

# California EDUCATOR

California Teachers Association June 2009 Volume 13 Issue 9

*"Discovery consists  
of seeing what  
everybody has  
seen and thinking  
what nobody has  
thought."*

Albert Szent-Györgyi

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On the cover: **Palm Springs Teachers Association member and eighth-grade science teacher Mina J. Blazy at Desert Springs Middle School.**  
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# ¡Sí Se Puede! ¿Por Qué No?

BY CTA PRESIDENT DAVID A. SANCHEZ

**A**s we prepare to close out this school year, we can't help but glimpse the tidal wave in the distance headed for public education due to the irresponsible and devastating recent state budget cuts. Our schools and colleges have been subjected to 60 percent of the total budget cuts. These cuts will bankrupt the academic future of California's 9.8 million students in our schools, colleges and universities.

California's economy continues to tumble. State revenues have dropped 17 percent from last year — a loss of more than \$24 billion. And the defeat of the special election ballot measures is forcing even more cuts to education, health care and public safety.

CTA's State Council of Education made the right and courageous decision to support Propositions 1A-1F. We knew it was going to be a difficult campaign from the beginning, as voters were rightfully angry with the governor and the Legislature for failing to do their jobs. The defeat of Prop. 1B was especially disappointing, as it would have guaranteed the repayment of the more than \$9 billion owed to education. But I am so proud of all the work CTA members did and all the phone calls members made during the campaign. CTA has already started legal action to ensure that our schools and community colleges get the money they are owed under the state's minimum school funding law. The defeat of those ballot measures and the growing state deficit led the governor to announce more cuts to schools. These cuts — the fourth round of cuts to education in just 18 months — include \$1.6 billion this school year, and another \$4.6 billion in the fiscal year starting July 1. These are in addition to the crippling \$11.6 billion in cuts made to schools and colleges in February's budget deal. All told, that's nearly \$3,000 per student.

Around the state, art, music, sports and vocational education programs have been cut. Dropout prevention programs, summer school, advanced placement courses and adult education classes have been eliminated. This means students will be facing class sizes of 35 to 40 students next year. College fees are increasing while the state is eliminating grant programs. We can't expect our students to continue to make improvements and meet California's rigorous

education standards when the state refuses to provide the resources necessary to help students succeed. Progress in student achievement made in recent years, including improved test scores and Academic Performance Index (API) ratings, will be impossible to maintain in the midst of devastating program cuts. If the state can't provide adequate funding, it should temporarily suspend the testing and accountability system. More than 27,000 teachers, counselors, nurses and education support professionals have already received layoff notices, and with these additional budget cuts more layoffs are expected. Under a seldom-used provision in the Education Code, some districts have until Aug. 15 to issue a second round of layoffs. CTA is aggressively advocating for our members and students and will continue to do so throughout the summer (*see the "Second-round layoffs assistance" link, next page*).

Earlier this month in Sacramento, CTA organized a number of members to testify at a legislative hearing. These members, joined by others from the Education Coalition, told lawmakers how the cuts to education are destroying the chance for a better future for our students and our state. You can support their testimony by e-mailing your legislators and sharing your story on the CTA website. Legislators need to hear from educators.

More cuts to education and sacrificing our student's future won't solve the state's problems. Increased revenues must be part of the solution. CTA is calling on lawmakers to support majority-vote fee increases, rescind the tax breaks that were given to big business in the February budget agreement, and make it easier for local communities to raise revenues for schools by reducing the vote requirement for passing local parcel taxes. And finally, it's time to reform the state budget process once and for all and reduce the two-thirds vote requirement to pass the state budget. As long as a small minority can hold our state budget and our schools hostage, we're not going to be able to fix the problem.

The future we want for our students and our state can only be achieved by investing in our children today. The education of our students must be the state's top priority if we are going to reach a better future.

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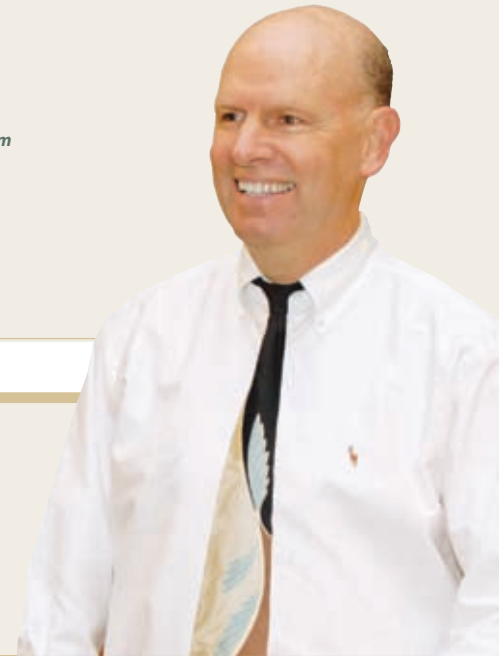
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¡Sí Se Puede! [It can be done! Why not?], words inspired by César Chávez,  
¿Por Qué No? encourage us to remember that, together, we can achieve great things.



**WHAT'S NEW AT CTA.ORG**

- > **Second-round layoffs assistance**  
In the event of second-round layoffs, the two documents "Getting Ready for Second Round Layoffs" and "Learn more about RIFs and what you can do" will offer you valuable information.  
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- > **GLBT Pride Month**  
Celebrate Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Pride Month.  
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*"If we can get beyond the notion of schools as testing factories, then teachers will have the freedom to strive for a higher standard of excellence."*

*Jeff Lantos, Marquez Charter Elementary School*

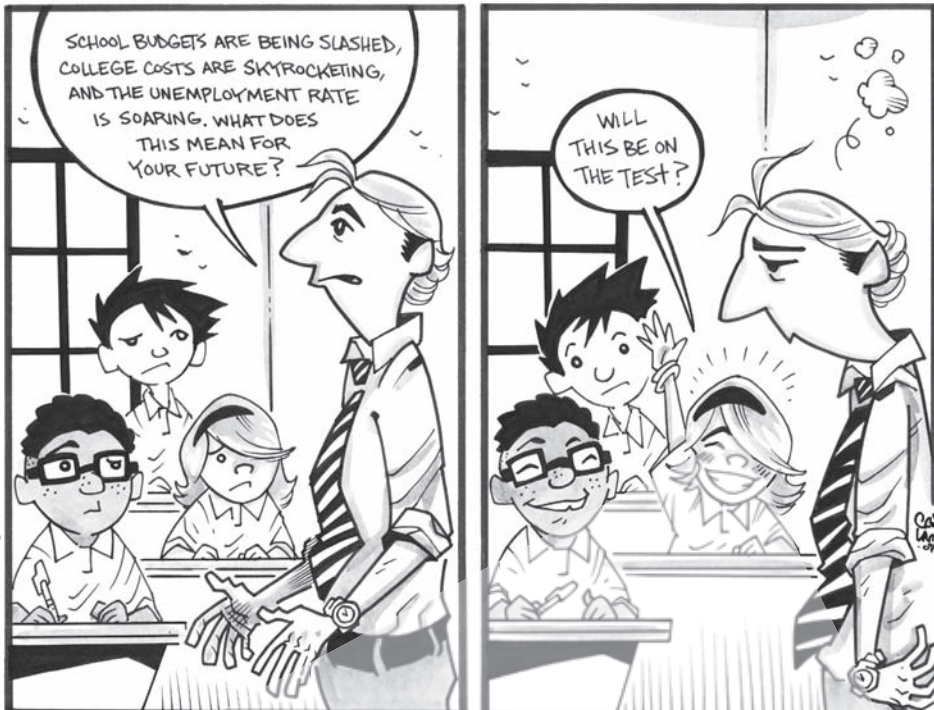
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### Create a cartoon concept

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

# UPDATE

## JUDGE UPHOLDS CERES UNIFIED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION GRADING VICTORY

In the March 2009 issue of *California Educator* we reported that a Superior Court judge ruled earlier this year that administrators violated the law by changing the final grades of 89 students attending Central Valley High School in Ceres ("Court backs teachers' right to determine final grades," page 35). The grade changes were made months after teachers had submitted the grades and without the teachers' consent, based on students' standardized test scores. The judge ruled at that time that the Education Code plainly states that teachers have the right to determine a student's final grade.

In March, the district filed a motion to set aside the judgment and request a new hearing where witnesses could

appear and testify. On May 7, a Superior Court judge denied this motion, and ruled that the original decision would stand unaltered. The district was ordered to return the grades to what they were as filed by the teachers before the results of the CSTs were final; to abandon the board policy that requires teachers to submit to the "grade factor" scheme; and to refrain from developing such a policy in the future.

Administrators at Central Valley



High School recently changed the grades back.

"Perhaps this case will cause other districts to think twice before they attempt to interfere with the teacher's ability to give a true assessment of his/her students' progress," said

Ceres Unified Teachers Association (CUTA) member Susan Engstrom, who fought the grade change with fellow CUTA member Marilyn Wood. "This could have set a dangerous precedent, and nipping it in the bud was the right thing to do."





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# In the age of testing, can schools teach critical thinking?

Are students learning how to think critically?

- (A) Yes, if students perform well on standardized tests.
- (B) No, schools just teach students to fill in the bubbles.
- (C) Sometimes, but not often enough.
- (D) All of the above.

It's a troubling question. Whether students are encouraged to become critical thinkers is a growing concern as pressures mount to raise test scores and NCLB reauthorization is just around the corner. The issue has sparked new conversations about how we measure success and failure, and whether schools are doing an adequate job of teaching students how to think, instead of just mastering multiple choice exams and rote learning.

President Obama has urged states to develop standards "that don't simply measure whether students can fill in a bubble on a test but whether they possess 21st century skills like problem-solving and critical thinking, entrepreneurship and creativity."

Critical thinking hasn't been entirely replaced in California's schools by drill-and-kill instruction and scripted learning, but it's in serious jeopardy, says Enoch Hale, a former high school teacher in Grossmont who is now on a fellowship at the Foundation for Critical Thinking, located in Dillon Beach. >>>



United Teachers Los Angeles member Jeff Lantos uses theatrical "stealth learning" techniques to engage his students at Marquez Charter Elementary School.





