

California
EDUCATOR

California Teachers Association February 2011 Volume 15 Issue 5

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On the cover: Samantha Abdullah, a first-year teacher at Rancho Pico Middle School in Santa Clarita, is grateful for support she receives from her district's mentoring program.

Story on page 8.



¡Sí Se Puede! ¿Por Qué No?

BY CTA PRESIDENT DAVID A. SANCHEZ

As educators hold their breath over who will receive pink slips, we know that school funding has been in crisis far too long. Governor Jerry Brown has proposed short-term solutions that can help stop the bleeding. Meanwhile, CTA is taking the lead by promoting tax fairness and awareness in order to identify stable funding sources that benefit both our state and our schools.

First, let's look at the short term.

CTA is working with lawmakers to support Gov. Brown's proposed state budget plan, which combines \$12.5 billion in budget cuts with a five-year extension of four temporary taxes to stop even deeper cuts to public education and other services. CTA is working with the Education Coalition and labor partners to support the budget plan and the revenue extensions. Gov. Brown has called for a special election in June.

According to the state's legislative analyst, if the temporary taxes are not extended, K-12 schools could face additional cuts of \$4.6 billion; community colleges, \$685 million; universities, \$1.1 billion. That means larger class sizes, no bus transportation, elimination of sports, higher fees for students attending our colleges and universities, and fewer grants for colleges. We've been down this road before, and it's hard to imagine things getting worse for our students and our profession. But without extending temporary revenues, they will.

It's clear that without permanent solutions, California will continue to run deficits for years to come.

We commend the governor for taking a balanced approach to solving the state's staggering budget deficit, and we believe that extending current revenues is critical to maintaining a quality public education system in this state. He needs our help to make sure lawmakers support the budget and support putting the tax extensions on a June 2011 ballot. I'm asking each of you go to the CTA website to e-mail your legislators and ask them to support the governor's balanced budget proposal, which includes extending temporary taxes.

Taking a long-term approach, we're starting to educate ourselves on where we are and how we can work our way to a brighter future. CTA has launched a new section on our website about tax fairness that can be found at cta.org/taxfairness. This site will be continu-

ously updated with the latest research, and is already filled with resources you can use to educate yourself and others about California's tax structure.

The information will amaze you. Did you know that between 1947 and 1979, incomes for the bottom 20 percent of the nation were rising faster than those for the top 5 percent? In contrast, between 1979 and 2008, the bottom 20 percent saw a decrease in their real income while the top 5 percent saw a 73 percent increase.

Still, the top 1 percent pay just 7.8 percent of their income in taxes while the bottom 20 percent pay 11.1 percent of their income in taxes. There is a growing divide between the haves and have-nots.

It's not fair and it's crippling our state. It doesn't have to be this way.

California has grown to be the eighth-largest economy in the world, but in recent years has ignored its own foundations in quality education, and now ranks 43rd in the nation in per-pupil spending.

It's appalling that we, as a state, are not doing better for our children. Making sure our students get the resources they need is not going to be easy, but educators in this state have a long, proud history of fighting the tough fight, and we won't back down in the face of an ailing economy.

You can help by asking your lawmakers to support the governor's budget proposal. Visit cta.org/taxfairness to learn more about why California's tax structure is broken. Then join me in talking to others about what is happening in our schools, and why we need better and more stable revenue streams for education. Together, we can make it better.

While we work together on funding for our state, we must also be ever vigilant about the attacks happening to our colleagues in Wisconsin and across the country. Our union and profession are under attack like never before and we must stand up to protect our rights and to protect all working families. Their fight is our fight. Their rights are our rights.

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EDITOR IN CHIEF Malaika Costello-Dougherty
STAFF WRITER Sherry Posnick-Goodwin
CTA WEB EDITOR Karyn Ferrera Donhoff
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CONTRIBUTORS

Scott Buschman, Dave Crosland, Len Feldman, Bill Guy, Mike Myslinski, Kamran Nasser, Kristina Rizga, Frank Wells

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¡Sí Se Puede! [Yes we can! Why not?], words inspired by César Chávez,
¿Por Qué No? encourage us to remember that, together, we can achieve great things.



what's new at CTA.ORG



Preparing for the pink slip — RIFs

As the March 15 deadline for RIF (reduction in force) notices approaches, the CTA Legal Department has developed online resources to help members. Log in to the Legal section today to learn how to put your employment files in order.

www.cta.org/RIFs



Tax fairness — it's the only way

California's tax structure is complicated. Our goal is to educate our members about tax disparities and how they are negatively impacting school funding. We've developed resources about the need to restore tax fairness. Please share them far and wide.

www.cta.org/taxfairness



Preparing for retirement?

Educators spend their lives dedicated to public service, often forgoing higher salaries in the private sector. They have earned and deserve the modest pensions they were promised. Stay informed at CTA's growing section on Retirement, Social Security and Pensions.

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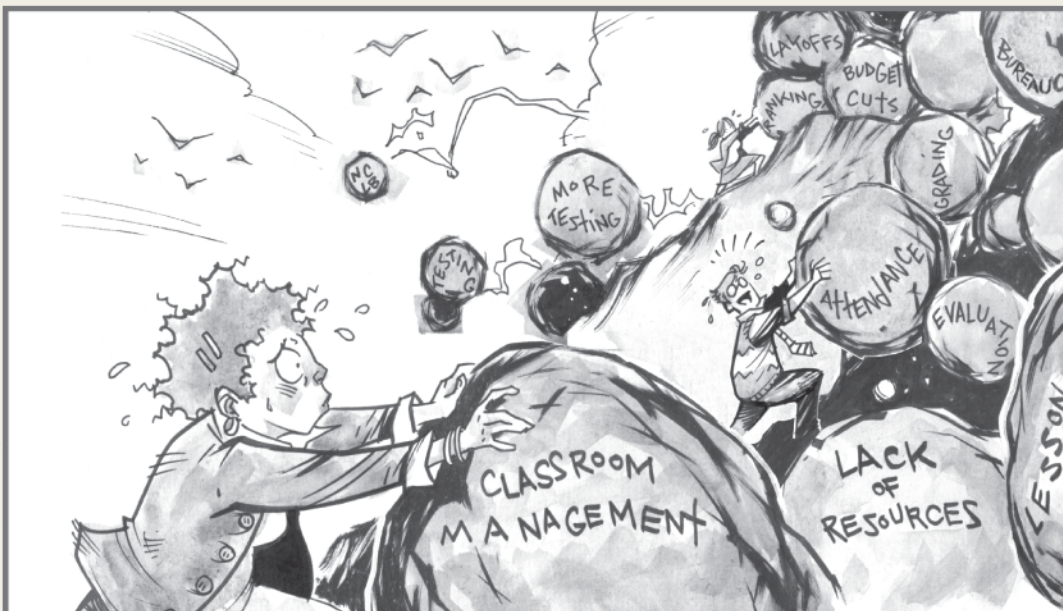
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We invite members to send in cartoon concepts for future issues of the *Educator*. All we ask is that your ideas deal with current events in education and captions are no longer than one sentence long. Please send your cartoon ideas through mail, fax or e-mail.

address: California Educator Magazine
CTA Communications
1705 Murchison Drive
Burlingame, CA 94010-4583

e-mail: editor@cta.org **fax:** (650) 552-5002



Dave Crosland, hiredmeat@gmail.com

"I hear it gets better in the second year."

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

If every teacher and administrator that was quoted in the "Facing autism" article (November) had a child of their own with autism, I can almost guarantee that they would pray for a school program such as Pacific Rim Elementary. They would want their child to be just as valued as every other child in the state, included and mainstreamed in every moment of their education. They would hope and strive for mutual respect from their fellow students. After all, most research shows that children on the spectrum learn social skills from peers, not special educators.

Stacey Bean Adams

Santa Barbara County Education Association

Dear Editor,

After reading "The blame game" (October), I would urge readers to see *Waiting for Superman* and judge the film's message for themselves. After watching, I felt honored to be a teacher. The movie demonstrated why I joined this profession: to make a difference in the lives of the children and to work toward reforming a broken system.

Yes, unions were negatively portrayed, but in a system so broken (as most of us in urban education would agree) how can we, as a union, expect the whole system to change and not ask any change of ourselves?

Kathleen Parent

United Teachers of Pasadena



Send us your comments

Letters to the editor regarding stories appearing in *California Educator* may be sent via mail, fax or e-mail.

address: California Educator Magazine
CTA Communications
1705 Murchison Drive
Burlingame, CA 94010-4583

fax: (650) 552-5002

e-mail: editor@cta.org

UPDATE

New study finds Los Angeles Times rankings flawed

The *Los Angeles Times* analysis of teachers' effectiveness based solely on how their students perform on the California Standards Tests is a deeply flawed measure of teacher performance, according to a recent report by Derek C. Briggs, chair of the Research and Evaluation Methodology Program at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

The report, "Due Diligence and the Evaluation of Teachers," funded by Great Lakes Center for Education Research, uses the same data set and methods as the *Times* analysis, but reaches a different conclusion. It finds that "value-added modeling" can lead to a number of false positives and negatives, and that half of the teachers in the *Times* database are wrongly categorized. The researchers label the *Times*' methods as deeply flawed, overly broad and simplistic, and assert that the *Times* methodology fails to consider other factors that impact student success, such as long-term achievement patterns and peer influence.

"This study confirms what educators have been saying since the *Los Angeles Times* first published their deeply flawed and irrespon-

sible ratings of Los Angeles Unified School District teachers," says CTA President David A. Sanchez. "The effectiveness of a teacher cannot be measured by one or two standardized test scores, and the *Times* did a great disservice to all educators by reducing something so multifaceted and complex to something so simplistic."

Another 2010 study, "Different Tests, Different Answers" by John Papay of Harvard University, found that using three different reading tests — the state test, the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) and the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) — at various points in the year produced substantially different outcomes. This study also found that value-added models can create inaccurate estimates of teacher effectiveness.

Autism cases on the rise in schools

The November 2010 *California Educator's* "Facing autism" feature reported that students with autism are part of a growing population and that experts believe autism to be one of the most expensive and

most challenging disabilities facing public schools today. In 2009, studies from both the National Survey of Children's Health and the National Centers for Disease Control confirmed that one in 100 children has autism, making it the fastest-rising disability in public education.

A new study released Feb. 4 by the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health shows that the epidemic is continuing to

climb steadily in California: numbers of students diagnosed with autism increased from 53,183 in the 2008-09 school year to 59,690 in 2009-10. The 2009-10 numbers are three times higher than the number of students diagnosed with autism in 2002. Last year, students with autism accounted for 8.8 percent of all special education enrollments.

