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California EDUCATOR

California Teachers Association February 2012 Volume 16 Issue 5



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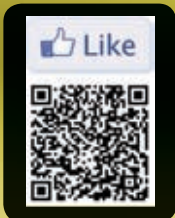
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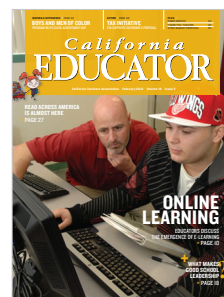
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- Teacher Damon Auchard works with Gabriel Ayala in a hybrid online class at Cyber High School in Lodi.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Gearing up for the fight ahead

WE ARE IN THE MIDST of a critical period in the history of our association and our country. Self-interest and bad economic policies are destroying our democracy and making it almost impossible for the middle class to survive. Corporate greed, which led to the subprime mortgage meltdown, shined a light on the growing inequality in this country. If we allow corporations to continue to get the upper hand, all gaps will widen: the income gap, the opportunity gap, the achievement gap. Franklin D. Roosevelt said in his second inaugural address (and it still rings true today), "We have always known that heedless self-interest was bad morals; we now know that it is bad economics."

We've seen the results of this imbalance play out here in California, too, with double-digit unemployment rates, 40,000-plus educators losing their jobs, families struggling to pay for food and health care, and one in four students now living in poverty. And all the while, CEOs are banking record profits and refusing to pay their fair share. This inequitable situation can no longer be ignored.

Well, our chance to set things right is now, and we'll begin by planning for the upcoming November election. It's important we all know what we are facing and understand the many moving parts that will affect our schools and our profession. For the third time, a harmful "paycheck deception" initiative that is designed to silence our united voice has qualified for the ballot. In addition to the governor's tax initiative, two competing funding initiatives are being circulated for signatures. And a handful of business groups have filed a spending cap initiative to cut school funding and limit future state spending. All of these initiatives are reason for concern.

There's a lot of intricate political motion happening this year in a lot of different directions — but what everyone can agree on is that our state is moving in the wrong direction and something must be done to fix it. A critical initiative on the ballot is the "paycheck deception" initiative, which prevents our union from advocating for our profession or our state, but continues to allow corporations to lobby for their own interests. Educators



CTA President Dean E. Vogel

would lose their collective voice in school board races, on matters like class sizes and safety issues, and in supporting state and national candidates who support public schools and colleges. If the system were left in the hands of CEOs, we may be saying goodbye to the 40-hour work week, a secure retirement, and safe working conditions — all basic workers' rights our union and others fought so hard for over the past century.

During this election process, CTA will also be joining a broad coalition to help pass a viable funding initiative. It is clear that California cannot cut its way out of its ongoing, burgeoning budget problem. It is well past time for a progressive tax increase, and the governor's initiative is the best chance we have to raise the revenues necessary to properly fund our schools. The plan raises income taxes on households earning \$500,000 and raises taxes even higher for those earning more than \$1 million. The proposal also includes a half-cent sales tax increase. The governor's initiative is the only proposal out there that directly helps reduce the state budget deficit. Without that component, our schools and colleges are facing another \$5 billion cut. By joining a broad coalition of labor, community and business groups, CTA can help to pass this important initiative and help California deal with state budget problems.

Together we have a powerful voice and tremendous energy. As educators, we can help bring about change. We need to do it for our schools, our students, and for ourselves. We can help lead the way to a prosperous future for everyone.

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ACTING EDITOR	Dave Earl Carpenter
STAFF WRITER	Sherry Posnick-Goodwin
CTA WEB EDITOR	Karyn Ferrera Donhoff
CTA WEB EDITOR	Tiffany Hasker
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WEB ASSISTANT	Tami Beseda
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CONTRIBUTORS

Scott Buschman, Len Feldman, Bill Guy, Stephen R. Harris III, Dina Martin, Mike Myslinski, Frank Wells

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CTA online



▶ WHAT'S NEW AT CTA.ORG



Sink your teeth into a good book

Join Gabby & Gator, and Boris – three characters from the two delightful books chosen this year for Read Across America. March 2 marks the day when we plan to sink our teeth into a good book – or two!

www.cta.org/raa



February is Black History Month

Black History Month is a time to recognize the role of African Americans in U.S. history. Get resources to help you celebrate the vast achievements, milestones and culture of African Americans.

www.cta.org/BlackHistory



Checked your member benefits lately?

CTA offers its members a great variety of benefits, from discounts on entertainment and travel to Health and Wellness tips and financial services. Check today to see what benefits await!

www.cta.org/mb

▶ VIRAL VIDEO



"We put children first." Teacher Sara Ferguson tells Ellen DeGeneres how the staff of Columbus Elementary in Chester, Pa., chose to continue teaching when the school couldn't pay their salaries.
ellen.warnerbros.com/2012/02/hero_teacher_sara_fergusons_inspiring_story_0202.php



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TOP TWEET

@CATeachersAssoc:

Education is the most important intervention we can make to improve our society.



MOST POPULAR FACEBOOK POST

16 Jan | 76 likes, 27 shares

"Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle. And so we must straighten our backs and work for our freedom. A man can't ride you unless your back is bent."

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



FAVORITE COMMENTS

Dina Martin

8:13 am | 21 Jan

Wow! More than 3,000 educators filled the Convention Center in Sacramento Friday night to hear their own rock stars Diane Ravitch, Linda Darling-Hammond, and Anthony Cody urging them to take back public education from corporate reformers and privatizers. It was truly amazing! The tide is turning.

Curtis Washington

12:35 pm | 5 Jan

The State of Emergency protests at the state Capitol and QEIA, the Quality Education Investment Act, are two of many things members have been doing to divert us from "status quo" to what really works to improve student performance. Hopefully, all of our members will become more involved in the efforts of our Association.

calendar

FEBRUARY

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
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FEB
24

SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE

Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarships

CTA and Student CTA established the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Scholarship Fund to aid members of ethnic minorities in preparing for teaching-related careers in public education. The fund is supported by voluntary contributions from CTA members and the CTA Foundation for Teaching and Learning. An applicant must be a member of a defined ethnic minority group and an active member of CTA or Student CTA, or a dependent child of a CTA member. Applications must be postmarked by Friday, Feb. 24.

www.cta.org/About-CTA/CTA-Foundation/Scholarships



MAR
2

EVENT

Read Across America

"Sink Your Teeth Into a Good Book!" Read Across America is an annual, nationwide celebration of reading, and this year CTA is dishing up not one but two featured books to tempt your reading tastes: *Gabby and Gator* by James Burks, and *Boris Ate a Thesaurus* by Neil Klayman and Barry Chung. We certainly hope everyone finds many books to savor and enjoy. Bon appétit!

www.cta.org/raa



Illustration © 2011 by James Burks

MAR
2-4

CONFERENCE

Equity and Human Rights Conference *Marriott, Irvine*

"Quality Public Education: Invest Today for Tomorrow's Future." This conference captures the essence of CTA's Mission Statement: To ensure that the dignity and civil rights of all children and youth are protected, and to secure a more equitable and democratic society. The conference offers a choice of 50 workshops to enhance CTA members' understanding of the issues of diversity and equity. Highlights include the Human Rights Awards luncheon on Saturday and entertainment by the student group Get Lit at Sunday brunch. Jean Kilbourne is a featured speaker.

www.cta.org/conferences

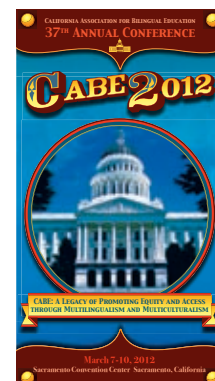
MAR
7-10

CONFERENCE

CABE 2012 37th Annual Conference *Sacramento Convention Center, Sacramento*

The California Association for Bilingual Education continues its rich legacy of ensuring equitable and quality instructional programs for English learners. CABE, as the premier source of professional development, has a long history of serving educators, parents and community members who provide services to our second language learners.

www.bilingualeducation.org



MARCH

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MAR
16-18

CONFERENCE

Good Teaching Conference South *Hyatt Regency Orange County, Garden Grove*

The CTA Good Teaching Conference is designed to support excellent teaching and learning practices for classroom teachers. Offering a variety of workshops in curriculum content areas for K-12 teachers, the conference provides opportunities for professional development and offers time to network and share ideas with colleagues and experts in the field. More than 80 workshops are scheduled, including sessions on innovative educational best practices, technology, classroom management, and much more. Special all-day pre-conference sessions on retirement planning, Common Core State Standards, National Board Certification, and teacher evaluation are offered on Friday. Rob Black, the popular host of television's "Rob Black and Your Money," will present a bonus session Saturday morning on financial issues for educators.

www.cta.org/conferences

APR
6

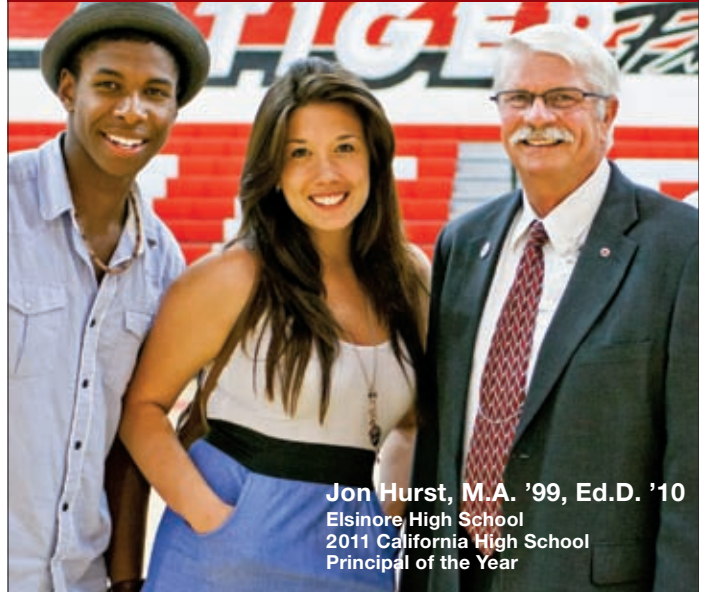
NOMINATION DEADLINE

2011 John Swett Awards

The story of public education in California deserves to be told. And those who tell it well deserve to be singled out for public praise. The 53rd annual John Swett Awards for Media Excellence, which are CTA's highest honor for media professionals, herald outstanding coverage of public education issues in 2011. Newspaper, radio and television editors, reporters, producers, directors and bloggers are all encouraged to enter. Nominations may be submitted by any CTA chapter (local affiliate) or Service Center Council. Entries are judged by panels of independent media professionals. Winners are awarded plaques at a special reception June 8 at State Council. A statewide CTA news release and full-page advertisement listing the winners in the *Columbia Journalism Review* give further recognition.