Stories by Sherry Posnick-Goodwin • Photos by Scott Buschman

“The California standards state very explicitly that teachers need to actively engage all students in critical thinking in all subject areas,” says Enoch Hale. “But I regularly hear from teachers asking how they can take the time to help students to think critically about content when they have the pressure of teaching to the test. Larger class sizes and funding problems also make it more difficult. Class size is linked to what a teacher can pragmatically accomplish in a classroom.”

“Teaching critical thinking is encouraged, but it’s challenging to do with standardized testing and the pressure we’re under to make it through STAR testing,” agrees Nadine Loza, a social studies teacher at Rowland High School and a member

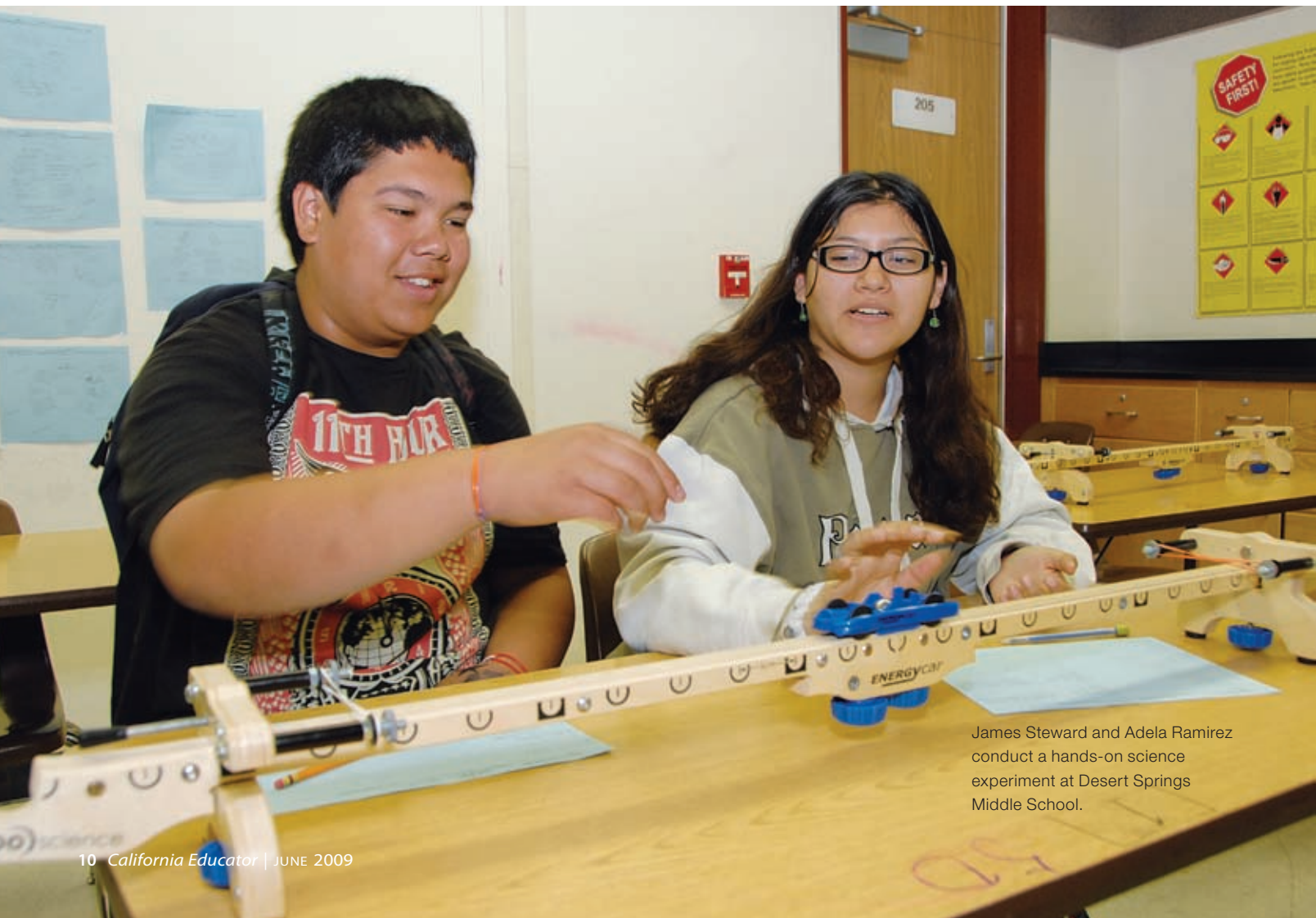
of the Association of Rowland Educators. “A teacher’s ability to incorporate more critical thinking into the classroom is really hurt by that.”

“If we can get beyond the notion of schools as testing factories, then teachers will have the freedom to

strive for a higher standard of excellence,” says Jeff Lantos, a teacher at Marquez Charter Elementary School in Los Angeles and a member of United Teachers Los Angeles. “Part of that higher standard would include the teaching of critical thinking. But endless test preparation has the opposite effect. It reduces inquiry. It goes against Socratic dialogue and can drain much of the passion from teaching and learning.”

#### **What exactly is critical thinking?**

Educators may think they are using critical thinking strategies in the



James Steward and Adela Ramirez conduct a hands-on science experiment at Desert Springs Middle School.

## Hold on to your handouts



"Why do things bounce back when they collide?" Mina J. Blazy asks her eighth-grade science students at Desert Springs Middle School.

Students are given a track, an energy car, silver marbles and rubber bands and told to explore, discover and create. They are not given handouts, even though they will later be given a laboratory handout designed around Newton's laws of motion.

"If you give them the handout first, they feel like they have to answer the questions and they become stuck," explains Blazy. "Then no critical thinking takes place. But if you give them manipulatives or an experiment before you give them the handout, they have the ability to think critically. And they can come up with their own questions based on my questions. But first I let them play and they don't even realize they are experimenting on their own."

The students are discovering Newton's second and third laws of motion, using the equipment while changing the force and the mass of the energy car. They are also having fun.

"There are no wrong or right answers in science," Blazy reminds them. "Our job is to experiment and test. If the answers are inconclusive, students and scientists continue to test until there is a valid explanation."

Blazy, a member of the Palm Springs Teachers Association, wants students to go beyond memorizing formulas. The goal is for them to ask questions and seek the answers. "When students learn how to learn, they become lifelong learners. When educators use a form of critical thinking in the classroom, students become engaged, and there are few behavioral problems.

"A lot of students want to answer the questions on a piece of paper and be finished. If I ask them how to find Newton's third law of motion at the beginning of the school year, most students have developed the habit of using only the textbook or don't realize that there are other sources for finding information. They don't know how to look outside the box. It is absolutely amazing to watch their face beam with gratification when they discover the concepts the same way Newton or any other scientist found the concept."

Some of her students have figured it out: For every action there is a reaction, and the forces of action and reaction always act in opposite directions. When she believes that the essential questions have been discussed verbally and the students can complete the task with little or no guidance, students are then given handouts and begin to work on a more formal lab.

"I think that a lot of politics is pushing testing so much that teachers feel they have to make a choice between the pacing guide and allowing students to become critical thinkers," says Blazy. "But I think we can do both."

To visit Blazy's website, go to [web.mac.com/mblazy/minablazy](http://web.mac.com/mblazy/minablazy).



Mina J. Blazy, a Palm Springs Teachers Association member, helps her eighth-grade science students at Desert Springs Middle School go beyond memorizing formulas to become "lifelong learners."



**LEFT:** California Faculty Association member Christianna Alger, an assistant professor in San Diego State University's School of Teacher Education. **OPPOSITE:** Jack Stanford works with Analuisa Rodriguez in English class at Palm Springs High School.

classroom, but sometimes that is not really the case, says Danny Craig, chair of the Social Studies Department at Capitan High School in Grossmont. "True critical thinking is a structured, formal way of thinking that has rules."

Critical thinking is self-guided, self-disciplined thinking which attempts to reason in a fair-minded way. It is the art of analyzing and evaluating so that when making a decision, an individual can weigh information and come to a logical conclusion without making snap judgments.

Craig, who has attended seminars at the Foundation for Critical Thinking, emphasizes that the art of critical thinking requires teachers and students to think a certain way that is different from the norm. It's about much more than just asking students for their opinion, which may be uninformed, prejudiced or distorted.

"It is higher-order thinking," explains Craig, a member of the Grossmont Education Association. "It teaches you how to ask questions so you can get down to the meat of the material. In history class, for example, you would expect your students to think like a historian. I'd begin by asking, 'How does a historian think? What kinds of questions would a historian ask?' And since it's the social sciences, and you are studying the behavior of human beings, one of the first things you might do is ask, 'How do human beings react in certain situations?' It's important to understand the way

### Some questions a teacher may pose to build a critical-thinking classroom environment

- > **Clarity:** Can you give an example? Can you state that in a different way? Can you elaborate on what you've said? Is there another word or phrase that communicates the idea?
- > **Accuracy:** How can we check to see if that is valid? How do we know that is correct? Where did you get your information? How can we verify or test that?
- > **Depth:** What factors make this a difficult problem? What are some of the complexities inherent in this problem? What are some of the most significant difficulties we need to deal with?
- > **Relevance:** How does that relate to the problem? How does that bear on the question? How does that help us with the issue?
- > **Fairness:** Do you have any vested interest in this issue? Are you sympathetically representing the relevant viewpoints of others?

that human beings think or react so you can understand the context of human behavior in history and historical events."

Critical thinking at its best involves Socratic questioning, based on the premise that it is questions — not answers — that provide the best path to knowledge. And it involves more than the most-often-asked question a teacher poses: "Does everybody understand the material?"

Well-posed questions probe key aspects of critical thinking, such as: **Clarity:** Can you give an example? **Accuracy:** How can we check to see if that is valid? **Depth:** What factors make this a difficult problem? **Relevance:** How does that relate to the problem? **Fairness:** Do I have any

## Model critical thinking for your students



Frame your lessons around essential questions rather than dispensing information, says Christianna Alger, an assistant professor in San Diego State University's School of Teacher Education. "At the simplest level, you can do a lot more questioning and create more space for dialogue in the classroom. Socratic seminars are a great example of ways to foster critical thinking."

Alger, a member of the California Faculty Association, encourages a "healthy level of skepticism," in her students. "Teachers need to model critical thinking rather than putting information out there as though it is 'the truth,'" she says.

She also suggests to her student teachers that they foster their own critical thinking skills by reflecting on their lessons from different points of view. "What are the students thinking? What would their parents think about the lesson? When you have multiple perspectives, you can see where change needs to start."