There is still no explanation for the increase in autism diagnoses. Reports linking autism to vaccines have been denounced by several medical journals during the year as falsified research stemming from a British physician who has been stripped of his license to practice medicine.



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It takes nurturing for educators to soar in the classroom. These CTA members learned to fly with the help of supportive schools.



When **Struggle**
Leads to **Success**



TEACHERS NEED THE SAME BUILDING BLOCKS to success that they provide to students every day — support, encouragement, room to grow, and the opportunity to learn from mistakes. One way for schools to provide this support is through experienced mentors who can point a struggling teacher in the right direction. Another is through programs like Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) and professional learning communities. Most of all, educators need to take the shame out of struggling. Every teacher hits road blocks at some point and needs assistance. The following stories look at how support programs can help struggling teachers find their way and become success stories.

Stories by **Sherry Posnick-Goodwin** • Photos by **Scott Buschman**

Teachers are their own best support

SAMANTHA ABDULLAH, A FIRST-YEAR teacher, perches on top of a desk and proudly observes while students in her eighth-grade English classroom at Rancho Pico Middle School interrogate one another and answer questions about the book they have just completed.

“Why did you try to drown Ponyboy in a fountain?” the “prosecutor” asks the “defendant” sternly as students in the class giggle during a mock trial of a character in S.E. Hinton’s *The Outsiders*.

Abdullah’s mentor, Jennifer Klipfel, observes the instruction. Afterward, in a conference room, they discuss the lesson.

“It went well, but time seemed to be an issue,” says Klipfel. She suggests that next time the lesson can flow more smoothly by having students submit questions in advance. Abdullah thanks her mentor, expressing eagerness to try out her suggestions next time.

This kind of support is critical for teachers to grow. At a time when budget cuts have damaged recruitment and re-

tention programs and made teachers’ jobs even more stressful, creating support systems is a critical way to keep teachers in the profession and help struggling teachers succeed. This support can take many forms, including Peer Assistance and Review (PAR), instructional supervisors, and professional learning communities. What do they all have in common? Teachers are supporting other teachers.

Starting off right

Abdullah is fortunate to be teaching in the William S. Hart Union High School District in Santa Clarita near Los Angeles, which offers a unique program that melds Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA), a state-funded program that pairs new teachers with veteran teachers, with Peer Assistance and Review (PAR), which generally provides peer feedback for teachers identified as struggling, to create a hybrid support system for teachers. It is operated by and

for members of the Hart District Teachers Association in conjunction with administrators.

What makes Hart unique is that *all* teachers receive help. Teachers with a preliminary credential receive BTSA and PAR concurrently the first year, continue in BTSA the second year and continue PAR an extra year if needed. Teachers on emergency permits don’t qualify for BTSA; but instead of being left to sink or swim, they are automatically enrolled in PAR. Veteran teachers who are identified as “struggling” by administrators in evaluations also enroll in PAR, either voluntarily or at the recommendation of their administrator. Unlike other districts where mentors have classrooms of their own, Hart has four mentor teachers who offer full-time assistance.

Such individualized attention allows teachers to thrive and prevents problems down the road, says Linda Margulies, the lead consulting teacher with the PAR program and also the BTSA induction director. Even though support providers have evaluative powers, she adds, most teachers find the help constructive.

Abdullah has felt overwhelmed at times, and is grateful for the strong support.

“My mentor, Jennifer Klipfel, sees things I don’t see and how they can be improved, such as where I’m posting homework assignments in class, or lesson planning, or how I structure my daily activities,” says Abdullah. “She’s making me a much better teacher.”



LEFT: Jennifer Klipfel, right, mentors Samantha Abdullah at Rancho Pico Middle School in Santa Clarita in a unique program that melds Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment with Peer Assistance and Review.

Klipfel — Abdullah’s mentor for both BTSA and PAR — says the two programs sometimes flow together seamlessly, and it’s difficult to separate one from the other. To be successful, she adds, a relationship must be built based on trust and caring between the mentor and participant. She is proud to have such a relationship with Abdullah.

Leslie Littman, president of the Hart District Teachers Association, says that supporting new teachers is crucial to retention, especially in the hard-to-staff areas of special education, math and science. She estimates that half of the district’s approximately 1,000 teachers went through the PAR program, which became mandatory over a decade ago for teachers with less than three years of experience. Only a handful have left the district, she says proudly, noting that nationally nearly a third — 32 percent — of new teachers leave the profession within seven years.

In addition, several veteran teachers identified as “struggling” who have com-



Samantha Abdullah watches as a mock trial takes place in her eighth-grade English class.

Money needed for **teacher support**

Funding model puts Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) programs at risk.

In contrast to districts that put money into teacher support, Centinela Valley Union High School has not had an active Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) panel for two years because the district decided to stop funding the program, despite contract language for PAR with its local association. Many teachers in the district have been identified as “struggling,” but there are no resources to help them.

“Nobody wants to be a struggling teacher, and the lack of PAR funding is a huge disservice to teachers,” says Betty

Setterlund, president of the Centinela Valley Secondary Teachers Association. Instead of helping teachers, the district has transferred teachers to different school sites on an unprecedented scale.

This is typical of what’s happening in many districts throughout the state: PAR is no longer available to help struggling teachers. The lack of funding for teacher support comes at a time when it has never been more difficult to be a teacher due to budget cuts, high-stakes testing and increased class sizes, says CTA President

David A. Sanchez.

In 2009, state funding for the PAR program was put into “flexibility” — also called “Tier 3” — along with other categorical programs. Phil Lafontaine, who oversees teacher quality for the California Department of Education, says that school districts and county offices of education receive the same amount of money for PAR that they received in 2008 — \$29 million total — but can now use it for any purpose including salaries, materials and other programs. The “flexibility” will last until 2013.



LEFT: After observing Maria Rao's math lesson, Radu Toma, right, gives her kudos for keeping students focused and on track. Toma is an "instructional supervisor" at Palo Alto High.

pleted PAR have been rejuvenated by learning new skills and reflecting on their practice, she adds, while a few veteran teachers in PAR came to the realization that it was time to pursue another career.

Despite statewide budget cuts, the program will continue, says Littman. The district spent approximately \$400,000 last year on PAR, BTSA and professional development — some of which comes from the state, but a portion also comes from the district's general fund.

"The district *chooses* to fund our program because it's a priority," she says. "It's because they know that it's working."

Instructional supervisors lend a helping hand

When Maria Rao was hired as a high school math teacher three years ago, students in her classes began behaving badly around the third week. She was taken aback and was not sure what to do. After all, this was Palo Alto High School, one of the highest-achieving schools in the nation. She sought some classroom management advice from Radu Toma, a fel-

low teacher who is also her "instructional supervisor." Three years later, she continues to receive support and advice from him.

Created by Palo Alto Education Association members and administrators, the Instructional Supervision program matches mentor teachers with new teachers for one-to-one support. Veteran teachers also get support from instructional supervisors. Every English, science and math department in the district's middle school and high schools has an instructional supervisor who teaches their own classes, but is granted relief time for coaching their peers.



Suz Antink

Instructional supervisors also help administrators make hiring decisions for new staff, and support teachers once they are hired. Until recently, they were responsible for evaluations of all teachers, but they will now share that responsibility with administrators.

"It makes fabulous sense; it's the reason I came to California," says Suz Antink, a math teacher at Palo Alto High School and a former instructional supervisor for 18 years. "When you have an-

other pair of eyes in the classroom, you can really focus on how you get your subject matter across."

Sometimes instructional supervisors meet with teachers in advance of a lesson they will be observing. Other times they just drop in unannounced. Afterward there are meetings to talk about what was good, what can be improved, and what can be done differently.

"It's an expensive program, but it tells us that the district values us deeply," says Antink. "There is never any talk about cutting it. If you want teachers to grow in their craft, you have to invest in them."

Such a program may not work in every district, says Toma, the current instructional supervisor for the math department at Palo Alto High School, but it works in Palo Alto, because teachers are receptive to constructive criticism and want students to succeed. He says instructional supervisors give support and advice that could only come from an experienced teacher in the same subject.

Rao is grateful for Toma's help. "It makes such a difference when advice comes from someone who knows what they are talking about," she says. "Sometimes I'm nervous, but our conversations make me feel that I'm growing as a teacher."

Collaboration, not isolation

Collaboration is the key to success at Sparks Middle School in La Puente, a school where teachers support each other in professional learning communities. Hacienda La Puente Teachers Association members created a schedule that allows them to meet as a group in daily collaboration time on top of their standard prep period. Dani Tucker, association president, says the practice has dramatically increased student achievement and im-

RIGHT: Dani Tucker, president of the Hacienda La Puente Teachers Association, says her district didn't have sufficient money to fund PAR, leaving teachers identified as "struggling" in the lurch

BELOW: Sparks Middle School teachers, from left, Sandy Ruiz, Raquel Medina, Mark Kawakami, and Araceli Ibarra, created a professional learning community and meet daily to collaborate and support one another.

proved the culture of the school, which serves primarily low-income students.

"It went from being *that* school — where nobody wanted to be — to the school where everybody wants to be, and is now considered a hidden treasure," says Tucker. "We may not buy into the argument that test scores are the way in which schools should be judged, but the school's scores are now stellar (in the 800s). Teachers have earned the right to do it their way."

Principal Sherri Franson says that the school has tried many things, but teacher support through collaboration time has made the biggest difference. "That's why we've stuck with it; nothing else has made such an impact," she says.

In addition to talking about best practices, sharing strategies, looking at data and writing common assessments, teachers constantly visit each other's class-



rooms so they can see live examples of good teaching. Instead of feeling overwhelmed and isolated, they are energized, enthusiastic and a team.

"It gives me tons of support," comments Araceli Ibarra during a recent collaborative

meeting of seventh-grade math teachers. Ibarra, a third-year teacher, is the self-described rookie of the group. "But I've never felt like the new teacher," she says. "I've learned to take constructive criticism well."

Raquel Medina describes teacher collaboration as a support system where "everyone is an equal" and "nobody is above anything." Teachers put their egos on the shelf, roll up their sleeves and get to work. In a collaborative atmosphere, teachers feel free to take risks and try new things.

"I guess it comes down to one thing," says Medina. "By supporting each other in this way, we are thinking about the kids — and not about ourselves." ❖



WWW

Find more resources on how teachers can support each other at cta.org/support-resources.

Finding success again



RICHARD LUEVANO NEVER EXPECTED to experience teacher burnout, but it struck in 2008. After 20 years of teaching, the Victor Elementary Teachers Association member no longer looked forward to going to work, and he did not enjoy his students. During lunchtime he sought refuge in his car. It had been a difficult year; he underwent double bypass surgery, and shortly after his recuperation, his wife was diagnosed with breast cancer. Sometimes he experienced bouts of anxiety in his K-1 classroom at Del Rey Elementary School in Victorville.