www.cta.org/Professional-Development/Awards

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APR
20-22

CONFERENCE

Region IV Leadership Conference *Marriott, Irvine*

"Commanding the Road for Great Public Schools." This year's conference will focus on advocacy, professionalism, leadership and vision. Aiming to build a stronger union reflective of members' common core values, the conference is based on themes revealed during relational conversations conducted throughout Region IV last year. Together, members will continue the important work of proactively taking command in the fight to promote and protect public education.

www.cta.org/conferences



Marriott, Irvine

APR
27-29

CONFERENCE

CCA Spring Conference and WHO Awards *Westin Mission Hills, Rancho Mirage*

The Community College Association's annual Spring Conference and WHO (We Honor Ours) Awards will feature important trainings in political action, membership-building, communications, and a variety of other areas, as well as discussion on topical issues of concern to CCA members. The conference will also feature the presentation of the second annual David Milroy Award for Part-time Equity.

www.cca4me.org



Westin Mission Hills, Rancho Mirage

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APR
30

APPLICATION DEADLINE

IFT Grants

CTA's Institute for Teaching has a competitive grant program for CTA members and chapters to support projects and programs that demonstrate the efficacy of strength-based, teacher-driven reform for students and public schools. Educator grants will be awarded to individuals and small teams of teachers in amounts up to \$5,000. Chapter grants will be awarded to associations in amounts up to \$20,000. Applications for the 2012-13 IFT Grant Program must be submitted by April 30.

www.teacherdrivenchange.org



MAY
4

APPLICATION DEADLINE

Incentive grants for summer conferences

Incentive grants are available for members attending the Presidents Conference (July 23-27) and Summer Institute (Aug. 5-10), covering transportation expenses and conference fees, including materials, meals and housing based on double occupancy. Both conferences offer grants to members of racial-ethnic minority groups to encourage minority leadership within the association. Both offer grants to members from small chapters representing 100 or fewer members. In addition, Summer Institute offers grants for ESP members, and for participants in the Emerging Leaders Track and the Member Benefits Strand. The Presidents Conference offers additional grants for first-time participation (available to new participants from a chapter of 1,000 or fewer members) and first-time chapter participation (available to participants from a chapter of 150 or fewer members that has not previously participated).

www.cta.org/conferences

MAY
7-11

EVENT

Teacher Appreciation Week

Teacher Appreciation Week — also known as National Teacher Week — is celebrated during the first full week of May. NEA observes National Teacher Day on the Tuesday of this week, May 8.

MAY
9

EVENT

School Nurses Day

School nurses share a unique passion to promote health and provide high-quality care to students and their families. Since 1972, School Nurses Day has been set aside to recognize school nurses.

www.nasn.org/AboutNASN/NationalSchoolNurseDay

MAY
9

EVENT

California Day of the Teacher

Day of the Teacher arose out of legislation co-sponsored by CTA and the Association of Mexican American Educators. State Sen. Joseph Montoya (D-El Monte) wrote the bill, and it was adopted in 1982 as Senate Bill 1546. California has patterned its celebration after the traditional Día del Maestro festivities observed in Mexico and other Latin American countries.

MAY
22

EVENT

CTA ESP Day

In recognition of the vital contributions of education support professionals, CTA observes ESP Day on the Tuesday of ESP Week (May 20-26).

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CTA CALIFORNIA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION



Depending on who you talk to about the subject, responses to the idea of online learning can vary widely. Some see it as the inevitable change schools will go through to remain current with society's needs while keeping in step with technology. Some see it as a great addition to the traditional classroom, offering flexibility to students and teachers alike. Still others find it challenging, seeing it as an ineffective way to stimulate and engage students in learning and an isolating experience. But no matter where you fall on the question, online teaching is flourishing, and many educators agree that it has its place in learning. Community colleges have been offering courses via the Internet for years with great success, and the idea is beginning to find a place in K-12 schools.

The question: **Does the use of online learning help us create better school settings, and where and when do we employ it?**



SURF'S UP!

Educators talk about catching the right e-learning wave

Story by **Sherry Posnick-Goodwin**
Photos by **Scott Buschman**



Luz Calvo looks at student work and grades papers from the comfort of her living room — with her dog, Nopalitito, nearby.



 **LUZ CALVO**

sits on her couch in her Oakland home in a comfortable pair of jeans and sneakers. Her dog, Nopalitito, wants to receive some attention, but she stays focused on her computer screen.

She might look relaxed, but Calvo is teaching and under a great deal of pressure. Her students submitted their term papers at 11:59 the night before, and she is furiously grading papers and e-mailing students who requested a deadline extension due to “technical difficulties.” The Califor-

nia Faculty Association member and chair of the Ethnic Studies Department at CSU East Bay has never met most of the students enrolled in her online course face to face, but has invited them to drop by her office and say hello.

Calvo enjoys the freedom and flexibility of virtual teaching. She can work at home in her pajamas any time of the day, or “teach” while sipping lattes at her favorite café. It’s just as much work as teaching regular classes, but it’s different.

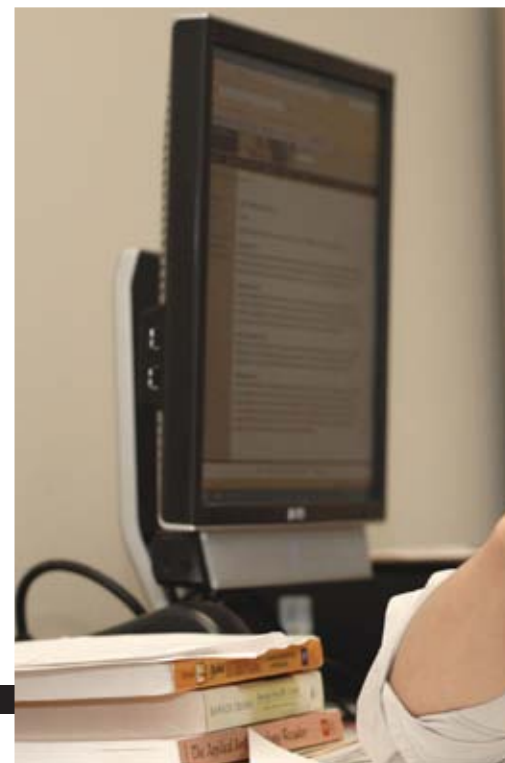




It's good because you can go at your own pace. You can go slower or go faster if you want to. And your friends aren't with you, so you can't talk. It's simple, straight to the point and non-complicated.

Lily Varela, sophomore
HOOVER HIGH SCHOOL, FRESNO

TEACHERS HAVE PROTESTED THAT MONEY IS BEING DIVERTED FROM TEACHER SALARIES TO PAY FOR ONLINE COURSES.



THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE?

Calvo and other virtual teachers are changing how we define teaching and learning, not only in universities, but throughout K-12 schools. Nationwide, more than 250,000 students are enrolled in full-time virtual schools in 30 states, according to the International Association for K-12 Online Learning.

Cyber schools are the fastest-growing alternative to traditional public schools. "Keeping Pace With K-12 Online Learning (2011)," an annual report by the Evergreen Education Group, says that California's full-time online school enrollment in 2009-10 was about 15,000, an increase of 43 percent from the previous year. At some colleges, students in teacher preparation programs practice classroom management skills with "virtual student avatars" displaying bad behavior in a program called TeachMe.

Online schools are popular because they are less expensive to operate than "brick and mortar" schools. They receive the same per-pupil funding even though they may have a higher student-teacher ratio, fewer printed materials, no transportation costs, and little or no building upkeep. Proponents say they prevent students from dropping out if they have trouble functioning in a traditional

school setting, are medically fragile, or have other challenges. Students can also take courses that may be unavailable at their local high schools, such as Arabic or German.

A few states, including Tennessee, Idaho, Florida and Michigan, require that high school students take online courses to graduate. In Idaho, teachers have protested that money is being diverted from teacher salaries to pay for online courses and laptops for students, and are angry about the lack of teacher input in the process. They have expressed fears that the online courses make the teacher less a lecturer and more a "guide" helping students navigate online courses.

California was ranked last among the states in "openness" to online learning by Digital Learning Now, a project of the Foundation for Excellence in Education, headed by Jeb Bush. However, petitions are circulating for a November ballot initiative known as the California Student Bill of Rights, which might change that. If it's voted in, students whose high schools don't offer courses needed to qualify for admission to the University of California and California State University systems would have a "right" to

TYPES OF VIRTUAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Asynchronous e-learning, facilitated by e-mail and discussion boards, supports communication between learners and teachers, even when participants cannot be online at the same time. It is flexible and allows people to log on to an e-learning environment at any time and download documents or send messages to teachers or peers.

Synchronous e-learning, commonly supported by media such as videoconferencing and chat, has the potential to support e-learners in the development of learning communities. It is more social and allows students to communicate in real time. Some believe that this kind of learning helps e-learners feel less isolated from classmates and their teacher.

Blended e-learning, also known as "hybrid" online learning, blends online curriculum with face-to-face instruction in person. Students may meet with a teacher individually or together for a group lesson. Instruction can be individualized as needed to make sure the student understands the online materials.

WHEN TEACHING IS A VIRTUAL CHALLENGE

ANDREW WONG had no formal training in online teaching, but that didn't stop him from teaching online anthropology courses at CSU East Bay and creating his own curriculum from scratch. Wong embraced the new form of teaching and now prefers it to traditional classroom instruction.

"Online teaching encouraged me to become more creative," says Wong, a California Faculty Association member. "Creativity means developing activities that encourage learning with different technological tools. You can encourage students to interact with each other with discussion boards and have them respond to each other's posts; you can blog and engage students with material; you can have students create websites and podcasts depending upon how comfortable they are with technology."

A good online class, says Wong, is more than just "converting" materials from face-to-face courses into an online format.

"You have to think about different ways and activities that help develop higher-order thinking skills, so that you are not just imparting information, you are allowing students to creatively use the information you give them."

Wong took a few online teaching workshops and talked to other online teachers before trying it himself. Now, after years of online teaching, he is receiving formal training. Wong is enrolled in the Online Teaching and Learning Certificate program at UC San Diego taught by CFA member Anne Guptill, who also teaches at CSU East Bay — but Wong found it cheaper to enroll through the San Diego campus.

Online learning certificate programs are offered at about a dozen colleges in California. CSU East Bay is the only public university with a master's program, says Guptill. After taking four virtual classes to receive an online certificate, students can take six additional classes to earn a master's degree.