Alger will be involved in the university's Institute for the Teaching of Critical Thinking Skills, which will be established in the future and recently received \$1.5 million from an anonymous donor.

For more info on Socratic Seminars, visit [www.greece.k12.ny.us/instruction/ela/socraticseminars/overview.htm](http://www.greece.k12.ny.us/instruction/ela/socraticseminars/overview.htm).



vested interest in this issue?

By asking these questions, students are thinking about the information and not just memorizing it. They are synthesizing, internalizing and evaluating it. And because of these things, there is a much better chance that they will remember it.

Lantos defines critical thinking as the ability to make connections. "I'm convinced that when you're listening to good teaching, you hear a familiar refrain," he says. "It goes like this: 'What is the connection between ... and ...?' Teachers need to create an academic environment in which students can sift through the mass of facts being hurled at them and begin to perceive pathways of interconnectedness."

Lantos finds it ironic that students begin learning by making connections. "They're taught to check their subtraction by adding. They can see

## Turn students into teachers



In a normal high school classroom students are expected to do very little and teachers do most of the work, says Jack Stanford, an English teacher at Palm Springs High School. But when you put them to work, amazing things happen.

For example, students went from writing four essays per year to writing 22 without him spending extra hours reading, critiquing and grading them. That's because students are grading each other — and becoming critical thinkers in the process.

Stanford, a Palm Springs Teachers Association member, created an ingenious system where students evaluate one another's essays using a detailed rubric. Writers are judged on whether their argument is convincing, their evidence is compelling, or their paper contains too many errors. Students use code names and usually those doing the grading are in a different period than those being graded. If students don't agree with the grade, they can challenge it, and Stanford has the final say.

"It changes my role from someone who dispenses all the wisdom and knowledge to someone who makes sure that scoring is done correctly," he says. "And it takes a lot of critical thinking skills for students to organize their thoughts and grade each other. The kids like it and I think it helps them. They learn more from this than just turning in an assignment and seeing my copious comments all over it."

"I like it because we can reflect upon what others have written and see where they need help," says Kerresa Robinson, a junior. "And you pay more attention to the comments from your fellow students."

She finishes grading an essay and explains she has given it a score of 6 out of 9. "He had good verbs and a good plan of attack, but it needed more work. The prompt was vague and the evidence wasn't convincing. He needed more names and quotes."

"I want them to be better readers, but first they have to be critical thinkers," says Stanford. "When they read a book, they have to be aware of the language, the rhetorical strategies of the writer, and the message. Hopefully words won't just wash over them while they read, and they will look for more than what's going to happen next."


a rectangle can be divided into two triangles. They know there's some link between the Pledge of Allegiance and the flag hanging from the wall. The challenge for teachers is to build on that foundation, to encourage students to seek connections between, say, fractions and percentages, or between lobbying and legislation, or between Copernicus and Darwin, or between the main characters in two different novels."

### Why is critical thinking important?


Rote memorization — or learning by repetition — can be useful for some things, such as learning the alphabet, multiplication tables or the periodic table in chemistry. And it can help students pass tests. But when it comes to mastering complex subjects, rote may only scratch the surface, making it appear that students thoroughly comprehend the material when they do not. And because the information is not meaningful or deeply understood, they are more likely to forget what they have learned after the test.

When students are encouraged to do actual thinking about the material, deeper understanding replaces the recall of facts. Students are able to state the material in their own

## Create stimulating multiple choice tests



If done creatively, multiple choice tests can measure critical thinking skills. Here's a sample question on economics from Danny Craig of the Grossmont Education Association:



John asks Mr. Tweet if he can use the restroom and then walks down to the Gatorade machine by the R buildings. John decides that his number one choice would be red, followed by blue and finally yellow. If they didn't have any of those three he'd rather keep his money than buy orange. Luckily for John, the machine was freshly restocked, with all colors available, and so he bought a red. What was John's opportunity cost?

- A Blue Gatorade.
- B Blue and yellow Gatorades.
- C The \$1.25 he spent to get the Gatorade.
- D There was no opportunity cost.

Instead of asking students to regurgitate a textbook definition of opportunity cost (the second-best alternative, the option that is given up when a decision is made), this question asks for an example from students' daily experience.

words, elaborate on it, illustrate it, provide examples from content and their own experience, and provide analogies, metaphors or other examples of the information.

Those who possess critical thinking skills are excited about learning and will be better prepared for life, says Hale. They will be skeptical enough to avoid being taken advantage of by others, understand why things are the way they are in the world, and be able to understand

other people's point of view.

"The role of CTA has been very beneficial in advocating for critical thinking and has often been overlooked," adds Hale. "CTA supports critical thinking by advocating for things such as lower class size and academic freedom."

Loza finds that students who are not used to thinking about subject matter deeply are not excited by the approach initially. Some students tell her at the beginning of the year that they just want to know the "right answer," circle it on a multiple choice test and get an A.

"Once they are offered something challenging like this, they become hungry for it," says Loza. "It makes the class so much more meaningful."

"Teaching them to just fill in the bubbles means we're not equipping them to analyze problems or solve them," adds Loza. "We're not teaching them to apply what they have learned in history to what's happening in the world today. The job market requires people who can look at all sides of an issue — not people who know how to do something but

## Link curriculum to current events



Nadine Loza  
Association of  
Rowland Educators



In Nadine Loza's history class, students study colonialism and imperialism in European history. But the lesson becomes much more interesting when she asks students to compare historical events with what is presently happening in the Caribbean nations of Guadalupe and Martinique, which are both trying to break free from French rule. Sometimes the discussions get quite heated, such as during the election, or when immigrant students compare World War II refugees to those fleeing difficult situations in their homelands today.

"But I'm not afraid of heated discussions or giving my own opinion" says the Association of Rowland Educators member. "I am a history teacher and a thinking participant in our democracy. I want to be an example of someone who has an opinion and thinks about things."



**ABOVE:** Betty Lightfoot, a teacher at Earl Warren Elementary School in Lake Elsinore, introduces her kindergartners to critical learning. **INSET:** Kindergartner Debrea Allen.

don't understand why. And we need students to be critical thinkers when it's time to vote and get involved in civic responsibilities."

Craig says he embraced the teaching method after soul-searching. "By the end of the school year, I would see seniors who had been in school 12 years and despised reading books and hated learning. I thought to myself, 'There's something wrong when you are getting the opposite results of what you profess to want.' Instead of getting kids who want to go out into the world and learn, they hate learning and reading books.

"I began to ask questions about what teachers do in the classroom that contributes to killing the joy of

## Create a thinking map



Thinking maps help students organize their ideas, says Betty Lightfoot, a teacher at Earl Warren Elementary School in Lake Elsinore. She believes that kindergarten is the perfect age to foster critical thinking skills and get students excited about learning.

Thinking maps were developed two decades ago by Dr. David Hyerle to improve reading comprehension, writing, problem-solving and reasoning. A circle map shows context, a flow map sequencing, and a tree map classifying and grouping. Lightfoot draws thinking maps when teaching writing and literature to her kindergartners, many of whom are English learners.

"Let's say you are talking about eggs," says Lightfoot, who is National Board Certified. "We might talk about what comes from eggs, sort it out and put it into groups. You might have birds, amphibians or Easter eggs. After they see groupings in a map they write it out themselves. It helps them process their thinking."

"It's all about questioning," she says. "When I asked them about what things float and don't float, they had to come up with their own predictions and hypotheses about what would float and why. They had to create their own boats and test their hypotheses. When you encourage critical learning, students become excited and enthusiastic. They become so involved it takes away from discipline problems."

*To learn more about thinking maps, go to [www.thinkingmaps.com](http://www.thinkingmaps.com).*



Campbell Healy and Taylor Hanson rehearse a dance at Marquez Charter Elementary School. **INSET:** United Teachers Los Angeles member Jeff Lantos choreographs a lesson.

## Research, re-enact, sing the subject



Jeanette Mills graduated from UCLA a year ago. Ask her if she remembers the original 13 colonies and without batting an eye she breaks into song naming all of them correctly. That's because when she was a fifth-grader, she performed in historical musicals co-written by Marquez Charter Elementary School teacher Jeff Lantos, a member of United Teachers Los Angeles. Today, she helps Lantos choreograph in the classroom.

During a recent visit, students were singing and dancing for a production called *Water and Power* set in Massachusetts in 1840, the site of America's first cotton mill factory, while Lantos accompanied them on piano.

*I labored in the cotton fields,  
Years of sweat and pain.  
I wondered how those bosses  
Could be so inhumane.*

Students must research their characters — actual people during that era — in depth.

They read old newspapers from that period. They internalize and think about the events that took place, says Lantos, who has been teaching 22 years.

"It's stealth learning, because they don't realize how much history they have learned until they get to high school," says Lantos, who has co-penned other musicals based on Lewis and Clark and the writing of the U.S. Constitution.

"If you want instant buy-in, all you have to say is 'Let's put on a show,' because kids love performing. And they really start thinking about that era instead of just memorizing the answers. When it comes to tests, our kids perform off the charts."

"I love it," says student Chad Warren. "It's so much better than just sitting there and reading a textbook. We get to be active and have fun. We'll always look back and remember this when we're older."

For more information on these musicals e-mail Lantos at [jefftoes@aol.com](mailto:jefftoes@aol.com).



learning we're born with," he continues. "I began talking to students about a time when they enjoyed going to school and had fun. Usually they said that was back in first or second grade when they finger-painted and explored things, before all the testing. Ultimately, it boils down to a teacher's ability to engage the students so they can see there is some application of what they are learning to their own personal lives." ❖

To learn more about the use of critical thinking in education, visit [www.criticalthinking.org/resources/k12/TRK12-tactics-encourage-learning.cfm](http://www.criticalthinking.org/resources/k12/TRK12-tactics-encourage-learning.cfm) and [www.criticalthinking.org](http://www.criticalthinking.org).





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# Providing when parents go

O

On the Friday before spring break, Annie Solomon's fourth-graders are busy making cards. Along with hand-colored pictures of bunnies and eggs, the children draw American flags and soldiers. There are heartfelt messages, too.

"We hope you come back safe and uninjured," says one card.

"Thank you for protecting us," says another.

Earlier in the day, two girls quietly approached the teacher and asked if the class could make cards as a writing exercise. They confided to Solomon that their fathers had recently been deployed to Iraq, and that they would like for the class to send cards and letters to them.