His administrator realized Luevano needed help, and referred him to CTA's Survive and Thrive, a weeklong intervention program designed to save teachers' careers and humanely deal with educators suffering from job-related burnout.

Luevano isn't alone. Annually, thousands of California teachers suffer from stress and job burnout. The number one cause for teacher disability is job-related stress, according to the California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS). If job-related stress could be reduced or eliminated, then teachers, the students they serve and the entire public school system would benefit substantially. This was the inspiration for the Survive and Thrive Mini-Sabbatical Intervention Program, designed to assist teachers needing coping skills to thrive professionally and personally in today's changing classroom. The program developed out of planning discussions in 1996-97.

The workshop is conducted by CTA staff members and Dr. Byron Greenberg,

LEFT: Richard Luevano was suffering from burnout and stress until CTA's Survive and Thrive program helped him to rediscover the joy of teaching. He now feels rejuvenated and is enjoying his students at Del Rey Elementary School in Victorville.

a licensed clinical psychologist at Virginia State University. School districts typically contribute between \$2,000 and \$2,500 per teacher for food and housing during the retreat, and CTA pays for workshop facilitators and materials. It is cost-effective, since an individual dismissal hearing can cost tens of thousands of dollars, according to Robin Devitt, a CTA staff member who teaches the program in Southern California.

Rescuing careers

Those referred to the program are veteran teachers who, at some point, experienced success in the classroom before burnout took over. Many of those who enter Survive and Thrive say they feel they have lost their personal power and that administration is out to get them, says Devitt. "They feel they are under a microscope, that everything has to be perfect, that they are constantly criticized, and that nothing they ever do is praised by the media, parents or their administration. They feel everyone is beating up on them."

These teachers need a break. The retreat, held in Big Bear, is a time of reflection, soul-searching, and bolstering skills in areas such as time management, stress management, health and nutrition, and building productive relationships. The intervention curriculum is divided into areas around four core questions:

- > Where am I?
- > Why am I there?
- > Where do I want to be?
- > How do I get there and stay there?

Participants are counseled to the point where they can be successful once again, or they are encouraged to exit the profession.

"They live with us, and are completely immersed in the experience from 7 in the morning until 9 at night," says Devitt. "It's a very intense, aggressive curriculum."

At first, Luevano was apprehensive

"It's not a quick fix, and it wasn't quick damage. It took a while to get there, and it takes a while to get out."

*Dr. Byron Greenberg,
Clinical Psychologist, Virginia State University*

and fearful of going through the program. Soon, he realized he wasn't the only one facing a crisis; other teachers expressed similar feelings and shared them freely with one another and the staff. Enveloped in support and understanding, Luevano decided to let down his guard.



"I tried to be open-minded," says Luevano. "There were workshops, seminars and exercises that made me think about goal setting and what I wanted to accomplish. I realized I was human and could only accomplish so much."

Finding confidence

Because most participants are dealing with personal issues as well, the program's focus is on regaining confidence and perspective, rather than on specific teaching strategies.

"We talk about the differences of being assertive, aggressive and passive, and how they can get their needs met while respecting the needs of others. We give them the skills and the tools to look at themselves and help them remember why they went into teaching. We tell participants to focus on what gives them joy."

Greenberg, the clinical psychologist in the program, says that many teaching careers have been salvaged through Survive and Thrive. "Most climb their way out," he says. "These people have given so much to others, and it's wonderful to give back to them." He is presently collecting data to determine the program's success rate.

After leaving the program, there are follow-up sessions at intervals of three, six and nine months. Sometimes participants feel better right away, become depressed again, and then slowly recover.

"It's not a quick fix, and it wasn't quick damage," says Greenberg. "It took a while to get there, and it takes a while to get out."

Luevano is extremely glad to be out of the black hole he once felt himself sinking into. During Survive and Thrive he began writing in his journal to keep in touch with his feelings. He continues to journal regularly about the positive things on the job and things he can do better. "It gave me a new outlook on life," says Luevano. "I was reinvigorated. I would recommend this program to any teacher who feels depressed or downtrodden, because it's a wonderful opportunity for change." ❖

For more information about the Survive and Thrive program, contact Robin Devitt, rdevitt@cta.org, (562) 478-1355.



Learn about how another teacher pulled herself out of a career rut through Peer Assistance and Review at cta.org/par-saves-career.

CTA'S training tips for teachers

Support is available for both new and experienced teachers in the "I Can Do It!" and "I Have Done It!" trainings taught by CTA staff and trained members. Workshops cover establishing classroom rules and routines; how to have a smoothly flowing classroom; and communication styles: dealing with difficult behaviors and communicating with parents. "I Can Do It!" is a six-hour training for K-12 educators within the first five years of teaching, while "I Have Done It!" is a six-hour training for veteran teachers that addresses advanced classroom management strategies and behavior intervention techniques. Members can get information about CTA trainings from their chapter leaders and primary contact staff.

Here are some of the trainers' best tips.

TIPS FOR VETERAN TEACHERS

1. Seek out fresh ideas for delivering lessons instead of getting stuck in old routines.
2. Embrace and encourage a collaborative environment with your colleagues. Open your door to other teachers and ask for feedback if they have observed you. Seek out other teachers to visit and observe.
3. Be reflective about your teaching. Analyze your strengths and weaknesses, and make changes if necessary. Teachers need to always be refining their craft.
4. Don't be afraid of technology. If you are not comfortable with technology, seek training. Use technology in your classroom so students can learn 21st century skills and you can maximize their engagement.
5. Embrace change, and ask for help if you need it.
6. Don't allow yourself to lose your zest for teaching. Take a moment every day to remind yourself of why you chose to become a teacher.

TIPS FOR NEW TEACHERS

1. When it comes to lesson-planning: Plan, plan, and over-plan. "If you fail to plan, you can plan to fail."
2. Don't be afraid to ask your colleagues for help.
3. If something isn't working, stop, take a deep breath, and try something different.
4. Take time to build a positive relationship with students and their families. Show them you care.
5. Be student-centered; make your decisions based on what's best for the students.
6. Go slow to go fast. Take some time in the beginning of the year to establish procedures and routines in the classroom. Drill students on these

routines again and again. It takes more time in the short run, but in the long run you will maximize instructional minutes and prevent problems.

7. Exhaust your resources. If there's a reading coach, mentor teacher or person helping with technology support, take advantage of the help they can offer. Parent volunteers can be a resource, too. Sign up for any free workshops or professional development your district or local CTA chapter has to offer.
8. Go on "field trips" to visit other classrooms to observe what other teachers are doing. Invite other teachers — both new and veteran — to observe your instruction and give feedback.
9. Strive for personal balance in your life. Set a time when you will arrive to school and depart from school and stick to that. Cherish personal time with family and friends and don't compromise your personal life.

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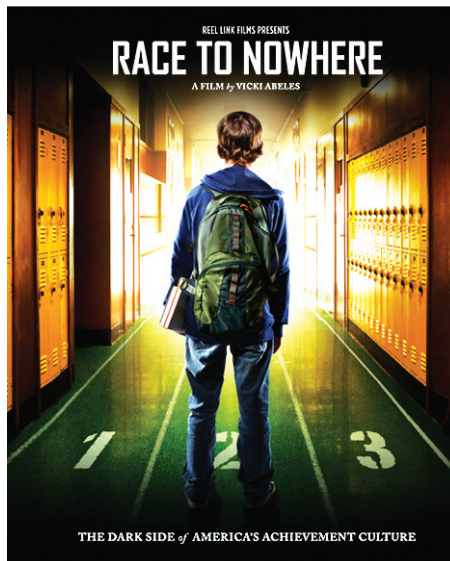
'Race to Nowhere' redefines success

Corporate finance attorney Vicki Abeles has emerged as an unlikely hero in the education field with her documentary *Race to Nowhere*. The first-time filmmaker and mother of three focuses on the mental and physical toll today's competitive school system takes on students, teachers and families due to an overemphasis on testing, drill-and-kill instruction and overwhelming amounts of homework.

The film depicts real-life students who focus on grades in hopes of being accepted into prestigious universities at the expense of true learning, critical thinking and happiness. Middle school and college-bound students from all socioeconomic levels are shown to be sleep deprived from studying all night, taking stimulants, cheating and dealing with depression. There is also the story of a 13-year-old girl who committed suicide after failing a math test. Teachers in the film say that they are under so much pressure to raise test scores that learning has become secondary. An Oakland teacher tearfully explains her decision to leave the profession because she feels unable to meet the needs of her students with so much emphasis on testing. Experts in the documentary say these issues not only hurt education, but pose a threat to society and our future.

But it's not all bleak. Solutions aimed at students, teachers, parents, administrators and mental health professional are listed in the film, and can also be accessed at racetonowhere.com. Anyone who would like to schedule a showing of *Race to Nowhere* in their school community may do so through the website or by calling (925) 310-4242.

The Reel Link Films production has been shown in more than 80 theaters nationwide, which isn't bad for a documentary. But the *real* impact has been at the local level. Screenings have been held in auditoriums at elementary schools, secondary schools and universities throughout the country; at community forums and conferences; and at CTA's Issues Conference in January and CTA's State Council. During the past six months there



have been 1,400 screenings held in 48 states and 15 countries.

California Educator's Sherry Posnick-Goodwin recently caught up with Abeles for an interview. Several of the questions were submitted to the *Educator* by CTA members who attended recent screenings.

EDUCATOR: How would you describe the reaction from viewers and critics to RTN?

VICKI ABELES: It's been overwhelming. The film is resonating with hundreds of thousands of people including parents, students, educators, school board members, administrators, college professors, college admissions departments and policymakers. It resonates not only because of the personal stories told, but also because of what the research is showing and what experts have to say. I felt it was an important story to tell and that it would provide students and educators with a voice about education reform. It was my hope that the film would be a centerpiece for communities generating a new dialogue around education and creating policies that will transform what we are doing. I was hoping for a film that would inspire change. So many people in communities where there have been screenings say they have found the film to be

empowering and comforting because they know they are not alone.

Your film shows that middle school can be a turning point when students stop enjoying school. How do you think we can we modify middle schools so we can give students the study skills that they need and not have them be totally stressed out by the time they arrive at high school? (Question submitted by María A. López de Howard from Sacramento City Unified School District.)

