soon: CTA’s New Website

A REVAMP OF [cta.org](http://cta.org) is in the works, to be unveiled this spring. Expect great new features, including more accessible, useful content and state-of-the-art design and functionality. Details about the rollout and what the site offers you will be available soon.

## CTA’s Disaster Relief Fund

**IMPACTED BY WILDFIRES** or other disasters? The fund offers four types of grants for members:

- Standard: Up to \$1,500 for hardship related to damage to your primary residence, or displacement.
- Catastrophic: Standard grant recipients may be eligible for up to an additional \$1,500 if damages exceed \$50,000.
- Temporary displacement: Up to \$500 for displacement from your primary residence for more than seven days.
- School site: Up to \$500 for damage to classrooms.

Active CTA, Student CTA and CTA/NEA-Retired members can apply at [ctamemberbenefits.org/drf](http://ctamemberbenefits.org/drf). For our story on California communities coming back from natural disasters, see page 30.



### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT

CTA is partnering with the California Association of African-American Superintendents and Administrators to host CAAASA’s annual conference. Titled “Strengthening an Equity Education Coalition for African-American, Latinx and Other Students of Color,” it will highlight evidence-based policies and practices that will let participants apply best practices to their classrooms, schools and districts. March 11-13, 2020, Sheraton Grand Hotel, Sacramento. [CAAASA.org](http://CAAASA.org)

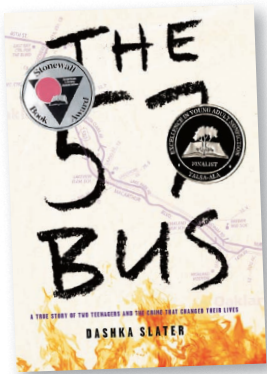


## BIGGEST. CLASS. EVER.

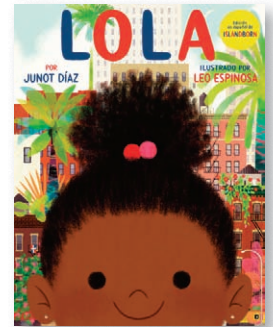
**THIS YEAR'S PARTICIPANTS** in CTA's Ethnic Minority Early Identification and Development (EMEID) program (above) are part of the largest class ever. EMEID promotes and develops ethnic minority leadership in CTA. It builds on existing CTA/NEA programs, trainings, conferences and events, and incorporates coaching and interaction with leadership from local chapters, CTA/NEA, and CTA Board members and staff.

Ethnic minority CTA members interested in broadening their knowledge of the association and exploring a possible role in leadership can apply for the 2020-21 program online starting March 1; application deadline is April 24, 2020. Go to [cta.org/emeid](http://cta.org/emeid).

## Riveting Reads



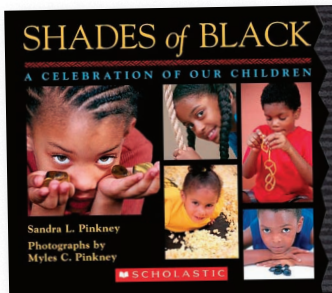
**TRUE STORY:** In 2013, two teens were riding the bus home from school in Oakland. While Sasha, who appeared male but was wearing a skirt, slept, Richard lit the skirt on fire. It left severe burns on Sasha, a white, agender private school kid. Richard, 16 and an African American public school student, was charged as an adult with two hate crimes. *The 57 Bus*, by Dashka Slater (grades 9-12), explores the very different lives of these teens and our assumptions about gender identity, adolescent crime and penal racism. Its themes of tolerance and forgiveness will resonate with students.



"I am Black. I am Unique." Through photos and poetic text, *Shades of Black: A Celebration of Our Children*, by Sandra L. Pinkney and Myles C. Pinkney (pre-K, kindergarten), conveys pride in a distinctive, diverse heritage. It is a book of affirmation for African American children, celebrating varied skin tones, hair texture and eye color.

In *Lola*, a book in Spanish by Pulitzer Prize winner Junot Díaz and illustrated by Leo Espinosa (grades 3-5), children in Lola's school come from faraway places. When the teacher asks students to draw pictures of these places, Lola is at a loss — she doesn't remember the island she left as a baby. With help from family and friends' memories, her imagination lets her journey back to the island. She comes to understand her grandmother's words: "Don't remember a place, it doesn't mean that it's not part of you."

CTA's California Reads offers teacher-recommended books for students at all grade levels. Find them at [cta.org/californiareads](http://cta.org/californiareads). #californiareads



# Quotes & Numbers

Compiled by **Julian Peeples**

## \$12 BILLION

**FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS** and public services per year that would be generated by the Schools and Communities First initiative, currently in signature-gathering to qualify it for the November 2020 ballot.

**“The fight for equity requires deliberate action, and Schools and Communities First would start to undo the effects of decades of chronic underfunding of our schools, colleges and public services.”**

—CTA President **E. TOBY BOYD**, at the campaign kickoff for the Schools and Communities First initiative at CTA State Council in October.

## 46%

**PERCENTAGE OF** American children who have experienced at least one adverse childhood experience that may be traumatic, according to the 2016 National Survey of Children’s Health.

## 46.3 MILLION

**NUMBER OF U.S.** students who can connect to high-speed internet (100+ kilobits per second), according to digital learning nonprofit EducationSuperHighway.



**“GREAT TEACHERS ARE THE CORE OF A GREAT EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. YES, TEACHING CHANGES LIVES OF INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS, BUT BEYOND THAT, TEACHERS SHOW US ALL THAT ALL CHILDREN CAN ACHIEVE, NO MATTER WHO THEY ARE.”**

—Superintendent of Public Instruction **TONY THURMOND**, announcing the 2020 California Teachers of the Year.

**“Through the power and strength of organizing, parent support and our unity, WSCTA reached a tentative agreement with the district that will benefit our students by helping to halt teacher turnover.”**

—**LILY SMEDSHAMMER**, West Sonoma County Teachers Association president, after reaching an agreement to end a three-day strike in November (see story, page 42).

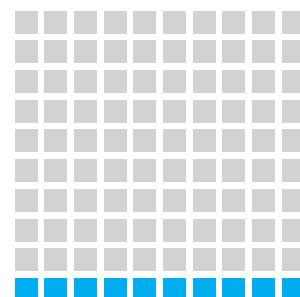


**“WE DEMAND A FAIR CONTRACT THAT PROVIDES SALARIES THAT ALLOW PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS TO LIVE IN THIS COMMUNITY. A FAIR CONTRACT MUST ENSURE CLASS SIZES THAT ALLOW TEACHERS TO TEACH, GUARANTEE CASELOADS THAT ALLOW NURSES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS, AND ALLOW LIBRARIANS TO SUPPORT LITERACY.”**

—Mt. Diablo Education Association President **ANITA JOHNSON**, at an October school board meeting.

## 975,000

**TOTAL NUMBER OF** instructional days lost in more than 1,400 schools statewide from Oct. 24 to Nov. 1 due to Public Safety Power Shutoffs, according to EdSource.



## 10%

**PERCENTAGE OF** children under 5 who were uncaptured in the 2010 Census (more than 2 million kids), according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

🗨️: @bykellymalka

# DO A DIGITAL DETOX

*You and your students will benefit from taking a social media break*

By @samdemuro



**RESEARCH TELLS US** that social media can cause anxiety, distraction, loneliness and FOMO (fear of missing out), yet technology is woven so intricately into our everyday lives — personally and professionally — that many educators question if it's even possible to take a break.

But educators are not only making choices about their own digital participation, they're also teaching students about creating a healthy relationship with technology. Making space in the classroom to have conversations about social media use and self-care is a great place to start. Sharing that a **#DigitalDetox** isn't just for young people, but for adults as well, can be empowering for students to hear.

Benefits of taking a digital detox:

1. Increases productivity
2. Allows you to be more present in your everyday life
3. Allows more time for self-reflection without distraction
4. Provides clarity
5. Decreases anxiety

***“Making space in the classroom to have conversations about social media use and self-care is a great place to start.”***

6. Increases awareness of self and surroundings
7. Allows you to stop comparing yourself to others

While it may be difficult to stop using your phone, computer, tablet and smart watch entirely, here are some ways, big and small, to perform a **#DigitalDetox**.

1. Delete apps you don't use
2. Unfollow social media accounts that don't add value or joy to your life
3. Turn off all push notifications for a day (both phone and watch)
4. Don't do social media in the morning (before 10 a.m.)
5. Don't do social media 90 minutes before bedtime
6. On weekends, spend no more than an hour a day online
7. Check in on a friend who appears to be living their best life on social media (it isn't always as it seems!)

Did you try any of these tips? How did it turn out? Let us know (after your detox!): **@WeAreCTA** on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.



Erin Castillo stands by the chart she created; below, suggestions to help students cope with different situations.



# Teacher Trending

## Erin Castillo's check-in chart is a safety net for students

By **Sherry Posnick-Goodwin** Photos by **Kim Sanford**

THEY MIGHT NOT say anything, but Erin Castillo can tell when a student is having a bad day. And she wants to help, without pressuring them. So last year she put a chart on the wall, encouraging students to write their name on a Post-it and stick it on the category that best sums up how they are feeling that day. Choices range from “I’m great” to “I’m having a hard time and wouldn’t mind a check-in” to “I’m in a really dark place.”

Castillo teaches English to students with mild to moderate disabilities at John F. Kennedy High School in Fremont. She also teaches a peer counseling class and has a degree in psychology, so incorporating mental health into the school day comes naturally.

The chart is a way to check in with students who are having difficulties and refer those in crisis to counselors and mental health professionals. Students are asked to trust one another and not to invade each other’s privacy. And surprisingly, they comply. The chart is located by the front door before an entryway, and it’s difficult for students to see who’s posting while sitting at their desks.

“I always worried that perhaps I was missing the signs that students were struggling. So, putting up a chart seemed the best option to find out.”

To her, it was a small gesture to show students that she cares,

and a way to create a safe space for them. She was shocked when it went viral in a big way.

After putting up the chart, she posted it on her Instagram page. Soon she was trending, going from 10,000 to 33,000 followers.

“I had no idea it had gone viral,” says Castillo, a member of the Fremont Unified District Teachers Association. “When the TV show *Insider* reached out to me with an interview request on April Fool’s Day, I thought it was a joke and that I was being punked.”

It was no joke. Since then, she has also been featured on *Good Morning America* and *CBS News*, which sent a camera crew to the school and filmed an entire day.

Facebook flew her out to speak at its Safety Summit about how to do online check-ins with groups. She has inspired teachers around the world — educators as far away as New Zealand and South Africa have modeled charts on the one she created.

While the accolades have been exciting, the biggest reward is helping her students, who struggle with self-esteem and have been the target of bullying.

“It has worked really well,” she shares. “It’s made it so much

**“It’s made it so much easier for kids to talk to me. For students, it can be daunting to share emotions and ask someone for help. But now it’s not so scary.”**

—**Erin Castillo**, Fremont Unified District Teachers Association



easier for kids to talk to me. For students, it can be scary and daunting to share emotions and ask someone to help them. But now it's not so scary. We talk about what depression means and look it up in the dictionary. I have had kids come up to me and ask to hug me, which is unexpected in high school. The school psychologist has worked with a couple of kids I have referred, and so have counselors."

Students say that it has been a lifesaver and inspired them to try harder in school.

"I like the chart and felt it was a way to share my feelings with Mrs. Castillo without other students knowing I was asking for help," says Virginia Morfin. "When I asked for help, she made me feel important and cared about."

Simone Dawkins says she felt a little nervous at first sharing



Student Simone Dawkins places her Post-it on the mental health check-in chart.

that being bullied had put her in a "dark place." Castillo sent her to talk with the counselor, who helped her cope and feel better.

"I feel empowered," says Dawkins, who carries a fluffy toy to comfort her. "It makes such a difference to know that on your darkest day, people care about you and love you."

Daniel Ferguson-Morales shares that posting how he was feeling on the chart also made it easier to open up to fellow students.

While educators around the globe have created their own posters, Castillo offers a free one at [teacherspayteachers.com](https://www.teacherspayteachers.com).

"I don't want to charge anyone for something that helps students," explains Castillo. "Just to know that other teachers are sharing this — and helping students — fills me with joy." ■

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 3. The guarantee to close within 10 business days does not apply if delays occur by third parties, including but not limited to realtors, borrowers, and/or sellers. Down payment must be from borrower's own source of funds and does not include non-lender paid fees, impounds, or reserves. Provident Credit Union guarantees to close your loan by the date specified in the purchase contract, provided this date is 10 business days from contract date and we have received a complete loan application and all requested documents. If the loan fails to close on time due to a delay by Provident Credit Union, we will credit \$995.00 of the buyer's closing costs at time of funding (POWER Funding must be requested at time of application). This offer may not be combined with other satisfaction guarantee offers. Borrowers must meet Provident Credit Union's lending guidelines. Any alteration to the loan amount or loan terms by, or per request of, borrower will invalidate the guarantee. Property must appraise at or above the sale price. POWER Funding is only available for properties in the Bay Area, which include San Mateo County, Santa Clara County, San Francisco County, Alameda County, and Contra Costa County. Other restrictions apply. NMLS #412725 ©PCU 5/19

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## \* ADVICE

# Content vs. Context

Take a cue from actors when balancing student learning *By Gregor Trpin*

**ONLY A FEW** years back, we placed a great deal of importance on the memorization of facts, figures, algorithms and content. Regardless of training and credential courses, many of us taught the way we were taught.

And then we swung the pendulum full tilt in the opposite direction and veered sharply toward the Common Core road of examining relationships, interactions and connections. This shift, often misinterpreted as devoid of foundation and structure for many, threw our community for a learning loop. The backlash of frustration from students, teachers and parents flooded administrators' inboxes.

Now, it is time to merge our divided ideologies and allow for the balance of content and context to fully converge, so we can provide the most effective strategic learning for our students and optimize performance.

We know that academic content is the underpinning for learning. Yet without context, the circumstances, the time, the place and the story behind it all — we're disconnected. Content and context go hand in hand like a class of kindergartners off to the library.

However, which approach should frontload the other? Should the engaging contextual approach lead to learning content, or the grounding of content be the conduit to further explore the context of a topic?

How do teachers approach this conundrum?

The answer: like an actor preparing for a performance. Hear me out.

In rehearsal and before playing a character, an actor explores many options. One is to dive into the script with complete energy and investment, listening intuitively for sparks of ideas and curiosities to provide insight into how to play the role. The words inspire the action. In reflection afterward the actor makes note of successful discoveries. In this case, the content stimulates ideas and expands the context.

Another option is to read, research and learn the substance and history behind the setting, relationships and life of the character. The actor uses this knowledge as a basis to inform choices on actions with respect to the script, and to pursue their character's objective. In other words, the content of



**“Should the engaging contextual approach lead to learning content, or the grounding of content be the conduit to further explore the context of a topic?”**

background knowledge supports the presentational choices the actor makes.

Finally, many actors choose to memorize their lines completely before investigating their performance choices. The comfort and knowledge of the words in the script allows an actor to feel liberated from the inevitable task of memorization, and opens opportunities for the artist to explore strong acting choices.

All the methods are a pursuit in artistry, and neither technique negates the others. In fact, all are illuminating and insightful. One technique may work better for one actor than another, but this doesn't discredit the technique. It's a personal and professional call by the artist in their process.

Similarly, the classroom calls on the teacher to utilize the process of an artist. A teacher must discern, make choices, trust instincts, and navigate the landscape of students to determine which instructional choice will support engagement and learning optimally. The teacher's professionalism and knowledge of their students and instructional craft dictate the road that will be traveled.

If students gravitate to engaged contextual precursors to provide momentum to learning a skill, then execute accordingly. If a class thrives on the impetus of a foundational academic base to provide security and groundwork for new knowledge, also execute accordingly.