"Yes, of course," said Solomon, a teacher for more than 20 years at Twentynine Palms Elementary School.

Such requests happen frequently in schools located in the community of

Twentynine Palms, home to the world's largest U.S. Marine Corps base. An hour away from Palm Springs, the area is remarkably similar to Middle Eastern terrain, with blazing sun, high winds and sandstorms that make it ideal for military drills. The elementary school where Solomon teaches is located a few miles from the base, and many students there have parents serving in the Marine Corps. This year, fortunately, there have been no injuries or deaths of parents whose children attend the school.

However, the stress of wartime has taken a toll on students. Morongo Teachers Association (MTA) members know

that many of their students struggle on a daily basis with more than just schoolwork. They live in a constant state of uncertainty, fear and anxiety. Their families are often struggling financially, too. Military pay is so low

that the schools are designated Title I. Many students have had to move frequently around the country. They may have attended several schools during their young lives and may be in the

process of adjusting to yet another new school.

Solomon says that teachers and others who work in the Morongo Unified School District define their role as keeping things "as normal as possible" for their students to help them cope.

"We try to keep them in a routine," says Solomon. "It's easier for them that way."

Earlier in the week Solomon knew something was up with one of her students, who nervously twisted her fingers. It was behavior the child doesn't normally engage in, and her teacher could sense she was upset and frustrated with an assignment that should have come easily.



**LEFT:** Morongo Teachers Association member Annie Solomon with fourth-grader Makya Bullion at Twentynine Palms Elementary. **ABOVE:** Students make cards to Marines — some their own parents — as a writing exercise.

# calm off to war

“I walked over and said, ‘Let’s take a deep breath and look at it again,’” recalls Solomon. “I know that concentration can be a challenge, so I decided to give her a hand.” Later, says Solomon, she learned the girl’s father had just been deployed to Iraq.

“Their emotions are very close to the surface,” says Melissa Norquist, a sixth-grade teacher at the school site. “With that comes frustration and being distracted in the classroom. Sometimes there are tears — especially when their dads first leave.”

Norquist knows exactly how they feel. Her husband of 20 years is a Marine and spent 14 months in Iraq, returning home in 2005. She has taught military children for the past six years in three different states.

“I have a lot of empathy for kids whose parents are deployed,” she says. “Sometimes you have to allow them extra time to get things completed and make sure they understand a project before you send them on their way. Sometimes I’ll invite them to talk to me during recess. I’ll share a treat with them and ask what’s going on. I’ll let them know that I understand that they may be a little sensitive right now, if their mom or dad is gone.”

Testing can aggravate stress, especially if a parent has been recently deployed. “It’s hard for them when they have a high-stakes test and they are not thinking about the test,” says Norquist. “Sometimes something on a test can trigger a meltdown. It’s a lot for somebody who is 11 or 12 years old and just starting puberty.”



The children of Marines at Condor Elementary School, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center in Twentynine Palms.

## School on the base

Five miles away is Condor Elementary School, located right on the base and accessible only after passing through a security checkpoint. Approximately 95 percent of the students there have a parent in the service, and at any given time a third of these parents are deployed in the Middle East. Many of the school’s teachers also have spouses in the service, such as kindergarten teacher Marisa Alderdice, whose husband is a Marine and has deployed three times to Iraq. (He is now at Twentynine Palms.)

“They are so young, and what’s going

on affects their routine and stability a lot at this age,” says Alderdice. “You can always tell when a dad is about to leave, because they get very irritable and cry easily. It affects their day and they can’t concentrate.”

She can relate. “When my husband was gone, I was living on the edge emotionally. I did ridiculous things like cry at Hallmark commercials. Little things made me angry and I would get sad at something that didn’t warrant that reaction. The level of stress put me right on the edge, and it’s true of my students as well.”



To help her students cope, she maintains a stable routine. “They need to know that everything is the same at school and they can always come to school and have stability, even if they don’t have it at home.” Her students also have a “Heroes” wall featuring family pictures and are encouraged to tape pictures of a parent on the inside lid of their supply boxes holding crayons and pencils.

Her students are young, but they are not sheltered from the harsh realities of war. “They know a lot,” says Alderdice. “They probably know more than we think they know. They talk about it with other kids. They say ‘My dad’s in Iraq fighting bad guys in the war.’ And many of them are only 4 years old.”

Sixth-grade teacher Carol Dougwillo’s students follow the headlines and understand exactly what kinds of danger a parent faces in Iraq or Afghanistan. They also follow the political scene, and there have been heated political discussions in her classroom at times, especially before the presidential election. Dougwillo says she

was surprised that many of her students wanted the U.S. to bring the war to an end.

But awareness of what is going on politically in the U.S. or militarily overseas has not made coping with the situation any easier for some students.

“It’s a strange situation,” she says. “You have some kids that withdraw and shut down and don’t do well academically. You have others who start misbehaving as soon as a parent is gone. And then you have a few who actually become caretak-

ers of their brothers, sisters and even the parent remaining at home. Sometimes you’ll hear from a kid that their parent is crying a lot of the time in the bedroom because they are upset. That’s the reality out here.”

Teachers, she says, rise to the call of duty. “You definitely have to do more and take on a counseling role,” she says. “You have to be very understanding and compassionate — more so than normally — because these kids are in a very bizarre situation. You have to step up and be more of a surrogate parent and more of a counselor. It’s hard. I love these kids like they’re my own kids. When they are hurting, it hurts me.”

Dougwillo pauses, takes a breath and becomes teary. “I tell them that everything will be okay, that mom or dad is



**ABOVE:** Teacher Carol Dougwillo helps sixth-grader Celest Hernandez at Condor Elementary School, located within the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center. **LEFT:** Marisa Alderdice, a kindergarten teacher at Condor Elementary School.

fine, loves them, is thinking of them and will call as soon as they can,” she continues. “Sometimes they will ask if they can write to dad in the middle of class. I let them take that time, because that’s where the kid is at emotionally at that moment. Some of the kids bring pictures of dad to school and take out the picture when they miss him.

Sometimes they need to cry and a teacher will say, ‘We’ll go outside and cry, it’s OK.’ These are sixth-graders and they really try, but sometimes they can’t hold it together because they’re so worried.”

There have been some fatalities of parents whose children attend Condor Elementary School, says Dougwillo, but so far, none have been parents of children in her classroom. But when something bad does happen, all of the students usually know about it immediately.

“We don’t talk about it, because it’s not

anything you want to dwell on,” she explains. “With their own parents gone, you don’t want to have that discussion.”

And she seldom tells her students about her stepdaughter’s husband, who was killed in Iraq in 2006. “It’s not something you want to share, because you don’t want to scare them,” she explains. “But this war is very, very real to me.”

When the war first began, counselors met with the students regularly and held school-sponsored letter-writing campaigns and collected items for care packages to be delivered.

But as the war lingered on, years after former President Bush declared “mission accomplished,” such activity gradually diminished.

“At first the war was shocking and scary for everybody,” recalls Dougwillo. “The base put cement blocks all around the school as a safety precau-



**ABOVE:** Melissa Norquist with sixth-grader Brianna Bickle at Twentynine Palms Elementary School.

**LEFT:** Photos of a parent serving in the Marines in a student’s supply case. **BELOW:** Student Jesika Johnson works on an assignment.

tion. But what was scary has become normal. I don’t know if that’s a good thing or not.”

The base has stepped up to assist students with programs such as “Operation Hero,” an after-school program where military personnel help students deal with the stress and problems associated with having a parent in the military. Over the years, communication has improved, so that students can regularly e-mail a parent in Iraq, which has eased some of the stress. Staying in communication is more difficult in Afghanistan, however, and students may not hear from parents for months at a time.

In a way, teachers in Twentynine Palms are also soldiering on to help students weather challenging circumstances. There have been years of unrelenting stress, and some teachers admit they are becoming somewhat weary.

“There have been a few of us here at the school since the war started, and we band together,” says Dougwillo. “I guess you could say that going through this has made us stronger as people. It has also made us stronger as teachers.”





## Program helps at-risk students focus on positives

According to Positive Deviance theory, students, teachers and school administrators already have the answers they need to address adverse problems like the high school dropout rate. I find that very empowering,” said Palm Springs Teachers Association President Beverly Bricker, one of 45 participants at an informational workshop about the Positive Deviance Initiative conducted May 28 in Orange County by CTA’s Institute for Teaching (IFT).

“Positive Deviance rests on two important assumptions,” said workshop facilitator Mark Munger, an independent Positive Deviance consultant associated with Boston’s Tufts University. “First, it proposes that solutions to community problems already exist within the community of interest, and second, that it is possible to find successful solutions to problems before all of the underlying causes are addressed.”

“Positive Deviance presupposes that in every high school there are students, teachers, families, other school employees, and members of the larger community who are helping to make some students successful,” said Munger. “The emphasis is to identify the behaviors and practices that keep students in school and then to encourage the rest of the student community to adopt them.”

“We’ve become experts on dropouts,” said retired CTA employee and former IFT manager Yale Wishnick, citing the more typical approach of trying to de-

termine what causes students to drop out of school. “What we need to do instead is become experts on why kids stay in school. It’s a very different approach.”

A pilot project to reduce the dropout rate at Merced High School in California’s Central Valley is the most recent of IFT’s projects aimed at bringing new approaches to school change. Supported by a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the pilot project is the first of its kind in California to incorporate the Positive Deviance Initiative’s principles. “We believe the potential of Positive Deviance to reduce high school dropouts is vast and largely untapped,” said IFT Manager/Program Director Dick Gale.

“We have so many kids with potential who aren’t successful in the classroom,” said Merced High School math teacher Sheila Whitley, whose grant proposal rose to the top for IFT funding — among scores submitted from schools throughout the state for the pilot project. According to 2006-07 school year figures (the most recent data available from the California Department of Education) nearly 13 percent of students at Merced High School are expected to drop out of school before graduating. “These are good kids, but they are falling through the cracks,” said Whitley.

The IFT grant will provide training for Merced High School teachers to interview high-achieving students there, identify their successful traits and create a plan to replicate those traits throughout the school system. Teachers will



CTA photo by Bill Guy

also interview and incorporate feedback from Merced community members. Munger believes that the answers to the pertinent questions lie within the Merced community now, and that if the project is successful, Merced High School will see a measurable change in the dropout rate within the next year or two.