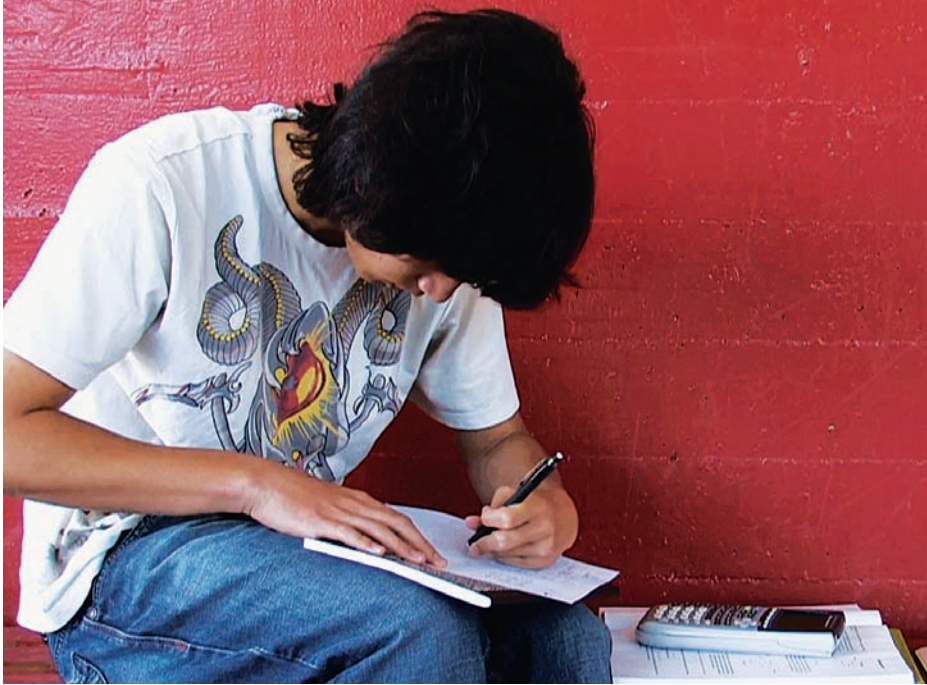
We have to first start shifting the mindset about what it takes to provide children with a good foundation in high school, college and life. We need to take into account where young people are developmentally, so we can provide them with high expectations that are developmentally appropriate. And in both middle school and high school, we need to focus on education that is meaningful and relevant. We need to structure the school day around inquiry and learning and engagement.

Some of the students were extremely stressed out from five or more hours of homework each night. Should homework be abolished altogether? How can teachers assign some homework, but not too much?

It's a challenge. Standards drive homework. Testing drives homework. And parents drive homework. But we have to look at both the quality and quantity of homework. Research shows the only homework that contributes to academic achievement in elementary school is reading for pleasure. Research shows that when it comes to middle school, an hour per night may contribute to academic achievement, but after that you start to see negative consequences such as kids who start hating school, kids who are bored and not engaged, and kids who aren't sleeping enough. Expectations are out of line with where kids are developmentally, so parents are doing homework for them. In a way, it's teaching students to cheat. Our labor laws wouldn't allow our kids to have jobs for six and a half hours each day and then work



Vicki Abeles



ABOVE: A student in *Race to Nowhere* says he has so much homework that it's difficult to find time to sleep or spend time with his family. **BELOW:** A youngster looks out a window wistfully and says that he doesn't have much time to play, because there is so much pressure to do well in school.

for another five or six hours. We need to stop worrying about homework and start using school days efficiently. We need to look at how kids are spending their time in school, rather than focusing so much on homework.

How do we start refocusing on "respect for the child" so we aren't just producing achievers, but developing the uniqueness that exists in every child? (Question submitted by Kendall Vaught from Los Alamitos Unified School District.)

Great question! That's what I'm advocating for. There is no silver bullet; many things have to happen in our schools so the focus is on growing individuals, looking at the whole child, and helping to foster individual talent and life skills. We have to change our school culture so it isn't focused on testing, competition and the pressure to conform. A lot of it



has to do with building good relationships between educators and students. But teachers often see too many students in a day for this to be realistic. Some say class size doesn't matter, but that's not true.

How can we change the paradigm that one is "incompetent" or "incomplete" if he or she doesn't get high grades or get accepted into a prestigious university? (Question submitted by Karla Davis from San Juan Unified School District.)

Again, we're talking about changing a culture. I think all of us as adults have to believe in young people, and we need a much broader definition of success.

Why have unions been blamed for the problems in education — and what role can unions and teachers play in helping to improve teaching and learning?

It's not just teachers unions; there's a lot of blame going around. My message is that we need to stop blaming each other and working collaboratively to do what works for young people. Teachers and unions aren't to blame. Teachers want to do a good job, but they are not supported. We have a system based on punishment rather than supporting our educators as professionals, which we should do. Those in teachers unions need to mobilize members and add their voices to the discussion. It's going to take work. It means going to school board meetings, spreading the word, and engaging in dialogue about education outcomes to show the present system isn't working.

Students in the school say they are just "doing school," rather than learning and problem-solving. Is No Child Left Behind to blame?

(Question submitted by Vince Rosato from New Haven Unified School District.)

I think it's a big contributor, but it's not the only thing. The bottom line is that there's a lot of fear driving what is happening in our schools. There is fear that our kids won't have opportunities we had growing up and that they won't be able to compete in a global economy. NCLB and Race to the Top are in reaction to other countries outperforming us on tests. But now other countries like China are looking to move away from test-driven instruction. They are going back to the type of system we used to have in the U.S. because they have found that test-driven instruction has not resulted in a generation of independent and creative thinkers. It has had the opposite effect.

RTN depicts the stress your own children experienced from a high-pressure school system. Have things improved for your children stresswise since you released this movie? If so, what can be attributed to these changes?

When I set out to make this film, my family was never going to be in it. But a year into production, other people leaned on me to do this. As a parent I wanted to be careful about this; what kids agree to at age 11 is not always something they are comfortable with at ages 15 or 16. My kids are thriving today. I have shifted my mindset so my kids are under a lot less pressure. They know they have the support of their family at home and that we value them. I protect their sleep at all costs. I am not afraid as a parent of what the future holds for my kids. My interest is in raising children with life skills who are resilient, happy and healthy people.

What is next for you?

I am committed to this campaign of social action and helping to support educational change at many levels. As screenings continue, we are still filming in schools to tell the story of what is happening in education. We are continuing to engage in conversation about the potential for change. We have power to create change. This film is just a tipping point. ♡

'Waiting for Superman' at Mission High



Photo of Mission High by Mark Murrmann, Mother Jones

AT A TIME WHEN THERE'S A NOTABLE decline in news organizations comprehensively covering education, *Mother Jones* has embedded education writer Kristina Rizga at Mission High in San Francisco for a year. Now in her third month, Rizga follows teachers and chronicles the student life at this ethnically diverse school. Her blog has already started authentic conversations about the "parent trigger" law, the California state budget and the achievement gap. Find more dispatches at motherjones.com/mission-high.

By **Kristina Rizga**, *Motherjones.com* blogger

It's lunchtime at Mission High, and over homemade lamb dumplings a student has given him, teacher Amadis Velez and I are discussing the damning education documentary *Waiting for Superman*. Velez has never seen it. (Like most teachers I've talked to, he thinks WFS is an attack on teachers and refuses to pay to see it.) I've managed to talk Velez into watching a free press screener DVD of the film with his students and me as a classroom exercise, since the whole country seems embroiled in a bitter debate over how to "save" students from low-performing public schools without actually asking said students what they think about the achievement gap, charter schools, and teachers unions. The bell goes off, and Velez moves to the front of the class to begin a week of "Education and You" discus-

sions in preparation for watching the movie.

"Today, we will be learning a new language," Velez starts out. "It's a language that I use, teachers use, media uses, Fox and CNN use. All of these adults are talking about you!" Velez says. Most of Velez's students are immigrants, who went to very different schools in China, El Salvador, Russia, and Panama before they landed at Mission High. Some are undocumented, living under constant threat of deportation in exchange for the highly coveted U.S. college diploma. Some want to become teachers.

"How many of you know what a charter school is?" Velez asks. I look around the class of 23 students, and Josue is the only one with his hand up. "OK, let's back up, and talk about public and private schools for a minute," Velez says.

"Did we always have public schools?" he asks. "Nooo!" the class responds in unison. Why is that? Velez asks. "Before, only rich kids could go to schools," a student at the front responds. "Why did they come up with public schools?" Velez asks. "So everyone can have an education!" a student next to me responds, while many hands go up. "Could everyone get in right away?" Velez asks. "Noooo!" the class responds in unison, again. "Raise your hands, please," Velez reminds students. "Who got in first, Mitra?" Velez asks a student at the front. "Men," she responds. "That's right, and did every race get in right away?" "Noooo!" the class says in unison, again. "White people got

in first," a student next to me says.

"What do you think is a charter school?" Velez asks Josue. "Something like a half-public, half-private school," he responds. "Sort of," Velez responds, and discusses the rise of the charter school movement in the U.S.

"What do you think is an achievement gap?" Velez probes next. Long silence. "Let's break it apart. What do they mean by the word 'achievement'?" he asks. "Jobs, money, good college, dreams," students shout out. "That's right," Velez says. "And what do they mean by a 'gap'?" he asks. One hand goes up. "It means there is a difference," a student next to me responds. "Exactly," Velez says. "And what's the connection?" he probes further. "It means we are not reaching our goals," a student next to me says.

"Why do you think there is an achievement gap?" Velez asks. "Inequality!" one student responds, and Velez starts writing a list on the white dry-erase board. What else? he asks. The noise level rises as students throw out words: "Parents, giving up too soon, students not putting in enough effort, too much technology, too much entertainment, rules that create too many obstacles for immigrants, personality, too much work, Bush, culture, lack of counseling, my color."

"Something is missing here!" Velez asks. "What's missing?" No hands go up. "The box you are born into?" Josue adds after a moment of silence. "What about teachers? What about your school? Shouldn't we add Mr. Velez and Mr. Guthertz to this list?" Velez wonders. After a brief silence, one student raises her hand and responds with a slight accent, "Our school doesn't give us that many problems." ✎

This post was originally printed on motherjones.com.

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California Teachers of the Year provide inspiration

Five CTA members were selected by state Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell as California Teachers of the Year. We asked them to share the secrets of their success.

Darin Curtis

Curtis' mantra is: "Nothing will affect students' future happiness and success in life more than a healthy lifestyle." He practices what he preaches as an eighth-grade physical education teacher at Tierra del Sol Middle School in Lakeside.

A member of the Lakeside Teachers Association, Curtis describes himself as a teacher and coach who acts as a "motivator" to keeps students moving, engaged and health-conscious. "I find a sense of humor is a must, because your smile lasts longer than your lesson."