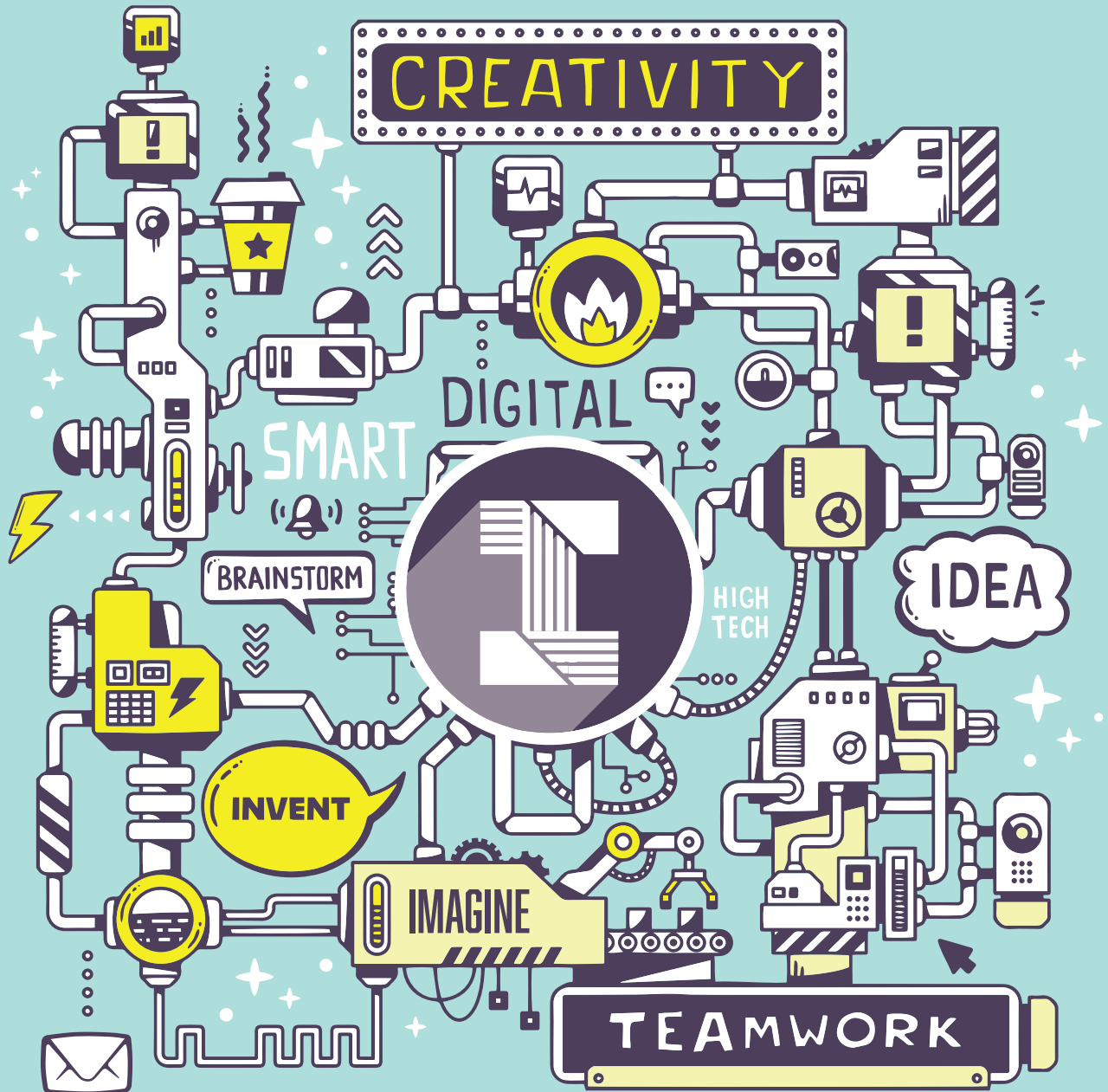
Regardless of the order of these two pathways, this instructional truth remains clear: One cannot exist without the other if effective and engaging learning is the objective. Knowing the story behind a fact makes it so much more interesting. And academic language, framework and formulas are essential to ground a topic of learning. As an artist evaluates nuanced choices for audience engagement, so too does a teacher thoughtfully assess the implementation of lesson design for a stellar instructional performance. ■

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*Gregor Trpin, Manhattan Beach Unified Teachers Association, is a middle school humanities and social studies teacher.*

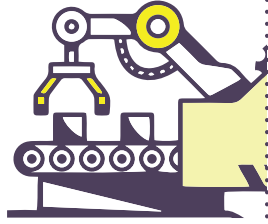
# “I” IS FOR INNOVATION

*...and imagination and inventiveness*



**INNOVATORS NOT ONLY** have the creativity to come up with great ideas, they also know how to execute — an equally important attribute of educators who excel and give their students something special. On the following pages, meet this year's brilliant bunch.





# THE SCIENCE OF

## SCIENCE LESSONS A LA 'CART'

*Juan Padilla's big idea brings opportunity to all kids*

*Hanford Elementary Teachers Association*



**S**TUDENTS PUT CRACKERS and bread pieces inside plastic baggies, add water, squish, and watch how the mixture clumps. When food is chewed in the mouth and goes down the esophagus, it looks like that, explains Juan Padilla, a sixth grade teacher at Jefferson Academy in Hanford. Next, to simulate stomach acid breaking down food on its way to the small intestine, students add coffee to the concoction. Some of the mixture is poured into containers of fake blood, demonstrating how nutrients enter the bloodstream and become absorbed.

The youngsters work in groups, pouring and mixing, clustered around four portable science labs that contain sinks. Eventually students are told to cut the bottom corner of the baggie and squeeze out the concoction, to show how the large intestine helps food depart from the body. “Oh my god, it’s poop,” the students cry delightedly.

This type of hands-on experiment to implement the Next Generation Science Standards was impossible until last year, due to the configuration of desks and no counter space. Then Padilla thought of creating portable science labs on wheels,

equipped with microscopes, petri dishes, slides, cylinder sets, gram scales, test tubes, pipettes and even fire extinguishers. CTA’s Institute for Teaching funded the project with a grant of nearly \$20,000.

“Students are definitely much more enthusiastic about science,” says Padilla. “Before, science was hypothetical. Now students do experiments in real time. It’s more exciting. Students are not just studying science — they see themselves as scientists.”

For students, science has never been so enjoyable.

“Mr. Padilla always has interesting experiments and makes learning fun,” says Gianna Garcia. “You never know what’s going to happen.”

There was fanfare and excitement when the portable labs were rolled out last year, recalls Padilla. “Kids came in and said, ‘Oh my gosh, we’re going to do real experiments now!’ The principal

and learning director walked in and said, ‘Wow, this looks like a real science classroom with all the bells and whistles.’ Other teachers on-site were thrilled because, of course, it’s all about sharing.” The labs easily roll into other classrooms.

“Parents came and saw students looking at their own cells under a microscope, and there was definitely a wow factor.”

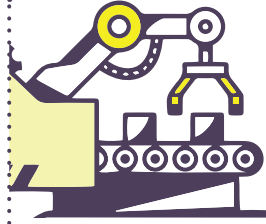
In Hanford, an agricultural town near Fresno, half the residents are Latino, and many are struggling financially. So it’s crucial that students have the same opportunities as those in more affluent communities, to prepare them for jobs of the future, says Padilla.

“So many jobs in the future will be science-focused. This gets students thinking about those types of careers,” says

**“Students do experiments in real time. It’s more exciting. They are not just studying science — they see themselves as scientists.”**

*PADILLA continued on page 20*

# INNOVATION



Stories by **Sherry Posnick-Goodwin**  
Photos by **Kim Sanford** and  
**Scott Buschman**



Photos by Scott Buschman



**“I want science to inspire my students to look at the world with wonder, and I’ll do whatever it takes — stand on a table and dance, tell a silly joke or create a funny meme.”**

## DANCING WITH NGSS

*Becky McKinney builds relationships — students learn science along the way*

*Escondido Secondary Teachers Association*

**“IN THREE WORDS** or less, what must organisms do to survive?”

Students call out answers, such as eating, breathing and reproducing.

“Organisms must *evolve, adapt* and *function*,” states biology teacher Becky McKinney.

The same could be said of science at San Pasqual High School: It has evolved, adapted to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), and functions well, thanks to the leadership and hard work of this Escondido Secondary Teachers Association member and her team.

The AP biology and physics teacher, curriculum creator, and professional development coach helped to radically change science on campus. She earned

two awards from Escondido Secondary School District — a Lighthouse Award for innovation in 2018 and Teacher of the Year in 2019. She was also named 2018 Outstanding Engineering Educator by the International Council on Systems Engineering for incorporating engineering principles into lessons.


McKinney also mentors new teachers and supports veteran teachers — and was the school’s Dancing With the Teachers champion for a fundraiser.

She’s not your typical educator. She wears combat boots and says “y’all” and “howdy.” She flies around the classroom offering real-world examples of science and rarely uses a textbook. An administrator once observed her frenetic

teaching style and asked later, “Are you always like this?”

“I said, ‘Yep, that’s me,’” McKinney recalls. “I want science to inspire my students to look at the world with wonder, and I’ll do whatever it takes. If I have to stand on a table and dance, tell a silly joke or create a funny meme, I’ll do that. I’m not afraid to be me.”

Colleagues say McKinney has transformed science by empowering students to take a problem-solving approach that’s exciting and fun, via questioning and collaborating.

For example, during a lesson on homeostasis, students put thermometers in water beakers, and were told to keep the temperature and 

*McKINNEY continued on page 20*



*PADILLA continued from page 18*

Padilla. “Many of them will want to pursue science as a career. I sense that in them. And I think the labs will definitely help.”

Padilla, who has been teaching at Jefferson Academy since 2007, identifies with his students. He moved to Hanford in third grade and never left, except for attending Fresno Pacific University.

“I was an English learner, and there was not a lot of inclusion during that time,” he recalls. “I was put in a separate class and felt targeted. In college, a professor made it a point to always check in with me and kept tabs on me. That was rare at the

university level. I try to replicate that with the little guys and be that kind of a teacher. It’s my motivation.”

Padilla created a sports science elective that incorporates the portable labs. Athletes love it because they learn about sports; science nerds love the data. It has brought all types of students together, and it’s so popular there’s a waiting list.

“You come to a point in your teaching career when it’s time to make things more interesting, branch out and find a



Padilla’s students use rolling science labs to learn about the digestive system.

way to reach every student,” says Padilla. “Innovation is exciting. It’s fun. It can be scary. For me, it’s all about getting out of my comfort zone.”

See [cta.org/JuanPadillaFT](http://cta.org/JuanPadillaFT) to view our video.

*McKINNEY continued from page 19*

water level constant for 10 minutes only by adding water. The group activity led to a lively discussion on how humans must sometimes intervene to maintain their body’s equilibrium.

“She relates real-life situations to science, showing us biology is everywhere, instead of just in a textbook,” says senior Kimberly Najera.

McKinney’s mission has led to higher student achievement, better instruction, more teacher collaboration and increased teacher leadership, according to her

Teacher of the Year Award bio.

Fifteen years ago, she was a forensic scientist with the police department in Fort Worth, Texas, doing CSI-style work. After moving to California, she needed a job and was hired on an emergency permit to teach science in Palmdale, later earning her credential.

“I grew up in Texas where you did your homework, respected your elders, and dinner was on the table every night,” she says. “But here, students didn’t turn in homework, had to take care of siblings, and sat down to dinner whenever they made it. I wasn’t prepared for that. I realized it wasn’t about science anymore; it was about fostering relationships with students so they could learn science along the way.”

She facilitated numerous conversations and meetings for a districtwide committee whose members rewrote physics curriculum in 2015 and then rewrote chemistry, biology and Earth science curriculum throughout 2016-18. There were few examples to follow, and the NGSS had not been finalized by the state, but that didn’t stop McKinney and her colleagues. She became a teacher on special assignment in 2016, co-creating

a “Summer Science Institute” for educators implementing NGSS, and has since returned to the classroom full time, which is where her heart is.

McKinney leads professional learning communities schoolwide for teachers of all disciplines, because she believes all teachers can learn from one another. Cross-curricular collaboration has brought staff closer together.

Her new project is working with colleagues to create NGSS-aligned grades and assessments that embrace equity. McKinney presented on the topic at the California Science Teachers Association’s conference in October.

“The work we are doing now geeks me out,” she says excitedly. “We’re not treading water, we’re jumping right in and being leaders in what NGSS assessments and grades should look like, throughout California. I’m super pumped about the great things we will accomplish.”

To read more about McKinney’s ideas on NGSS implementation visit [sites.google.com/euhd.org/science-in-escondido/home](http://sites.google.com/euhd.org/science-in-escondido/home) and [bmckinney-ngss.blogspot.com](http://bmckinney-ngss.blogspot.com).



McKinney and fellow science teachers won the Dancing With the Teachers championship (a fundraiser for cancer research) two years ago. She says, “I am a mess at dancing. But kids see I’m not perfect. It was another way of telling students, ‘We’re in this together.’”



# THE WOW FACTOR

*Dennis and Daniel Gibbs set a STEM career path*

*Imperial Teachers Association*

◀ Dennis and Daniel Gibbs flank the vortex cannon. Spandex cloth pulls back to suck air into a steam-filled vessel. When it is released, foggy air is ejected, forming a ring-shaped vortex.

**I**T'S TIME TO fire the vortex cannon, and a hush falls over the high school and elementary students assembled. There is no explosion or boom. Instead, the cannon quietly emits giant smoke rings that float over the schoolyard.

The cannon isn't just blowing smoke. It's teaching students about the relationships between volume, pressure and the stability of rotating objects.

When students utter "wow!" it means the cannon has what it takes for the Imperial Valley Discovery Zone (IVDZ), a unique science center created by Dennis and Daniel Gibbs, with help from CTA's Institute for Teaching, IFT, which funds educators' innovative ideas, awarded their project \$20,000 in 2015-16 and another \$10,000 in 2018-19.

"While every exhibit our students create has some underlying STEM concept,


every exhibit also has to pass the wow test," explains Dennis. "In addition to being fun, science should make kids wonder and tap into their innate curiosity so they want to learn more."

The fraternal twins teach at Imperial High School and grew up in nearby Brawley. Dennis, the older by three minutes, teaches science classes with a focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering and math), and Daniel teaches a career pathways course. The educators created the center at Ben Hulse Elementary School, across the street from the high school. The goal is to have high school students build exciting, hands-on projects that get elementary students in this agricultural community excited about science when they visit.

The IVDZ incorporates elementary school STEM instruction, covers the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS),

and provides exciting educational opportunities beyond the regular classroom environment for youngsters, many of whom are low-income English learners. There's a 3-D printer, robotics activities and coding lessons. In addition to operating during school hours, the IVDZ is available for community use after school.

"I like it because I get to ask lots of questions," says fourth grader Yarely Vasquez. "We get to do experiments and figure out if something works or not. I love doing robotics."

Thirty high schoolers, who are recruited from Dan's science classes and receive vocational education credit, are leaders in the program. These "explainers" help in training 180 of their peers, who deliver specific lessons to elementary students. 

*GIBBS continued on page 22*



# IT REALLY IS ROCKET SCIENCE

## Jorge Perez's oasis of excellence

College of the Desert Faculty Association

**H**OW TO ENGAGE students? Rocket science! A collaboration between NASA and College of the Desert (COD) has successfully launched, thanks to Jorge Perez, adjunct professor in math.

In March, the NASA Community College Aerospace Scholars (NCAS) program selected COD to participate in a pilot project called NASA On Campus. It is one of six community colleges serving minority students in the project, funded by NASA's Minority University Research and Education Project (MUREP).

"I felt proud to be one of the six," says Perez, who facilitated the collaboration. "It's important for students to see NASA present on campus so they can envision themselves there

in the future. NASA's presence gave them the confidence to believe in themselves."

(The other participating colleges are Cerritos College in Norwalk, two colleges in Mississippi, one in New Jersey, and one in Oklahoma.)

NCAS offers community college students focusing on STEM careers a weeklong experience at NASA centers. Nearly 200 internships have been awarded to students since 2007, helping students obtain jobs in the aerospace industry. The travel may be difficult for some students — especially minority students — so NASA On Campus was created last summer to help level the playing field.

For NASA On Campus, 24 COD students first took a five-week online course, administered and funded by

NASA. Perez was the instructional assistant for the self-paced class, answering students' questions. Those who passed participated in NASA-created engineering design and robotics competitions on campus. NASA sent representatives for the weeklong competitions, and will award a student from each of the six campuses a NASA summer internship.

"Student groups competed for a mock NASA contract," says Perez. "The focus was to design, develop and construct a functioning rover to perform tasks. During this time students learned team-building skills, listened to NASA speakers, and worked with mentors from local industries who were COD alums."

To prepare for the pilot project, Perez received online training and visited NASA Ames Research Center in Silicon Valley. Then he was invited to help run the NCAS program at Langley Research Center in Virginia, which he found "extremely useful" in deciding what would work (and not work) at a community college.

COD has been part of the California Space Grant Consortium since 2015, with Perez as lead. The consortium is the state's implementation

*GIBBS continued from page 21*

"I love it! It's my favorite class," says explainer Eric Gomez, 18. "I love interacting with the kids and introducing lessons. I love watching their faces light up when they begin to understand something."

The explainers benefit as much as the young students, says Daniel, who shares that some teens are considering teaching careers because they enjoy it so much. They attend community events such as fairs and farmer's markets, and since 2018 have engaged more than 12,000 community members through interactive science projects.

Among things the high schoolers have created for IVDZ:

- A sand bed that teaches about solids and liquids. When millions of sand grains in the container are agitated with air and shaking, the entire mass behaves like a liquid and flows. Steel ball bearings sit on top of

Photo by Scott Buschman

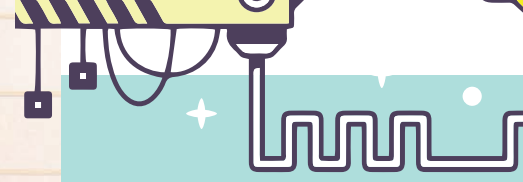


"Explainer" Brenna Rollins with Jett Vindiola, Ashlyn Mass, teacher Daniel Gibbs, and Yarely Vasquez.





Jorge Perez, center, with students, faculty and NASA representatives.



**“It’s important for students to see NASA present on campus so they can envision themselves there in the future. [It gives] them confidence in themselves.”**

arm of NASA’s National Space Grant College and Fellowship Program, supporting scholarships, fellowships and traineeships for aerospace-related education, plus faculty training. It nominated COD, which has a Hispanic enrollment of nearly 70 percent, to participate in NASA On Campus.

Creating an oasis of scientific excellence at COD did not happen overnight. Since 2015, staff have been mentoring students to program microcontrollers. Students presented their projects at Armstrong Flight Research Center and USC School of Engineering.