Considering teaching online? HERE ARE SOME TIPS:

- 01 // Try to foster a connection between teacher and student for the student to be successful. This can be accomplished with a face-to-face orientation, e-mails or Skype.
- 02 // Take an online course, if you've never done so, and incorporate engaging elements into your own lessons. (Online driving school doesn't count!)
- 03 // Maximize the use of discussion boards, so all students have a voice.
- 04 // Customize curriculum that engages all types of learning styles.
- 05 // Be flexible and make allowances for "technical difficulties" due to students working from home.
- 06 // For K-12 students, involve parents so they are supportive and help keep their child on track.
- 07 // Don't bombard learners with materials; break down courses into manageable modules.
- 08 // Provide constant feedback, so students don't feel as though they are working in a vacuum.
- 09 // Manage learners' expectations, so they know what is expected from them. Sometimes a 5-10 minute webcast can be created and shown at the beginning of a new class or module.
- 10 // Keep a separation between your work and your home, even if there is no physical separation. Students may e-mail you at midnight, but you don't need to respond instantly.
- 11 // Facilitate online discussions by being the "guide on the side" rather than the "sage on the stage." Don't respond to every student post; instead, encourage student-to-student interaction.
- 12 // At the end of each course module, use a survey tool to get student feedback and update the next course by implementing suggestions as needed.

(Sources: Kelly McAllister, Anne Guptill and other CTA members interviewed for this feature, and Renee Robbins of www.learningputty.com.)



Andrew Wong in his CSU East Bay office.

“I AM NOT A ROBOT” AN ONLINE TEACHER SPEAKS OUT

WHEN THE CHINO CHAMPION published the editorial “Don’t teachers count anymore?” — a newspaper piece critical of online learning, which referred to online teachers as “robots” — it offended Mary Hancock, an Association of Chino Teachers member and online teacher at the Alternative Education Center in Chino Valley Unified School District. Excerpts of her response in a follow-up editorial are below.



Mary Hancock

Yes, there are virtual classrooms at the Alternative Education Center; however, they are far from empty. In each classroom can be found a highly educated and compassionate teacher working directly with students, mentoring them through any difficulties students may have with the curriculum and motivating them to be successful. Teachers spend long hours responding to their students’ e-mails, calling parents and students, grading assignments, and giving their students feedback on their work.

Virtual teaching is far from robotic; it is about making connections. Virtual teachers find that they actually get to know their students far better than they did in a traditional classroom of 35; they give their students one-on-one instruction.

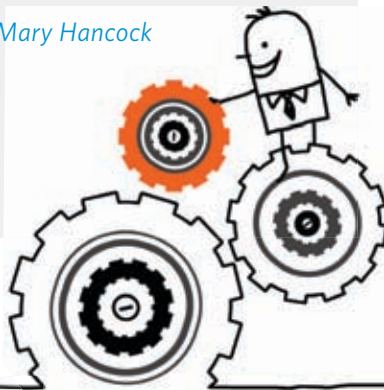
Virtual learning is far from sterile — it is active and innovative. Virtual learning allows for all types of students to be successful, from a basic student to those who are advanced. If a certain lesson triggers a more in-depth question for the student, the lesson has several links to allow the student to actively explore and learn. If a student is having trouble understanding a concept, they can reread, review and redo the activities as many times as they need until they understand, or they send an e-mail to their teacher for more instruction.

I am anything but a robot. I am a living, passionate and motivating teacher who loves inspiring my students to explore the possibilities that our virtual education can provide.

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Mary Hancock



STUDENT'S VOICE



I prefer online because I can learn more and I can go faster. But not for all classes. It can be hard at times and I'm like, "Help me!" Sometimes you need a real teacher.

Vincent Edwards, junior
HOOVER HIGH SCHOOL, FRESNO

take those courses online. If a school doesn't offer AP History, for example, or a certain class doesn't fit with a student's schedule, the student could take the course online at the district's expense.

Depending on your viewpoint, online learning is the wave of the future — or a threat to the teaching profession and an isolating experience for students. While online learning may be controversial, it's here to stay. By 2019, half of all high school classes may be taught online, predicts Harvard business professor Clayton M. Christensen.

CTA believes that online learning has a place in the education system, but should never eliminate the need for real teachers in real classrooms.

“People may see cyber schools as a viable solution to the economic downturn,” comments CTA President Dean Vogel. “The danger is using online learning as an excuse to continue the underfunding of our schools. Any determination to move forward with online learning should be born out of pedagogic needs of our students — and not as a solution to the budget crisis.”

FOR-PROFIT CYBER CHARTER MOVEMENT SPARKS CONCERNS

Rapid proliferation of non-union, for-profit cyber charter schools is happening nationwide. Several have been accused of fraud or providing a substandard education; some of these schools pay more for advertising than academic materials, according to *Mother Jones* magazine.

“On measures widely used to judge all public schools, such as state test scores and graduation rates, virtual schools — often run as charter schools — tend to perform worse than their brick-and-mortar counterparts,” the *Washington Post* reports. And class sizes at cyber charters tend to be larger than at traditional schools, with as many as 60 students in some classes.

A new study published by the Center for Research in Education Outcomes at Stanford University finds “cyber charters” are much less successful than brick-and-mortar charter schools, and reports that in 100 cyber charters, students performed “significantly worse” in math and reading than students at traditional public schools.

WHILE UNIONS ARE FIGHTING TO STAVE OFF ATTACKS, THE VIRTUAL CHARTER INDUSTRY STEADILY MOVES FORWARD, ALMOST UNNOTICED.

Diane Ravitch

For-profit cyber charters are being used as an instrument of “creative destruction” against the public school system in an effort to privatize public schools, some education experts believe.

“It siphons money from public institutions into for-profit companies, and it undercuts public employees, their unions and the Democratic base,” writes Stephanie Mencimer in a *Mother Jones* article, “Jeb Bush’s Cyber Attack on Public Schools.”

Education author Diane Ravitch describes the cyber charter movement as a “stealth campaign” to privatize public education in her *Education Week* blog.

“While unions are fighting to stave off attacks, the virtual charter industry steadily moves forward, almost unnoticed,” she says.

VIRTUAL SCHOOLS BECOMING MAINSTREAM

Fear of losing public school students to for-profit cyber charters influenced some school districts to open virtual schools of their own in Los Angeles, Riverside, Lodi, Elk Grove, Chino, Fresno and other communities. Some, including Fresno, Chino and Lodi, purchase curriculum from private companies, while teachers in Riverside write their own.

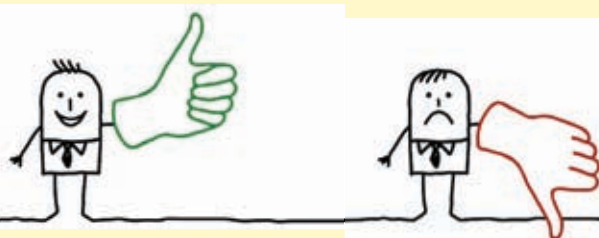
“I don’t think it would be prudent if we did not embrace new directions,” says Tim Martin, president of Riverside City Teachers Association, whose district has the largest virtual public school in the state. “Not having online learning would impact us negatively in the long term. We would lose kids because people would turn to online charters. Online learning isn’t for every kid, but it works well here.”

“We are trailblazers,” says Mary Hancock, a science teacher at Chino Valley Unified School District’s Alternative Education Center. “Online learning has increased ADA collection for alternative education to double what it used to be. We have recovered kids from charters. Our district lost \$3 million over the last few years, and with our virtual academy, we have reclaimed close to \$2 million.”

When school districts operate virtual learning programs, there is much more accountability, says Hancock, an Associated Chino Teachers member. Teachers from online for-profit charters have applied to her school, complaining of huge class sizes, overwork and the inability to meet the needs of students.



POSITIVES AND PITFALLS OF ONLINE LEARNING



PROS:

- ✓ Lessens dropout rates for students who have trouble functioning in a traditional classroom.
- ✓ Assists medically fragile or otherwise challenged students to integrate.
- ✓ Allows students to take courses that may not be available at their school (Arabic, Robotics, etc.).

CONS:

- ✗ Diverts funds meant for schools to pay for online courses and laptops for students.
- ✗ Minimizes the amount of teacher input in the teaching process.
- ✗ Makes the teacher less a lecturer and more a “guide” helping students navigate online courses.

VIRTUAL SCHOOLS STILL NEED REAL TEACHERS AND STRUCTURE

THE NOON BELL RINGS at Cyber High School in Lodi, but all is eerily quiet on campus. There is no laughter or yelling in the courtyard; the tables and chairs stand empty, as if perpetually waiting for students to sit down and eat lunch. Some of the school's students are working at home, while others haven't even started their "school day" yet and will hunker down with a computer this evening.

Students may work at their own pace and in different areas, but they still need help from teachers like Damon Auchard, a Lodi Education Association (LEA) member, who sees students at the school on a regular basis — and communicates with them online — to make sure they are up to speed.

Gabriel Ayala, 17, drops by for a one-on-one meeting with Auchard, then sits alone in the computer lab completing a virtual lesson. The serene environment appeals to Ayala, who found regular school distracting.



Jeff Johnston

LEA PRESIDENT JEFF JOHNSTON SAYS THE DISTRICT COULD HAVE TRIED TO "OUTSOURCE" ONLINE TEACHERS, BUT INSTEAD CHOSE FROM EXISTING TEACHERS.

"It was harder for me to concentrate before," he relates. "I do miss the social life of high school, but cyber school works well for me."

His father, Gabe Ayala, says he appreciates being "in the loop" now that his son is taking online classes. Instead of calling teachers to find out Gabriel's progress, he can log in to the system and make sure his son is doing assignments and passing his tests. And his teacher sends e-mails with updates.

Lodi Unified School District opened Cyber High School last year, along with a Virtual Academy for K-8 students. Both schools use

PLANNING IS IMPORTANT Learn from one district's mistakes

In Los Angeles Unified School District, a virtual "school within a school" at City of Angels High School has been a "catastrophe" from the beginning, says Jeff Pott, a member of United Teachers Los Angeles and a teacher of non-virtual classes at the school site, who serves as site rep.

"It opened without planning," says Pott. "It was rolled out with curriculum undeveloped. Teachers were untrained, and students had to be recruited. We started with eight teachers, and now we are down to two. We've never had more than 25 students enrolled, which makes one hell of a student-to-teacher ratio. Kids were unsupervised, and there was no way to compel them to come in or check in online, so by and large they didn't. Large numbers of students failed."