He emphasizes practicing skills every day instead of just focusing on tests at the end of a unit. "I am also preparing students to be independent learners each day forward," he says. "I continually challenge students by establishing high expectations, building their self-confidence and empowering them to take ownership of their learning."

Curtis was selected to serve as California's representative to the National Teacher of the Year competition. He and the candidates from other states will be hon-



Photo by Jim Jordan

ored at a White House ceremony.

His thoughts on winning the award? "It's unbelievable to think that I, a PE teacher, was chosen," says Curtis. "Honestly, just being at Salute to Teachers, the San Diego awards ceremony, was like being at the Oscars."

Shannan Brown

Teaching is a "dynamic and ever-changing profession," says Brown, a fifth-grade teacher at Thomas Edison Elementary School in Sacramento.

"Teaching is not just about standards," she says of her philosophy. "It is also about teaching whoever walks in the door to believe in themselves. I create an environment of high expectations, but loving support.

I know that what I say — and don't say — will affect them for the rest of their lives."

She says that the secret of her success is giving non-graded feedback on areas where students have achieved mastery, as well as on the areas where they need to improve. "I involve students and they begin to take charge of their own learning," Brown says.

Brown, a member of the San Juan Teachers Association, says being involved in the union has made her a better teacher.

"SJTA gives me a voice to express concern and frustration about not being able to do what is best for students due to mandates made outside of my classroom," she says. "The association and district have held very honest and open

ABOVE: The five Teachers of the Year are (left to right): Jennifer Kelly, Shannan Brown, Darin Curtis, Kadhira Rajagopal and Beverly Gonzales.

conversations about how we can work together to further student learning."

Beverly Gonzalez

This fourth-grade math and writing teacher at Santa Fe School in Baldwin Park sees herself as a "gardener" who is cultivating successful students.

"I water my seeds with knowledge," she says. "Some need watering constantly and grow very quickly. I make sure there is no ceiling above them to stop their joyous growth. Others need careful watering; I make sure they can handle each drop before I give them more. Occasion-

ally I am given a seed that others would say is a weed. I refuse to believe that. It may need its own soil, watering level and more sunshine, but if you look you can see the beginnings of the most beautiful flower imaginable.”

Gonzalez, a member of the Baldwin Park Education Association, has been a school principal, but found that her heart is in classroom teaching.

“I love the personal challenge of finding every way possible to teach and motivate my students to achieve at a level not usually attributed to lower socioeconomic, predominantly English language learner students,” she says.

She credits her much of her success to receiving outstanding professional development.

“I have been given the opportunity over the years to have hundreds of hours in training in theory and instructional strategies,” she says. “My ‘quiver’ is very full of strategies. If one doesn’t work with a particular child or group of children, I can easily reach back and pull out several more strategies until I find the perfect fit.”

Jennifer Kelly

Constantly evaluating her lessons and asking herself questions is the key to the success of this eighth-grade physical science teacher at Middletown Middle School.

“Am I reaching the students?” she wonders. “What is advancing and hindering learning in my class?”

Her job, as she sees it, is making kids *want* to learn.

“It is our job as teachers to help make students excited about learning,” says Kelly, a member of the Middletown Teachers Association. “I draw on students’ backgrounds, interests and learning needs to shape my lessons. I never give up, and I encourage students to do their best. I use a visual, hands-on style of teaching combined with a detailed knowledge and enthusiasm for the subjects. I make class an interesting place.”

She encourages teachers to become lifelong learners and attend workshops whenever possible to grow in the profession.

“It’s important to surround yourself with positive think-

ing,” she adds. “Teaching can be tough and frustrating at times, which makes it extra rewarding when you figure out how to be successful.”

Kadhir Rajagopal

This math teacher has been credited with creating a “math turnaround” at Grant High School, an inner-city campus in Sacramento, by dramatically increasing student achievement. He is a member of the Twin Rivers United Educators Association.

“You should try to build a class culture where students feel it is cool to succeed,” he says. “It’s also important to create a school culture that celebrates success for students and teachers.”

SHERRY POSNICK-GOODWIN

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CTA advocate appointed to State Board of Education

The appointment of CTA legislative advocate Patricia Ann Rucker to the State Board of Education by Gov. Jerry Brown will give CTA members an important voice in education policy. This appointment is extremely timely, with major issues such as budget cuts, Race to the Top and the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind looming.

"I am extremely honored," says Rucker, a former teacher of the year in Sacramento County with 15 years of classroom experience at the K-12 and university levels in California. "My goal is to balance the priorities of student learning conditions and teacher working conditions. You cannot improve one at the expense of the other."

Rucker's appointment to the board was based on her expertise regarding state and federal education programs and issues. As a lobbyist, she was instrumental in the passage of laws improving teaching and learning conditions, such as SB 1209 (the Jack Scott bill, which eliminated 150 clock hours of professional growth) and more recently AB 2160 by Assembly Member Karen Bass, allowing teachers who hold a credential authorizing them to teach students with mild to moderate disabilities to also serve students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD).

The appointment of Rucker and other public school educators to the State Board of Education has been described as the beginning of a new era in school politics. As part of the overhaul, the newly elected governor replaced seven of 11 board members with experienced educators, including Dr. Michael Kirst, professor emeritus at Stanford University. All appointees must be confirmed by the state Senate.

"Clearly, the governor's intent was putting seven expert educators together so that the conversation about schools could be framed by people who understand the



ABOVE: CTA Legislative Advocate Pat Rucker (right) is congratulated by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson immediately after taking the oath of office to become a member of the State Board of Education.

conditions of teaching and learning," says Rucker.

Vitality important, she adds, is the opportunity for teacher input on accountability measures such as linking student test scores to teacher evaluations. As the Common Core State Standards are implemented, she looks forward to working on alignment between standards and the new curriculum and testing materials that will be adopted.

"It is exciting to see this new board and to hopefully see new openness in these important conversations," says Rucker. "We didn't have that opportunity before."

CTA President David A. Sanchez praises the governor for his appointments and his willingness to give teachers a voice in education matters.

"We commend Gov. Brown for appointing educators who reflect and understand the complexities of our public schools," says Sanchez. "Many of these appointees have worked in the classroom and understand the challenges and needs of California's students. The voices of educators will be critical as the state faces urgent issues requiring the kind of knowledge and background these educators bring to these vital positions."

SHERRY POSNICK-GOODWIN

Lights, camera, learning: Students run a TV network



LEFT: Falcon TV director and teacher Ken Newton, center, watches the live show in progress next to Hannah, left, shooting video and Jake, right, giving cues to on-air personalities.

Photos by Scott Buschman

They're only in elementary school, but they're TV stars at Fair Oaks Ranch Community School in Santa Clarita. Each morning — via the school's closed-circuit TV network — youngsters can be viewed on televisions in every classroom giving live reports on weather, sports and entertainment. They are not just reporters; students also serve as producers, film crew members and script writers. Perks include attending movie premieres and mingling with celebrities. Even more important, they are having fun while also learning about journalism, technology and the world.

Falcon Television Network may be entirely run by students in grades 4-6, but it wouldn't be must-see TV without Ken Newton, who serves as the station's director. He is the man behind the curtain, in a literal sense, who prepares youngsters for

prime time. And he loves every minute of it.

"This program is normally found at high schools and is very unique at the elementary school level," says Newton, a sixth-grade teacher and member of the Sulphur Springs District Teachers Association. "My TV crew does an amazing job every day."

Falcon Network, named after the school mascot, was started in 2002 with a grant from Time Warner Cable, which installed the closed-circuit TV equipment. In the beginning, student broadcasters stuck to mundane announcements such as the lunch menu. But that changed in 2007 when Newton took over and decided to liven things up with segments such as "Whaaaat

To Do Over the Weekend," "Wacky Wednesday Weather," "Monday Masterpieces" and "Read a Good Book Lately?" along with the latest in local, national and world news.

During a recent visit to the "station," located in the school library, the lead story was a visit from the *California Educator*, followed by a rapping weather report ("Wacky Wednesday Weather, changing every day,

you never know what's coming your way"), a feature on pollution (enlivened by students coughing dramatically before advocating bike riding and chanting "Go Green!"), a sports update on Southern California teams, and much more.

"I was nervous at first, but now I'm used to it," says rapping weather girl Brittney Giles, a fifth-grader. "I like knowing everyone on the crew is there for me. I'm having fun."

Fifth-graders Andrew Failma and Ushni Gupta enjoy making slides shown during broadcasts. They love the job because they can be creative and use technology.

"You get to show your own personality in some of the slides," says Gupta with a grin. Students frequently trade "jobs" so they can learn all aspects of broadcasting.

Falcon TV crew members have attended movie premieres,

Continued on page 37

RIGHT: Sulphur Springs District Teachers Association member Ken Newton and his students celebrate another successful broadcast.



Issues Conference creates conversations

More than 700 participants attended the CTA Issues Conference Jan. 14-16 in Las Vegas. This year marked the first consolidation of what had previously been three separate and popular conferences dealing with urban, rural, and education support professional (ESP) issues. A strong emphasis on organizing was the theme of many conference offerings.

“Merging the three conferences was in part a responsible cost-savings measure,” says Conference Chairperson Jolene Tripp, “but it also allowed members from all three constituencies to share common ground topics while still dealing with issues specific to their own interests.” Tripp says feedback from participants was overwhelmingly supportive of the new format.

Workshops covered a variety of topics. Attendees had two opportunities to see *Race to Nowhere*, director Vicki Abeles’ documentary about the

RIGHT: In luncheon remarks to participants at CTA’s Issues Conference in Las Vegas, CTA President David A. Sanchez quotes Cesar Chavez, one of his personal heroes: “When you have people together who believe in something very strongly — whether it’s religion or politics or unions — things happen.”

pressures faced by American students and teachers in a system that is obsessed with illusory achievement, competition, and the pressure to perform. (See Q&A with Abeles on page 18.) The film, which has a very different perspective from another current education documentary, *Waiting for Superman*, features interviews with students, parents and teachers about the exhausting high-pressure environment that is alienating many students and leaving others behind.

Inglewood Teachers Association member Aba Ngissah concurred with many of the film’s



CTA photos by Bill Guy

points, especially the lack of deeper long-term learning in a system that unwittingly encourages students to learn facts only long

enough to regurgitate on a test. “A lot of students do just memorize,” she says. “We have AP students who don’t really perform at an AP

Miguel Ruiz: ESP of the Year

A highlight of the Issues Conference was the recognition of Miguel Ruiz as the 2011 CTA Education Support Professional of the Year. Ruiz has served in several capacities for the Redlands Education Support Professionals Association (RESPA), beginning his union work as a building rep. He currently serves as RESPA vice president.