“Every year students did better,

developing more complex projects, ranging from low-cost incubators to 3-D printers and satellite prototypes,” says Perez. “They even created a car that could be moved literally with thoughts. I know this sounds crazy, but it worked. Our students’ achievements led to a recommendation for the NASA pilot project. It’s an amazing success story.”

Perez, a COD professor since 2011, is a success story himself. Born in Mexico, he moved to America at 12 without being able to speak a word of English. He received his associate degree in math and philosophy from COD and transferred to UC Riverside, where

he received his bachelor’s and master’s in pure mathematics.

His high school science teacher cooked breakfast for him on a Bunsen burner and paid for his AP chemistry exam because his parents couldn’t afford it. Her kindness motivated him to become a teacher so he could help others.

Perez’s students are grateful for the opportunity to reach for the stars.

“It’s one of the greatest experiences I’ve ever had in my life,” one student wrote on a survey after the project. “This program gives you all the information you need to succeed in a STEM career.”

## IDEA

**“We’re starting to see a tsunami of critical thinkers along with increasing STEM literacy in our district. It’s wonderful to see students excited about science.”**

—Dennis Gibbs

the sand until it is “fluidized,” and then they sink, demonstrating how liquefaction of soil occurs during earthquakes.

- An acoustic levitator with sound waves projected from different angles. When the sound waves intersect, the high and low pressures suspend small pieces of plastic foam in the air.

- A life-size game of Operation.

“It’s so exciting to see how hands-on learning has transformed science instruction,” says Josh Phillips, 18. “When we come up with a bright idea, one of the Mr. Gibbs will just say, ‘Build it.’”

The Gibbs brothers have created more than 40 original

NGSS science lessons so far for IVDZ, and are proud of the way it’s changed science instruction within the district. The program has bridged elementary, middle and high school science lessons and increased teacher collaboration districtwide. It has also shown students possibilities that exist beyond Imperial Valley, where agriculture and prisons are the primary source of employment.

“We started doing this six years ago,” says Dennis. “And now we’re starting to see a tsunami of critical thinkers along with increasing STEM literacy in our district. It’s wonderful to see students excited about science.”



# SOMETHING'S COOKING IN POPLAR

*Somphane Hunter creates community in the kitchen*

*Pleasant View Education Association*

**TULARE COUNTY PRODUCES** more than 240 agricultural commodities for human consumption. But a crop of student chefs, otherwise known as the Poplar Food Network (PFN), is also growing and flourishing these days in the Central Valley. The students are learning how to cook healthy foods — and are transforming their families' lifestyles. They even star in their own YouTube cooking channel.

This success story was made possible from the vision and hard work of Somphane Hunter, a teacher at Pleasant View Elementary School in Poplar. In September 2018, she created PFN, which provides Poplar students in grades 4-8 and their families with a free after-school program combining food, community and technology. The program is funded by CTA's Institute for Teaching (IFT), and workshops are continuing this year.

PFN is a collaboration among:

- Food Link of Tulare County, a food bank that offers its teaching kitchen and garden in Exeter for classes, provides transportation, and even teaches some classes.
- Paint Poplar, a social justice community advocacy group created by Hunter.
- Outlaw Consulting Group, a digital strategy and marketing company, which films the classes and created a YouTube channel to showcase student talents.

"It's been exciting to conduct this

project beyond my classroom and into the community," says Hunter. "Our students and families are collaborating with peers, adults, businesses and organizations while exploring what a healthy eating lifestyle looks like. They have ventured out into the world on field trips, including Homeboy Industries in Chinatown in Los Angeles, Woodlake Botanical Gardens, and a food day event with Food Link."

Student chefs' skills are on display during a class with Hunter called *Cooking With Color* as they whip up a veggie-chicken stir fry. Boys and girls use sharp knives to carefully and safely cut the veggies, with nary an injury, despite tears from the onions. They listen to directions and work in teams, gathered around the hot electric skillets in the cafeteria at Pleasant View. Hunter darts from station to station, offering encouragement and a dash of oyster sauce to

spice things up. Excitement, happiness and delicious smells mix together before the group finally sits down to dinner.

Tonia Gloria and her son Victor Govea, a seventh grader, love the program. "We are spending more time together as a family, and Victor is helping out more at home," says Gloria. "We've made spring rolls and zucchini spaghetti."

Some students are nervous trying new foods. Luzceleste Arellano, a fifth grader, had never tried spring rolls or sushi before making them, but now she loves them. She has also developed a fondness for mangoes and cucumbers, and helps with the cooking at home.

"Parents tell me they are thrilled to have their children helping in the kitchen," says Hunter. "This has motivated parents to be involved, and families are making healthy meals at home."

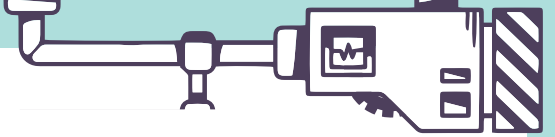


Hunter and her students enjoy the fruits of their labors.

**"When you overprepare, you drown from the stress and don't get to enjoy it with the kids. We learn as we go."**

*HUNTER continued on page 26*

# CHANGERS



With only 35 fluent Yurok speakers left, Genshaw tells students, "You are important, needed and valuable."

## REVITALIZING A LANGUAGE – AND A PEOPLE

*James Genshaw helps Native American youth connect to their culture*

*Eureka Teachers Association*



"**AIY-YE-KWEE**" is a Yurok greeting, but it means much more than hello, James Genshaw explains to his ninth grade students at Eureka High School in Humboldt County.

"It has more feeling. It means I missed you, I'm so happy to see you. It applies to places. When I go fishing or kneeling at the mouth of the Klamath River and I wash my hands in the ocean, which is considered a living being and ceremonial place, I say 'aiy-ye-kwee,' which means 'hello, you make me so happy.' It is an important phrase."

Yurok is a Native American language that came close to extinction, as elders passed away. But Genshaw has played a key role in revitalizing the language, including teaching four levels of Yurok to high school students at Eureka High.

He intertwines instruction with stories, songs and games, building a sense of community in the classroom. Approximately half of his students are Native American, and many are Yurok, but not

all. While students say Yurok is easy to learn, it's a complicated language — for example, there are 20 different ways of counting, depending on whether one is counting animals, flat things, round things, money or people.

Genshaw wrote the curriculum, and his classes meet world language and "a-g" college preparatory requirements. Two students in his fourth-year class received Seal of Biliteracy awards for mastery of the language after passing difficult tests, including translation.

"One of my students said it saved her life," shares Genshaw. "She was a Yurok tribal member. She was getting in big trouble with the law. She told me that learning Yurok got her off drugs and prevented her from going to prison. It helped her to understand who she was."

He tells his students that what they are doing is special. "Millions of people are able to speak Spanish, French and German, but Yurok has only 35 conversationally fluent speakers, so you are

important, needed and valuable."

His students are proud to be revitalizing an ancient language.

"I wanted to learn this language to help keep it alive," says Native American student Gracie Anderson, whose great-aunt speaks Yurok.

Kirsten Simpson has family who are Yurok. "[The class] makes me feel more connected," she says. "And it's cool."

Genshaw, a Yurok tribal member, grew up on the Yurok Reservation in Klamath. He was raised by his grandparents, who knew little of the Yurok language because, like many in their generation, they were forced to attend boarding school. (Beginning in the 1800s, the practice of forcibly removing Native American children from their homes was intended to coerce assimilation by wiping out their memories of Native language and culture.)

After high school, he took community language classes offered by the Yurok

*GENSAW continued on page 26*



Hunter on the line with her young chefs.

*HUNTER continued from page 24*

Hunter, who is Laotian, learned to cook from her mother while growing up in nearby Porterville. “We raised our own vegetables, and I witnessed the slaughtering of animals. My dad hunted. Today everything is so prepackaged and processed.”

A few years ago, as a single mom, she became concerned about the nutrition of her children, who considered Hot Cheetos and soda to be lunch. When discussing nutrition, she asked students to list healthy foods, and they could only name salad. She began advocating for healthier food choices in her school’s cafeteria, which now has fresh vegetables and a salad bar. It was time, Hunter decided, to expand their food options. To help create PFN, she applied for and received an IFT grant last year in the amount of \$17,545.

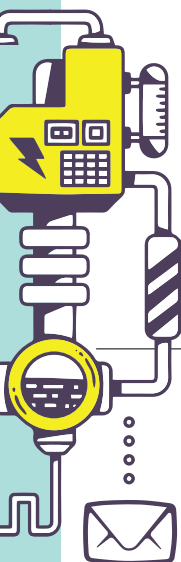
The videos by Outlaw Consulting — posted on YouTube and on the community’s Facebook page — have drawn hundreds of followers and instilled a great deal of pride in this community, which is mostly Latino and low-income.



“One parent teared up seeing their child on video, and it made me want to cry,” says Hunter. “At first the kids were stiff and uncomfortable being filmed, but soon they forgot they were on camera and became very confident.”

Her advice for educators wanting to try something outside the box is to have fun. “Dive in and go for it. When you overprepare, you drown from the stress and don’t get to enjoy it with the kids. We learn as we go. If I had waited until I was an expert, we’d never get there.”

See our video at [cta.org/SomphaneHunterIFT](https://cta.org/SomphaneHunterIFT), and check out the Poplar Food Network videos at [facebook.com/poplarcommunity](https://facebook.com/poplarcommunity).



*GENSAW continued from page 25*

Tribe and worked with Barbara McQuillen, a teacher at Del Norte High School and member of Del Norte Teachers Association. “A part of me always felt something was missing, so I immersed myself in learning Yurok,” Gensaw says.

After enrolling at College of the Redwoods, he became an intern in the Yurok Tribe Language Program and worked with elders whose first language was Yurok.

“I was very blessed to have the opportunity,” Gensaw says. “They became like family. I documented and recorded more than 1,000 hours with nearly a dozen elders. That time contains some of my fondest memories, and also some of my saddest, because everyone I worked with has now passed away.”

The Yurok Tribe, the largest in California with 6,400 enrolled members, partnered with UC Berkeley to create the Yurok Teacher Institute, which has the goal of restoring the language and developing credentialed Yurok language teachers in public schools. Gensaw earned his

**“It means everything to me having Yurok as a living language again. It’s a way to give Native American students resilience.”**

credential through the program.

He later worked with Andrew Garrett, director of UC Berkeley’s Yurok Language Project, and a team of elders to create an online Yurok language dictionary and database. Gensaw also helped

develop a free language app for Android and iPhones, and created online Yurok lessons for Quizlet and Kahoot! to help other educators.

He was recently approached by College of the Redwoods to teach a Yurok class as a pilot project, which he finds exciting.

“It means everything to me having Yurok as a living language again,” says Gensaw. “It’s changed my life and helped me grow into a stronger man. It’s a way to honor my elders. It’s a way to give Native American students resilience so they can find out more about themselves and their culture. To be part of taking an almost extinct language to a living, flourishing language has been awesome.”

Jennifer Bryant with student  
Kyle Dungan in The Den.

## A ONE-STOP SHOP

*Jennifer Barry guides  
special ed students in  
work and life skills*

*San Joaquin County Educators  
Association*

**A STUDENT LOADS** soda into a vending machine, grouping the cans by flavor. Nearby, classmates hang shirts on racks, sorting them by size and color, and display hats and glasses on rotating racks.

Welcome to The Den at Redwood School in Stockton, which resembles a mini-mart, but is actually a vocational training center that prepares students with moderate to severe disabilities for employment in the outside world.

The Den was created by special education teacher Jennifer Barry last year with a \$20,000 grant from CTA's Institute for Learning. The funding allowed her to purchase a vending machine, adaptive technology such as toggle switches that allow students to use body movements to manipulate machinery and computers, and software that teaches workplace and social skills.

The Den enhances training opportunities for 240 students ages 14-22 with Down syndrome, autism, cerebral palsy, and other cognitive disabilities that create challenges in attaining employment. It's an upbeat environment — focusing on students' abilities rather than challenges



**CREATIVITY**

**“Special education students are like little puzzles. It challenges me to think of creative ways to find access.”**

— in a cheery, large room that offers four types of work settings: office, retail, food service and assembly of items.

The setup reflects Barry's teaching style.

“I really look at everything with an attitude of ‘Why not?’ Why not let my students go to a restaurant, or wherever peers are going?” says Barry, president of her CTA local. “I approach things thinking I am going to try something that my students may be successful at, or something they tried before and were not successful at, and see what happens.”

Barry has been teaching special ed for 19 years within the San Joaquin County Office of Education (SJCOE). Currently, she has 12 students at Redwood, a center that serves special education students as young as 6. A third of her students work part time in community businesses, including movie theaters, restaurants and stores. Their salaries are paid by the state through the WorkAbility I program, which places students in jobs based on their interests, abilities and aptitudes.

“One reason I love working with special education students is that they are

like little puzzles, and I have to figure out how to help every student be successful,” Barry says. “What I did with student A might not work with student B, so I have to figure out something else. It challenges me to think of creative ways to find access — whether it's access to curriculum, access to peers, or access to new ways of communication.”

Barry also keeps a healthy perspective in her work. “Everybody says, ‘Oh, to teach special ed takes a special type person, you must be so caring and patient.’ That's true, but what also helps is having a good sense of humor and not taking things personally. A student might say the most random things, which can make me laugh. When they cuss me out, I don't take it personally. I know that student is trying to let me know he or she is not happy with what's going on, and I try to be empathetic to how they are feeling.”

The Den is separate from Barry's classroom, and is used by her students four days a week for a half hour each time. Other teachers use it once or twice a week. It is open to all SJCOE students, who come from special ed classes





housed on general education sites in Manteca Unified, Lincoln Unified and Escalon Unified school districts.

“My students may not be able to express how The Den impacts them, but I can see their progress,” Barry says. “In the beginning, I had to sit with them and explain each step. Four months later they come in and pick up a task and don’t need someone sitting next to them. I can see that they are excited and proud they’ve mastered something.”

The Den has received strong community support. Target donated shelving and materials; San Joaquin County put fresh paint on the walls and new linoleum on floors; and the Junior League revitalized a greenhouse that will eventually be used in the program.

Last spring The Den held an open house, and attendees included small businesses that employ students, potential employers, community members and administrators. Such public interaction, says Barry, boosts student confidence and improves social skills.

“People underestimate what kinds of things these students can do and how productive they can be,” says Barry. “I’m very proud of what they are accomplishing here.”

Student Kristopher Gonzalez with Jennifer Barry.



## KNOW AN INNOVATOR?

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## RACE AND CLASS IN CLASS

*Sherinda Bryant teaches English through a social justice lens*

*Sequoia District Teachers Association*

**M**ENLO ATHERTON High School teacher Sherinda Bryant takes a social justice approach to education. As a result, her ninth grade English students have won prizes, become critical thinkers and been a voice in their community.

Last school year, students received kudos for examining a problem in their own backyard.

“We looked at the housing crisis and defined what it was, why it was happening, and who benefits when there is a crisis,” says Bryant. “We discussed very tough questions. But I was pleasantly surprised at the responses I got from my 14-year-old students.”

Bryant teaches in Atherton, where even modest homes cost millions. The Bay Area tech boom resulted in shortages of affordable housing, displaced longtime residents and created a traffic nightmare.

She expected that her students from struggling families living in nearby Redwood City, Menlo Park and East Palo Alto would worry their families are being



Bryant with Teki Sanft. She helps students think critically and be a voice in their communities.



**“I’m not an expert. I’m continuously learning new things. But whatever we are reading, we find a way to talk about social issues.”**

priced out, but conversations revealed broader concerns. Even students from affluent households feared that after college, they would never be able to move back to their community. Students worried about traffic, pollution, congestion and quality of life.

When the Housing Leadership Council of San Mateo County created a contest for youth to submit creative ideas about the housing crisis last year, Bryant jumped at the opportunity. She made the contest an assignment for her three freshman classes and submitted the best entries.

Students turned in artwork, poems and essays. At the awards ceremony held in April at Kepler’s Books in Menlo Park, three won prizes: Marco Lenzi wrote a song called “Housing Crisis Blues” that included video and news reports; Clara Reinhold wrote a poem about the inequity of housing and what it is worth to have a roof over one’s head; and Max Villalobos created artwork with the message “Homes Are for People, Not Profit.”

“I was blown away,” says Bryant. “This was so much more than just telling them facts so they could learn how to write. This project created a platform for them

to shine. At the awards night ceremony I just sat back, watched and clapped.”

For Reinhold the experience was transformative.

“My teacher helped me figure out who I was. She helped me grow. I began focusing on social justice and became more interested in helping people. I joined school clubs such as Pride Pals, which includes students with special needs, and the Gay Straight Alliance. I became an ally.”

Bryant grew up in the Bay Area and worked for years as a paraeducator before enrolling in the College of Notre Dame’s credential program, which partnered with the Sequoia Union High School District, community groups and philanthropists to pay tuition costs for participants. She has been teaching for two years.

She recalls experiencing racism and insensitivity as a student in the public school system. Her high school, for example, had “Slave Day,” where students “bought” other students for a day of servitude, which African American students found very offensive. She says when members of the Black Student Union walked across campus to a meeting, it caused an

“uproar” among others who felt threatened. When she became an educator, she decided to expand her freshman English students’ horizons and teach through a social justice lens.

“I’m not an expert on social justice. I’m a lifelong learner continuously learning new things. But whatever we are reading — such as *The Great Gatsby*, for example — we find a way to talk about racism and justice and social issues.”

She is an adviser for her school’s Black Student Union, which voted to welcome nonblack students who are interested in being allies and social justice advocates.