Damon Auchard helps Gabriel Ayala work on an online class at Cyber High in Lodi.

curriculum from private companies and have teachers who monitor student progress and offer individualized instruction as needed.

It was a big step for the rural district, which now has cyber students enrolled from several outlying areas. LEA president Jeff Johnston says the district could have tried to "outsource" online teachers, but instead chose from existing teachers. He appreciates that LEA members in this agricultural community are on the cutting edge of technology.

Cyber High may be quiet, but it's an exciting place to work, says Auchard. Most students need "credit recovery" to graduate on time, and the school has a 94 percent passing rate in online courses. There are very few behavior problems.

"I love the challenge of motivating students who have not been successful in traditional educational settings," says Auchard. "Kids need to have educational options, and this serves a tiny percentage of the student body where traditional high school didn't work."

Auchard does more hands-on teaching than he expected, because students don't always understand the lessons. At first, he assumed students would be working independently, but he soon realized that one-on-one instruction was essential.

The same is true in the Fresno Unified School District (FUSD), where educators discovered that students "working at home" sometimes weren't working at all. After a disastrous fall 2010 session in which a large percentage of students who were assigned work at home failed their courses, FUSD decided that students who were enrolled in virtual courses needed to show up to a real classroom every day to be successful. Students can only take one online course at a time.

"Being supervised and having a credentialed teacher in the classroom has been the key component to success," says Tom Nixon, a member of the Fresno Teachers Association (FTA) who runs the online learning program for the district. "Kids do get stuck, and this way teachers can provide support where necessary."

Once high school students began working in real classrooms in a "blended" program that combined virtual and in-person instruction, the rate of course completion "shot through the roof," says Nixon. Class size is limited to 25 students, who sit side by side in a computer lab taking different courses.

"You don't have to stand up front and lecture; it's a whole different vibe," says Tim Carey, an FTA member who supervises an online learning class. "I've only had to discipline one student this year. And I can



Tom Nixon



still be that caring adult. When kids walk in the door, I can see who's not focused and talk to that student. For the most part, these kids are learning to be responsible and work independently, and they like the fact that they can be successful."

Riverside Virtual School also offers blended online learning. Students work at home, and there are weekly in-person visits or Skype sessions. The program thrives because of the student-teacher connection, says Kelly McAllister, a member of the Riverside City Teachers Association.

"I just went to a conference where someone said this job can be done without a teacher," she says. "That's interesting, because if a kid doesn't come in and connect with us, it usually means they were not meant for online learning. While learning may happen online, it's still that teacher-and-student connection that makes it work."



ISOLATION — OR A DIFFERENT TYPE OF COMMUNITY?

While some embrace virtual classes as a natural integration of technology with learning, others fear it may deprive students of peer interaction necessary for socialization. CTA members teaching online courses say they make a strong effort to foster a personal connection and create an online community for students.

"We have meet-ups, trips to the museum and hikes," says Kelly McAllister, a middle school teacher at Riverside Virtual School. "We use different tools so that students can interact with each other in classes. We have discussion boards and Google chat, and kids are constantly e-mailing us or texting us when they are stuck. We see our kids at least once a week in most circumstances. If they can't come in, we Skype them. The kids can be as social as they want to be. Some students don't want to be social, while others want interaction."

Virtual school doesn't work for every student and requires family support, says McAllister.

"It's no different than any school; we just give instruction in a different way."


Luz Calvo, the CSU East Bay professor, says it is becoming more challenging to teach online courses because the college is constantly raising class size since there is no physical classroom.

Professors have been fighting to hold the line at 40 students per class, while the university would like as many as 60.

For online courses to succeed, says Calvo, there has to be interaction between individual students and between groups of students and the instructor, within structured "online communities" created with various online programs like Blackboard and Moodle.

"I post a set of questions about the reading for a week, and students are required to post answers and respond to each other's posts and answers," she explains. "There are also functions where, instead of a discussion board, students can post a blog and people can comment on their blog post."

While online classes can be isolating for some students, others blossom in an online environment, says Calvo.


"I think it works a little more for students who are a little shy and sit in the back of the class and never talk," she says. "We use names, but if nobody knows who you are, you feel very anonymous. There can be a greater level of disclosure in the online class than you see happening in face-to-face classrooms." 



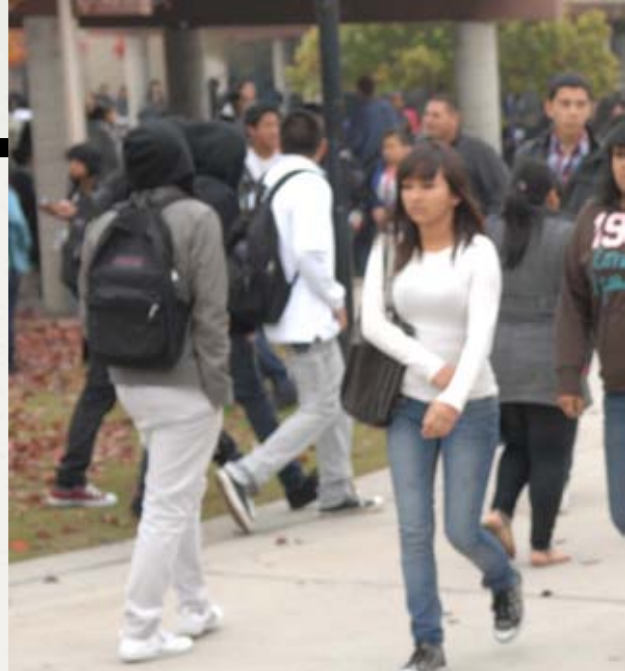
Kelly McAllister

STUDENT'S VOICE



 I can work anywhere or anytime, but the best part is that I can take mornings off and work at night. I am not a morning person, and it was hard for me when I had to wake up early and learn. Now, I start about 2 o'clock.

Chelsea Kunz, senior
ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION CENTER, CHINO



WHAT MAKES GOOD SCHOOL LEADERSHIP?

Story by **Sherry Posnick-Goodwin**

Every school employee knows that a principal can either create a dynamic learning environment where staff feel valued and fulfilled — or make life extremely difficult for teachers and classified staff.

WHEN VISITING CTA MEMBERS, I am usually greeted first by principals. Some extend warm welcomes, give tours of the school and invite me into their offices to proudly discuss their talented staff. Others, well, are sometimes less welcoming. One principal whom I remember fondly, Sheryl Weaver in Fresno (see profile on facing page), actually gave me the keys to the enormous campus and suggested I visit all teachers in their respective lunchrooms to ask staff what they think of her leadership! (They love her.)

So what *does* make a good principal?

At schools I have visited, teachers who like their principal say there is less turnover and fewer

teachers leaving the profession. They tell me that having a good principal makes the difference between looking forward to going to work each day — and feeling dread.

Principals, like teachers, deserve to be judged on more than just test scores. Unfortunately, when a school is labeled as “failing,” a principal’s head may roll, even though the school is making steady academic progress. I have visited numerous sites where teachers were devastated because their beloved principal was being replaced by the superintendent for failing to instantly close the achievement gap, even though strong progress was being made in that direction.



Photo by Scott Buschman

SHERYL WEAVER *inspires devotion among staff*

"WHEN SHE RETIRES, I'm going to sell shoes at Macy's," declares Cindy Duzi, an English teacher at Sunnyside High School in Fresno Unified School District.

Duzi is talking about her principal, Sheryl Weaver, in a way that few teachers talk about their boss. But she is not alone. Other Fresno Teachers Association members at the campus adore, admire and respect Weaver.

"She's someone you can talk to," explains English teacher Tashiana Aquino. "She makes you feel comfortable. She's not just a principal; she's also a friend. She takes time to actually listen to you. If you e-mail her or text her, she responds."

Special education teacher Kem Vestal describes Weaver as nothing short of amazing.

"She backs teachers and implements discipline as needed. She defuses situations, and she's got a great mind. She finds alternatives that are the best path for everybody. And she always lets teachers and staff know what's happening, because she is on top of everything and so organized."

Sunnyside High School is an enormous campus with 3,200 students and 150 teachers. There are four staff lunchrooms, so Weaver hands

this writer the master key to make it easy to catch teachers on their break. Teachers are wary about being approached by a stranger until they learn the motive is to discover what they think of their principal. Then they smile and eagerly oblige. They use words like "kindness" and "caring." They say Weaver knows about their families; she knows their favorite candy and supplies them at meetings; she knows when they are having a bad day or having personal problems, and reaches out to them. They say there is almost no staff turnover; few leave unless they are promoted or retire.

Weaver is no softy, say staff. She has a "don't go there" list of things she won't stand for, and if crossed, she will give teachers a talking-to that isn't pleasant. But it helps to have a list of behaviors they should avoid, so her wrath is a rarity.

"She's a leader — a strong leader — and everyone knows to take her seriously," says Duzi. "You better put kids first, or you're in trouble. She's loving and caring, but you don't want to mess with her."

Weaver has been a principal for eight years at Sunnyside, and before that, she was a science and PE teacher, school counselor, vice principal and assistant principal.

"It's very, very important for me to never forget where I came from," says Weaver. "I still understand the challenges that teachers face every day."

She believes it is the principal's job to support teachers and to give them the tools they need to do the best job possible.

"I don't believe you can have an ego in this job," says Weaver. "It's not about you as a principal. When I come to work every day, I want to make sure the staff is happy and have what they need to go into the classroom and do their job. Without them, I'm nothing."

Weaver has a sign in her office: "Work with me, people." A willingness to work as a team has created a sense of community at the school, described by staff as a home away from home.

When things aren't going well at Sunnyside, teachers aren't afraid to say so.

"They don't have to send me an anonymous note or e-mail, because I have broad shoulders," says Weaver. "If they don't tell me something isn't working out, I'm going to have to come back to them and say, 'Where was your input?' And I don't like whining. If teachers and staff have ideas they want to talk about, fine. But don't come in whining and complaining unless you have ideas."

Math teacher John Sundgre says Sunnyside High School staff feel fortunate and appreciative they have a such good principal.

"We realize how fortunate we really are when we hear from teachers at other schools who are not as fortunate," he says.

Sheryl Weaver's tips for success as a principal

- 1 Smile, no matter how you feel. You set the tone and do not get the luxury of a bad day.
- 2 Sincerity, passion and enthusiasm are three qualities essential to the profession.
- 3 Don't make excuses. People expect and deserve your best.
- 4 Model what you expect from staff and students.
- 5 Say what you mean and mean what you say. Consistency, guts and fairness — you've got to have them.
- 6 Remember people's names.
- 7 Pay attention to details.
- 8 Love your team unconditionally. They are your team, and your role is to get them to be the best they can be. Coach 'em up!
- 9 Take time to listen and look at people when they are talking to you. Don't look at your phone or watch, and don't text.