Ruiz’s association involvement began with advice from his parents (both of whom, along with his wife, were present for the award presentation). After graduating from high school and working in the fast food industry, he was encouraged by his parents to work for the school district, where he would belong to a union.

RESPA President Jolene Tripp, a past ESP of the Year honoree herself, praises Ruiz and



appreciates having him on the RESPA leadership team. “Miguel is a loyal and capable lieutenant, always willing to step in, whatever the circumstances,” she says. She calls him RESPA’s “go-to guy” who is always ready to respond. “When four of our members lost their homes in flooding,

Miguel was there the next day to offer assistance,” Tripp says.

Ruiz’s position as a warehouse delivery worker with the Redlands school district puts him in a unique position to interact with RESPA members at sites throughout the district. Although careful to adhere to district policy about work hours and union work, he always makes sure members are kept informed, and he makes himself available for advice and assistance after work hours. For Ruiz, the best part of association work is the one-on-one time with fellow workers.

His many contacts have also helped build RESPA’s capacity. “Always keep an eye out for the talent in your ranks,” he offers. “Dedicated members are the ones that make it happen.”

level.” The pressure on some of Ngissah’s own middle school students can be even greater than those in some of the more affluent school districts shown in the film. “With a lot of kids in my district, we’re playing a catch-up game,” she observed. “And even if they’re caught up, they’re still shortchanged, because the emphasis on math and English means the things they aren’t tested for get less focus.”

Other conference offerings were more union-centered. Noted labor organizer Fred Ross Jr. conducted workshops to share the legacy of his famous father, Fred Ross Sr. The elder Ross was a major force in the U.S. labor movement, help-

ing figures like Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta find their voice and power base. Ross Jr. followed in his father’s footsteps, one of his more notable achievements being a successful U.S. boycott of coffee from El Salvador during the 1990s.

“My father’s goal was to help people do away with fear, to speak up and demand their rights, to push people to get out in front so they could prove to themselves they could do it,” Ross Jr. told participants.

All conference attendees became the first to receive a new CTA edition of Fred Ross Sr.’s “Axioms for Organizers,” a collection of his motivational thoughts for others in the labor

RIGHT: NEA Director Marc Sternberger and CTA Board member Bonnie Shatun are prepared for the culinary theme of this year’s Read Across America.



movement. The bilingual booklet includes aphorisms such as “To inspire hope, you have to have hope yourself” and “Good organizers never give up — they get the opposition to do that.” The publication, put together by the CTA Negotiations and Organizational Development Department, honors the centennial of the elder Ross’s birth. “Let us

take this book, accept his challenge, and let it inspire us to become aware of our capabilities, potential, and duty to carry on the fight,” says CTA President David A. Sanchez.

FRANK WELLS

Transitioning to the Common Core State Standards

This year’s Instruction and Professional Development (IPD) Strand at CTA’s Summer Institute, July 31 to Aug. 5 at UCLA, will focus on planning for the transition from the California Content Standards to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Teams of teachers, administrators, curriculum coordinators, and other educators will be offered up-to-date information and training on the transition and alignment of the CCSS. You can use QEIA, School Site Council, PI and SIG funds to register for this important professional development.

As California prepares for the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics and the Career and College Readiness Standards, classroom teachers and other educators will be

impacted by this policy and developmental transition. The IPD Strand will cover development and alignment of the CCSS as part of this transition, including:

- > Academic content standards.
- > Performance assessment and proficiency level.
- > Framework adoption.
- > Textbook adoption.
- > Professional development.

During your planning for the transition, you will:

- > Build knowledge around the new standards.
- > Assess how current California standards align with the Common Core State Standards.
- > Formulate a plan to prepare your school and district for the new assessments expected in 2015.

- > Work with your colleagues to develop a clear, focused and purposeful vision for your school site.

Keynote speakers

W. James Popham, who began his career in education as a high school teacher in Oregon, is professor emeritus at UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies. He taught courses in instructional methods as well as courses in evaluation and measurement. In January 2000, he was recognized as one of UCLA’s top 20 professors of the 20th century. He is the author of 25 books and a former president of the American Research Association. In 2002 the National Council on Measurement in Education presented him with its Award for Career Contributions to Educational Measurements. As a member of the National Assessment Governing

Board of the Race to the Top Consortia, Dr. Popham will discuss how curricular aims plus appropriate assessments can dramatically improve our schools, and how the Common Core State Standards will be measured.

Bobb Darnell is an internationally known speaker who has conducted workshops for educators at all levels. Bobb’s high-energy workshops are filled with practical ideas that have resulted from blending research and tested practice. He will guide educators in this transition to the CCSS.

For program questions, contact Martha Buenrostro at mbuenrostro@cta.org or at (650) 577-5181. Registration begins in April on the CTA website: www.cta.org/conferences. For registration questions, contact the Conference Coordination Center at (650) 552-5355.



Taking a Stand

National City settles at the last minute

Only a few hours before they were set to walk picket lines in an unfair labor practices strike, the 354 members of the National City Elementary Teachers Association learned that instead they would be going back to their classrooms that day. Following 18 hours of intense negotiations, the NCETA's bargaining team inked a temporary agreement with the National School District at 2:30 a.m., Friday, Feb. 4. On Feb. 10, 97 percent of the union's membership ratified the new contract, ending a full year of protracted, difficult bargaining for this south San Diego County chapter.

"Of course, a strike was the last thing National City teachers wanted," says NCETA President Linda Cartwright. "So we are extremely pleased to avert that kind of disruption by settling the contract. But it shouldn't have come down to the wire like it did. We knew all along that some concessions were necessary during the current economic difficulties. We made numerous conciliatory offers, but each one was pushed back across the table."

The new three-year contract includes four teacher pay cut days in each year with restoration language that could result in fewer cut days if the district's attendance-based "revenue limit" funding increases beyond a certain level in the final two years. Class sizes in the district will be maintained at 22 to 1 in kin-



CETA photos by Bill Guy

dergarten through third grade and 33 to 1 in grades 4-6 during the contract's first two years. The agreement also restores association leave and guarantees association input on hours of employment and transfer and reassignment language.

Contract talks began February of last year with the district declaring impasse in March after only four bargaining sessions. At the same time, National City Superintendent of Schools Chris Oram stated both in public and in writing

that the district had not made its final offer, clearly an unfair labor practice under California labor law. Last July, the district insisted on fact-finding, but when the teachers accepted the recommended settlement, the district not only rejected the report, but came back with even harsher proposals, followed by an imposition that ultimately forced the

union's strike vote.

The imposed conditions unilaterally cut five student instruction days plus an additional prep day for teachers, and gave the district leeway to increase class sizes to 30 to 1 in primary grades and 34 to 1 in upper grades. It also stripped contract language with no fiscal impact, including teachers' rights to negoti-

TOP: Maria Vazquez and Jennifer Hawkish at the Jan. 28 candlelight vigil.

RIGHT: National City Elementary School Teachers Association members at the vigil hope that they'll remain in the classroom with their students without disruption.



ate the school calendar, job transfer and reassignment, and leave for association business. In addition, the district unilaterally targeted first-year teachers, refusing to follow the past practice of not charging for the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) program.

“The district’s financial statement clearly indicated their ability to settle,” Cartwright says. “But only after we organized our membership and large numbers of parents and community supporters to put pressure on the district did they finally capitulate. Their last-hour agreement to a reasonable settlement could have come months ago, minus all the frustration and anxiety for our members, our students and their families.”

NCETA members and supporters organized and implemented a variety of advocacy tactics during the bargaining crisis, including several social media strategies (see sidebar). On Jan. 26, a crowd of more than 350 packed a school board meeting, with scores of parents demanding a fair contract for the teachers. Then a massive rally and march on Jan. 28 along a busy National City street near a freeway culminated in a candlelight vigil with more than 400 participants in front of the school board president’s home.

“Our efforts to mobilize our members, our parents and our community supporters were vital to our success,” says Cartwright, “and we are now in the process of evaluating our organizational capacity to mount a campaign to elect new and more supportive school board members.”

BILL GUY

Social media for organizers

Social media can be a new tool for local association communications and organizing. Recent examples of chapters using social media tactics in bargaining crises and strike situations are Capistrano in April, La Habra in December, and National City in February this year. Here are some tips from these Southern California chapters.

Although Capistrano did not use social media strategies initiated by the chapter, relying instead on their existing website and e-mail distribution system, individual members, parents and community members set up their own Facebook and other social media sites to discuss and communicate about crisis issues. Take-away lesson? Chapters and leaders that are used to a greater degree of communications control should understand that in the age of social media, anyone can and will use these channels to express information and opinions. For two perspectives on the uses of social media, see the videos “**Social Networking in Plain English**” and “**Socialnomics: Social Media Revolution 2**” on YouTube.

Neither La Habra nor National City had functioning chapter websites going into their bargaining crises. To facilitate immediate internal crisis communications, each created Ning sites (ning.com), offering quick and easy setup with a variety of features for modest fees. Other possibilities are Groupsite.com and BuddyPress.com.

The two chapters also created Facebook pages and Twitter feeds, both to enhance internal communications and to offer parents, community supporters and fellow union members the opportunity to share information, content and support. The Facebook pages quickly filled with expressions of resolve and encouragement, information items about rapidly changing events, and historical records including photos and video.

The 140-character “tweet” limit on Twitter makes this medium ideal for transmitting brief snippets of information — rally or meeting time and place reminders, bargaining progress updates — that followers can access through their computers or as text messages sent to their cell phones. The chapters made sure to inform media covering the crises about the ability to follow events through the social media outlets, with many joining immediately to stay current.

Be sure you have the organizational capacity for the immediacy required by social media. Content on social media must be updated frequently. For Facebook, you might get by with three or four new postings per week, but a Twitter feed needs daily monitoring and to be “fed” with updates at least three or four times per day. Once a crisis puts multiple demands on a chapter president, bargaining chair and other leaders, they shouldn’t be expected to keep the social media tactics going too. Recruit a member already engaged with social media for personal communications to take that role for the local chapter.

You can check out CTA’s presence on Facebook — facebook.com/californiateachersassociation — and on Twitter [@CATeachersAssoc](https://twitter.com/CATeachersAssoc).

Other resources include: Visit gcflearnfree.org/facebook101 for a Facebook tutorial and bit.ly/1EsHAK for advice on best Facebook practices. Visit bit.ly/hpock for Larry Ferlazzo’s list of Twitter resources and bit.ly/b65V4U to see a video on Twitter basics for teachers at Jason Renshaw’s blog.

WWW

Go to cta.org/social-media-resources to find direct links to these resources.