Presently, her 11th graders are working on what it means to be American and looking at students who are privileged, struggling or undocumented. Her ninth graders are reading short stories and making connections to current social issues.

“Being led by my passion has made me innovative,” says Bryant. “I feel very lucky. It’s beneficial for students and helps me pursue my dream of becoming a social justice advocate in the workplace and community.”

# PHOENIX RISING

*Educators deal with students' and their own post-traumatic growth after disasters*

Story and photos by **Julian Peeples**

**T**HE 100-FOOT pine trees surrounding Ridgeview High School in Magalia are charred black. Towering over students and educators as they go about their school day, the pines serve as stark reminders of the destruction wrought by the Camp Fire only a year ago. And the freshly bulldozed dirt where neighborhoods of family homes once stood, now dotted with trailers and recreational vehicles, shows that this story of recovery is far from over.

For residents of Paradise and surrounding Butte County communities, every moment of the day can evoke memories of when the skies turned black with smoke and flames consumed nearly everything familiar. As efforts to rebuild continue, many of those scattered in the Camp Fire diaspora have returned to their communities — more than expected by Paradise Unified School District, where the high school alone had 300 more students than anticipated on the first day this year. But while the flames have long been extinguished, healing the minds and hearts of those impacted is a lengthy process.

“Our kids are pretty angry. We’ve had lots of fights. They don’t know what to do with these emotions,” says David Smith, president of Teachers Association of Paradise (TAP). “When you’ve got 36 kids who’ve all been through this trauma, it’s hard to have a lot of learning going on. It’s nobody’s fault, but that’s the way it is.”

Golden Feather Teachers Association President Marianne Moore says the uncertainty of post-fire life is difficult for her fourth to sixth grade students. Although Concow Elementary School survived, its water system was damaged beyond repair. A



“They lost what little they had. We’re doing the best we can and it’s OK, but we need a lot.”

—**Marianne Moore**, Golden Feather Teachers Association president



David Smith

temporary home for their school is just one in a long list of ways the fire is still impacting Moore’s students.

“Some of them are in mobile homes or live far outside of town. They’re grouchy and tired. One girl shouted out the other day, ‘My parents can’t afford anything!’ They lost what little they had,” she says. “We’re doing the best we can and it’s OK, but we need a lot.”

## Trauma lives in nervous system

The impacts of natural disasters on communities are long-lasting and far-reaching. Whether it’s a





Charred pines are constant reminders of the destruction the Camp Fire wrought on Butte County communities, like Magalia.

Annie Finney's students at Paradise Children's Community Charter School show inspiring resilience to ongoing trauma from the fire.



**“We didn't shy away.  
We kept teaching them.”**

**—Annie Finney**, Children's  
Community Charter School  
Teachers Association

flood, an earthquake, or one of the destructive wildfires that have ravaged California for the past five years, the trauma from the experience lasts much longer than the disaster itself. Trauma lives in the nervous system, not in the event, according to Fresno County school psychologist Deni Dayan. It's like being in a car accident — the wreck is only for a moment, but it changes the way the nervous system reacts to being in a car every time after. For students and educators impacted by disasters, the simple act of going to school or work can cause traumatic responses.


“There is no healing in trauma unless you feel safe in your body,” Dayan says.

After the devastating Woolsey Fire chased students and school staff from their homes in 2018, Malibu High School psychologist Juliette Boewe compiled information to prepare district teachers and staff on what to expect from students when they returned to school, and practices to support them. Disasters can cause a wide variety of traumatic responses, from guilt, fear and worry to sadness, anger and shock, she says. While there is no normal reaction to loss and no timeline for recovery,

changes in emotions and behaviors should be expected to last for at least six weeks.

Santa Monica High School mental health counseling coordinator Shuli Lotan, a member of Santa Monica-Malibu Classroom Teachers Association, was part of the support team Boewe assembled to help the several thousand affected students, educators and community members when school resumed after the Woolsey Fire. The team of school psychologists, counselors, mental health professionals and interns provided support to students and staff in “comfort rooms” at every school site, identified resources for those in need, and helped develop resiliency groups rooted in a trauma-focused cognitive behavior therapy model, among many other approaches.

“Everyone responds to trauma differently. We really have to keep our eyes open to be aware of what their needs are,” Lotan says. “Trauma stays in our minds and bodies.”

While the Santa Monica Malibu Unified School District had an emergency response plan, it wasn't rooted in the reality of the kind of mental health needs for students, staff and the community that a disaster like the Woolsey Fire would create, Boewe says. 

Juliette Boewe, second from right, with her school psychologist interns and Gordon the therapy dog. Photo courtesy of Boewe.



Many Paradise residents have returned and vow to rebuild their community, like teacher Shelly Kiefer: "There's no place like home."



Boewe and her team sprang into action, checking in on the families of their students in special education and setting up systems of support at their school sites. A week before schools were set to reopen in Malibu (Malibu High was closed for five weeks), Boewe's team trained staff at each Malibu school on how to talk about the fire, what to expect from their students, their own trauma, and how to best support their community through the trying time. With the district's mental health staff on hand, educators participated in restorative "harm circles," allowing a chance to share their stories and what they needed.

"These are our kids, our families and our colleagues. This has an impact on all of us," says Boewe.

As the reopening approached, Boewe sent emails to all staff with self-care tips to make sure they were prepared for the emotions they would encounter. The day the mandatory evacuation was lifted and roads were opened, she visited the four schools in Malibu to survey the damage and identified the best routes for parents and staff to take to each.

"I needed to see what the kids would see when they returned to schools," says Boewe, her voice trembling with emotion. "I wanted to make sure people knew ahead of time what to be prepared for because it could be traumatic."

### Supporting students and each other

First grade teacher Debbie Woodmansee will never forget the day the Camp Fire approached Ponderosa Elementary School. As the smell of

smoke drifted onto campus, there was an announcement that a wildfire had started nearby, but the school was not in danger. Less than an hour later, teachers and students fled for their lives as the raging inferno gave chase. Despite thick smoke filling the skies and blotting out the sun, the school's smoke alarms never sounded. Miraculously, teachers and staff were able to evacuate every single student to safety.

Woodmansee and fellow TAP members Nicole Mattly and Shelly Kiefer now teach at the new Paradise Ridge Elementary School, which brings together students and staff from the destroyed Paradise Elementary and the damaged-beyond-repair Ponderosa Elementary. The new school is co-located at Paradise Intermediate School, where it faces challenges like toilets that are too high for primary students and classrooms lacking the necessary sinks for little learners who get messy.

Instead of taking time off to process their own trauma, nearly every teacher at the new school worked through the summer getting classrooms ready for students. Kiefer, who lost her home as well as her classroom in the fire, says there wasn't enough time to recreate everything that was lost. Things will never be the same in Paradise, she adds.

Before school resumed in Malibu following the Woolsey Fire, educators prepared to welcome students. Photo from Boewe.



“It’s been survival. Kids and teachers are tired,” Kiefer says. “But I believe in our little town.”

One way they’ve been trying to help their young students is through the healing power of mindfulness. With the help of an Orinda-based organization called Mindful Littles, these educators lead their first and second graders through weekly mindfulness sessions, helping them learn how to identify their feelings and teaching them breathing techniques to calm stressful moments. Giving students the tools to provide themselves with inner space is critical when so many of them are impacted by having very little personal space of their own these days, according to Mattly.

“We’re seeing more anger than usual,” she says. “We teachers are helping all of our kids to learn how to process and get through it.”

When asked what they’re doing to take care of themselves and deal with their own trauma, the three teachers stare silently before nervous laughter tells a familiar story about educators putting their students’ needs first. Even if they wanted to take a personal day for self-care, Woodmansee says, another unexpected impact of the fire is a near-complete lack of substitute teachers, so any time off means the rest of their colleagues shoulder

## HOW TO HELP STUDENTS AFTER DISASTER

- Remain calm and reassuring: “We will be OK.”
- Acknowledge and normalize their feelings. Use active listening. There are no wrong feelings.
- Encourage students to use multiple forms to express their feelings about disaster-related events. Don’t force it. Follow their lead.
- Promote positive coping and problem-solving skills. Review spaces and activities they can use when feeling upset. Be flexible and model the skills.
- Emphasize their resilience and community resilience. Focus on what they have done before to feel better when upset. Identify the helpers.
- Strengthen social bonds and peer supports. Assign collaborative group work. Encourage them to be kind to each other.
- Take care of *you*.

## CLASSROOM SPECIFICS

- Maintain structure and routine.
- Shorter lesson plans.
- Slower pace.
- More time for personal expression and discussion.
- Plan hands-on activities.
- Structured opportunities for positive social connections.
- Expect an overall performance decline.
- Model positive coping skills.
- Stick to the facts.
- Limit media exposure.

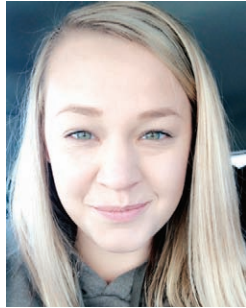
## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

**Elementary** — Creative expressions, including drawing, writing and talking about memories, feelings and thoughts. Hands-on/active tasks, including organizing or building projects like scrapbooks or replicas, to give them a chance to organize chaotic or confusing events.

**Secondary** — Creative expression like art, music, poetry, or keeping a journal to describe their feelings and experiences. Active tasks, including developing a disaster plan for their home or school, or facilitating community involvement.



Paradise teachers Nicole Mattly, Shelly Kiefer and Debbie Woodmansee lean on each other as they support their students and their families.



“We’re seeing more anger than usual. We teachers are helping all of our kids to learn how to process and get through it.”

—Nicole Mattly, Teachers Association of Paradise



the load. For teachers who’ve been leaning on each other for a year now, that’s not acceptable.

“We’re all trying to take care of our basic needs and each other,” Kiefer says.

## The ABCs of Self-Care

Priorities for educators:

- **Awareness:** Assess your own stress level, thoughts and behaviors.
- **Balance:** Seek balance in work, personal and family life, rest, and leisure.
- **Connection:** Social connection reduces stress (co-workers, friends, family, community).

Read our story on educator self-care in the next issue of the *Educator*.

## Fire season will always be difficult

As the familiar smell of wildfire smoke drifts onto campus, students and teachers stop like deer in headlights to check whether the threat has returned. The increasing prevalence of wildfires in California means hundreds of thousands of survivors whose trauma could be triggered during fire season in October and November.

Woodmansee says a recent nearby fire terrified the Paradise Ridge school community into tears.

In Malibu, the smell of smoke resulted in hundreds of students and teachers taking a mental health day. “We’ve got staff stressed out,” says Boewe of the smoke-filled skies. “Even I got triggered today.”

Students at Chapman Elementary School in Chico became concerned when they recently saw and smelled smoke. Chapman School counselor and Chico Unified Teachers Association member Ashley Trezza says class was in session when the Camp Fire sparked, and her students are still on edge.

“It’s just reassuring kids and letting them know they’re safe,” she says, adding that long-term resources are necessary to truly help students experience post-traumatic growth. “The needs aren’t temporary. What’s really going to help is having people in schools providing counseling services for at least three years.”

TAP’s Smith and other educators say that while the Paradise and Chico districts offer counseling, unfortunately, the current massive demand exceeds even the increased resources that are available.

The fire, evacuation and slow recovery effort have impacted nearby communities

Memories of the destroyed Paradise Elementary are still fresh in students and educators minds alike.



“We get so drained trying to work our way through this. Getting those positive vibes from fellow CTA members and teachers really means something.”

—David Smith,  
Teachers Association  
of Paradise president

like Chico that weren't directly affected. In Chico Unified, classrooms bulged as they provided temporary homes for evacuated students. Trezza says one fifth grade class had 39 students, and lack of space became an issue throughout the district.

“It was a big mess at the beginning of the year,” she says. “Our classrooms are full.”

### The warm embrace of CTA family

As these communities rebuild and recover, a common refrain is how much the thoughts and support of their CTA family meant during very difficult times. And even as these educators continue efforts that go far beyond helping students in the classroom, they lament being unable to thank everyone who wrote a message, donated their time or sent supplies. “We get so drained trying to work our way through this,” says Smith. “Getting those positive vibes from fellow CTA members and teachers really means something.” ■

In nearby Chico, school counselor Ashley Trezza says students have shown signs of secondary trauma from the fire.



## RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

**MALIBU HIGH SCHOOL** psychologist Juliette Boewe recommends giving students opportunities to openly share feelings and thoughts with each other and adults in a circle format. These restorative circles can include prompts or talking pieces to encourage structure and consistency. Begin with low-risk questions; gradually increase to medium and high-risk questions. Be sure to agree to ground rules for discussion, to allow for emotional expression and to conclude discussions with a focus on positive takeaways.

Sample script to facilitate discussion: “The fires have impacted all of us. It is normal to have many different emotions and reactions. Some of you may feel scared, angry, guilty, shocked or relieved. These emotions may change and may last a while. I want you to know that this school is a safe place and that all teachers are here for you. Today, and over the next couple of weeks, we are going to support each other and take time to talk about what has happened.”

Discussion starters:

- What has this been like for you?
- How have you been taking care of yourself?
- How have you been taking care of others?
- Where have you seen helpers?
- How can we support each other?
- How did you help your family during or after the disaster?
- How could you help your family if you were in another disaster?
- Did anything good or positive happen because of the disaster?
- Did you learn anything?
- What has this experience made you grateful for?

In the weeks following the fire, teacher Sheri Eichar, left, held “class” in her kitchen, on Facebook Live and in the Chico Library. Annie Finney, right, says students need a full-time, on-site counselor to help them recover from their trauma and grow.

## CHILDREN’S COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL IN PARADISE: ONE YEAR LATER

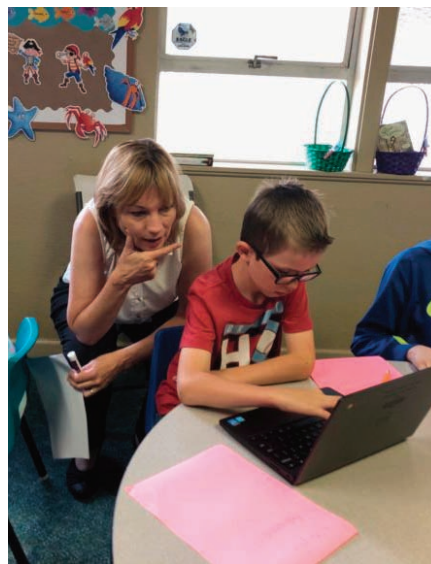
In the days immediately following the Camp Fire, we first met the inspiring educators of Children’s Community Charter School Teachers Association (CCCSTA) when they held class for their students at the Chico Community Library. Teachers Annie Finney, Sheri Eichar and Brittany Bentz read stories and hugged students while fire-weary parents watched their children smile for the first time in a week.

When we returned to Paradise six months later, these dedicated teachers shared the challenges of educating their students in the midst of uncertainty and without proper care for their severe trauma. This showed itself in numerous ways, such as when students trembled and sobbed uncontrollably during a fire drill or one girl wrote the word “pig” over and over on assignments in daily grief for a lost pet.

Recently, we checked back with Finney and Eichar.

### On trauma:

**FINNEY:** “The kids don’t want to talk about the fire in front of their parents because they don’t want to worry them. And the parents don’t want to talk about it in front of their kids because they don’t want to upset them. So



“We have our support circles, and that’s been very healing for a lot of us. We talk a lot about what happened, and we tell our students: Don’t let it define you.”

—Sheri Eichar, Children’s Community Charter School Teachers Association

it stays bottled up. ... It’s literally every child.”

**EICHAR:** “Nighttime is hard for the kids. One of my students told her mom she wasn’t sleeping well. When her mom tried to reassure that they were safe, the student responded, ‘You said we were safe before in Paradise.’”

### Recovery:

**FINNEY:** “We’re focusing on the post-traumatic growth. How can we help students move on from the trauma and grow?”

**EICHAR:** “We have our support circles, and that’s been very healing for a lot of us. We talk a lot about what happened, and we tell our students: Don’t let it define you.”

### Resilience:

**EICHAR:** “We could have requested a waiver for testing, but as a charter school, it’s one of our only measures of accountability. So, we tested our kids and were shocked to see their scores actually increased: 4 percent growth in English language arts and 10 percent in math!”

**FINNEY:** “Look at what we can do on a bad day! We didn’t shy away. We kept teaching them.”

## SPECIAL REPORT

→ **THIS STORY IS** part of our series that looks at how educators are handling students with trauma. Read more at [californiaeducator.org/teaching-through-trauma](http://californiaeducator.org/teaching-through-trauma).

Two documentaries recently aired to mark the anniversary of the Nov. 8, 2018, Camp Fire. Both are titled *Fire in Paradise*. The one-hour PBS *Frontline* documentary is at [pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/fire-in-paradise](http://pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/fire-in-paradise); the 40-minute Netflix documentary is at [netflix.com/title/81050375](http://netflix.com/title/81050375).





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# It's Time to Put Schools and Communities First

**FIGHT FOR TAX FAIRNESS!** The Schools and Communities First (SCF) initiative closes corporate property tax loopholes to reclaim \$12 billion annually for our schools, community colleges and public services. California's school funding is dismally low because a handful of corporations and wealthy investors have avoided paying their fair share. This decision tree diagram shows how SCF would rectify this while protecting homeowners, renters, agricultural property owners and small business owners.

## Does SCF Impact\_\_\_\_\_?



Is this property with...