SO WHAT DO CTA MEMBERS THINK MAKES A GOOD PRINCIPAL?

Martha Snider

LODI EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
social studies teacher

My principal at Christa MacAuliffe Middle School, Randy Malandro, is very collaborative and a good leader. He comes from "within" and was a teacher, so he knows things from a teacher's perspective. He knows how it sounds to teachers when he asks them to do things. When he disseminates information he gets from the district, he presents it to the entire staff in a way that when he says "Jump!" we want to say "How high?" We have site-based leadership, and there's a lot of buy-in from teachers. He says all the time that he's here for the children, and he lives it and breathes it. And this goes from him to the staff and to the kids. When a principal has that kind of relationship with staff and students, it creates an atmosphere where learning just happens.

Maria Smith

PRESIDENT OF CTA OF BERRYESSA
teacher adviser

A good principal is an effective communicator and a community builder. Without the two, he/she cannot lead and expect the staff to follow. Good principals know that building trust comes first with their staff; making connections increases rapport. Trust established between the principal and teachers allows for openness and dialogue. High morale in a school setting starts with the principal, so he/she must be inspiring. An instructional leader promotes collaboration by being a good listener and being willing to consider others' ideas. Everyone appreciates a principal who supports them and acknowledges their effort and hard work. Good principals know that it is not what you say that is important, but how you say it. Teachers want to feel comfortable going to their principal and feel safe when they take risks.

Lauren Miller

BUTTEVILLE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION
teacher

An excellent principal trusts his or her staff. They encourage us to be creative, while holding us to high professional standards. They support us to exercise our judgment and to feel safe asking questions. They listen. They believe in children. They discipline with love. They set limits when they need to with adults and kids. They take risks when they need to. They are fearless. They care about the profession of education. They embrace the arts. I know what makes an excellent principal because we have him right here at Butteville Elementary School. Our Mr. Clark is all of this and more.

Nick Cheranich

NAPA VALLEY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
teacher

A good principal would have to find the time and effort (at least one day a month) to plan and teach in the classroom. A few districts have this as policy. Sadly, most principals have been delegated to mere bureaucrats, spending most of their time doing what they are told to do by managers above them, and going about policing teachers to see if they are correctly implementing the newest program. What better way to grasp how a new program is or isn't working than by actually doing it? Certainly, the administrator would gain a better respect from his or her staff and students if he or she were to plan and teach in the classroom on a consistent basis. I have yet to work with this kind of principal.



A SINGLE E-MAIL SOLICITING COMMENTS ABOUT WHAT MAKES A GOOD PRINCIPAL BROUGHT A TORRENT OF RESPONSES. HERE IS A SAMPLING, AND MANY MORE CAN BE READ AT www.cta.org/goodprincipals.

Surveying PRINCIPALS

A RECENT SURVEY of 600 principals conducted by the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning at WestEd found:

Lynda Barnett

YREKA HIGH SCHOOL
TEACHERS ASSOCIATION
English/drama teacher

A great principal respects teachers. While board members and administration can be full of platitudes about “being there for the kids,” a true leader realizes that those kids spend their day with the teacher, and that dissatisfied, stressed and disrespected teachers will find it more difficult to bring all they can give to the classroom environment. Teachers know a good principal is there to support them, and there is an atmosphere of trust. This principal will not allow teachers to be bullied and will not listen to gossip or make assumptions, regardless of how powerful a person a parent may be. This principal has “got your back.” When this is the case, it is much easier to accept constructive criticism. Just as students work harder for a teacher they admire, a great principal inspires teachers to do their best.

Bertrand Eckelhoefer

ALVORD EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION
social studies teacher

I say a good principal is one with integrity, a strong sense of character; one who is secure in his or her identity, so that they don't constantly look for petty political victories and power games to assert their influence and dominance so that they may feel more secure about themselves. Good principals — effective principals — are often unpopular because they will consistently do what's right, and what's right is often what's difficult and what no one else wants to do or face. This magazine's look into the role of the principal is well due.

Tyra Weis

PRESIDENT OF ASSOCIATED
POMONA TEACHERS
teacher

Main Ingredients:

- One part **educator** who is genuinely interested in helping students succeed and fostering the value of lifelong learning.
- One part **communicator** who sets realistic expectations and provides clear directions after soliciting and listening to staff ideas and opinions.
- One part **motivator** of students, families and staff.

Mix the above ingredients together with generous helpings of defense of teacher time, fairness, honesty, integrity, kindness, maturity, support and teamwork. Season with collaboration and trust. Serve liberally and enjoy!

More than half of principals had been in the job five years or less.

53 percent were principals in their current schools for three years or less.

Principals admitted that prior to becoming principals, they had little experience with “management functions” at their job.

66 percent said they had little or no experience in managing a school site budget.

Principals had taken on increasing responsibilities due to budget cuts and often lacked the time and resources to provide instructional leadership to their teachers.

Nearly 40 percent reported having minimal experience performing formal teacher evaluations.

For additional research conducted about principals, see:

“School Leadership Study: Developing Successful Principals” by Stephen Davis, Linda Darling-Hammond, Michelle LaPointe and Debra Meyerson, 2005, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.
www.srnleads.org/data/pdfs/sls/sls_rr.pdf

“A Possible Dream: Retaining California Teachers So All Students Learn” by Ken Futerick, 2007, CSU Center for Teacher Quality.
www.calstate.edu/teacherquality/documents/possible_dream_exec.pdf

MORE INFO

Visit www.cta.org/goodprincipals to read what other members said about what makes a good principal.



► **LEARN MORE ABOUT CTA'S COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAMS.**
WWW.CTA.ORG/PARENTS-AND-COMMUNITY/COMMUNITY-OUTREACH

BMOC PROGRAM HELPS CLOSE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD Chris Krebs will never forget his field trip to UC Berkeley. The eighth-grader was amazed at how large a university could be and how much there really is to learn after high school.

"I liked the library, because I like to read a lot," says Krebs, a student at Bret Harte Middle School in Oakland. "I learned from the visit that college is important. Before that, I didn't think it was important and didn't want to go, but now I do."

Krebs' inspirational visit to a university was a field trip that was sponsored by the Boys and Men of Color (BMOC) program at his school site. The BMOC program was created by CTA's Community Outreach and Human Rights departments and is funded by a grant from The California Endowment with the goal of closing the achievement gap. BMOC students visit colleges and community businesses, engage in community service, and listen to guest speakers with inspiring stories. CTA members and staff involved in the program serve as role models and mentors by supervising fun, educational outings and events outside of the regular school day. Parents are involved, too, volunteering for field trips and activities. Founded three years ago, the BMOC program is also in place at Markham Elementary School in Oakland and Hillcrest Drive Elementary School in South Central Los Angeles. Topics discussed at BMOC meet-

ings include conflict resolution, health and nutrition, and good decision-making.

Krebs says that the program has influenced him to work harder. "The teachers in there push me to be on the honor roll," he says. "I used to be bad and sent out of class, but now I'm mostly staying in class and doing all my homework."

The program was recently studied by Mary Kreger, a senior researcher at Philip R. Lee Institute for Health Policy Studies at UC San Francisco. She found that



Nikita Gibbs

One little boy told me he was going to drop out, but after a visit to San Jose State, he now wants to go to college.

Nikita Gibbs, Oakland Education Association

students in BMOC programs had increased reading scores by 5 percent in Oakland schools after three years, and to a lesser degree in Los Angeles, where the program has been in place for only two years.

CTA members involved in BMOC believe the program is making a big difference.

"I have really seen changes with the students. A lot of them are more focused," says Nikita Gibbs, a third-grade teacher who coordinates the program at Markham Elementary School. "One little boy told me he

was going to drop out, but after a visit to San Jose State, he now wants to go to college."

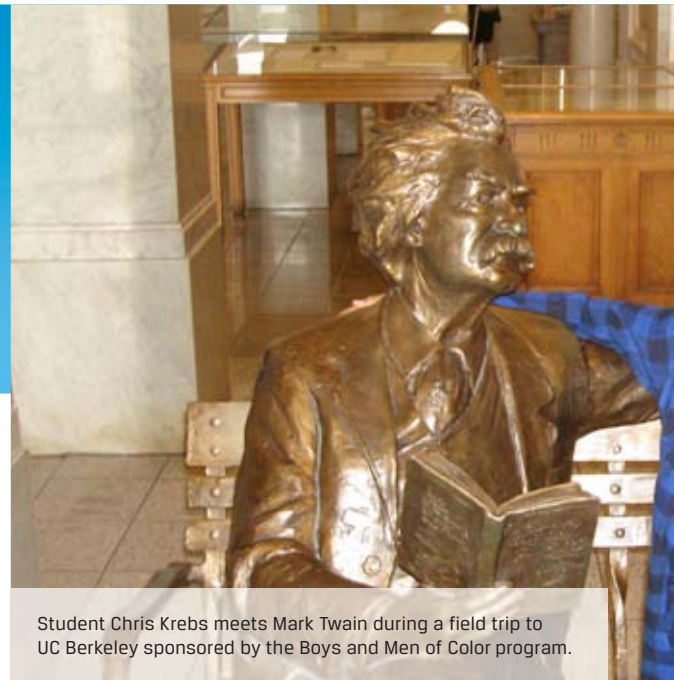
Gibbs, a member of the Oakland Education Association (OEA), decided to become involved because she wants to help close the achievement gap.

"I believe we are in a state of emergency with our African American and Latino boys," she says. "I see the achievement gap getting wider, and programs that are geared

toward motivating boys of color to be successful are the key."

Sonia Martin-Solis, a second-grade teacher at Hillcrest Drive Elementary School in Los Angeles who has helped chaperone field trips, says the program has improved the behavior and attitudes of participants.

"They learn a lot about one another and seem to be much more tolerant of each other — and also the other kids at school," says the United Teachers Los Angeles member. "They are much more accepting of each other and willing to have conversations with



Student Chris Krebs meets Mark Twain during a field trip to UC Berkeley sponsored by the Boys and Men of Color program.



Photo by David Hernandez

each other instead of reverting to an altercation. They are much more willing to talk things out.”

She is especially pleased to see African American and Latino boys getting along. “They are seeing the commonalities instead of the differences,” she says. “They realize both groups have had to overcome common struggles as far as poverty and stereotypes of who they are and what they represent based on the color of their skin or language.”

Keith Brown, an OEA member and coordinator for the BMOB program at Bret Harte Middle School in Oakland, also sees the BMOB program having an impact.