'Parent trigger' launches firestorm in Compton

In early December, staff and many parents at McKinley Elementary School in Compton were stunned to learn that Parent Revolution, a Los Angeles-based education group, was claiming to have collected enough signatures to invoke the "parent trigger" law and turn the school over to an outside charter school operator. In a heavily self-promoted move, Parent Revolution made national headlines by choosing McKinley as the first school to test the new law.

The parent trigger law was enacted last year under a bill by state Sen. Gloria Romero (D-Los Angeles), and was initially proposed as part of a slew of measures intended to help in California's ultimately unsuccessful bid to win federal Race to the Top funding. The law provides that if a ma-

majority of parents at a school ranking in the state's bottom 10 percent sign a petition, they can force the school to enter one of four reform models that follow options under Race to the Top: reconfigure the site as a charter school, bring in new staff, replace the principal, or close the school entirely.

On Feb. 9, the State Board of Education moved to delay finalizing regulations governing the parent trigger law until at least March. The delay was in large part due to concerns over what has been taking place in Compton under poorly drafted emergency regulations adopted last summer by the previous board.

CTA has continued to provide support to the Compton Education Association (CEA) and work with various state officials and agencies to make sure both the intent and the

letter of the law are followed. It's clear the law was never meant to apply to schools already embracing reforms and making gains.

Parent Revolution's Executive Director Ben Austin is a charter school advocate with ties to heavily financed charter and education reform interests. Austin, who was recently removed by Gov. Brown from the State Board of Education, has freely admitted to the stealth nature of Parent Revolution's signature-gathering tactics, saying they were necessary to prevent opposition.

"I don't know who Parent Revolution thinks the 'opposition' is," says CEA President Marie E. Truby. "Informed parents? Teachers? The problem with their secretive campaign is parents were never given the full picture or the opportunity to all be together in the same room to discuss the options available to the school. They also weren't informed of the great progress already being made."

And McKinley has been making significant progress. The school is already participating in CTA's Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA) and is one of the many schools in that program showing major gains on state tests and outpacing schools with simi-



ABOVE: Marie E. Truby, President of Compton Education Association

lar student demographics. Now, with the parent trigger targeting McKinley, a proven reform is in danger of being scuttled by one with no track record.

"We want and need parents to play a major part in the education of all students," says Regina Tyler-Powell, a teacher at McKinley. "Some of our staff is hurt, and others don't understand the attacks, especially since we are helping our students move in the right direction."

CTA opposed the parent trigger law, in part because of the many flaws that are becoming apparent though the McKinley example. "Parent empowerment and involvement are key to a child's success," says Tyrone Cabell, a CTA Board member who represents Compton and the surrounding area. "But this law isn't empowering parents. Instead, it's become a tool for outsiders to come in and take over on behalf of a charter company." Cabell notes the issue has become a politically charged platform for



Photo by Scott Buschman

LEFT: Regina Tyler-Powell teaches at McKinley Elementary School in Compton and wants to work with parents.

outsiders, with then-Gov. Schwarzenegger, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, and former Washington, D.C., public schools chancellor Michelle Rhee all descending on Compton to weigh in.

Confusion and misinformation have riddled the process from the beginning. When Parent Revolution announced it had secured the necessary signatures, angry parents packed Compton school board and community meetings, saying they had been lied to or harassed by Parent Revolution organizers. Many demanded to rescind their signatures. As news accounts of its own abuses grew, Parent Revolution began loudly publicizing countercharges against McKinley and district staff. In January, Parent Revolution announced support for complaints filed with the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights over alleged “intimidation” (the alleged offenses include putting erroneous information about charter school requirements online and in a YouTube video, as well as making inaccurate statements to a student).

“It’s disheartening to see Parent Revolution using well-meaning parents to attack quality teachers in order to score public relations and political points,” says Truby. “But we’re pushing back and defending both our members and the school. The parent trigger law is clearly being abused by outsiders who don’t know the first thing about the good things going on at McKinley.” By choosing McKinley, Parent Revolution aimed at the wrong target to pull the parent trigger.

FRANK WELLS

Timeline of “parent trigger” controversy

JAN. 7, 2010

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signs reform legislation intended to make California more competitive for federal Race to the Top grants. The reforms include a “parent trigger” provision that allows parents to petition school boards to implement one of four reform models at a low-performing school.

SEPT. 13, 2010

State Board of Education approves emergency regulations governing parent trigger law.

DEC. 7, 2010

In the first example of the law being invoked, Los Angeles-based Parent Revolution announces that it has collected a majority of parent signatures at McKinley Elementary School in Compton. The petition would turn McKinley (an improving QEIA school) over to Celerity Educational Group, a charter schools operator.

DEC. 8, 2010

A large number of McKinley parents complain that they have not been fully informed of the proposed change or of other options.

DEC. 9, 2010

McKinley PTA hosts two community meetings in which additional charges are made about misrepresentations, intimidation and threats made by parent trigger organizers.

DEC. 10, 2010

Parent Revolution begins making and publicizing allegations of intimidation by McKinley staff.

DEC. 15, 2010

State Board of Education distributes proposed parent trigger regulations.

DEC. 22, 2010

CTA submits comments on proposed parent trigger regulations to the State Board of Education dealing with conflicts between the draft regulations and existing law, as well as numerous examples of problems in the Parent Revolution signature-gathering process at McKinley.

JAN. 18, 2011

Parent Revolution announces support for federal civil rights violations charges against McKinley staff members. The claims allege that verbal and written comments made by two staff members in opposition to the charter constitute harassment.

FEB. 9, 2011

State Board of Education, with new members appointed by Gov. Jerry Brown, delays adopting new regulations until at least March, allowing more time for review of the process, especially as implemented at McKinley.

Evaluation Workgroup seeks members' views

How would you rate your last job performance evaluation experience? Did it provide useful insights and suggestions to help you do your job even better? Or was it a mere formality with no long-range practicality? Worse, was it a “gotcha” ordeal with an evaluator with an ax to grind?

In an effort to be proactive and help develop a more meaningful and effective evaluation system, CTA established the Evaluation Workgroup last year. The workgroup is composed of leaders serving on a number of CTA State Council committees and CTA staff. Since its first meeting last April, the workgroup has consulted a wide array of resources and experts, and is working to make recommendations for an evaluation model that helps educators do their jobs even better.

Certificated evaluation procedures in California have remained largely unchanged since the 1970s, when the state Legislature passed what's known as the Stull Act. Since then, the only significant changes have been the addition of an option for districts and local associations to bargain the inclusion of standards from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and the referral of employees with unsatisfactory ratings to the Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program in districts where it still exists.

Although there are differing opinions on how to improve the evaluation process, almost everyone agrees the current system needs to be improved. Criticisms are numerous — the lack of properly trained

administrators, the sometimes staged nature of scheduled observations, the often unrepresentative nature of announced drop-ins, and the lack of meaningful feedback. Many administrators also feel the current system isn't working and doesn't really help improve instruction.

CTA members look at the issues

Robert Ellis serves on the workgroup and is also chair of CTA's Teacher Evaluation and Academic Freedom Committee. He sees numerous flaws in the current



Mary Rose Ortega
CTA Board member

evaluation system, including a lack of adequate time involved and a lack of effective cross-disciplinary training for administrators. “The current system focuses on a few very small snapshots in time and isn't really geared to improving practice,” he says.

“We'd like to see an evaluation model that is truly helpful to teachers, one where they can learn and build on what they already know. Evaluation should support good teaching.”

One area of ongoing debate is to what extent, if any, student test scores should be used in teacher evaluation. Although there has been pressure to link test scores to both evaluation and pay, few can agree on how much weight, if any, should be given to those scores. The issue notoriously gained national attention last summer when the *Los Angeles Times* published an online database ranking of thousands of Los Angeles Unified School District teachers from least to most effective based on their students' scores. The *Times* used its own “value-added” model that purported to account



Weigh in with your evaluation thoughts at:

surveymonkey.com/s/CTAevalSurvey

for external factors and past student performance.

The outcry from the education community over this public “evaluation” was loud and nearly unanimous. “What the *L.A. Times* did was reprehensible,” says Mary Rose Ortega, the CTA Board member who serves as liaison to the workgroup. “They used a badly designed rating system to mislabel thousands of dedicated educators.” Recently the National Education Policy Center released a study confirming that the *Times* value-added approach was deeply flawed.

Experts weigh in

Diane Ravitch is a policy expert and author of *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education*. She has spoken at CTA conferences and was last year's NEA Friend of Education Award winner. A former undersecretary of education under President George H.W. Bush, Ravitch is opposed to using test score growth to measure teacher effectiveness.

“I have been trying to figure out how a school would function if the advocates of tying test scores to teacher evaluation prevail,” Ravitch wrote in her blog. “At least three years of data would be needed, though five years would be better. At the end of the three-to-five years, the teachers who did not get gains would be fired and replaced by teachers who have no track record at all. Every year, a new group of teachers who had not produced gains would be fired, and another untested group of teachers would

take their place.”

Linda Darling-Hammond, a Stanford professor and nationally recognized education policy expert whom the workgroup has consulted, believes California's standards tests are particularly unsuited for use in teacher evaluation because they are grade-based and not vertically scaled. She points out that since only the skills for that particular grade are measured, if a teacher brings a sixth-grader initially performing at a second-grade level up to a fourth-grade level, the test won't show it.

Despite the problems of using test scores for evaluation, federal programs like Race to the Top have encouraged the linkage, and some California lawmakers are supporting legislation that would follow suit. Those approaches are geared toward tying evaluation to pay, or in some cases to firing teachers, as opposed to developing a tool to improve instructional practices.

But if test scores aren't necessarily the answer, what is? To find out what you think, the workgroup has developed a survey that can be found at surveymonkey.com/s/CTAevalSurvey. A link to the survey is currently on the CTA home page. All certificated CTA members are encouraged to complete the survey and help the workgroup develop recommendations for an evaluation system that works. “Any improvements to the current system CTA proposes are going to be member-driven as well as experience or research based,” says Ellis. “We want to make sure we get this right.”

Online learning for your life



Have You Visited NEA Academy's New Interactive Website?



Your input helped guide the design of the NEA Academy's new website, and we think you'll be pleased with the results. Come explore the site and fill out your personal profile. Based on the preferences you select, this new interactive learning environment will provide content recommendations, course alerts, and additional material of specific interest to you. We invite you to see the all-new NEA Academy at neaacademy.org.

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ACTION

Tax extension key to education funding



CTA photos by Malika Costello-Dougherty

LEFT: State Council members wait to vote at the February meeting in Los Angeles.

nate redevelopment agencies, generating about \$1 billion in new funding for schools; and opposition to fee hikes that are making higher education unaffordable for college students.