- A single-family home
- Apartment buildings of any size
- Mobile homes
- Vacation homes
- Senior centers
- Assisted living facilities

**EXCLUDED**

Schools and Communities First exempts and maintains all protections for homeowners and renters, by making clear that under no circumstances will residential property of any kind be affected.



What about...

- Live/Work spaces
- Home offices
- Home-based businesses

**EXCLUDED**

SCF requires that limited commercial uses of residential property, such as home offices, home-based businesses or short-term rentals, shall be classified as residential.



Is this property used for agriculture?

**Yes**

**EXCLUDED**

SCF exempts land that is used for producing commercial agricultural commodities.

**No**

Is it used as an open public space?

**Yes**

**EXCLUDED**

SCF exempts spaces such as parks and historical sites.

Is it undeveloped commercial-zoned?

**Yes**

**REASSESSED**

Currently, California's property tax system incentivizes owners to hold idle vacant and underutilized commercial and industrial property. A reformed system that assesses all properties based on their fair market value would create a new incentive to build housing.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION** and to help get SCF on the 2020 ballot, go to [schoolsandcommunitiesfirst.org](http://schoolsandcommunitiesfirst.org) and [@Schools1stCA](http://cta.org/taxfairness) [#SchoolsandCommunitiesFirst](https://twitter.com/Schools1stCA)

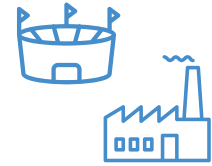


# Is it a commercial property assessed over \$3M?



**No**

**Yes**



Does the owner have other commercial properties with a combined assessed value >\$3M?

Is it "mixed use" property?

**Yes**

**No**

## REASSESSED

SCF will reclaim \$8B to \$12B every year for California by closing a commercial property tax loophole that benefits a fraction of large corporations and wealthy investors. Even after SCF takes effect, California will still have one of the lowest property tax rates in the United States.

## EXCLUDED

SCF exempts all properties worth \$3 million or less from reassessment.

**Yes**

**No**

If >75% is used for residential:  
**POTENTIALLY EXCLUDED**

SCF specifies that the Legislature can exempt commercial property that is heavily used for residential.



If <75% is used for residential:  
**EXCLUDED (PARTIALLY)**

SCF specifies that all residential is exempt and only the portion of a property used for commercial purposes will be reassessed.

Is it owned by a non-profit, such as university, church, or hospital?

**Yes**

**No**

## EXCLUDED

Current law that provides property tax exemptions for certain nonprofits will stay the same.



**REASSESSED**

**TAKE ACTION!**

**SIGN THE PETITION**

CTA is gathering 150,000 of the needed 1.6 million signatures to qualify the SCF initiative for the November 2020 ballot. Go to your chapter president (or your Primary Contact Staff at CTA) to sign the petition, and ask your colleagues, friends and family to sign too. You can also volunteer to collect signatures at [schoolsandcommunitiesfirst.org](https://schoolsandcommunitiesfirst.org). Help us reach our goal and support our students, schools and communities now and in the future.



Yulil Alonso-Garza, right, with husband Martin Garza, left, and Assembly Member Eduardo Garcia.

# Turning Tragedy Into Hope

## *Calexico educator champions Gang Awareness and Prevention Month*

By **Julian Peoples**

**YULIL ALONSO-GARZA** dreams of a world where no one ever experiences what she and her family have gone through since Jan. 6, 2013. That was the day her son, Martin Alberto Garza, was murdered by a gang member, randomly targeted outside a holiday party.

Since that tragedy, Alonso-Garza has dedicated her life to spreading awareness about the dangers of gangs and providing resources to prevent young people from entering gangs. One outcome is the state Legislature's designation of January as Gang Awareness and Prevention Month, which encourages all Californians to support the cause with activities to prevent gang activity and honor those who lost their lives due to gang violence.

Gang violence is responsible for an average of 2,000 gang-related homicides each year, according to 2007-12 data from the National Youth Gang Center. Alonso-Garza and her organization, Mothers and Men Against Gangs (MAG) Coalition, are building a movement to ensure that communities and families don't have to suffer from that violence.

"We need to provide our kids with the support they need to prevent them from going down the wrong path. No one grows up saying they want to be a gang member or want to be in prison," says Alonso-Garza, a member of Associated Calexico Teachers. "This is about more than just my son. Telling his story opens the door to things we can do to keep this from happening to other families."

Alonso-Garza would love to see Gang Awareness and Prevention Month become a common observance in

schools, like Red Ribbon Week. She is grateful for the support of 56th District Assembly Member Eduardo Garcia, who has authored the designation resolution for the past few years and is supporting Alonso-Garza's effort to make it a permanent observance. She also thanked CTA State Council for allowing her to share her story, adopting the placement of the month on the CTA Calendar and being so supportive of her efforts.

"I'm very grateful to have my CTA family be a part of an important movement that will save lives," she says.

The 3 million members of her NEA Family are also on board after this year's NEA Representative Assembly. Alonso-Garza authored a new business item (NBI) to garner the support of the nation's educators for gang awareness and prevention. In the days leading up to the discussion and action on the NBI (see box, next page), Alonso-Garza visited every state association to tell Martin's story and ask for their support. Her efforts were rewarded when RA

delegates approved the item, meaning that NEA will now champion and promote gang awareness and prevention.

"I had to tell my story over and over again, which was very painful but necessary to show people how important this is," Alonso-Garza says. "The pain of gangs could impact any of us."

Her amendment to an existing NEA gang awareness resolution to create resources for educators and students also garnered RA approval. For more information on the MAG Coalition, visit [facebook.com/MAGCoalition](https://www.facebook.com/MAGCoalition).

**"I'm very grateful to have my CTA family be a part of an important movement that will save lives."**

—**Yulil Alonso-Garza**, Associated Calexico Teachers

## 2019 NEA Representative Assembly NBI 98

**INTRODUCED BY** Yulil Alonso-Garza and approved by delegates as modified:

NEA will partner with organizations, schools, businesses, law enforcement agencies, elected officials, community members and families to:

- Promote January as the Gang Awareness and Prevention month of action starting in January 2020 ... specifically calling for clear and immediate action to help NEA members educate their students and families on the implications of gang involvement;
- Promote the creation of social justice clubs in our schools that will help students to be empowered, self-sufficient and proactive in their community by associating themselves with community groups that promote positive alternatives to gang involvement;
- The NEA will compile existing resources in an online toolkit, offering resources for education students, educators and families on gang awareness and prevention.
- NEA will encourage state affiliates to support programs for at-risk students in areas of high-gang activity.



**REGISTER TO VOTE!**

**Feb. 18, 2020**

is the deadline to register to vote in California's March 3 primary election. (Those who miss the deadline may still be able to vote conditionally.) Go to [sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration](https://sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration) to register online or for more information.

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# BARGAINING ROUNDUP

By Cynthia Menzel, Julian Peeples, Ed Sibby and Frank Wells #OurVoiceAtTheTable



## WEST SONOMA COUNTY: A Strike and a Win

Community and parent support, the love of students for their teachers, organizing, and inspiring unity powered the **West Sonoma County Teachers Association** to a victory after three days on strike in November.

Their new contract provides a 12 percent raise over three years, with 8 percent guaranteed over the first two years and the third year contingent on the passage of a parcel tax, along with adjustments to health care benefits and class sizes. During the strike, the community joined teachers in solidarity on the picket lines to urge the board to make teacher retention a priority.

“This settlement is a good step in the right direction toward investing in educators and the future of our community,” says WSCATA President Lily Smedshammer.

Months of negotiations were punctuated by rallies and informational picketing. As the strike approached, West Sonoma County Union High School District attempted to intimidate teachers by filing a series of frivolous lawsuits, even serving Smedshammer with legal documents at her home on a Saturday morning. But the legal action backfired, galvanizing the community around their dedicated educators as they refused to back down.

“Having the community stand with us in support has been amazing,” says Smedshammer. “As we move forward, we will remain strong in our commitment to our students, our colleagues and our community.”

## WILMAR: Agreement Reached

Only two days before a scheduled strike date, **Wilmar Teachers Association** in Petaluma won an agreement that helps attract and retain qualified educators.

WTA organized and won a more than 13 percent pay increase over three years, as well as an increase in the district’s medical benefit contribution. The presence and guidance of two school board members in the penultimate bargaining session made all the difference, according to WTA President Janice Garrigan.

“They chose to enter negotiations on Tuesday with the two board members we have had relationships with the longest,” she says. “This demonstrated to us their sincere and genuine desire to show us what we mean to them, and it did not go unnoticed. Thank you to everyone for helping us get to this place.”

## REDLANDS: Teachers, ESPs Settle

After a year and a half of fruitless negotiations, the growing power of **Redlands Teachers Association** and **Redlands Education Support Professionals Association** helped forge a mediated agreement that provides wage and benefit increases, including retroactive pay.

Recent months of rallies and instituting work-to-rule paved the way for the settlement. RTA and RESPA won a 6 percent raise for last year and this year, as well as a 1.17 percent increase in health benefits, which have gone unadjusted for 18 years. RESPA also negotiated an annual increase to the district’s portion of health and welfare costs.

The deal was ratified by both RESPA and RTA, but the extended negotiations took a toll. “We felt like teachers are satisfied for now, but disappointed that it took so long,” RTA President Teresa Steinbroner says.



### FILLMORE:

## Agreement Breaks Stalemate

**Fillmore Unified Teachers Association** members reached a tentative agreement with Fillmore Unified School District on Nov. 25, following months of stalemate and frustration with the district and school board. The contract, set to be ratified in early December, allows for a 4 percent salary increase retroactive to July 2018 and a 2.5 percent increase retroactive to July 2019.

The agreement comes after the parties were in their second round of state mediation. Fillmore educator salaries had ranked at the bottom among Ventura County school districts. FUTA members rejected the district's modest salary offer in September, instead fighting for a contract that will help attract and retain teachers. Actions included a rally and turnout at a November school board meeting, where members urged the district to stop delaying and reach a fair agreement.

"We are hopeful that this is the beginning of mending what is broken in our relationship for the benefit of Fillmore students," said FUTA President Tammy Ferguson in announcing the agreement.

### MT. DIABLO:

## 16 Months, No Contract

About 500 educators, students, families and community members rallied to support **Mt. Diablo Education Association** at a rally before a packed school board meeting in October, where many called on the school district to stop stalling on its teachers.

MDEA President Anita Johnson demanded that the school board direct Mt. Diablo Unified School District management to negotiate fairly and reasonably.

"It is past time to settle," Johnson said. "The delays and lack of effort by management prove they do not value us. We demand a fair contract now!"



### UNION DISTRICT:

## Request for Mediation

The **Union District Education Association** filed an unfair labor practice charge against Union School District in San Jose for dragging out bargaining as the two sides got set to enter mediation. UDEA educators and parents are rallying to fight for resources that prioritize teacher retention and support student learning conditions.

UDEA President Kathy Hudson says it seems like teachers are asked to do more and more all the time, yet their pay and benefits remain stagnant.

"While district revenues have increased year after year, our salaries have decreased in the percentage of the district's total budget," Hudson says. "Also, USD teachers pay more in out-of-pocket expenses for health care than all other districts in the county."

UDEA requested state mediation in November as it ramped up organizing efforts. Students and their families turned out at a November school board meeting, packing the room to show solidarity with their teachers.

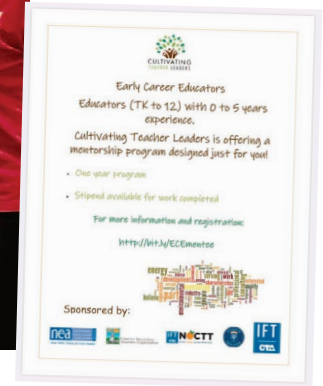
Educators in the district, located in Contra Costa County, have worked more than 16 months without a contract. MDEA filed an unfair labor practice charge when the district refused to provide information that could help reach a settlement.

MDEA members insist hefty class sizes and teacher turnover are hurting students. They demand lower class sizes in all class categories, especially Title I schools; support for bilingual programs; and more nurses, counselors and librarians.

"We have 14 nurses for 30,000 students. Some school libraries are closed four days per week," Johnson says. "Student safety is at risk, and this district's management doesn't seem to care."



Left to right, network members Al Rabanera, Aimee Nelson, Debbie Chiong, Joan Ke, Jes Bracken, Robert Bassett, Allison Carey, Jenny Hitchcock, Nathan Dawson, Myra Deister.



## Cultivating Teacher Leaders

*Professional network strengthens educator pipeline, from student to leader*

**AL RABANERA** is a little busy. The high school math teacher and Fullerton Secondary Teachers Organization (FSTO) member has a 6-month-old baby at home while still working full time in his classroom. Not only that, he and his North Orange County colleagues have spent the past four years building a thriving teacher professional network.

With a goal of strengthening and diversifying the profession, they have grown the network out of the teachers-teaching-teachers model supported by CTA's Instructional Leadership Corps (ILC). Rabanera says he and other ILC teacher leaders felt strongly that educators knew best about educator needs. "We said, 'If we really want to take back the profession, what are we going to do? Let's put action to those words.'"

Their network, called Cultivating Teacher Leaders (CTL), now offers regular conferences and workshops for experienced educators, and mentoring programs for new teachers and those aspiring to be teachers in college and high

school. Using FSTO as a base, the network has forged key partnerships with CSU Fullerton's College of Education, as well as with community organizations and businesses. It has secured funding from, among others, NEA, which awarded an initial grant of \$250,000 that was followed by a grant of \$500,000 earlier this year.

The result, according to an October 2019 report from the Learning Policy Institute (LPI), is that Cultivating Teacher Leaders is "making significant contributions to the profession along its continuum [and is in essence] striving to build and to widen a pipeline for professionals — from potential to aspiring, emerging, professional, accomplished, and finally, teacher leader."

The network is one of the major successes of ILC, the multiyear, statewide initiative that has teachers training teachers in instructional shifts in new state standards, providing opportunities for professional development and leadership.

### ILC benefits educators and students

ILC, a partnership of CTA, the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education and the National Board Resource Center at Stanford University, was formed after California shifted to the Common Core State Standards and new assessments in 2014. (ILC now also addresses the Next Generation Science Standards.) It is, as LPI president and president of the California State Board of Education Linda Darling-Hammond says, changing the paradigm for teacher learning. Instead of outside consultants who parachute in to conduct one-time workshops, ILC taps into the expertise and experience of local educators who lead ongoing professional development for their peers.

"Through ILC, CTA is helping teachers acquire the skills they need to give students a quality education," says CTA President E. Toby Boyd. "ILC also allows trainers to gain valuable leadership experience. It's a win for students and educators at all levels."



At the Cultivating Teacher Leaders event on Sept. 21.

## The Reach of the Instructional Leadership Corps

Since ILC's inception in 2014:

- Teacher leaders have provided multisession professional learning to more than 32,000 educators in more than 2,000 schools in California.
- An additional 30,000 educators participated in ILC-related conferences and presentations.
- 38,000 more were indirectly impacted as ILC members trained instructional coaches in a trainer-of-trainers model.

Since its inception, ILC teacher leaders have provided ongoing professional learning to more than 32,000 educators statewide (see sidebar). As documented in the LPI report, educators' responses to ILC conferences and training have been overwhelmingly positive, with many participants identifying this as the best professional learning experience they have had.

### Building the teacher pipeline

Fliers for a CTL event Sept. 21 enticed educators and aspiring educators: "Do you need new ideas to implement in your classroom? Come join us for a morning of empowerment as we work together to build our professional capital!"

This was the 10th event presented by CTL; sessions ranged from "Got Cardboard 2.0? Design Thinking & PBL" to a workshop for those interested in becoming National Board Certified Teachers.

While CTL's partnerships allowed the event to take place at CSU Fullerton's Center for Careers in Teaching, its professional development workshops have also taken place at CTA chapter offices. Karin Barone, teacher leader and member of Orange Unified Education Association, says in the LPI report that running trainings through the union had a dual purpose: "to get teachers to understand that your fellow colleagues have skills and expertise in an area that they can train you in ... [and] to help them see the union is [about] more than just bargaining your

contract; there's more to offer and more support that we can give you than just that. That was important to me."

Educators from Southern and Central California have attended CTL events.

The latest NEA grant is allowing CTL to expand on the ILC mission to address not only California's teacher shortage, but the shortage of teachers of color and the high number of educators who leave the profession within the first few years of teaching.

**"WE SAID, 'IF WE REALLY WANT TO TAKE BACK THE PROFESSION, WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO? LET'S PUT ACTION TO THOSE WORDS.'"**

—**Al Rabanera**, Fullerton Secondary Teachers Organization

Specifically, CTL is tailoring its work to recruit and retain a diverse population of:

- Potential educators in high school.
- Aspiring educators in college.
- ESPs and paraprofessionals interested in becoming teachers.
- Early-career educators.