In addition to the recent informational workshop in Orange County for participants from Southern California, IFT presented a similar workshop at CTA’s Burlingame headquarters for Northern California participants April 2.

“I was so impressed with the teenage students from Merced High School who related that one of the main reasons they have stayed in school is the interest and encouragement of a special teacher or teachers,” said Burlingame workshop participant Dixie Johansen, a Ravenswood Teachers Association member and co-chair of CTA’s Eth-

**ABOVE:** Attendees of the informational workshop (right to left), Inglewood Teachers Association member David Brown; Merced High School student Christian Arroyo; and Mark Munger, an independent consultant and senior associate of Valeocon Management Consulting, in a discussion about the Positive Deviance Initiative.

nic Minority Affairs Committee.

“The Positive Deviance workshop exceeded my expectations,” said participant Bricker. “The explanations, the guest student speakers’ ideas and the respect given to all participants made the day an encouraging one for me and my six colleagues from our Palm Springs TA local who accompanied me. We came away energized with the idea that Positive Deviance is an approach that we hope to replicate in our schools, too.”

BILL GUY

# Bay Area rallies against Social Security offset law

For San Francisco Bay Area middle school teacher Karin Alexander, the decades-old injustice of educators in California and 14 other states being denied full Social Security benefits just because they chose to teach was too much to take.

So Alexander mobilized, recruiting many other supporters, and the result was a huge May 30 rally in Berkeley attended by about 1,800 Bay Area teachers, parents, state lawmakers and others. The remarkable “Social Security Fairness for Teachers” rally at Berkeley High School was covered by local media and reintroduced this injustice to new supporters.

“No campaign for equal rights has ever been won based on silence,” said Alexander, a teacher at Iron Horse Middle School in San Ramon Unified School District. “People in public service who dedicate their lives to helping others should not be penalized for doing so.”

She spoke at the rally, as did CTA Secretary-Treasurer-elect Gail Mendes. “Due to the state budget crisis, some lawmakers want to cram as many children as they can into our classrooms — and attack our health benefits,” said Mendes. “Federal lawmakers want to continue shortchanging us on our Social Security benefits. No wonder school districts are finding it hard to recruit and

retain teachers in California.” Teachers and other public service workers in California and 14 other states are shortchanged on benefits because of two federal laws that penalize people who held private sector jobs before becoming public employees by denying them full Social Security benefits.

The 1983 Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) requires that a teacher’s Social Security retirement or disability benefit be reduced when they’re also entitled to a public pension from a job — such as teaching — in which he or she didn’t pay Social Security tax. In California, teachers pay into the State Teachers’ Retirement System, but not into So-

cial Security.

The Government Pension Offset (GPO) became law in 1977 and can reduce or eliminate the Social Security benefit for spouses. Nationwide, nine out of 10 public employees subject to the GPO lose their entire spousal benefit, even if their deceased spouse paid Social Security taxes for years, according to the National Education Association.

In an Oct. 22, 2008, letter to NEA, then-Sen. Barack Obama expressed his clear support for repeal of the Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provision. “Nobody should be penalized for serving our children, and that’s why I

*Continued on page 37*

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# Members celebrate Day of the Teacher, protest cuts



CTA photo by Bill Guy

**LEFT:** Oceanside Teachers Association members (left to right) Laura Griffin, Denise Lambdin, John Connolly, Beth Martino and DeGolden Williams spend part of their Day of the Teacher celebration rallying for Props. 1A-1F on a highway overpass in Oceanside. **BELOW:** Franklin-McKinley Education Association President Scott Shulimson talks with reporters at a rally in San Jose.

On May 13, California Day of the Teacher, thousands of teachers across the state celebrated the day named in their honor with picnics and other fun events — but many also fanned out to protest loudly against drastic school cuts and layoffs and to raise support for the May 19 ballot measures.

CTA President David A. Sanchez kicked off the day with a live five-minute interview about school cuts and the special election for “Mornings on 2” on the Oakland Fox affiliate, KTVU.

Noting the Day of the Teacher theme — “California Teachers: Standing Up for a Better Tomorrow” — Sanchez said, “We can’t have a better tomorrow if we ignore the funding crisis our schools face today.”

CTA Vice President Dean Vogel stood at a busy intersection near Eastridge Mall in San Jose with nearly 150 educators from several Santa Clara County chapters. Near him, spread out in front of a gas station, was a row of 10 empty chairs with signs reading “California Day of the Former Teacher.” Two TV stations covered Vogel and the protesters asking motorists to vote yes on Propositions 1A-1F.

Cars honked in support as teachers marched. The protest was

the result of the hard work of Franklin-McKinley Education Association President Scott Shulimson, who wore a “Save Our Schools” T-shirt and praised his chapter’s organizing chair Yvonne Tran for her efforts.

“We got the news out there, and we made a difference,” Shulimson said.

In Alameda County, members of the San Lorenzo Education Association wore pink and red as they protested the San Lorenzo Unified School District’s decision to lay off more than 70 teachers, including Samantha Terrasas, who had just been named the district’s Outstanding First-Year Teacher. Another pink-slipped educator was San Lorenzo High School teacher Judy Smith.

“I’m totally devastated,” Smith

told the *Hayward Daily Review* newspaper. “I love San Lorenzo — the kids, the teachers, the community.”

In nearby Contra Costa County, hundreds of Mt. Diablo Unified School District teachers and parents protested on Day of the Teacher in Concord, Walnut Creek and Bay Point and urged motorists to pass the statewide propositions and a local parcel tax (which also failed at the polls). The district issued more than 400 permanent pink slips to teachers.

In San Mateo County, teachers from San Carlos and Belmont gathered for phone banking for Props. 1A and 1B at the CTA offices in Foster City, and educators from all over Monterey County joined parents in a night of community phone banking in Salinas.

In Bakersfield, about 1,500

teachers celebrated Day of the Teacher in what has become a tradition for them, a picnic in Yokuts Park. But, in what has also become a rite of spring, the teachers seized the opportunity to talk about what further state budget cuts would do to schools. On their minds specifically this year was the need for voters to pass Propositions 1A-1F on the statewide May 19 ballot.

“I think if they fail, the state Legislature will essentially have to go back to the battle. They’re not going to be at square one, but they’re certainly going to have massive shortfalls they are going to have to deal with,” Mitch Olson, president of the Kern High School Teachers Association, told a local TV station that had sent a crew to cover the event.

Teachers and parents also worked side by side at the Sacramento City Teachers Association, calling voters.

In Chico, educators from the Butte County Teachers Association, the Chico Unified Teachers Association and the Thermalito Teachers Association joined together to observe Day of the Teacher by phoning voters to urge them to vote yes on the ballot propositions. At the same time teachers were phone-banking, the Chico Unified School District announced that it would eliminate 135 full-time positions.

Association members in Southern California celebrated the day in a variety of ways that included both advocacy and recognition of their accomplishments.

Members from several locals demonstrated at rallies along highways and very visible public places. Members of Orange County’s Tustin Educators Association lined up with signs at the intersections of Jamboree Road and Airport Avenue and Irvine Boulevard in Irvine, urg-



CTA photo by Mike Myslinski





CTA photo by Mike Myslinski

ing support of the ballot measures. And in north San Diego County, the Fallbrook Elementary Teachers Association coordinated a demonstration at a major shopping center, and members of the Oceanside Teachers Association and the Carlsbad Unified Teachers Association demonstrated near the intersections of State Highway 78 with Jefferson Street and El Camino Real in Oceanside. San Marcos Educators Association members demonstrated along Highway 78 in San Marcos.

More than 800 Murrieta Teachers Association members and their families celebrated Day of the

**ABOVE:** In San Jose a row of 10 empty chairs with signs reading "California Day of the Former Teacher" depicts the frustration educators feel with the current budget issue.

**BELOW:** CTA President David A. Sanchez kicks off Day of the Teacher in a live television news interview in the Oakland studio of the KTVU "Mornings on 2" program.

Association held a teacher appreciation picnic at a local park the Saturday before Day of the Teacher. Nearly 200 people attended and enjoyed a barbecue lunch, face painting, craft-making and line dance lessons. Vendors were there, along with staff from a local gym who worked with the association during the Million Step Challenge. The picnic was also a celebration of all those members who participated in and completed the Million Step Challenge, a walking program that lasted 100 days. Many local businesses donated prizes for a raffle.

Members of the La Mesa-Spring Valley Teachers Association in east San Diego, in a show of solidarity with laid-off colleagues, chose to take funds that they normally use to mount a spring end-of-year celebration and use it instead to purchase gift cards for members of their association who received pink slips this year.

BILL GUY, DINA MARTIN, MIKE MYSLINSKI



CTA photo by Mike Myslinski

Teacher at a local restaurant, as did members from the six local associations that form the South County Teachers United alliance in south San Diego County. Members of the Riverside City Teachers Association met in a local park to commemorate and enjoy the day.

The Riverside City Teachers



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# QEIA school makes strides, boosts test scores

Photos by Scott Buschman



**LEFT:** Educators get involved at a QEIA training session on April 22 in Emeryville in the Bay Area. **BELOW:** In San Francisco, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (left) talks with CTA Vice President Dean Vogel during a visit to Paul Revere Elementary School, a QEIA site.

One school in Riverside County is showing promise for students targeted by the landmark CTA-sponsored Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA) of 2006.

Test scores are edging up and class sizes are going down at Susan B. Coombs Intermediate School in Banning, creating the kind of enhanced learning environment that QEIA was meant to foster, says Yvonne Lanthripp, a dedicated teacher at the school.

“I am so glad that we have QEIA,” she says. “I think it is making a difference. It also helps us focus. We have smaller class sizes now and can provide more individual attention. I think the law is working.”

It’s working because of the ongoing commitment by CTA members, staff, parents and administrators to build on the momentum of each year. The Quality Education Investment Act (SB 1133) — which grew out of a court settlement of a CTA lawsuit against the governor over funding owed to schools from 2004-05 under Proposition 98 — provides nearly \$3 billion in extra resources over seven years to 487 K-12 schools of greatest need. All of the selected schools had Academic Performance In-

dex scores in the bottom two deciles.

Not even the state’s current financial crisis is affecting the resources made available to these schools.

The law, unique in the nation, provides funding to reduce class sizes, improve teacher and principal training, hire more

counselors, and launch programs that best fit the needs of local students. It stresses collaboration among educators and the fair distribution of experienced teachers at all QEIA schools. Community colleges also receive a portion of the funding to expand career and vocational education.