Dean E. Vogel becomes president-elect

Council unanimously elected CTA Vice President Dean E. Vogel as president of the 325,000-member union. Vogel was unopposed. His education career spans 37 years and includes working as an elementary public school teacher and a master counselor for university students. David A. Sanchez will remain president until June 26, when Vogel's term begins.

"President Sanchez and I are more hopeful for the future of public education now that we have a governor who understands that state budgets should not be balanced with more devastating classroom cuts," Vogel said.

The new CTA secretary-treasurer and vice president will be elected at the April State Council meeting.

CTA President David A. Sanchez mixed optimism with realism when he spoke to hundreds of representatives at the February State Council meeting. He congratulated CTA members on how their hard work in the November election has paid off with leaders who will make education a priority. Sanchez also reminded educators that the work is not done, since the governor's budget plan needs to be approved with key tax extensions.

"The governor's plan to extend temporary taxes for five years is a necessary and viable option to prevent further cuts to schools, public safety, health and other vital state programs," Sanchez said. "California voters

must be allowed to decide whether they want to make our schools a priority and start rebuilding a world-class public education system, or whether they want a world-class state budget catastrophe."

Council approves budget plan

Council endorsed the governor's budget proposal aimed at resolving the state's \$25 billion deficit.

This endorsement includes the governor's call for a June election to extend certain temporary taxes. Council members were alarmed that without an extension of current revenues, public schools and colleges would lose at least another \$2.3 billion on top of the more than \$18 bil-

lion in devastating cuts they have suffered over the past three years. *(After State Council met, the Legislative Analyst's Office released a new report changing this figure from \$2.3 billion to \$4.6 billion.)*

Council also approved principles for the 2011-12 state budget, including opposition to any additional cuts to schools and colleges; support for a balanced approach of cuts and revenues to resolve the budget crisis; support for the governor's plan to elimi-



LEFT: CTA President-elect Dean Vogel describes how his work is focused on improving the lives of students.



ABOVE: CTA leaders don chef hats to celebrate Read Across America, coming on March 2.

CTA launches tax fairness resource

Without permanent, long-term solutions to funding, our public schools and the entire state will continue to suffer from more state budget deficits. A presentation was made at the Council meeting about a new CTA

online resource dealing with tax fairness that can be found at cta.org/taxfairness.

The site offers school funding facts, data about tax loopholes, and information on how teachers can spread the word about tax reform that will help students and schools.



The new site includes a revealing PowerPoint presentation about tax fairness and the state budget process. It notes that California

- In other action, State Council:**
- Recommended the following candidates for the Feb. 15 special primary election: Senate District 17, Darren Parker; Senate District 28, Ted Lieu.
 - Elected Doreen McGuire-Grigg as NEA Director, District 1; and Gayle Bilek as NEA Alternate Director, Seat 3.
 - Re-elected Sue Cirillo as NEA Director, District 6/14; and George Sheridan as NEA Director, District 12.
 - Took a "Support" position on State Constitutional Amendment 5 by state Sen. Joe Simitian (D-Palo Alto) to lower the threshold for voter approval of a local parcel tax from two-thirds to 55 percent.
 - Took a "Support" position on Assembly Bill 124 by Assembly Member Felipe Fuentes (D-Los Angeles), which would establish an English Language Development (ELD) Standards Advisory Committee to align ELD standards to the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts for approval by the State Board of Education, and require the superintendent of public instruction and the state board to develop and present to the governor and Legislature an implementation plan to integrate the ELD standards.

ranks 43rd in per-pupil spending. In the last seven years, California's K-14 education spending has only increased 5.7 percent, compared to 39.5 percent for prisons. In California, residents with incomes in

the lowest 20 percent pay 11.1 percent of their income in taxes. The wealthiest 1 percent pay only 7.8 percent of their income in taxes. The site will be regularly updated with the latest research.

Governor's proposed budget aims to protect schools

When Gov. Jerry Brown released his proposed 2011-12 budget on Jan. 10, he made it crystal clear that he wanted to protect education from additional cuts. He said that schools had already "borne the brunt" of the state's budget reductions, having suffered more than \$18 billion in cuts over the past three years.

To preserve vital revenues for schools, the governor proposed extending the state's temporary taxes. That proposal aims to head off additional cuts that could pare another \$4.6 billion from the already fiscally beleaguered public schools.

Giving Californians the opportunity to vote on the extension, the governor's preferred route, would likely require a two-thirds vote of both houses of the Legislature. Working with the governor, Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg and Assembly Speaker John Perez are expected to spearhead the efforts in their respective houses to put the issue before the voters.

CTA's policymaking body, the 800-member State Council of Education, voted at its February meeting to endorse the governor's budget plan, with its call for extending the state's temporary taxes.

"We appreciate the governor's efforts to limit cuts to education," said CTA President David A. Sanchez. "Schools and our students have suffered the loss of more than 40,000 educators due to layoffs. These cuts have translated into dramatically higher class sizes; the elimination of nurses, counselors, and other vital staff; and the loss of art, music, and other classes that help keep students engaged."

As the *Educator* went to press, the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office had just released information about the severity of the additional cuts the state would have to make — around another \$12.5 billion beyond those already in the governor's proposal — should the temporary taxes not be extended. That means \$4.6 billion less for K-12 schools than Brown proposed, as well as a \$1.7 billion reduction to community colleges and universities.

Urge your lawmakers to support Gov. Brown's proposed budget.

The governor's proposed tax extension and his plan to shield

The governor's proposed tax extension and his plan to shield

schools from additional cuts is reflected in two key sentences in his budget documents that underscore the importance of education and spotlight how pervasive the cuts have been: "The Budget recognizes that the education of California's children is a core function of government. It also recognizes that education has borne a disproportionate share of budget reductions in recent years."

These financial realities led Superintendent of Public In-

struction Tom Torlakson to proclaim that California's schools are in a financial crisis and the state must find new revenues to help fund public education.

The governor has asked the Legislature to act quickly on his budget proposal. In fact, he is hoping to have the spending plan adopted within 60 days of Jan. 31, much earlier than the June 15 deadline set by the state constitution. The governor is also calling on lawmakers to approve the tax-extension revenue measure

quickly so that it can go to voters in a special election prior to the June budget deadline.

The actions create an accelerated unusual timeline for the new budget.

The normal timeline is the one sketched out in the state constitution: The governor proposes a preliminary budget in January and then issues a revised budget proposal in mid-May that takes into account updated revenue and expenditure estimates. The state constitution requires

the Legislature to review the governor's budget proposals, make changes, and then send a final document to him for his signature by June 15. The constitution allows the governor to reduce expenditures in the budget, which should be signed before July 1, the start of the state's new fiscal year.

The governor's declaration of a fiscal emergency, under terms of Proposition 58, has greatly accelerated the timeline.

LEN FELDMAN

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TV network

Continued from page 25

including *National Treasure*, *A Series of Unfortunate Events* and *Horton Hears a Who*. Among the celebrities they have interviewed are Nicolas Cage, Steve Carell and Jim Carrey. They have also interviewed local dignitaries while celebrating CTA's Read Across America at school.

"I love to see how these students shine," Newton whispers while watching his students broadcast live. "They are developing oral language skills. They have enthusiasm, energy and self-confidence. They are learning the technology of video and using the Smart Boards for creating background. I am proud to say that most of our FTN crew go on to their local high school news crews or end up majoring in some sort of journalism in college. I am very, very proud of these students."

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New!

Introducing the Clear Credential Program (Single and Multiple Subject)

The UC San Diego Extension SB 2042 Clear Credential program is designed for public, charter and private school teachers who are employed in a school or district that do not have an Induction program.

After completing the program, students can then initiate the formal recommendation to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

The new UC San Diego Extension Clear Credential Program is:

- 100% online.
- designed to meet the new standards defined by the CCTC.
- one of the first programs to be made available under the new CCTC standards.
- specifically designed to be **completed within one year**.
- UC San Diego Extension is now accepting applications for the new program.

To view credential requirements, the program FAQ and to download an application please visit our Clear Credential program page at extension.ucsd.edu/clearcredential.

UC San Diego Extension also offers accessible and affordable online programs for K-12 and Postsecondary Educators.

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For more information, please contact
Morgan Appel, Director of Education at: (858) 964-1064 or mappel@ucsd.edu

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Heads up!

Conferences

GTC pre-conference sessions March 18, 2011

Hyatt Regency Orange County

Three pre-conference sessions will be offered before the Good Teaching Conference South on Friday, March 18. Registration and fees for each one-day session do not include registration for the Good Teaching Conference.

Unveiling the New California Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.): Elective sessions include overviews of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English language arts and mathematics. General sessions include an overview of CCSS and a discussion of assessment and accountability, with question-and-answer sessions.

Moving the Teaching Profession Forward Using the National Board Process (10 a.m. to 3 p.m.): Learn about the National Board process and its potential impact on school culture, teacher effectiveness, and student learning. Explore how to build leadership capacity opportunities. Examine how National Board Certification fits in your school site's professional development initiatives.

403(b) and 457 Retirement Plans: What You Need to Know (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.): This briefing covers 403(b) and 457 plans, investing for retirement, and utilizing CTA resources. Release time is available for two members per chapter. For more information, visit www.cta.org/conferences.

Joint Ethnic Caucus Issues Conference April 29-May 1, 2011

Marriott Manhattan Beach

CTA is proud to sponsor the first Joint Ethnic Caucus Issues Conference, in conjunction with the African American Caucus, the American Indian/Alaska Native Caucus, the Hispanic Caucus, and the Pacific Asian American Caucus. The theme, "Stand Up! Advance Our Power Together," reflects the strength of diversity in promoting the quality of life for everyone. The conference will provide a variety of topics that deal specifically with certain ethnic groups. Participants are encouraged to attend a variety of sessions that will provide them an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of issues facing our ethnic minority communities across the state. For more information, visit www.cta.org/conferences.

Deadlines

IFT grants April 30, 2011

The CTA Institute for Teaching (IFT) has established a competitive grant program for CTA members and chapters to support strength-based, teacher-driven reform for public schools. The grant application process is open to individual CTA members, small teams of educators, and local CTA chapters. The deadline to apply for 2011-12 grants is April 30. Competitive grants will be awarded to educators in amounts up to \$5,000, and to chapters in amounts up to \$20,000. All applications must reflect innovative efforts to achieve school and district reform and be strength-based and teacher-driven. Applications must specify how the proposal is strength-based, how it will improve teaching and learning conditions, and how student outcomes will be improved. For more information, visit the IFT website: www.teacherdrivenchange.org.



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