To date, some 170 high schoolers and college students have participated in CTL's mentorship programs, which offer, for example, monthly local member-led workshops on best teaching practices and relationship-building with community partners, nonprofits and colleges/

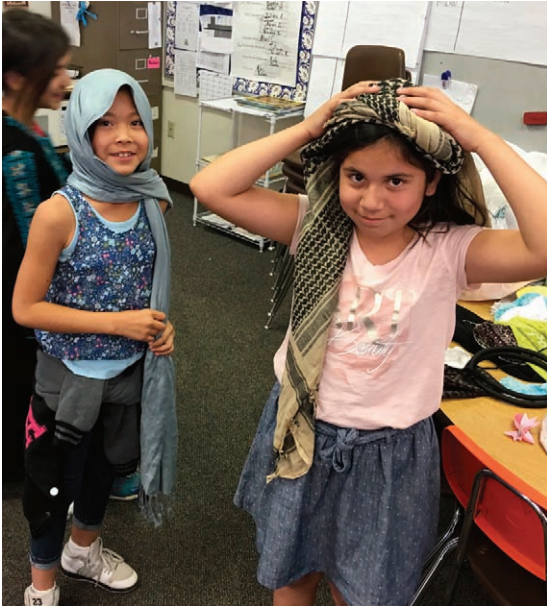
universities. CTL is also creating a 50-member union-led "new educator cohort." The group will assist new members in their first challenging years in the classroom by helping strengthen their skills and providing meaningful training to improve their professional practice. And CTL is collaborating with CTA's Institute for Teaching on a social justice curriculum for early career educators.

The teachers-teaching-teachers model is spreading, says Rabanera, pointing to how ILC colleagues Angela Der Ramos, Alisal Teachers Association, and Colleen Maroney, San Bernardino Teachers Association, are already conducting their own events and workshops.

He's excited by the big picture all these various facets will present. "With these components we'll be able to track between educational ecosystems as students and educators move through them. We'll be able to use the data to say if these programs are effective, durable and sustainable.

"It's helping the next set of future educators who will become our colleagues."

To read the full Learning Policy Institute report, "*The Instructional Leadership Corps: Teachers Leading Sustainable Professional Learning in Their Communities*," go to [learningpolicyinstitute.org](http://learningpolicyinstitute.org).



Through a partnership with a world languages professor, Beshears' students learn about language, culture and the immigrant experience in the Arabic-speaking world.

# A Beautiful Mind in San Bernardino

## *Wil Beshears earns NEA Award for Teaching Excellence*

By **Julian Peeples**

“**THIS IS NOT** the job for invertebrates” is Wil Beshears’ endearing advice for any aspiring educator, a lesson learned after more than two decades of teaching all over the world, from inner-city Los Angeles to Ghana. He has spent the last 13 years as the gifted and talented education (GATE) teacher at Manuel A. Salinas Creative Arts Elementary School in San Bernardino, where he inspires and challenges students, expands opportunities for kids and their families, and has helped create a thriving learning community that includes parents.

These are just a few of the reasons the San Bernardino Teachers Association (SBTA) member was named a 2020 recipient of the NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence. He represents California as one of 50 California Casualty awardees nationwide.

Beshears engages with his fourth and fifth graders on subjects ranging from the words of oral historian Studs Terkel to Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. He started a Quotational Quotes Bee, where students compete by memorizing famous historical quotations such as Yiddish sayings and wise words from Mother Jones and Laozi, “as a way to sneak college-level discourse into the home.”

“If you take a moment to consider it, how often does a child really get to speak to an adult — teacher or parent — in a thought-provoking way?” Beshears asks. “Far too often, we only interact with our children via praise, punishment, or by giving directions.”

Held annually at CSU San Bernardino (CSUSB), the

event has grown to include a Submit-a-Quote competition, where students become the teachers, creating their own deep content that is folded into the curriculum for future lessons, debate and memorization.

“Our kids are not simply vessels of knowledge; they are the creators of curricular content,” he says. “We continue this outreach in posters featuring our students throughout the Inland Empire. Why? Because wisdom, despite the age of the mind, should be shared.”



Wil Beshears

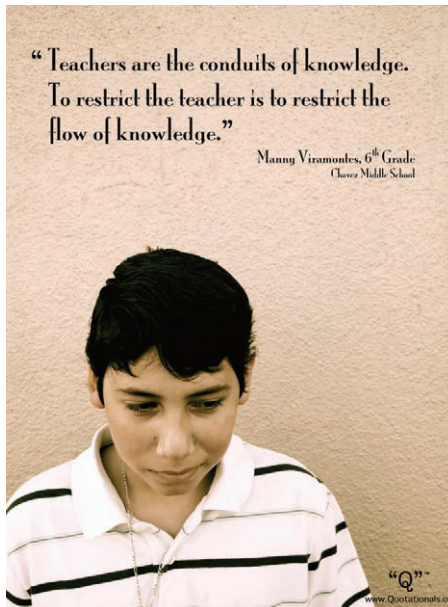
Beshears talks fast, thinks much faster, and it can take some effort to keep up. He never planned on a career in education. It was while working with incarcerated youth during his time attending UCLA that he realized that he cared too much about the future to do anything other than teach. He spent time teaching sex education for Planned Parenthood of Los Angeles (“The best training of my career was teaching sex ed to 14-year-olds,” he laughs), taught sixth grade at Florence Nightingale Middle School in Los Angeles, did two educational stints in

Ghana, and taught English at Usui Senior High School as part of the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program.

Since landing in San Bernardino 13 years ago, he’s quit traveling the world, opting instead to sate his wanderlust by pushing boundaries in his classroom. Most recently, he formed a partnership called Al Najm (“the star” in Arabic) with a world languages professor from CSUSB. Beshears says it has brought a diversity of culture and outside-the-box thinking to his classroom.

“Our first year, we focused on the culture and written





Students' quotes are made into posters. Why? "Wisdom, despite the age of the mind, should be shared," says Beshears.

language of Arabic, but my 33 eager little minds were hungry for more," he says. "After completing the first all-Arabic play at my school — and in any public school that I am aware of — we decided to focus on inquiry to understand the parallel immigrant experiences of the Arabic-speaking worlds and my own mostly immigrant Latino families."

This year, Beshears is bringing a new facet to his GATE classroom: conceptual art to promote creativity. Students suggest their interpretations of famous artworks and create pieces of their own, with Beshears asking probing questions that reveal the roots of the work, much of it personal and emotional.

"It's this really intimate setting of being honest," he says.

Beshears is especially proud of the learning community he's been a part of building and nurturing in the San Bernardino area, called Salinas and Coyotes: Instruction in Poetry and Prose (SCIPP). What began as a simple after-school class, led by Masters of Fine Arts graduate students and professors of poetry and creative writing, has now grown to become a legitimate CSUSB course where prospective teachers study teaching the creative child, which includes a service learning component tutoring students.

Every Friday, SCIPP meets as a true learning community, tutoring K-12 students in a variety of educational and enrichment activities, from video game design to cooking. Their parents meet with educators to discuss hot-button issues in education and learn how to use this knowledge to advocate for their children and themselves.

"Formerly shy parents now not only better understand

teaching dynamics in the classroom, but express agency that is rocking the boat in the Inland Empire. We put true meaning to the words learning community, extended family and democracy," he says. "Through it all, SBTA was there for me and, by extension, the kids, parents, tutors and professors that I call family."

Beshears says he wants to use the platform of winning a national award to spotlight the beauty of his parent learning community and showcase some of the great work that is being done in his home of the Inland Empire. But mostly, he hopes that his fellow educators who struggle day in and day out to do the right thing are inspired to see a fellow soldier in the movement and recognize some of themselves in his story. Admitting that some days even he gets beat down, Beshears says the award will serve as a reminder of what he's been able to accomplish and an inspiration for all that's left.

"We have so much potential, and it's already being realized, so how do we tap into that?" he asks. "As a union, we are the biggest laboratory of ideas in the nation. How do we access that library of ideas in all our classrooms? How do we uplift and inspire each other? How do we support innovation in education?"

**"Our kids are not simply vessels of knowledge; they are the creators of curricular content."**

*The NEA Foundation's Awards for Teaching Excellence recognize educators who shine in their schools, communities, and their own learning. For more information, visit [neafoundation.org](http://neafoundation.org).*

# Calm During Crisis

*Santa Clarita teacher maintains focus when the unthinkable happens*

By **Julian Peeples**



Kaitlin Holt

*Saugus High School choir director Kaitlin Holt and about 35 students were listening to an audio recording on the morning of Nov. 14 when her classroom door burst open with terrified students seeking safety and reporting gunshots fired on campus. It was the start of a nightmare that every educator fears, and tragically, two students died that day. But actions by Holt, a member of Hart District Teachers Association (HDTA) in Santa Clarita, and other educators, parents and neighbors did much to calm panicked students and may have saved lives. Here is an excerpt of our story at [californiaeducator.org/calm-during-crisis](http://californiaeducator.org/calm-during-crisis).*

Holt, a first-year teacher, says that while she hadn't heard any shots, she had to assume the unthinkable was happening, and directed students into her small adjoining office, which had a door with a lock. After barricading the door, she turned to her students, many of whom were distraught and sobbing. "We don't know if this is real, but we need to be quiet and calm and act like this is real," she told them in a direct and reassuring tone.

A student said she thought she had been shot. "I used my phone flashlight to look," Holt says, "and she had a gunshot wound."

Holt remembered being handed a gunshot wound kit when she first started working at Saugus High in January and watching a tutorial video on how to use it. She exited the office to retrieve it.

The kits were distributed districtwide last school year for the first time, the idea of two students whose father is an emergency room doctor, says HDTA President John Minkus. Trainings were held at all school sites during the distribution, with follow-ups scheduled annually.

Holt dressed a wound on the side of the student's torso, which she later learned was the exit wound of a bullet that entered the student's back. The student said she thought she

might have been shot in the arm as well, which Holt confirmed. With the kit already used, Holt turned to a first aid kit for something that would help stop the bleeding. She settled on a maxi pad, taping it onto the student's arm.

Holt says the girl stayed in remarkably good spirits during the entire ordeal, and the two quickly formed a bond, laughing and joking to break the tension.

A student called 911, and Holt shared their location on campus and described the situation. Officers and paramedics eventually arrived.

When Holt and her students finally walked out the choir classroom door, it was into a world where Santa Clarita had joined Columbine and Parkland on the ever-growing list of communities whose schools had been struck with tragedy.

Holt says she still hasn't processed the whole experience.

"My students said I was very calm, but I just needed a job," she says. "Fight or flight kicked in. If you're thinking about the safety of your students, it overcomes your fear. I never felt fear."

Holt says she's had the chance to spend time with the injured student. She's eager to continue their unique relationship — as long as it continues to be a positive experience for the girl and doesn't trigger negative emotions from the trauma.

"I feel very connected to her and would like to be in her life forever, if she wants," Holt says.

The choir teacher shakes off the hero label. Any educator who's played out a similar scenario in their head will be able to react with the same composure and focus, Holt says.

"I genuinely believe that anyone would have done what I did and that everyone has it in them. If you're an educator and you worry that you'll be afraid, I don't think that's what will happen. You'll know what you need to do and you'll do it. That's what we do."

*"If you worry that you'll be afraid, I don't think that's what will happen. You'll know what you need to do and you'll do it. That's what educators do."*

CTA President E. Toby Boyd and State Council kick off the Schools and Communities First campaign.



NEA President Lily Eskelsen García tells Council delegates: “We are fighting for the two most important words in the English language: for all.”

# Our Work Continues

*While celebrating victories, State Council prepares for 2020*

By **Julian Peeples**

**H**OW DOES CTA’s State Council of Education celebrate some of the biggest victories in our union’s 156-year history? By kicking off the Schools and Communities First (SCF) campaign to begin reversing decades of education funding cuts, and to make students and families a top priority in California.

At State Council’s October meeting, CTA President E. Toby Boyd led a news conference to announce the SCF ballot initiative, which will close corporate property tax loopholes and generate \$12 billion a year for public schools and community services. CTA has committed to gathering 150,000 of the 1.6 million signatures needed to qualify SCF for the November 2020 ballot.

“We’re here to celebrate the start of a new day for public schools and communities all across California,” Boyd said at the press conference. “Schools and Communities First will reclaim \$12 billion every year to fund world-class schools and make our local economies stronger. It also starts to undo the effects of decades of chronic

underfunding of our schools, colleges and public services.” (Read about SCF on page 38.)

## Making history

Boyd outlined the important fight ahead during his speech to Council, and thanked CTA’s assembled leaders for their efforts in CTA’s victories for students and public schools over the past year. The biggest win was the signing into law of SB 126, AB 1505 and AB 1507, the first changes to California’s charter school law in nearly 30 years. These laws will ensure transparency and accountability of privately managed charter schools, give local school boards the power to consider the fiscal impact charters will have on other schools before authorization, and require that charters operate within the borders of the districts that authorize them.

“They also will ensure that students attending charter schools are taught by fully credentialed teachers,” Boyd said. “Together, we made history!”



## NEA President Lily Eskelsen García

NEA President Lily Eskelsen García delighted State Council in a keynote address, sharing stories about why next year’s presidential election is so crucial for public education and the very future of the United States.

“We are fighting for an America that never existed. We are fighting for who we are supposed to be, ... for the two most important words in the English language: for all,” Eskelsen García said. “It is my daily prayer that you and I will be worthy of those who are counting on us. I have never believed in the power of us more than I do now.”

She encouraged educators to visit NEA’s presidential election website, Strong Public Schools ([educationvotes.nea.org/presidential-2020](http://educationvotes.nea.org/presidential-2020)), for information on where all the candidates stand when it comes to public schools and issues that matter to educators.

Eskelsen García also issued a unique call to action: throw a house party. She asked educators to host house parties in early November — one year before the 2020 presidential election — to talk with family, friends and neighbors about why their vote next year is so important.

“We’ve got to get people woke!” she said.

## The year ahead

Setting the vision for the coming year’s advocacy, State Council endorsed next year’s school facilities bond (AB 48), as well as authorized up to \$6 million to support CTA positions on the 2020 ballot.

President Boyd introduced to State Council the new CTA executive director, Joe Boyd (see page 51 for more on Boyd).

Four members were elected to new leadership roles:

- **Christopher Finley**, NEA Board of Directors, District 14
- **Nichole DeVore**, NEA Board of Directors, Alternate Seat 2
- **DeWayne Sheaffer**, CTA Board of Directors, District Q
- **Hilary Hall**, CTA/ABC Committee, District I

Emphasizing that the victories of the past year took commitment to each other, our students and our shared mission, President Boyd thanked all CTA members for fighting side by side for the schools our students need to be the leaders of tomorrow.

“Our work never really stops as educators and advocates,” he said. “But with students at the center of everything we do, it never really feels like work.” ■

“Our work never really stops as educators and advocates. But with students at the center of everything we do, it never really feels like work.”

—CTA President **E. Toby Boyd**



State Council delegates show their support for the Schools and Communities First initiative.

# Meet Joe Boyd

*Longtime activist and organizer returns to CTA as executive director*



**A SIGN THAT SAYS** “Work hard and be kind” is displayed prominently in Joe Boyd’s office. The maxim ties into advice he received as a labor organizer that still guides his approach today: Don’t take yourself too seriously, take the people around you very seriously, but remember that everyone’s got their own issues.

“It’s given me the ability to give a lot of leeway to people,” says Boyd, who began his term as CTA’s executive director Nov. 1. “We’re all imperfect, but we’re all trying to work together to make things better.”

A former educator and son and grandson of public school teachers, Boyd has been helping people and groups organize around issues they care about for more than 30 years — 23 of them with CTA. In the early 1990s, he headed United Teachers of Richmond, helping the chapter in the wake of a state-imposed receivership. He went on to work with rural, suburban and urban locals across the state, handling political campaigns, negotiations and other advocacy efforts. In 2008, he served as executive director for the Teachers Association of Long Beach, which was then in receivership.

Boyd left CTA to found his own advocacy and organizing firm in 2014. In 2016 he became executive director of the California Federation of Teachers.

Now back “home,” Boyd is in charge of CTA’s day-to-day operations, including management of 400 employees and oversight of more than 1,000 local affiliates. As we chatted with him, he shared that he’s excited to work with members, leaders and staff at a critical time for public education.

## What’s on your plate right now?

The Schools and Communities First (SCF) campaign [the 2020 ballot initiative that would bring in \$12 billion

annually for education and basic community services]. It addresses the issue of funding that we’ve wanted to tackle for as long as I remember. We need corporations to start paying their fair share while protecting residential taxpayers, agriculture, small businesses. That’s the big focus. We’re going to get outspent. The only way we can fight back is to out-organize, to organize our members and our communities.

SCF is part of a longer push to put our schools back to where they should be in terms of funding, to make that structural change. The power we build through organizing our union for this will serve us well beyond November. It’s the fight to have lower class sizes, to have nurses, to have arts and music and sports programs that are funded, to have good technology. This is the start of structural support, not only for our schools but for our communities. SCF deals with all the pieces in communities that are important.

## How about longer-term?

We need to provide every student with the support, the balance they need — in math, reading, sports, everything. Sometimes that’s getting a meal, sometimes it’s getting into Berkeley, sometimes it’s both. Schools are at the center of that. That makes what we do the center, the core, and the place to build out and create understanding with voters and our communities about why our schools are so important.

## What made you an activist?

I’d always been an activist living in the co-ops while at UC Berkeley and in Ecuador, where I worked with Amigos de las Americas helping a community fight a high rate of dysentery. I learned basic



CTA President E. Toby Boyd introduces new Executive Director Joe Boyd at CTA State Council in October.



“The union is just us — people. It’s not a building, it’s not support for this or that, it’s us figuring out what we want to do to make our work lives and our families better, and also make our larger community better.”

organizing lessons then: You can’t really do things *for* people, you have to work *with* people. They have to have ownership of the projects.