At UC Berkeley, says Brown, students toured dorms, visited classrooms and libraries, and talked to students of color. By talking to college students “who looked just like them,” the youngsters saw higher education as being accessible, desirable and fun, and understood there can be a balance between



Keith Brown

receiving an education and also having a social life.

“We also visited Electronic Arts, a Pixar video game company that produces popular video games students recognized,” says Brown. “It made a powerful impression for them to see that skills are needed to produce these games and that it’s possible to have a career doing something you enjoy. They learned that a job at Electronic Arts requires ‘hard skills’ like math and science, and ‘soft skills’ like being a good listener or team building. After this, our students saw the connections between working and school and why education is important.”

Teachers who head BMOB at individual school sites are in charge of selecting students for the program. According to the program’s criteria, these students must have a C average, attend school more than 80 percent of the time, and have minor behavior issues.

“We select kids who are kind of in the middle of the road,” says Brown. “Often, as educators, we put a lot of energy and focus on students who have severe discipline issues or students who are very far below basic, or those who excel at school. But students somewhere in between sometimes

Positive changes

More than **71 percent** of the boys and youth in the program demonstrated a positive change in attitude toward teachers, school personnel, and school.

More than **76 percent** of the boys and youth increased their connection to a trusted adult in school.

More than **72 percent** of the boys and young men understood that some adults have high expectations of them. Between year 1 of the program and year 2, this increased 40 percent.

89 percent of the boys and young men increased their “goal setting” related to school and career.

More than **79 percent** of the boys and young men increased their understanding of the importance of staying in school as it relates to future meaningful careers and education.

(Source: Mary Kreger. Compiled from a survey of 14 adults working with the Boys and Men of Color program.)

don’t get the nurturing and attention they deserve. They can be swayed through peer pressure not to take school seriously or to drop out or get involved in gang activity. It’s important to really mentor and cultivate those students who might otherwise get neglected in our own school system.”

Brown says being involved with BMOB is a way of giving back to the community. Years ago, when he was a student at the middle school where he now teaches, he had the opportunity to visit UC Berkeley, meet with college students and take summer classes.

“A program like this had a positive impact on me, and I feel good about having the opportunity to provide a similar program for black and Latino students at my school,” he says. “I think programs like this are essential to show that teachers — and unions — are first and foremost when it comes to supporting public education and taking an active role in fostering community connections to provide powerful learning.”

By **Sherry Posnick-Goodwin**

MORE INFO

For more information or to start a BMOB group on your campus, contact the CTA Human Rights/Community Outreach departments at (650) 552-5313.

Diane Ravitch tells California educators: Get involved!

Ravitch on the issues

- “ Never has there been such a sustained assault on public education. ”
- “ Merit pay cannot work because schools are collaborative by nature. Schools are communities. Merit pay destroys collaboration. ”
- “ We must stand up for public education where the doors of the school house are open to all, where no one has to enter a lottery to get in. ”
- “ Professionals should be prepared as professionals and treated as professionals. Reform will never succeed without the enthusiastic support of the people who do the work every day in the schools. ”
- “ It’s time for fresh thinking, time to draw upon the wisdom of those who teach in our schools and lead our schools every day. ”
- “ Our success [as a country] is due to what we’ve done with our public schools. We cannot afford to lose them. We must improve them, not privatize them. ”

AT A TIME WHEN so many educators are demoralized and under attack by corporate reformers and privatizers, Diane Ravitch’s message proved to be “chicken soup for the teacher’s soul” for throngs who turned out for her speaking tour of California in January.

Once an ardent supporter of the ill-conceived No Child Left Behind Act, the New York University education professor made headlines across the country in recent years for doing a complete about-face on NCLB, testing, accountability, pay-for-performance, and the merits of charter schools. In the process, she has become a hero to millions of beleaguered public school teachers across the country.

One of those teachers was Erik Knudson, second vice president of the Sacramento City Teachers Association (SCTA), who conceived the idea of inviting Ravitch to California more than a year ago.

“Somehow, we’ve been branded as what’s wrong with education, and not seen as student mentors and advocates. Being demonized like that incited me to take action,” Knudson says.

With the support of SCTA, Knudson reached out to the Capital Service Center Council and eight other Sacramento area chapters:

Elk Grove, Twin Rivers, San Juan, Folsom-Cordova, Stockton, Lodi, Davis, and Washington. Each in turn made commitments to turn out their members for the event. But even a seasoned speaker like Ravitch was startled when more than 3,500 educators and community members showed up at the Sacramento Convention Center on a rainy Friday night to hear her.

Though the event was billed as “An Evening with Diane Ravitch,” several other supporters of public education joined her, including Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson, Stanford University education professor Linda Darling-Hammond, and Anthony Cody, a teacher and blogger for *Education Week* — all of whom shared her



Diane Ravitch speaks at Herbst Theatre in San Francisco.

Photo by Scott Buschman

words of encouragement for teachers.

Ravitch also spoke to smaller but equally enthusiastic audiences earlier in the week at Herbst Theatre in San Francisco, where the event was co-sponsored by CTA and the Cali-

formia Federation of Teachers and hosted by United Educators of San Francisco, and at Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles, sponsored by United Teachers Los Angeles.

The best-selling author of *The Death and Life of the Great American School Sys-*

tem, Ravitch maintains a breakneck schedule even while on a lecture tour, as CTA Vice President Eric Heins discovered while spending time with her in Sacramento and in San Francisco, where she met with local education leaders before her speaking engagement.

“Spending the day with Dr. Ravitch was inspiring,” Heins says. “Whether she was talking in a small group, to a crowded room, or to her 24,000 Twitter followers, she challenged us to fight back against unproven reforms and for what we know works in our classrooms.”

Ravitch, who learned on this trip that she is the same age as Gov. Jerry Brown, said she’s realized she’s at a point in her life where she’s not afraid to speak out to critics.

Speak out, blog, write letters, use social media, run for office, and if none of that works, engage in direct action.

Diane Ravitch



Vanessa Sheared, dean of the CSU Sacramento College of Education, Diane Ravitch, and SCTA Second Vice President Erik Knudson.

story continued on page 34 ►

CTA member finalist for National Teacher of the Year

REBECCA MIELIWOCKI, a 2012 California Teacher of the Year from Los Angeles County, has been selected as one of four finalists nationwide for the 2012 National Teacher of the Year.

“I am elated that Rebecca, who is remarkably gifted and innovative, is being considered as the nation’s next top teacher,” says state Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson. “I nominated her for this prestigious title because she is an inspiration to other teachers as well as her students, who are learning and succeeding due to her tremendous classroom skill.”

Mieliwocki (pronounced like Milwaukee) was named in November as one of five California Teachers of the Year. Her selection as a national finalist was announced in January by the Council of Chief State School Offi-

cers (CCSSO), a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education.



Rebecca Mieliwocki

Mieliwocki, a Burbank Teachers Association member, has been teaching for more than 13 years, including nine years at Burbank Middle School, where she teaches general education and Gifted and Talented Education classes. She is faculty chair and serves on the school leadership team. Her lessons are infused with a wide array of technical tools that, as her principal says, “brings lessons to life.”

She earned a B.A. in speech communication at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, and a single subject clear credential in English at CSU Northridge.

“It is amazing and yet profoundly humbling to have been nominated by my colleagues for Teacher of the Year,” says Mieliwocki. “I am not the best teacher in California — but I am a reflection of all of us who have devoted ourselves to teaching.”

Mieliwocki and three other finalists from Florida, Alabama, and the Department of Defense Education Activity agency in Italy were chosen by a national selection committee representing the major national education organizations. The winner will be announced in April.

MORE INFO

For more information on the four 2012 National Teacher of the Year finalists, visit the CCSSO website at www.ccsso.org.



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LIVE IT.®



Letters our members have received from appreciative students continue to roll in to the "Thank You, Teacher!" Project, so we thought we'd share a few more, including a poem! We're finding that our teachers, counselors, librarians, and education support professionals not only hear from students, they hear from parents, which is always a sign that they are involved in their children's education. Take a look at this month's offering.

And if you are interested in sharing notes you've received from students, send them to the "Thank You, Teacher!" Project, CTA Communications Department, 1705 Murchison Drive, Burlingame, CA 94010, or to dmartin@cta.org.

LISA WILANDER, a member of the College of the Desert Faculty Association, received a poem from a student she counseled.

“ If I could teach you, teacher,
I'd teach you how much more
You have accomplished
Than you think you have.
I'd show you the seeds
You planted years ago,
that are now coming into
bloom.

I'd reveal to you the young
minds that have expanded
under your care.
The hearts that are serving others
because they had you as a role model.

If I could teach you, teacher,
I'd show you the positive
effect you've had on me
and my life.

Your homework is
To know your value to the world.
To acknowledge it.
To believe it.
Thank you, Teacher.

LEIGH ANN MCCREADY, a veteran Milpitas Teachers Association member, has kept one letter of thanks from a parent since 1985, when she was a student teacher being supervised by her father, a 39-year teacher. Her dad told her to hang on to it because there would be days when she needed it. Apparently it was advice taken.

She writes, "The letter still hangs on a bulletin board in my home office, and there have been days in the past 26 years that I have needed its gentle reminder. There are other thank-you notes that I've collected over the years, but this one continues to remind me why I chose this field."

“ Because you took the time to let me know how Linda is doing in your class (which makes me very proud of her), I thought I'd let you know how well you are doing with her. I can remember when Linda hated history. She now comes home and tells me how interesting you make it. She tells me she's not bored anymore and that she really likes it! You must be one good teacher. Keep up the good work. We need you!

ANN SIMS, a Lake Elsinore Teachers Association member, keeps a letter from one of her eighth-grade students framed on her wall. She says, "It reminds me how very important my job is and how the slightest word or look can ultimately change my students' lives forever. Continually, my students humble me as a person and a teacher."

“ I was waiting for you to finally drop me, to finally give up on the lost cause I thought I always was. I was waiting ever so impatiently for that bomb to just drop, just as it had so many times before. But you didn't let it. You refused to give up the hope you had for me. Because of this, I finally, for once in my life, have hope for myself.

When I was going in all the wrong directions, you gently showed me the right way. When I was caving in, you were always there to put my pieces back in place. You not only helped fix me, you gave the necessary tools to help me deal in the future.

P.S. You have helped inspire me to fulfill my dream of being a writer. One of these days, you are going to see one of my books sitting on a bookshelf in the library, just wait!