The estimated 500,000 California students benefitting from the extra QEIA resources are mostly minorities from lower-

income families.

That is the case at Susan B. Coombs School, where nearly 55 percent of students are Hispanic and 83 percent are poor enough to qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. The QEIA school in the Banning Unified School District serves about 700 students in only two grades — fifth and sixth — says Lanthripp, who is also vice president of the Banning Teachers Association. “Over the last two years, our students have shown much growth in their test scores.”

For 2006-07, Susan B. Coombs met both its state Academic Performance Index (API) target and federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) require-

*Continued on page 36*

## Secretary of Education impressed with San Francisco QEIA site

When U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan came to visit Paul Revere Elementary School in San Francisco recently, he was impressed with the high-quality programs he saw at the pre-K-8 campus.

The school has a Spanish immersion program and offers foreign language enrichment and the opportunity for students to learn a second or third language. The staff includes a librarian. The school has an after-school enrichment program including art, music, dance, PE and homework help. The school also offers an extended school day from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. for students in grades K-8.

“He was impressed with the things that he saw going on at Paul Revere School, but we had to remind him that it had a price tag, and that because of QEIA funding the school received money above and beyond regular funding,” said CTA Vice President Dean Vogel, who was joined by United Educators of San Francisco President Dennis Kelly for a meeting that also included school employees, administrators and parents.

It was the secretary of education’s first visit to California since joining the Obama cabinet and was part of a 15-state “listening tour” that will influence federal policy on education.

“Arne Duncan talked about the need for schools to do something different and embrace reform in order to qualify for the billions of dollars he controlled,” said Kelly, who traveled with the education secretary on several stops. “He was impressed with the way that the union, the district and the city all worked together and said it was not

something that was seen in other locales. I tried to give examples of things we did that worked — elements of our parcel tax with its alternative compensation and teacher accountability aspects — and commented to him that reform was something he could do with us, but should not be done to us.”

*For a more complete story on Arne Duncan’s visit to Paul Revere Elementary School, visit [www.cta.org/issues/current/QEIA.htm](http://www.cta.org/issues/current/QEIA.htm).*

# LACEA decries cutting counselors for at-risk youth programs

With 42 out of 68 counselors in the Los Angeles County Office of Education receiving pink slips, the counseling department that serves students in alternative school sites and ROP programs has been virtually gutted. Members of the Los Angeles County Educators Association (LACEA) fear that the students needing the most help will receive the least.

“Forty-two of us have no jobs and have been terminated for budgetary reasons,” says Lori Hunzeker, a member of LACEA who received a pink slip. “They have basically wiped out the counseling program.”

LACEA counselors serve specialized programs for a wide variety of student needs in more than 23 districts throughout Los Angeles County. Programs being affected by the loss of counseling posi-

tions include ROP and career technical education programs at alternative education school sites and programs for students mostly in grades 10-12 at many of the 23 districts’ high schools. Additional educational programs that will be impacted include those at juvenile court schools, two public high schools, Foster Youth Services programs and community day schools.

Once the cuts are in place, there will be only 26 counselors to serve nearly 3,000 students spread throughout the county in such programs. Most of those students were unable to succeed in traditional high school settings and require a great deal of attention and follow-up.

“I have been working to get a student who is graduating from high school into

*Continued on page 37*

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## \$1.4 million settlement for misclassified members

Over 40 teachers in Bakersfield will share a total of \$1.44 million thanks to a legal settlement that is likely to have statewide implications for school districts that abuse the “temporary” classification of teachers.

Checks of as much as \$55,000 were sent to teachers and counselors in the Bakersfield City School District who had been classified as “temporary” employees by the district much longer than they should have, in violation of the state’s Education Code.

The settlement culminates a lawsuit that had been decided by the Fifth District Court of Appeal in favor of CTA and the Bakersfield Elementary Teachers Association (BETA), in which the court ruled that the school district had misclassified teachers as temporary who should have been probationary. In some instances, the abuses go back to 1985.

In addition to the money and the legal precedent, the case vastly helped the local teachers in other ways. In all, 109 teachers and 10 counselors were reclassified from temporary to probationary, and the layoffs of 68 probationary teachers were rescinded. Seniority dates for 63 teachers were recalculated, recognizing dates between 1985 and 2002, with most reset between 1997 and 2000. Corrections were also made for several teachers regarding their salary schedule placement and restoration of sick leave credits, including days to be transferred to successive employer districts.

“The settlement has statewide significance because it

serves to prevent all school districts from abusing the temporary classification,” says Tom Driscoll, the attorney who represented the teachers in the case for CTA.

*In all, 109 teachers and 10 counselors were reclassified from temporary to probationary.*

In the past, school districts claimed they had the discretion to decide on a teacher’s classification. The court decision held that credentialing and classification are two different systems. The decision limits the temporary classification in accordance with the Education Code, according to Driscoll.

While many districts commonly misclassify teachers, “Bakersfield was the best manifestation of abuse” that has come forward, according to Driscoll.

“We’re proud of BETA and our members who came forward,” says BETA President Brad Barnes. “It’s a big decision, especially against Bakersfield City School District, which seemed to have been writing its own rules.”

Barnes adds that the decision has since forced the school district to be more diligent in making sure that teachers are moved into the probationary category rather than kept languishing as a temporary teacher.

Although it took almost six years to reach a settlement, the teachers involved were pleased to have received their checks, according to Barnes. “The whole process also says something about the organizational strength of BETA. The district knows that we have people on the lookout for abuse like this, and we will go after them.”

DINA MARTIN

## Sweetwater teachers: no confidence in superintendent

“We’re happy to have all our RIF’d members ‘back on the bus,’ but we still believe Sweetwater Union High School District Superintendent Jesus Gándara wants to keep SUHSD employees at the back of the bus, and that he is driving us over a cliff,” said Sweetwater Education Association (SEA) President Sam Lucero after the SUHSD Board of Education voted May 11 to rescind

remaining RIF (reduction in force) notices to SEA members. All 120 SEA members who had received RIFs have now had them rescinded. The school board also pulled a proposed 2 percent salary cut off the table. SEA members say that they merely wish to keep the current contract language, where neither side has anything to lose or gain.

Earlier that evening, hundreds of SEA members —

joined by education employee union brothers and sisters in the Sweetwater Guidance and Counseling Association (SGCA), the California State Employees Association (CSEA), and the National Association of Government Employees (NAGE), and by students, parents and community citizens — presented petitions of no confidence in Superintendent Gándara with some 2,000 signatures to the SUHSD

Board.

The petitions cite Gándara’s refusal to accept input from education community stakeholders; his unwillingness to facilitate dialogue; his failure to foster collaboration; and his inability to build a “culture of integrity, respect, and trust” — contrary to the ideas expressed in the Sweetwater District’s Strategic Plan.

“Of course, we are glad that the board rescinded the re-

duction in force notices for our members, and that they took the proposal to cut our salaries off the table, but these were contract takebacks and we have no confidence in Superintendent Gándara's willingness or ability to bargain with us in good faith," said Lucero. "The district yielded to SEA pressure to do what's right. His budget priorities, as articulated in the district's bargaining proposals, demonstrate a complete lack of understanding of the needs and priorities of students, parents and the community of SUHSD."

"District spokesperson Lillian Leopold complains that the unions want to maintain status-quo contracts in the midst of a difficult economy," said CSEA Chapter 471 President Stephanie Napier, "but what the district's bargaining team fails to recognize is that our contracts' pass-through language states that if the district receives any monies from the state, then

the dollars pass through to all employees' wages and benefits. If no monies come down from the state, then no money is given to employees, the district gets nothing, we get nothing — very simple. Instead, the district wants to break our pass-through contract language, so that in the future when things are better and the COLA comes from the state it would require all bargaining units to negotiate any monies for employees of the district. District employees understand this is a very tough economy and are not asking for anything at all other than to maintain current language. With our current language, neither side has anything to lose or gain at this point."

Lucero said that the SUHSD Board is slated to review Gándara's job performance soon, but that the efforts of SEA and of its education employee union colleagues will be directed toward persuading the board to initiate the search for a new district superintendent instead. "We definitely need a new leader as we face the challenges ahead," said Lucero.

BILL GUY

**BELOW:** A reporter captures Sweetwater Education Association members as they gather for the protest.



CTA photo by Bill Guy



## Teaching outside the lesson plan.

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# ACTION



CTA photos by Dave Earl Carpenter

**LEFT:** Jack Foreman (second from left), president of the Centinela Valley Secondary Teachers Association, with the three CTA officers, accepts the Joyce Fadem Chapter-in-Politics Award for Small Chapter. **RIGHT:** Folsom Cordova member Mark Schultz addresses Council.

## Sanchez tells Council CTA will keep fighting

In his address to State Council in May, CTA President David A. Sanchez said that CTA will do everything in its power to protect students and schools during this economic crisis. That includes taking legal action to recover \$9.3 billion in education funding diverted during the state budget battles, and working to change the state's two-thirds vote requirement to pass a state budget.

"We will continue to lead the fight to guarantee that our schools and colleges get the resources they need, deserve, and are owed under law," said Sanchez.

In his speech just four days before the May 19 special election, Sanchez warned that if the budget-related Propositions 1A-1E failed — as they did — public schools would face cuts of huge proportions. He praised Council

for endorsing all the ballot propositions, and for a successful phone banking campaign — reaching more than 135,000 voters around the state.

He criticized the Legislature's "illegal manipulation" of Proposition 98, the state's minimum education funding law, to divert \$9.3 billion owed to schools. CTA has prevailed in court twice in the past 15 years when similar diversions occurred, and its attorneys have been working since January to prepare a possible lawsuit, he said.

Sanchez told Council that the lawsuit filed during the campaign by two other unions was premature. "Our attorneys are working with other members of the Education Coalition to ensure we have the best legal case possible when we file in court," he said.

Meanwhile, it's time to change

the budget hostage to personal philosophical agendas that are not shared by the vast majority of Californians."

Sanchez announced that CTA is reaching out on this effort to overturn the two-thirds vote. California is one of only three states (Arkansas and Rhode Island are the others) that require a two-thirds vote of legislators to pass the state budget, and one of only 12 states that require a two-thirds vote or higher to increase taxes.