When I was a new teacher and baseball coach at Kennedy High School in Richmond, I was a site rep, but not an activist. Then our superintendent drove the district into bankruptcy. My seniors didn’t know if they would be able to graduate; we didn’t have money for team uniforms or buses. I thought, “This situation is affecting my ability to do my job, so I’m going to get really involved.” I was elected chapter vice president in my second year and became very active. The financial trauma resulted in some 600 teachers getting pink slips. I was one of them. What happened was bad for the community, bad for students.

### What do you want members to know about CTA?

The union is just us — people. It’s not a building, it’s not support for this or that, it’s us figuring out what we want to do to make our work lives and our families better, and also make our larger community better.

My parents were in the union. They weren’t activists, they were supporters. My family in West Virginia has coal mining roots, so unionism was a big conversation — everybody who was living a good life economically was in the union. I understood all that.

But until things got rough in Richmond, I didn’t realize so many things are connected to activism, like retirement and health care. My mom took off more time than permitted when she was pregnant, so she lost her job and seniority and had to start all over again. She got RIF notices every year. We lived a little on credit; we’d worry until she got notice that her job was going to be there.

We’re standing on the shoulders of those who came before us, before collective bargaining existed. What makes us a union is our ability to organize school site by school site. What goes on at that school site

## VITAL STATS

**Born and raised:** Long Beach

**Family:** Wife Nancy, an elementary school teacher; five children (two still in college)

**Education:** B.A. Political Science, UC Berkeley; teaching credential: San Francisco State University

**Current reading:** *Eyes to the Wind*, by Ady Barkan, which chronicles how Barkan’s terminal illness sparked his rise as a social justice warrior; fiction choices lean toward mystery-thrillers set in Southern California

**Passion:** Baseball (at one point coached by his father, Long Beach Hall of Famer Artie Boyd), and the LA Angels. “I went to game after game [in the nosebleed sections as a youth]. I became a diehard Angels fan, because you have to support the underdog.”

Watch a short video interview with Joe Boyd at [tinyurl.com/CTAJoeBoyd](http://tinyurl.com/CTAJoeBoyd).

on a daily basis *is* the union, it’s where the union starts.

The reason to be involved in CTA is because that’s who educators are. This is our community. The work we do has the ability to make our classrooms better and our lives better even if our political, religious, generational views are not the same. That involvement is what keeps us going and makes the world a better place. ■

# Dialogue or Divestment?

*Discussion continues about CalSTRS and fossil fuels* By **Julian Peeples**

**MUCH LIKE TOBACCO** and firearms before, holdings in fossil fuels by the State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS) are inspiring healthy debate about sustainable investments and associated costs among some educators. Prudently managing a \$223 billion retirement fund to provide stability for more than 950,000 members includes making diversified investments, sometimes in industries with environmental and social implications.

As global impacts from the climate crisis become more apparent every day, a growing number of voices are calling for complete divestment from the fossil fuel industry by CalSTRS. Others, including CalSTRS managers, believe that the best way to support sustainability is to continue investing in the industry to engage fossil fuel corporations and influence them to adopt best practices. The retirement fund has been a forerunner in sustainable investing for more than two decades, striving to provide stability and growth while influencing changes in public policies and corporate practices.

## Hot-button issues

In November 2018, CalSTRS signed on with an array of other retirement fund managers to the Principles for a Responsible Civilian Firearms Industry, which has already influenced multiple parts of the firearms industry chain. These systems, with combined assets of \$5 trillion, are working to get retail chains to adopt best practices that see federal requirements for gun sales as the floor rather than the ceiling, encouraging the industry to adopt stricter rules than law requires.

CalSTRS partners with sustainability-minded investors to enhance influence around other issues that potentially impact the fund, including climate action, opioid accountability, and diversity in corporate boardrooms. "CalSTRS' history of engagement activities has resulted in better relationships and outcomes across global industries," according to a CalSTRS report provided to CTA State Council in October.

While the debate about whether dialogue or divestment is the best path to sustainability continues, the health and vitality of

the fund is of chief concern to both CalSTRS and CTA. Divesting completely from fossil fuels at a time when CalSTRS still has a significant unfunded liability endangers the stability of the pension system. CalSTRS has a fiduciary responsibility to defend the retirement fund from significant risk and has sought to engage rather than divest to best protect the health of the system.

In 2017, despite many calls for divestment from the Dakota Access Pipeline, CalSTRS chose to engage corporations and banks about concerns of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe that their voices were not being heard. Divestment would have adversely impacted the fund by between \$8 billion and \$10 billion, according to estimates. Instead, CalSTRS took an active role in the situation, advocating for indigenous rights and environmental protections with the corporations and banks involved in the project.



*"CalSTRS' history of engagement activities has resulted in better relationships and outcomes across global industries."*

—From a CalSTRS report provided to CTA State Council

## Protecting the fund

CTA policy is clear on the top priority when it comes to the retirement fund: "The Retirement Systems should have as their primary investment goals to preserve the principal and maximize the growth and income when selecting and retaining securities." And the experts generally agree that full divestment from fossil fuels would hurt the fund. The next line in the policy is also pertinent to the debate: "Non-economic factors must be considered in making investment decisions."

At least one CTA local has adopted its own resolution on the issue, with Oakland Education Association strongly urging CalSTRS to stop any new investment in fossil fuel companies and ensure none of its investments include holdings in fossil fuels, beginning immediately. United Teachers of Richmond's executive board has also voted to support divestment.

*California Educator* will continue to monitor this issue and provide updates as they arise. For more information on CalSTRS' sustainability beliefs and practices, visit [calstrs.com/sustainability](http://calstrs.com/sustainability).

# Changing Lives

*California's Teachers of the Year bring joy and creativity to the classroom*

*“Great teachers are the core of a great educational system. Teachers show us all that all children can achieve, no matter who they are.”*

—Superintendent of Public Instruction  
**Tony Thurmond**

**A LOVE OF** learning and strong connections to students are abundantly evident in the 2020 California Teachers of the Year. The educators, all CTA members, were announced by state Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond in October.

“These five incredible teachers receive this prestigious honor for their focus, drive and determination to teach young people in California,” Thurmond said in a statement. “They make profound differences in the lives of their students and their communities by employing innovative strategies to increase academic success and narrow the achievement gap among a broad range of students.”

California Teachers of the Year act as ambassadors for the profession. The 2020 awardees are:



**SEAN BUI, Fremont Education Association**, a ninth through 12th grade English language development and business law teacher at Cupertino High School. Thurmond has nominated Bui as California’s representative for the National Teacher of the Year competition; the 2020 National Teacher of the Year will be announced in the spring.

Bui came to the Fremont Union High School District nine years ago. Besides teaching, he advises the Mock Trial Club and is the voice of the Pioneers on the football field. District staff say that Bui “strives to create a supportive and inclusive culture on campus, whether that means designing activities to help ELD students feel more at home or working with struggling students to relieve stress and have fun.”

Bui’s colleagues note his “bubbly personality” and “joy in the teaching profession,” and say he is a force for good in the world. Indeed, he says he’d rather be at school making a positive influence on a kid than anywhere else.



**BRENDA CHAVEZ-BARRERAS, Perris Elementary Teachers Association**, a kindergarten teacher at Good Hope Elementary School in Perris, Riverside County. Chavez-Barreras immigrated to the U.S. at age 16, not speaking English, but was an honor roll student by the time she graduated high school, according to the Riverside County Office of Education.

She has been a teacher for 22 years. At Palms Elementary, where she previously taught, she led the California Association for Bilingual Educators program and founded an English-language tutoring initiative to help students before and after school.



County offices of education nominate California Teachers of the Year applicants through county-level competitions. California Department of Education (CDE) selection committees review applications; conduct site visits to evaluate teachers' rapport with students, classroom environments, presentation skills, and teaching techniques; and interview the teachers. The state superintendent then selects the five California Teachers of the Year and the National Teacher of the Year nominee.

The program began in 1972 to honor outstanding teachers and encourage aspiring educators. The awards are presented by California Casualty and supported by the California Teachers of the Year Foundation.

"Great teachers are the core of a great educational system," said Thurmond. "Yes, teaching changes lives of individual students, but beyond that, teachers show us all that all children can achieve, no matter who they are." Thurmond and the CDE will fete the 2020 honorees at a gala in January.

For more information about the program, see [cde.ca.gov/ta/sr/ct](https://cde.ca.gov/ta/sr/ct).



**MANDY KELLY, Saddleback Valley Educators Association**, a sixth grade multiple-subject teacher at Trabuco Mesa Elementary School in Rancho Santa Margarita, Orange County (she's done previous stints as a kindergarten and fourth grade teacher). Kelly uses virtual reality and other emerging technologies in her classroom and trains teachers in these technologies as well. She has helped design curriculum focused on math development, English language arts sequencing, engagement strategies, Next Generation Science Standards, and other subjects.

"I have had such amazing teachers growing up, and I always wanted to make them proud and be my own version of them," Kelly said in an *Orange County Register* story. "It's a wonderful reminder and a way for me to celebrate that I am continuing the line of great teachers who influenced me."



**GUY MYERS, Burbank Teachers Association**, a ninth through 12th grade drama and musical theater teacher at John Burroughs High School in Burbank. Myers was honored last April by the Burbank Arts for All Foundation, and was named the Burroughs High School Teacher of the Year earlier this year, the district Teacher of the Year in April, and a Los Angeles County Teacher of the Year in September.

"It is a humbling and overwhelming honor to be chosen as one of the Teachers of the Year for California," Myers told *MyBurbank*. "I grew up in public schools, and I am made up from all of the wonderfully supportive and caring teachers who nurtured me along the way."



**KATYA ROBINSON, West Sonoma County Teachers Association**, a kindergarten through third grade special education teacher at West Sonoma County Consortium School in Sebastopol. According to the *Santa Rosa Press-Democrat*, Robinson wrote in her application that while her students learn in different ways, "my standards and vision for them remain high because I see their place in the world."

"I believe it's the educator's job to open doors for our students, especially during their early years," she told *Sonoma West Times & News*. "I spend a lot of time creating opportunities to learn and breaking down boundaries to their learning."

The 15-year teacher lost her house in the 2017 Tubbs Fire. The call from Thurmond to tell her of her award came as she was walking through her newly rebuilt home.

# Grants for Music and Arts

*California Casualty helps educators keep arts at the forefront of learning*

**MUSIC STUDENTS** at Jackson Heights Elementary School in Red Bluff and Susan B. Anthony Elementary School in Sacramento will soon be hitting new notes, thanks to Music and Arts Grants from California Casualty. Instructors will use their \$250 awards to purchase musical instruments for their classes.

“I will be able to incorporate music into my curriculum,” says Jackson Heights Elementary kindergarten teacher Cathy Van Lente, Red Bluff Elementary Educators Association. “I’ll be able to teach basic rhythm to my students.”

Susan B. Anthony Elementary School music instructor Cindee Stewart, Sacramento City Teachers Association, says, “This is such an amazing gift. Our students will learn to make amazing music and develop a love for music with their new recorders.”

Raisin City Elementary School in Raisin City, Fresno County, received a grant that will go toward a garden art project.

Forty schools across California received 2019 Music and Arts Grants, for a total of \$10,000. The grant is designed to foster creativity in schools, in areas such as choir, band, dance, film, theater, computer arts and graphics, or any K-12 curriculum that employs art for learning.

California Casualty hopes to fill the gap as schools have reduced funding for the arts.

“Students love to showcase their creativity, and helping educators keep music and arts in the forefront of everyday learning is absolutely the right thing for us to do,” says Brian Goodman, California Casualty assistant vice president.

California K-12 public schools needing funding for arts or performance programs can apply for the 2020 Music and Arts Grant from California Casualty at [calcasmusicartsgrant.com](http://calcasmusicartsgrant.com). The deadline is June 30, 2020. ■

*California Casualty has partnered with CTA to provide members auto and home insurance tailored to their professional needs since 1951. To request an insurance quote, visit [calcas.com/CTA](http://calcas.com/CTA), or call 800-800-9410.*



Red Bluff Elementary EA President Catherine Piffero; teacher Cathy Van Lente; and California Casualty's Christy Forward.



At Laguna Creek High School in Elk Grove, band instructor Jeffrey Edom will use the grant to keep instruments in good repair. Left to right: California Casualty's Lisa Almeida; parent Tracey DelNero; California Casualty's Christy Forward; Edom; CTA Board member Shelly Gupton; Elk Grove EA President Rick Stancil.



Music instructor Cindee Stewart, Sacramento City TA; and California Casualty's Amanda Keidel.

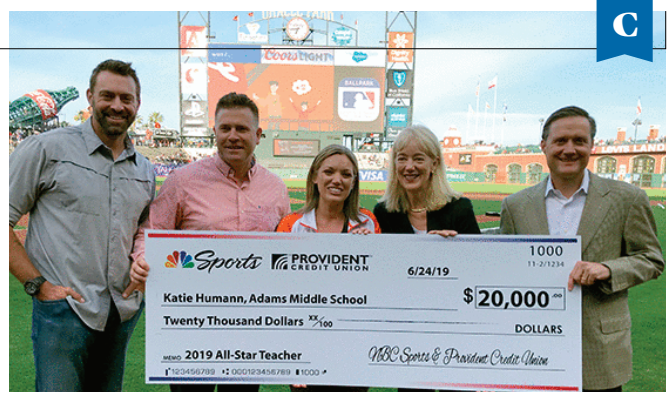
# We See Stars

**FOR THE PAST** nine years, Provident Credit Union has partnered with NBC Sports Bay Area to sponsor the All-Star Teacher Award — awarding over \$200,000 to California schools. Each year, the winner receives \$20,000 for their school, and runners-up receive \$2,000.

The award recognizes five teachers from Northern and Central California at the middle and high school levels for their extraordinary dedication to their students and significant presence within their communities. A panel of judges selected this year's finalists in four categories: overall commitment; excellence in teaching; rapport with students; and level of distinction.

Finalists are featured in video vignettes that air on NBC Sports Bay Area and are interviewed on select Giants and A's pregame live shows. Members of the public then vote online for their favorite.

This year the finalists, selected from over 150 nominations, were honored at a ceremony at Oracle Park in San Francisco.



Provident and NBC Sports Bay Area announced Brentwood Teachers Association member **Katie Humann** (above, center) of Adams Middle School in Brentwood as the winner of the 2019 All-Star Teacher Award.

Finalists included **Bill Schrier** of Carmel High School (Association of Carmel Teachers), **Awele Makeba** of Skyline High (Oakland Education Association), **Marquel Coats** of Greenleaf TK-8 (Oakland Education Association), and **Matt Tate** of Sierra High (Manteca Educators Association).

Keep an eye out for your 2020 opportunity to highlight a teacher in your area. Your nominations and votes determine the winning educator. Visit [providentcu.org](http://providentcu.org) for more information. ■

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## DECLARATION OF CANDIDACY FOR CTA/NEA-RETIRED POSITIONS

**DEADLINE TO RETURN DECLARATION IS JANUARY 30**

**CTA/NEA-RETIRED OFFICES TO BE FILLED:**

**President, Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer of CTA/NEA-Retired**

Term: 2 years, beginning June 26, 2020

Requirements: A candidate must be a member of CTA/NEA-Retired.

**Interim State Council Representative for District 4 of CTA/NEA-Retired**

Term: From confirmation of this election through June 25, 2021

Requirements: A candidate must be a member of CTA/NEA-Retired and reside in District 4.

**I AM A CANDIDATE FOR THE OFFICE OF:**

President                       Vice President                       Secretary-Treasurer

Interim State Council Representative for District 4

County of Residence: \_\_\_\_\_

**CONTACT INFORMATION:** (Please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (as it should appear on the ballot)                      CTA ID

\_\_\_\_\_  
Home Address                      Mailing Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State & Zip                      City, State & Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
Home Phone                      Cell Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

**CAMPAIGN STATEMENT:**

You may write a candidate statement **of no more than thirty (30) words**, which will be included with the ballot. If more words are used, the statement will only include the first 30. Reference to ethnic minority identification will not be counted in the 30-word limitation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**This form must be received no later than 5 p.m. on January 30, 2020.**

Mail to: CTA/NEA-Retired Elections, 1705 Murchison Drive, Burlingame, CA 94010

Email: CTA-Retired@cta.org

**Candidates may wish to return this form by certified mail in order to get a receipt and ensure compliance with the deadline.**

**CTA/NEA-Retired  
to elect Officers and  
Interim State Council  
Representative  
for District 4**

Anyone wishing to run for a position should complete this Declaration of Candidacy form and return it to the address at the bottom of the form. **The deadline to submit forms is January 30.**

A postcard containing voting instructions will be mailed and/or emailed to CTA/NEA-Retired members in February.

For more information, call 650-552-5439.