Calexico pajama party for literacy

ABOUT 150 CHILDREN in pajamas assembled for the 13th annual Camarena Memorial Library Pajama Party in January. The event in Calexico was sponsored by community project grants from CTA and Associated Calexico Teachers to promote literacy. The grants will also help pay for similar free events at the library throughout the year with crafts, games, snacks, raffles, and every child taking home a free book. Another event is planned in March to celebrate Read Across America. "It's an opportunity to give back to our community and show that we're supporting literacy," says CTA member Chad Cooper.



Photos by Lizeth Legaspi and Judith Mazon



Illustration © 2011 by Barry Chung

Get ready for Read Across America

GET PREPARED for Read Across America this March with *Gabby and Gator*, written and illustrated by James Burks, and *Boris Ate a Thesaurus*, written by Neil Klayman and illustrated by Barry Chung. Established to promote literacy, Read Across America is celebrated each year on or near **March 2**, the birthday of children's author Dr. Seuss. To plan an event at your school consult your librarian, who may have event ideas and resources to offer; invite guest readers to visit your school; and share your plans with colleagues. For more info on Read Across America, visit www.cta.org/RAA.

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► LOOK FOR NEW COVERAGE OF THE NOVEMBER ELECTION AT WWW.CTA.ORG IN THE COMING MONTHS.

CTA STATE COUNCIL PREPARES FOR NOVEMBER ELECTION, INCLUDING SUPPORT FOR GOVERNOR'S TAX INITIATIVE

FOLLOWING A THOUGHTFUL and spirited debate, CTA's State Council of Education accepted the recommendation of its Political Involvement Committee and voted to support the governor's tax plan, which provides additional funding for schools and pays down the state's debt.

The governor's initiative, called the Schools and Local Public Safety Protection Act of 2012, raises about \$7 billion annually for education and other essential services by raising income taxes on the wealthy and instituting a temporary half-cent sales tax hike. In signing on to support the initiative, CTA joins what promises to be a broad coalition of labor, education and business groups that have gotten behind the proposal, including the Service Employees International Union.

Following the Council meeting Jan. 29, CTA President Dean E. Vogel stated: "Educators know that California cannot continue to cut its way out of ongoing budget problems. We also know that not everyone in California is paying their fair share, and that's why we are supporting the governor's tax proposal, which taxes the wealthiest Californians in order to bring additional revenue to our schools, colleges and other essential public services.

"The governor's initiative is the only initiative that provides additional revenues for our classrooms, closes the state budget deficit, and guarantees local communities will receive funds to pay for the realignment of local health and public safety services that the Legislature approved last year. It's time to put California back on track, and this initiative is the best way to do that. It's the right choice for our students and their families, our communities and our state."

In voting to support the governor's ini-

tiative, State Council adhered to budget principles it had adopted previously for tax initiatives. Those criteria are that any tax initiative approved is progressive in nature and promotes tax fairness; that it funds public education and other essential services; that it generates \$8 billion to \$10 billion and helps close the state budget deficit; that it is supported by a broad coalition; and that it's winnable.

The debate in Council centered on both the governor's initiative and the California



CTA President Dean E. Vogel addresses State Council.

CTA Photo by Terry Ng

Close-up on the Schools and Local Public Safety Protection Act of 2012



Betty Forrester of United Teachers Los Angeles speaks about the governor's tax initiative.

Funding Restoration Act, which is sponsored by the California Federation of Teachers and the Courage Campaign and relies on increasing taxes of millionaires and high earners. While several speakers spoke passionately and eloquently for the CFT initiative because it would require more from millionaires, Council was persuaded by arguments that the governor's initiative had the best chance of winning because of the broad support it is likely to receive; that it freed up money for higher education and other essential services; and that it paid down the wall of debt the state must address.

Council also elected not to support a third initiative sponsored by wealthy activist Molly Munger. Her "Our Children, Our Future" initiative wouldn't bring funds to higher education, nor would it help reduce the state deficit.

The early support for the governor's tax initiative will allow CTA to prepare for other

important campaign issues, particularly the "paycheck deception" initiative, which will involve a large-scale member mobilization. Unlike two previous initiatives, the measure on the November ballot doesn't just affect CTA and public employee unions, but all unions in the state, and goes straight to their ability to give their members a voice in politics. It prohibits any contributions collected via payroll deduction (i.e., member dues) to ballot measure committees as well as independent expenditures supporting or

THEY KNOW THAT AS A UNION OF EDUCATORS WE WILL ALWAYS PUT STUDENTS BEFORE PROFITS AND LEARNING BEFORE MANDATES.

Dean E. Vogel

- The initiative is called the **Schools and Local Public Safety Protection Act of 2012** and has been officially titled: "Temporary Taxes to Fund Education. Guaranteed Local Public Safety Funding. Initiative Constitutional Amendment."
- Its proponents must gather **807,615 valid signatures** from California voters by June 18.
- It would raise as much as **\$6.9 billion** annually through 2015-16 and boost school funding.
- The temporary tax funds would go to K-12 schools and community colleges in line with the ratios established by **Proposition 98**.
- Paying for realignment would free up **\$3 billion for higher education** — CSU and UC — and other essential services.
- Funding would also ensure local governments the promised funding for public safety services realigned from state to local governments.
- The measure would increase personal income taxes on annual earnings over **\$250,000** for five years. It would increase the sales and use tax by one-half cent for four years.

opposing state and local candidates and ballot measures.

"Defeating this must be the top priority for the entire labor community, not just us," Vogel said. "If this initiative passes, we won't be able to advocate for our profession or our state — but corporations would be able to lobby for their interests. We get taken out of the picture. Corporations get the whole show."

He continued, "If we left it up to the CEOs, how long do you think we'd have a 40-hour work week, a secure retirement, and safe working conditions — all things our union and others fought hard for? Those

ACTION

behind this deceptive initiative aren't seeking to protect your voice as an individual; they are seeking to annihilate it. If I sound paranoid, that's because I know what they are after. They are after us. They know that as a union of educators we will always put students before profits and learning before mandates."

To help launch the upcoming campaign, State Council members were invited to be filmed giving short messages about why it was important for CTA to be politically involved.

Dennis Kelly and Susan Solomon, president and secretary of United Educators of San Francisco, each talked about the UESF-sponsored Proposition A, a parcel tax approved by voters in 2010 that raises \$28 million per year. The new funding has allowed the district to recruit and retain quality teachers with increases in base pay, bonuses for working in hard-to-staff schools and in hard-to-fill subject areas, and retention bonuses.

"That parcel tax directly affects the quality of education in the district, but without being able to use our union dues, we wouldn't have been able to conduct that campaign," Kelly said.

In addition, the November ballot may contain a spending cap initiative to cut school funding and limit future state spending, and an initiative that threatens pensions. It will also include the presidential candidates.

Of the upcoming campaign, Vogel said, "Losing is not an option for this election, and victory isn't going to be easy. But together, we have a powerful voice and tremendous energy and a successful track record. While the attacks on us seem to be coming from all sides these days, know this: They wouldn't be attacking us if they weren't scared of us. And they should be. We are about to go to battle for the future of this organization and our profession."

By **Dina Martin**



CTA's State Council convenes in Los Angeles in January.

CTA Photo by Terry Ng

IF WE LEFT IT UP TO THE CEOs, HOW LONG DO YOU THINK WE'D HAVE A 40-HOUR WORK WEEK, A SECURE RETIREMENT, AND SAFE WORKING CONDITIONS — ALL THINGS OUR UNION AND OTHERS FOUGHT HARD FOR?

Dean E. Vogel

In other action, State Council:

- Elected NEA Directors Colleen Briner-Schmidt (District 5), Gerri Gandolfo (District 7), Karl Kildow (District 8), Eric Padget (District 9), and Gilda Maria Bloom (District 16).
- Elected Loren Scott to the CTA/ABC Committee (District J-LA).
- Welcomed this year's **Read Across America** honorary co-chairs James Burks, Neil Klayman and Barry Chung, the authors and illustrators of *Gabby and Gator* and *Boris Ate a Thesaurus*. The annual Read Across America celebration takes place on March 2.
- Greeted Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship winner **Cathy Creasia**, a classroom teacher and member of United Teachers Los Angeles.
- Congratulated the **San Ramon Valley Education Association**, winner of the Jose Colmenares Award for Outstanding Chapter Communications, for its successful campaign to elect three school board members in a highly contested race.
- Approved a resolution that CTA will take every step necessary to combat the threatened elimination of **Early Childhood Education (ECE)** and all preschool programs.
- Endorsed and called upon local chapters to support the Occupy movement's Statewide Week of Action in Defense of Public Education, March 1-8, 2012, including the rally March 5 at the state Capitol.
- Took an "Oppose" position on the **Government Spending Limit Act of 2012**.
- Approved candidate recommendations for the state Legislature and U.S. Congress in the June 5 primary.

Bargaining updates around the state

ALAMEDA EDUCATION ASSOCIATION members had a fruitless Jan. 30 session with a state mediator over their proposals for raises and better benefits — proposals which merely match what the superintendent received. The dispute was then certified to be heard by a neutral fact-finder under state law soon. The fact-finder will offer a non-binding resolution of the bargaining impasse in Alameda Unified School District, which continues to keep millions in reserves rather than invest in its educators.

ALUM ROCK EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION members in San Jose have been bargaining a successor collective bargaining agreement for over a year. The battle so far has included AREA winning a favorable Public Employment Relations Board settlement of an unfair labor practice charge over the district illegally recording bargaining sessions without the union's knowledge. While AREA members have had no raises for several years, the superintendent recently received a \$4,000 raise and some administrators received dubious longevity stipends.

BLOCHMAN TEACHERS ASSOCIATION in Santa Maria won a new salary schedule structure that increases pay 2 to 13 percent depending on where members are on the schedule, and adds more pay for additional credits and a master's degree.

BURBANK TEACHERS ASSOCIATION members ratified a tentative agreement in December that includes restoration language and no permanent cuts.

FAMILY PARTNERSHIP CHARTER TEACHERS ASSOCIATION in San Luis Obispo County settled an unfair labor practice complaint against their employer by negotiating a continuation of step and column increases and retroactive pay, and incorporated part-time unit members into their bargaining unit and contract.

GLENDALE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION reached a tentative agreement Jan. 12, which rescinds two furlough days for this school year and postpones one until next school year.

PEABODY CHARTER EDUCATION ASSOCIATION in Santa Barbara settled for a 2 percent salary increase retroactive to July 1, 2011.

SAN JOSE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION and the San Jose Unified School District have begun a fundamentally different bargaining process. The approach is a collaborative and constructive partnership which will focus on the profession and professionalism of teachers. Both parties agree that successful interaction between teachers and students in the classroom is paramount.