"CTA is working with a group of labor unions and other organizations to end this ridiculous requirement," Sanchez said. "It's time to bring democracy back to California and eliminate this unfair roadblock that puts our schools and our state in turmoil year after year."

Executive Director Carolyn Doggett said in her speech to Council that the ability of CTA members to rise to the occasion again and again, to push back

the two-thirds budget vote rule that only perpetuates the state's broken system, Sanchez said. "California's budget process remains fatally flawed. It's one of the things that have brought us to the brink of disaster in the first place. As long as a small minority can hold our state budget and our schools hostage, we're not going to be able to fix the problem."

A new CTA fact sheet distributed at State Council noted that tax breaks only require a simple majority vote — and that tax cuts enacted since 1993 will cost California \$11.7 billion in the fiscal year ending July 1. The fact sheet notes the two-thirds vote has allowed "a small mi-

### New phone-banking technology



At State Council in May members used a new phone-banking system while placing calls in support of Props. 1A-1F. The system was set up to automatically dial preprogrammed phone numbers of voters across the state, allowing Council members to place more calls in a shorter time span.



against adversity during dark economic times, is the key to the survival of the association. “We strive to be proactive. We continue to fight for reforms that we know will work. And we do it together.”

Doggett added, “CTA has weathered hundreds of storms since our founding 146 years ago, and we will weather many more.”

MIKE MYLSINSKI

### In other action, State Council:

- Elected Elana Davidson (District F), David Goldberg (District J-LA), Jim Rogers (District M), and Curtis L. Washington (At-large) to the CTA Board of Directors.
- Approved the CTA budget, which included an increase in CTA Category 1 dues by \$22 from \$599 to \$621.
- Approved new CTA policy concerning affordable housing for educators and supported pending legislation that would promote this kind of housing stock.
- Re-elected Floyd Worsham (District J) to the CTA/ABC Committee.
- Honored winners of CTA’s 50th annual John Swett Awards for Media Excellence in a reception Friday night, May 15. (The news release about the 16 winners is posted at [www.cta.org](http://www.cta.org).)
- Recognized winners of the State WHO awards.
- Recognized winners of the Joyce Fadem Memorial Chapter-in-Politics Awards: Centinela Valley Secondary Teachers Association for Small Chapter; Livermore Educators Association for Medium Chapter; and Mt. Diablo Educators Association for Large Chapter.
- Recognized winners of the Theodore Bass Memorial Teacher-in-Politics Awards: Jason Dufenhorst, San Jose Teachers Association, for Getting Others Involved; Leslie Littman, Hart District Teachers Association, and James Messina, Grossmont Education Association, for Local Priorities; Melody Kelly, Ontario Montclair Teachers Association, for Partisan/Non-Partisan Activities; and Andy Montoya, Fullerton Elementary Teachers Association, for Coalition Building.

## CTA, coalition battle governor over latest cuts

CTA and its Education Coalition partners are mobilizing their members and school supporters throughout the state to oppose Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger’s latest round of devastating cuts that threaten to slash another \$5.4 billion from public education.

These cuts were announced after voters rejected five budget-related ballot measures on May 19 and after updated economic forecasts showed state revenues falling even lower than earlier projections.

Many lawmakers have conceded that voters told them clearly during the May 19 special election that they want the gov-

ernor and Legislature to solve fiscal problems without bringing the issues to the electorate. The governor is asserting that the initiatives’ failure means voters will not support revenue increases or borrowing. He has therefore sought to bridge a looming \$23 billion revenue shortfall by cuts and cuts alone.



CTA photo by Len Feldman

**ABOVE:** CTA Board member Mike Bustos cautions members of the legislative budget conference committee during the panel’s June 1 hearing that further education cuts would devastate schools and harm students.

“These additional cuts are unconscionable,” says CTA President David A. Sanchez. “We will do everything in our power to persuade lawmakers to reject the governor’s proposals to further gut public schools. The cuts will force more layoffs, create larger class sizes, and implement other instructional reductions that would do irreparable

damage to our more than 9 million students. California can’t afford this kind of devastation to our public schools and colleges.”

The governor’s revised budget plan, the May Revision, proposes changes to state spending in both the 2008-09 and 2009-10 fiscal years. It would hit public schools

with another \$1.6 billion in cuts this year, with an additional \$3.7 billion in cuts that would take effect during the following school year.

The cuts for 2008-09 would reduce school spending to the Proposition 98 minimum guarantee by paring \$1.36 billion from basic

*Continued on page 32*

### What you should do to prepare for second-round RIFs this summer

In certain limited circumstances, school districts can proceed with a second round of layoffs of certificated employees in addition to the March 15 layoff process. CTA expects that some school districts will attempt to proceed with such layoffs this summer. The timeline for such RIFs may be very short between the school district approving such potential RIFs and the final decision on the RIFs, which must be made by August 15. To be prepared as summer approaches, CTA Legal Services advises that you make sure that your CTA chapter has your current contact info; check that the district has your seniority correct; and make sure that all your credentials and certifications are on file with the district.

For more useful information from CTA Legal Services regarding second-round RIFs, visit [www.cta.org/mycta/services/legal](http://www.cta.org/mycta/services/legal).

# 16 winners of John Swett Awards

Media stories ranging from a look at homeless students in one San Francisco Bay Area school district making academic gains, to an investigation of contaminated water in the Los Angeles Unified School District, to a look at how the foreclosure crisis is uprooting public school students, are among the works honored by the California Teachers Association's 50th annual John Swett Awards for Media Excellence.

Sixteen entries in the prestigious CTA awards contest were chosen by an independent panel of media

professionals. The awards honor individuals, publications, websites, and television and radio stations for their outstanding achievements in reporting and interpreting public education issues during 2008.

"These winners have demonstrated their ability to capture the struggles and successes in our classrooms with candor and compassion," said CTA President David A. Sanchez. "These journalists and editors helped tell the compelling story of public education in California. All of this year's winners showed the kind of insight that deserves special recognition."

The award is named in honor of the founder of CTA, who was California's fourth superintendent of public instruction. There were 54 entries this year.

This year's winners are: **Nanette Asimov**, the *San Francisco Chronicle*; **Ruben Moreno**, *La Opinión*; **Jason Song**, the *Los Angeles Times*; **Kimberly Wetzel**, the *Contra Costa Times*; the *Los Angeles Daily News*; **J.M. Brown**, the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*; **Mayra Flores De Marcotte**, the *Willow Glen Resident* (winner of two awards); **Anne Gelhaus**, the *Willow Glen Resident*; **New America Media** ([www.newamericamedia.org](http://www.newamericamedia.org)), based

in San Francisco; **Ronn Owens**, KGO Radio, San Francisco; **Bruce Robinson**, KRCB Public Radio in Rohnert Park, Sonoma County; **Lynne Melendez**, KGO-TV in San Francisco, an ABC affiliate; **Elyse Miller**, KESQ-TV in Palm Desert, an affiliate of ABC; **KTVU**, a Fox affiliate in Oakland; and **Joel Grover**, KNBC Channel 4 in Burbank.

The winners received their awards during a reception in their honor at the CTA State Council of Education meeting in Los Angeles on May 15. CTA also will take out a full-page advertisement in the July/August issue of *Columbia Journalism Review* to list the winners and give them national recognition.

MIKE MYSLINSKI

## Budget

Continued from page 31

school funding (revenue limits) and by slashing \$200 million in

community college funding. Among the casualties of the cuts is the 2008-09 cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), which was pegged at 4.25 percent.

In total, the new cuts for 2008-09 account for a reduction in per-student funding of at least \$240. California is already 47th nationally in this important measure of support for public education, and these cuts will move the state further down the list.

For 2009-10, the additional \$3.7 billion in cuts will drive revenue limit funding downward by another \$1.4 billion, reduce community college funding by another \$580 million, and defer another \$1.6 billion in school funding. These cuts would reduce per-student funding by another \$715.

CTA fiscal experts expect some of the state cuts to be offset by federal stimulus funds dedicated to public education by the Obama administration.

Public schools have already been hit hard by the largest reduction in public education funding in the state's history, more than \$11.6 billion. Those cuts resulted in more than 27,000 educators receiving layoff notices.

Additional teachers and education support professionals could receive pink slips until Aug. 15 under provisions of state law that al-

low a second layoff window to open when school funding drops precipitously.

Districts have responded by eliminating key education programs, cramming more students into each classroom, and reducing student access to nurses and counselors.

CTA and members throughout the state are fighting hard to block these cuts. In the state Capitol, CTA representatives are reminding lawmakers about the impact of the already implemented cuts and the devastation the new cuts will have on the students of California.

Association representatives are pushing for new revenues and technical changes to laws that would protect vital instructional programs. For instance, CTA representatives have been exploring the impact of a relaxation of state laws that set the minimum amount of funds districts must keep in reserve. CTA officials point out that districts should be allowed to spend down their rainy day reserves rather than doing irreversible damage to educational programs by cutting positions and increasing class sizes.

LEN FELDMAN

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# Trend toward teacher retirement on the rise

In some districts, teachers are grasping tightly when a golden handshake is extended. In others, teachers have kept their distance when early retirement incentive packages are dangled in front of them.

While there are no firm numbers on how many teachers have opted to take advantage of early retirement, the trend is definitely on the rise as schools struggle with declining revenues. Even

though districts have to shell out initially to pay for buyouts of veteran staff, districts save money over the long haul by hiring new employees with less experience for lesser salaries.

In the Los Angeles Unified School District, a staggering 1,360 employees have signed up for early retirement. Under the plan, teachers and counselors receive about 40 percent of their 2009-10 salary over a period of time, along

with their normal pension. The move might save some of the 3,500 positions held by United Teachers Los Angeles members at risk of being laid off.

In the San Diego Unified School District, nearly 600 teachers have submitted papers for early retirement under a plan that provides them with one year's salary paid out over a few years, in addition to regular retirement benefits. The district has estimated that replacing veteran teachers with lower-paid, newer teachers would save between \$7.6 million and \$12.3 million over the next few years.

"The San Diego Education Association values the contributions of our veteran educators, many of whom bargained our first collective bargaining agreements and went out on strikes in 1976 and 1996," says SDEA President Camille Zombro. "But the voluntary layoff of our sisters and brothers through a SERP [Supplemental Executive Retirement Plan] is bittersweet. The loss of our veteran SDEA members is a loss to our union culture and our history."