**ELECTORAL DISTRICTS**

Following are the counties in each electoral district for CTA/NEA-Retired:

**District 1**

Alameda	Napa
Contra Costa	San Benito
Del Norte	San Francisco
Humboldt	San Mateo
Lake	Santa Clara
Marin	Santa Cruz
Mendocino	Solano
Monterey	Sonoma

**District 2**

Alpine	Placer
Amador	Plumas
Butte	Sacramento
Calaveras	San Joaquin
Colusa	Shasta
El Dorado	Sierra
Fresno	Siskiyou
Glenn	Stanislaus
Kern	Sutter
Kings	Tehama
Lassen	Trinity
Madera	Tulare
Mariposa	Tuolumne
Merced	Yolo
Modoc	Yuba
Nevada	

**District 3**

Los Angeles	Santa Barbara
San Luis Obispo	Ventura

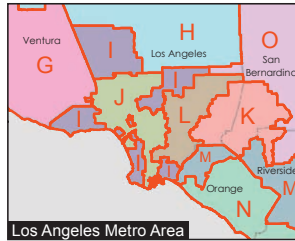
**District 4**

Imperial	Riverside
Inyo	San Bernardino
Mono	San Diego
Orange	



# CTA

## DIRECTORIAL DISTRICTS



ABT* (O)	3,834.29
AGUILAR (H)	6,769.58
ALCALÁ* (O)	3,921.95
BARTELL (M)	5,241.50
BILEK (G)	2,953.57
BONACCORSI (B)	2,892.07
BOYD	5,474.82
BUSHÉE* (I)	2,330.71
DAWSON (N)	2,669.43
EATON (A)	4,193.28
ELLIS (At-Large)	3,073.49
FREEMAN (At-Large)	3,559.33
GOLDBERG	3,017.95
GRANADO (L)	5,118.66
GREEN* (Q)	4,364.22
GUPTON* (E)	1,513.17
HEINS*	9,574.62
HOUSE†	2,648.62
JACKSON* (C)	1,495.55
JONES (J)	3,338.64
LITTMAN	3,571.19
MARTINEZ (K)	5,687.61
MONTAÑO*	4,007.58
NORMAND* (C)	2,791.87
PATTERSON (D)	6,288.22
RODRIGUEZ (P)	3,903.58
RUIZ (F)	5,937.85

†CTA/NEA Coordinator

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

### CTA Board Expenses

Amounts represent a monthly average for fiscal year 2018-19. During the reporting year, the normal and statewide activities include CTA Board meetings, State Council, Service Center Council meetings, Equity and Human Rights Conference, Good Teaching Conferences, various task force meetings and other business-related functions. Some differences in expenditures may be due to the widely varied geographical sizes of directorial districts, distances traveled for Regional, Service Center and other meetings, and the varied number of functions CTA Directors are responsible for attending. Expenses of Board members with partial-year service are averaged based on months served and delineated with an asterisk.

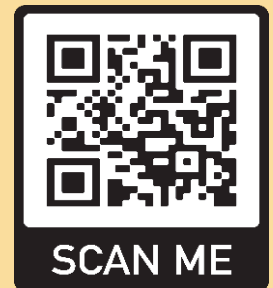


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You can represent CTA at NEA's convention

**ON THE NEXT PAGE** is the official Declaration of Candidacy form for state delegates to the 2020 NEA convention in Atlanta, Georgia.

It is the responsibility of each member wishing to run for state delegate to fill out a Declaration of Candidacy form and file it by the deadline. You must use the Declaration of Candidacy form that is printed in the December 2019/January 2020 *California Educator* (photocopies are acceptable) or downloaded from the CTA website ([cta.org/racandidacy](http://cta.org/racandidacy)).

Service Center Councils will begin accepting state delegate Declaration of Candidacy forms on Jan. 3, 2020.

Each candidate filing a declaration form will receive an acknowledgment of receipt.

In order to attend the Representative Assembly, you must pay for your meals, hotel room and transportation for July 1–7.

The first caucus meeting is set for July 2, and the annual meeting of the Representative Assembly runs July 3–6.

CTA will reimburse state delegates up to \$2,000 with appropriate receipts. If a delegate stays within the CTA meal allowance, shares a room with another delegate and purchases a super-saver airline ticket (if applicable), the CTA reimbursement should cover delegate expenses.

In keeping with CTA's commitment to minority involvement, members who are ethnic minorities are urged to become candidates.

For more information, or if your chapter has not initiated an election by March 20, 2020, contact the CTA Elections Committee at 650-552-5300, or [RA@cta.org](mailto:RA@cta.org).

## CTA Service Center Council addresses

Service Center Council	Counties	Service Center Council	Counties	Service Center Council	Counties
<b>ALCOSTA SCC</b> 2177 Diamond Blvd. Concord, CA 94520 925-676-2822 925-676-2915(fax)	Alameda, Contra Costa, Solano (Benicia)	<b>GOLDEN GATE SCC</b> 1705 Murchison Dr. Burlingame, CA 94010 650-552-5571 650-552-5023 (fax)	San Francisco, San Mateo	<b>SERVICE CENTER ONE</b> 222 E. Huntington Dr., Ste. 208 Monrovia, CA 91016 626-357-2095 626-357-2451 (fax)	Los Angeles, San Bernardino
<b>BAY VALLEY SCC/CTA</b> 6095 Bristol Parkway, Ste. 100 Culver City, CA 90230-6601 310-215-0326 310-215-0341 (fax)	Los Angeles	<b>HIGH DESERT SCC</b> 9329 Mariposa Rd., Ste. 215 Hesperia, CA 92344-8086 760-244-2239 760-244-1665 (fax)	Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Mono, San Bernardino	<b>SHASTA CASCADE SCC</b> 760 Cypress Ave., Ste. 301 Redding, CA 96001 530-243-5623 530-243-5813 (fax)	Lassen, Modoc, Shasta, Siskiyou, Tehama, Trinity
<b>CAPITAL SCC</b> 4100 Truxel Rd. Sacramento, CA 95834 916-288-4925 916-288-4912 (fax)	Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Tuolumne, Yolo	<b>IMPERIAL COUNTY SCC</b> 2419 La Brucherie Rd. Imperial, CA 92251 760-355-4600 760-355-0906 (fax)	Imperial, San Diego (Borrego Springs)	<b>SIERRA SCC</b> 3409 Calloway Dr., Ste. 201 Bakersfield, CA 93312 661-587-1366 661-587-1365 (fax)	Kern
<b>CENTRAL COAST COUNTIES SCC</b> 928 E. Blanco Rd., Ste. 100 Salinas, CA 93901 831-783-3200 831-783-3211 (fax)	Monterey, San Benito, Santa Cruz	<b>MERCED/MARIPOSA SCC</b> 3351 M Street Merced, CA 95348 209-723-8871 209-723-9598 (fax)	Mariposa, Merced	<b>SOUTHEASTERN SCC</b> 11745 E. Telegraph Rd. Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670 562-478-1377 562-478-1432 (fax)	Los Angeles
<b>CHANNEL ISLANDS SCC</b> 2325 Skyway Drive Santa Maria, CA 93465 805-922-5707 805-346-2106 (fax)	San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura	<b>ORANGE SCC</b> 281 N. Rampart St., Ste. A Orange, CA 92868 714-978-8861 714-978-2423 (fax)	Orange	<b>STANISLAUS SCC</b> 3900 Mitchell Rd. Ceres, CA 95307 209-537-0702 209-537-4049 (fax)	Stanislaus
<b>CHICO SCC</b> 1430 East Ave., Ste. 1 Chico, CA 95926 530-345-9743 530-345-1839 (fax)	Butte, Glenn, Plumas	<b>REDWOOD SCC</b> 2490 Guerneville Road Santa Rosa, CA 95403 (707) 544-1075 (707) 544-9238 (fax)	Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Napa, Solano, Sonoma	<b>TULARE/KINGS SCC</b> 301 W. School Ave. Visalia, CA 93291 559-733-7706 559-739-7863 (fax)	Kings, Tulare
<b>DELTA SCC</b> 7330 West Ln. Stockton, CA 95210 209-478-6091 209-478-5923 (fax)	San Joaquin	<b>SAN DIEGO COUNTY SCC</b> 5333 Mission Center Rd., Ste. 200 San Diego, CA 92108 619-683-3990 619-683-3994 (fax)	San Diego	<b>UTLA/NEA SCC</b> 3303 Wilshire Blvd., 10th Fl. Los Angeles, CA 90010 213-368-6266 213-251-6256 (fax)	Los Angeles
<b>FEATHER RIVER SCC</b> 950 Tharp Rd., Ste. 901 Yuba City, CA 95993 530-755-2082 530-755-0641 (fax)	Colusa, Nevada, Sierra, Sutter, Yuba	<b>SAN GORGONIO SCC</b> 430 E. Vanderbilt Way San Bernardino, CA 92408 909-890-4520 909-890-2461 (fax)	Riverside, San Bernardino	<b>HIGHER EDUCATION CCA</b> 4100 Truxel Rd. Sacramento, CA 95834 916-288-4900 916-288-4912 (fax)	Community colleges
<b>FRESNO/MADERA SCC</b> 5330 N. Fresno St. Fresno, CA 93710 559-222-6593 559-222-9827 (fax)	Fresno, Madera	<b>SANTA CLARA COUNTY SCC</b> 4810 Harwood Rd., Ste. 100 San Jose, CA 95124 408-266-1321 408-266-7893 (fax)	Santa Clara		

## DECLARATION OF CANDIDACY For State Delegate to the 2020 NEA Convention in Atlanta, Georgia

Name	Cellphone
Address	Home phone
City, Zip	CTA/NEA Member ID Number
Personal email address	Gender <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> Nonbinary
I am a member of: <input type="checkbox"/> CTA <input type="checkbox"/> NEA _____ Chapter	

Service Center Councils will begin accepting state delegate Declaration of Candidacy forms on Jan. 3, 2020.

### Category:

- NEA Active (Non-Supervisory) Member** (including Education Support Professionals)  
Send or fax directly to your Service Center Council (see addresses and fax numbers on previous page).
- Higher Education CCA Member** (eligible to be in bargaining unit)  
Send to Community College Association, 4100 Truxel Rd., Sacramento, CA 95834.
- CTA/NEA-Retired Member** (must be member of CTA/NEA-Retired)  
Send to CTA/NEA-Retired, Attn. Governance Support Dept., P.O. Box 921, Burlingame, CA 94011-0921.
- Student CTA** Send to Student CTA Office, CTA, P.O. Box 921, Burlingame, CA 94011-0921.

### Ethnic Grouping, Other Information:

I am:  American Indian/Alaska Native  Caucasian  Hispanic  
 African American  Asian  Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

I am or plan to be a declared candidate for a local delegate position also.  
 Yes  No

If yes and you are elected to any delegate position (state, local, or both state and local), you are responsible for informing the Service Center Council of your choice by April 13, 2020.

Name	Service Center Council
------	------------------------

Please give a brief biographical sketch of no more than 30 words. (If more words are used, the information that accompanies ballots will include only the first 30 words.) If you wish your ethnicity to be listed, this will not count as part of the 30-word limitation. Please print.

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Signed

**THIS FORM MUST BE FILED NO LATER THAN 5 p.m. on Jan. 31, 2020**, at the appropriate office listed above. Candidates are urged to return this form by certified mail in order to get a receipt and ensure compliance with the deadline. It is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that this document is received by the due date and time.

## Duties of delegates to NEA RA in Atlanta, Georgia

1. Each delegate will be expected to arrive in Atlanta, Georgia, in time to ensure registering as an official delegate to the Representative Assembly (RA) with both the California delegation and NEA.
2. Each delegate will be expected to attend all caucuses of the California delegation. Normally, the caucus begins at 7 a.m. daily. Delegates must be registered with the California delegation to participate in the caucus. Delegates are expected to remain through the convention.
3. Each delegate shall attend all business meetings of the RA.
4. Each delegate is strongly encouraged to attend NEA budget committee hearings, resolutions committee hearings, bylaw committee hearings, speeches by prominent national figures, etc.
5. Each delegate should take into consideration CTA State Council and caucus policy when voting.
6. Each delegate is encouraged to participate fully in all activities of the California delegation.
7. Each delegate — state and local — will be expected to sit with his or her Service Center Council delegation on the RA floor or to inform the appropriate person where he or she will be seated. This is to ensure communication regarding RA business and/or personal emergency information of concern to the delegate, as well as to verify attendance.

I understand that, as a state delegate, my attendance is being directly funded, at least partially, by membership dues. I accept my responsibility to carry out the above specified duties.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

\_\_\_\_\_ Signature

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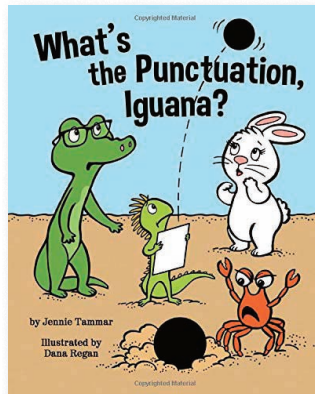




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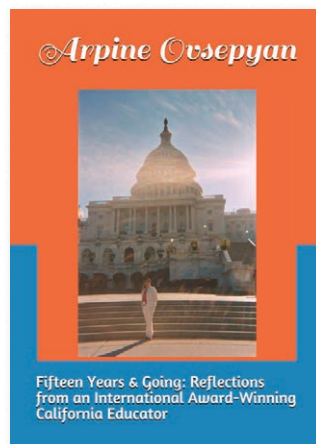
## Period. The End.

**AFTER JENNIFER TAMMAR**, Natomas Teachers Association, saw her first graders "writing punctuation marks the size of bowling balls," she thought of a children's book to help students learn how to properly form periods at the end of sentences. *What's the Punctuation, Iguana?* (2019) finds Alligator, Bunny and Crabby enjoying a day at the beach when their friend Iguana causes some chaos because of his difficulty writing periods. Available on Amazon.

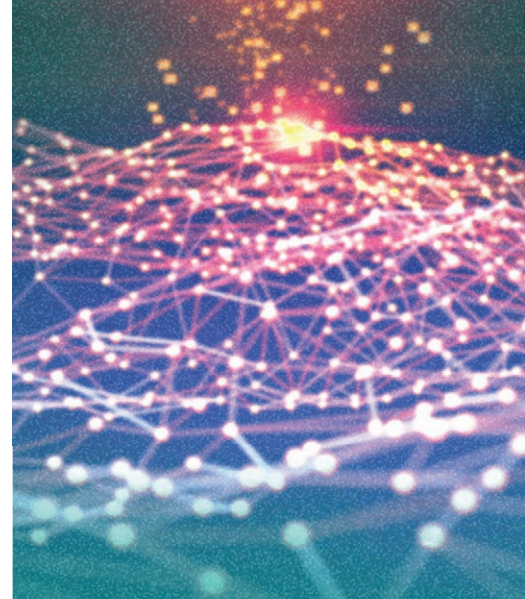


## Helping Future Generations

**GLENDALE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION** member Arpine Ovsepyan has worked from preschool to the graduate school level, so she knows the challenges and excitement teachers face daily. She shares her experiences in *Fifteen Years & Going: Reflections From an International Award-Winning California Educator* (2019), with the goal of inspiring educators to do what it takes to help future generations reach their personal best. Ovsepyan offers research-based teaching and learning tools to ignite student interest, with interactive journal exercises for each chapter to help educators reflect and stay on the path of continual innovation.



**GOT SOMETHING** for these pages? Send details to [editor@cta.org](mailto:editor@cta.org) with "Lit From Within" in the subject line. We lean toward new(ish) work that can be used in the classroom.



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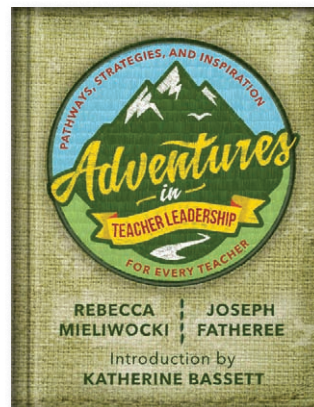
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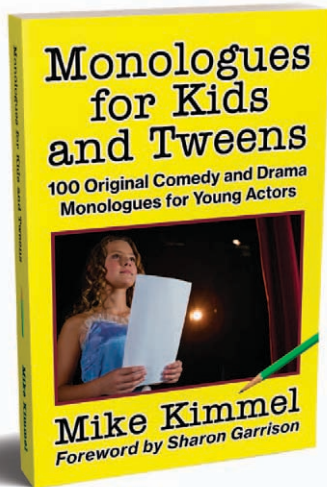
Often educators' creativity spills over into a book, blog, app or other work. We're happy to showcase members' talents.



## Adventures in Teacher Leadership

**EVER WONDERED ABOUT** the first steps to becoming a teacher leader, what kinds of approaches work best, and how to overcome inevitable challenges in leading colleagues on a journey toward professional improvement?

Burbank Teachers Association's Rebecca Mieliwocki (California and National Teacher of the Year, 2012) and co-author Joseph Fatheree (Illinois Teacher of the Year, 2007) answer these questions and more in *Adventures in Teacher Leadership* (2019). This is a guide organized around five key tools — communication, collaboration, professional development, data and advocacy. The authors and many other state Teachers of the Year describe pathways to leadership, strategies for success, and pitfalls to avoid. The book invites you to expand your professional reach, empower the profession, and make a big difference in the lives of students everywhere. Available at Amazon and [ascd.org](http://ascd.org).



## Making a Scene

**MIKE KIMMEL** spent 11 years working on *The Tonight Show With Jay Leno*. The actor and ESL and drama teacher, a member of Burbank Teachers Association, has long felt the need for practical, effective training tools for child and teen actors. So, he's written several instructional books to meet the need, including *Monologues for Teens* (2018), named Performing Arts Book of the Year by the Independent Author Network, and *Monologues for Kids and Tweens* (2019). The family-friendly books contain positive imagery and subtle life lessons. Available at Amazon and [mikekimmelauthor.com](http://mikekimmelauthor.com).



continued on page 63

# School of Education

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Kim Sheehan, M.A.Ed. '99 and '09, Principal, Barranca Elementary School

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