TAHOE TRUCKEE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION is working to see that the district makes cuts in non-classroom areas before considering any concessions. Teachers took five furlough days last year and are resolved not to take any further cuts this year, especially when the district has a healthy 24 percent reserve. TTEA expects to reach out to parents and the community in an effort to tell their story.

TEHACHAPI ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS negotiated the restoration of four furlough days and pay.



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- Professional Development/ Salary Point Coursework

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

extension.ucsd.edu/education

5011-1042

Governor's 'grim' budget proposal shows need for new revenues

California ranks:

45TH

IN STUDENTS PER SCHOOL NURSE (2010)
2,187 STUDENTS PER SCHOOL NURSE

47TH

IN PER-PUPIL FUNDING (2012)

48TH

IN CLASS SIZE (2009–10) [LATEST DATA AVAILABLE]
19.8 STUDENTS PER TEACHER

50TH

IN STUDENTS PER COUNSELOR (2009–10)
810 STUDENTS PER COUNSELOR

ALREADY REELING FROM more than \$20 billion in cuts, California's public schools could suffer another \$4.8 billion in "triggered cuts" if voters reject Gov. Jerry Brown's planned November initiative to raise income taxes on the state's wealthiest citizens and temporarily boost sales and use taxes by one-half cent.

The governor unveiled his proposed 2012-13 budget at the state Capitol Jan. 5 and warned that the spending levels in the fiscal plan would be much lower without the income from the November initiative.

With the new revenues, schools would avoid the additional cuts, and the state's chronic budget deficit of \$9.2 billion would be completely eliminated by June 2013. That deficit had reached more than \$33 billion when Gov. Brown came into office.

The governor's ballot measure was cleared for signature gathering by Secretary of State Debra Bowen on Jan. 18.

"Our schools and colleges have already been cut more than \$20 billion in the last

four years, and that doesn't include the latest round of millions in midyear cuts to colleges, universities, and home-to-school transportation," says CTA President Dean E. Vogel. "We already rank 46th in per-pupil funding — additional cuts will not help us move in the right direction. This is another stark reminder that a state with the ninth-largest economy in the world has lost its way.

"California can do better, and CTA members are committed to working with parents, our communities, the governor and Legislature on a state budget that guarantees a better future for all of us."

The governor told reporters that he regretted the fact that schools would suffer still more cuts should the ballot measure fail, and the cuts would fall heavily on schools because education is such a large part of the state budget.

While CTA is vitally concerned about the funding shortfalls that have harmed students and educators, it is also pointing to elements of the governor's budget that could



Gov. Brown meets with representatives of the Burbank Teachers Association.

Governor meets with educators

THE SAME DAY Gov. Jerry Brown delivered the second State of the State address of his term, he paid an after-school visit to Bret Harte Elementary School to meet with representatives of the Burbank Teachers Association (BTA). Brown had contacted CTA the previous week, saying he was eager to meet with teachers for a candid discussion on education issues and for reaction to his budget proposal.

The governor met with BTA building reps for an hour, discussing a number of subjects including budget cuts, testing, class size, and the critical need to pass his tax proposal to prevent deeper cuts to education and other services. He was receptive to many educator concerns, including the out-of-control impact of testing and test preparation.

BTA President Lori Adams pressed the governor to do something about funding cuts and the current practice of school districts using almost-always-wrong three-year budget projections to make current decisions about cuts. "Districts operate out of fear," said Adams. "And they end up keeping resources we need now out of the classroom."

Although the meeting was closed to the media, afterward the governor was mobbed by a throng of TV cameras and reporters. He shared many of the BTA member concerns he had heard, proffering a district school testing schedule he'd been given as evidence that something needs to be done to cut back on the intrusion of standardized testing on regular instruction.

CTA Board member Bonnie Shatun, who teaches first grade at Harte, praised the governor for really listening to teachers. "He was very engaged in what BTA members had to say about issues like class size, lack of materials, and an overemphasis on testing," she said. "He argued his own point of view where we disagree, but he clearly understands that the people in the classroom have a better understanding than bureaucrats of what's needed to improve student achievement."

By Frank Wells

We already rank 46th in per-pupil funding – additional cuts will not help us move in the right direction. This is another stark reminder that a state with the ninth-largest economy in the world has lost its way.

Dean E. Vogel

exacerbate the problem. “CTA is gravely concerned about the governor’s proposed new school funding formula, which eliminates the state’s successful class size reduction program,” says Vogel. “This change allows districts to increase class sizes even further. Squeezing more and more students

story continued on page 36 ▶

Key elements of the governor’s proposal

The governor’s budget would:

- Keep \$4.8 billion in the plan for schools for 2012-13 if voters approve the tax initiative. Should education lose the funding, it would represent an equivalent of closing schools for three weeks, the governor’s staff told reporters.
- Fully fund the Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA).
- Consolidate most categorical funding by employing a questionable “weighted pupil funding formula” that would have the effect of eliminating the class size reduction program, among other things.
- Decimate child care funding by requiring families to meet federal welfare-to-work participation requirements. It would also implement other child care cuts.
- Provide no cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) or student growth funding for community colleges.

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“They’re not going to stop me, and they’re not going to shut me up,” she said during a Sacramento reception with educators, deans of nearby schools of education, and local and state officials.

Corporate reformers have two goals in mind, she later told a rapt audience at the convention center: privatizing schools and “de-professionalizing” teachers.

Although the Gates, Broad and Dell foundations have money and political power on their side, “what they don’t have is the truth, or evidence that their reforms work,” she said.

Despite the backing of big-moneyed corporate reformers, proposals to fire teachers

based on the test scores of their students don’t address the fact that the teaching profession *already* loses 50 percent of new teachers in their first five years of employment, nor do they take into consideration that “the new teachers might be worse than the ones that are fired,” Ravitch said.

Merit pay has also proved to be a failure. Ravitch cited a Vanderbilt University study that concluded merit pay alone does not raise student test scores and achievement. It hasn’t worked in Washington, D.C., or in New York, which spent \$56 million on a disastrous merit pay program.

Despite the assaults on the teaching profession, Ravitch pointed to some posi-

tive developments coming from the work of education advocates in California, including former Oakland teacher turned education blogger Anthony Cody, the “best voice for teachers in the nation”; Tom Torlakson, the “wisest state superintendent of public instruction”; and Jerry Brown, “the only governor in the nation who gives a damn about public education.”

But nothing will change, Ravitch said, unless teachers get involved.

“Speak out, blog, write letters, use social media, run for office, and if none of that works, engage in direct action,” she said. “It’s time to organize, demonstrate and agitate.”

By Dina Martin

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Budget

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into California's already overcrowded classrooms will not improve student learning."

The governor's unveiling of his budget proposal is the first step in the state's effort to craft a new spending plan prior to the July 1 start of the new fiscal year. Lawmakers will study and make changes to the draft budget through mid-May, when the governor will release an updated budget proposal built on newer revenue and expenditure estimates. Following the release of that May Revision, lawmakers will have until June 15 to send the governor a budget bill. He has until June 30 to sign it into law.

All during that period, CTA and Education Coalition groups will be pressing lawmakers to increase funding for schools and to eliminate provisions of the draft spending plan that would be counterproductive.

By Len Feldman

AT PRESS TIME, a CTA-backed bill that would restore \$248 million in home-to-school transportation funds was awaiting the governor's signature. The funding had been cut because of triggers in the state budget. Senate Bill 81 cleared both houses of the Legislature with bipartisan support. The bill would restore the entire remnant of this year's funding for the program, which underwrites busing that is particularly vital to rural school districts, where students travel many miles to school. CTA will press for passage of the governor's tax initiative to prevent further cuts from occurring in future years.

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Analyzing hate

Researcher and educator Brian Levin examines the mechanisms that propel extremist groups.

GOING TO EXTREMES is nothing new for Brian Levin, a criminal justice professor at CSU San Bernardino. As the director of the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism, he advises top government officials, educators and lawmakers about terrorism and extremist groups. He has talked to racist skinheads and members of the Ku Klux Klan and Hamas to learn hater monger philosophies, and has met with hate crime victims. He tracks websites that spread hate online so he can predict trends and potential threats to others.

A civil rights attorney and a court-certified expert on extremism, Levin has appeared on every major network and on cable TV news broadcasts to discuss extremism, civil rights and criminal law, and has authored or edited numerous books, articles and training manuals. Previously, he served as associate director of legal affairs of the Southern Poverty Law Center's Klanwatch/Militia Task Force in Montgomery, Ala.; legal director of the Center for the Study of Ethnic and Racial Violence in Newport Beach; and a New York City cop in the 1980s. Levin founded the center in New Jersey in 1996 before moving it to San Bernardino in 2001, where it serves as a nonpartisan domestic research and policy center that looks at how bigotry, terrorism and hate crimes deny civil or human rights to others based on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or other reasons.

"I've been fortunate to have been able to research and lecture on hate and extremism internationally," says the California Faculty Association member. "As methods of violence become more accepted, lethal and accessible, there will be those who employ it to circum-



Brian Levin teaches a criminal justice class at CSU San Bernardino.

vent democratic methods because they simply lack the rational power of persuasion and a belief in civilized conflict solving. I am particularly concerned that for some on all different sides of the political spectrum, bigotry, falsehoods and violence have become an acceptable way to advance their

By providing information on these [hate crime] issues, it is our hope that all sides of the political spectrum can become engaged.

Brian Levin

cause. Through the power of balanced information and discourse, we intend to stand in their way. The center vigorously opposes violence, bigotry, attacks on democracy, but also censorship by government officials — even when free speech is bigoted, blasphemous and unpatriotic."

Levin reports that record numbers of small, dangerous extremist groups exist today due to technology, a splintering of society, conspiracy theories and fear of the future. The No. 1 target of hate homicides today is the homeless, driven in part by Web videos of "bum fights" and homeless abuse.

Levin has interviewed extremists, includ-

ing deceased neo-Nazi Jeff Hall, a Hamas convict, and Ku Klux Klan members. Sometimes he is treated with open hostility, but more often he finds extremists are pleased that a researcher wants to hear their views. However, most of his research is gathered from monitoring websites, public events and publications of extremist groups.

"By providing information on these [hate crime] issues, it is our hope that all sides of the political spectrum can become engaged," says Levin. "We welcome and post scholarly and professional contributions and links from diverse perspectives — including some that I personally and vigorously disagree with. A key element to the maintenance of our pluralistic democracy is the ability of folks to be exposed to peaceful, nonthreatening, deliberative, intelligent discourse as a way to move forward."

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin
Photo by **Scott Buschman**

MORE INFO

The Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism offers a wealth of online information about hate crimes and extremism at hatemonitor.csusb.edu.



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