Some also fear the loss of veteran teachers may have other impacts. Experienced teachers have been counted on traditionally to provide school leadership and to mentor and support new teachers.

"Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment [BTSA] providers are recruited from the ranks of veteran teachers," says Margaret Gaston, executive director of the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning based in Santa Cruz. "In schools where there has traditionally been a lot of turnover, there has been a concern that there are not enough accomplished veteran

teachers to usher novices into the profession."

On the other hand, adds Gaston, if new teachers are being laid off at the same rate as veteran teachers retiring at a particular school site, those who remain have some years of experience and are not as greatly in need of mentoring.

The Santa Ana Unified School District offered an early retirement incentive and 94 teachers accepted. According to Santa Ana Education Association President David Barton, the district is "top-heavy" with older teachers and has mostly younger teachers being pink-slipped. It is hoped the early retirements will help balance things out and allow younger teachers to return in the fall.

Among those who accepted the offer, which includes 70 percent of last year's salary, was Barton, a teacher for 27 years.

"The offer was pretty generous and I'm pretty happy," says Barton. "I'm going to spend a lot of time relaxing and trying not to think about how bad things are going when it comes to public education."

The buyouts are happening at a time when the nation is facing the largest teacher retirement wave in history, with more than 50 percent of teachers over the age of 50, notes the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, a Washington-based education advocacy organization. In May, the commission forecast that more than half of today's veteran teachers — 1.7 million — may be gone soon due to retirement, taking with them invaluable experience and expertise.

SHERRY POSNICK-GOODWIN

## A glimpse at retirements across the state:

- The Baldwin Park Unified School District offered a one-time early retirement incentive where teachers will receive about \$30,000 over a three-year period. Close to 40 teachers signed on. The district is saving so much money that it avoided pink slips and also held a job fair to fill 35 vacated teaching positions.
- In Santa Rosa, 25 teachers braved rain and temperatures that dropped into the 40s to make sure they qualified for the February cutoff date in the district's retirement incentive package, which had a limit of 68 teachers. Under the deal that entitled them to about \$45,000 paid over three years, the district hoped to save \$1 million. But only 26 people signed up and savings will be much less than that. Dan Evans, president of the Santa Rosa Teachers Association, says that the "silly" limit of 68 teachers caused unnecessary panic among those who took the bait.
- In nearby Windsor, teachers were offered a year's full salary — or \$73,000 — for retiring early, paid out over five to 12 years. Thirteen Windsor District Education Association members signed up, which allowed the district to avert layoffs and save 13 jobs.
- More than 60 teachers will retire from the Kern High School District this year, which will allow some pink-slipped teachers to return to the district next year. Normally, about 30 Kern High School Teachers Association members retire annually. Those who opted for earlier departures will receive 70 percent of their final year's salary.
- The Turlock Unified School District rescinded a golden handshake offer because 40 people were needed to volunteer and only 22 signed up. The offer would have included \$20,000 in cash or an extra two years' worth of service credit toward retirement.

# Calexico teachers win hard-fought contract



Photo by Scott Buschman

Members of Associated Calexico Teachers wearing their bright yellow T-shirts with the slogan "An injury to one is an injury to all."

Just when temperatures and tempers were nearly at the boiling point, members of Associated Calexico Teachers (ACT) reached an agreement with the district over a new contract that protects health and welfare benefits for teachers and also offers a slight hourly wage increase. The teachers were unhappy with the district's proposal to have 1.8 percent of their salaries deducted to pay for the cost of health care next year — especially after going without a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for three years. Maintaining the status quo for health care in the contract, which extends through June 2010, is considered a victory in these tough economic times, says ACT President Carmen Durazo.

It has been a hard-fought battle at this desert town adjoining the Mexican border. Negotiations were at impasse for a year, and during this time, ACT members engaged in a vigorous campaign demanding fair pay and respect from Calexico Unified School District administrators and school board members. ACT members regularly protested before school and at school board meetings wearing

bright yellow T-shirts with the slogan "An injury to one is an injury to all."

The association was featured in the local newspaper on a regular basis protesting for fair treat-

ment, and received coverage when CTA President David A. Sanchez attended a rally at Calexico High School in April.

ACT members charge that the district did not bargain in good faith and engaged in "stalling" tactics by putting new items on the table every time the parties come close to reaching an agreement. In May, district officials passed out a "Negotiations Update" flier that had obviously been written before a negotiating

session had even adjourned.

"We weren't even done, and they started handing out the flier," says Durazo. "We were flabbergasted."

ACT members are pleased to finally have a contract, but are not pleased with the disrespectful treatment they have received during the past year. Teachers were ordered to come to school during a swine flu closure; half of the 100 pink slips given to teachers were rescinded, while 33 of 34 pink slips given to administrators were rescinded; and the chapter had to fight to keep a QEIA school from being closed (see "Numerous disruptions" sidebar on this page).

*Continued on page 37*

## Numerous disruptions in the Calexico district

- After several students were diagnosed with swine flu in April, Kennedy Gardens Elementary School was closed for a week. Officials feared that the spread of the virus could endanger the lives of students attending school in the border town. Teachers, however, were ordered to continue showing up at the school every day, and there was no concern for their health and safety.
- After the district pink-slipped 100 out of 500 teachers in March, 34 administrators were also given the axe. Within a short amount of time, however, all but one of the administrators had their pink slips rescinded. A little more than half of the pink-slipped teachers were rehired. "Pink-slipping administrators was just symbolic," says ACT Vice President Bill Hodge. "We don't think for a minute they actually planned to get rid of their own people."
- Calexico High School was the site of a mercury contamination incident that made nationwide headlines in early spring. The district at one time leased a classroom at the high school for a program to train nurses. After the class ended, the district neglected to remove a blood pressure cuff and monitor that were screwed into the wall. Students in the classroom dismantled the apparatus and began playing with the mercury inside, unbeknownst to the substitute teacher overseeing the class. Students passed the poisonous substance to fellow students, and some brought it home. The mercury spill occurred on a Thursday, and the school did not take action. A week later, the Environmental Protection Agency closed the campus for decontamination.
- The district laid off many kindergarten teachers, replacing them with retired teachers hired part time — and at a lower wage — during math and English classes only. By doing so, say ACT members, schools retained their 20-to-1 funding for class size reduction while leaving teachers with 30-to-1 classes for much of the day. Also, the district hired intervention "tutors" to work with students. Many of these tutors were still in college and were not even in a teacher credentialing program. However, they were placed on the district's seniority list along with retired and substitute teachers, and were used to staff summer classes instead of certificated teachers.
- The association successfully fought the district's plan to close a Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA) school and use the funding for unauthorized purposes.

## CTA-sponsored and co-sponsored legislation for 2009-10

	BILL #		STATUS
<b>SECOND-GRADE TESTING</b> Hancock	<b>SB 800</b>	Would eliminate second-grade tests in the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program effective July 1, 2010.	Senate Education
<b>UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE</b> Leno	<b>SB 810</b>	Would establish a single-payer health insurance system in California. (Co-sponsored bill)	Senate Appropriations
<b>IMMIGRATION INVESTIGATIONS</b> Mendoza	<b>AB 132</b>	Would propose school procedures to make immigrant children know it is safe to come to school when there are immigration raids in the community. Would prohibit schools from collecting data on students' citizenship status.	Passed Assembly; to Senate Education
<b>CONSEQUENCES OF DROPPING OUT</b> Block	<b>AB 374</b>	Would encourage schools to provide at-risk students with a "consequences of dropping out" notice developed by the CDE. (Co-sponsored bill)	Assembly Appropriations
<b>COMMUNITY COLLEGE FUNDING</b> Furutani	<b>AB 551</b>	Would provide for a permanent backfill of shortfalls in property taxes to California Community Colleges.	Assembly Appropriations
<b>50% LAW COMPLIANCE</b> Torlakson	<b>AB 581</b>	Would require the California Community Colleges chancellor's office to conduct annual random audits to ensure district compliance with existing law that requires 50 percent of education dollars to be spent on instructors' salaries.	Assembly Appropriations
<b>75/25 FACULTY RATIO COMPLIANCE</b> Hill	<b>AB 1095</b>	Would ensure full compliance with law that mandates 75 percent of instruction be performed by full-time faculty in California Community Colleges within three years of passage.	Assembly Appropriations

Photo by Glen Korengold

## QEIA

Continued from page 26

ment under No Child Left Behind. For 2007-08, the school met its API goal but not its AYP target. The school is in its fifth year of Program Improvement status under NCLB. Still, English learner students had the largest test score growth over two years.

Smaller classes helped students make progress, says Lanthripp. Sizes fell from 30 students per classroom to an average now of 26.4 for grade 5 and 24.8 for grade 6. The school's target class size average is a manageable 24.7 students.

"Modernization projects on our campus have resulted in more classrooms being built so that we did not have to spend QEIA dollars on this," she says. "The extra planning dollars are being banked for use during years 6 and 7 [of QEIA] so that we may get our class size even lower than our re-

quired average."

Thanks in part to QEIA, all educators at the school have completed 40 hours of professional development, receive extra training about writing and instruction protocols, and enjoy the help received from new curriculum coaches like Lanthripp. She spends half her time teaching language arts and social studies to sixth-graders, and the other half as a coach, demonstrating model lesson plans to colleagues, observing classes and fostering more collaboration.

She took CTA training as well to become a school site contact, one of 335 now trained and working at one of the 487 QEIA schools. She attended the April 2 CTA site contact training in Pomona, while hundreds of other educators took part in the trainings on April 22 in Em-

eryville in the Bay Area and on April 30 in Santa Ana.

Sheila Jo Himes, site rep for Mare Island Elementary School in Vallejo, says about her experience at the Emeryville QEIA event, "I interacted with teachers from Redding, Oakland and Salinas. It was great to get ideas to take back to my school."

Site contacts are building an online community to exchange ideas on the new [www.qeia.org](http://www.qeia.org) website.

More resources are available on the QEIA section of [www.cta.org](http://www.cta.org), where educators can listen to podcasts of QEIA briefings, look at research that shows the characteristics of successful schools, or read the professional development requirements for QEIA spelled out in the legislation that launched this program, SB 1133.

The 43-member CTA QEIA

Workgroup, including site educators, CTA Board members and staff, met May 26 to assess the program. The workgroup urged educators to sign up for the popular QEIA training at CTA's Summer Institute in August. This year, educators from NCLB Program Improvement schools are invited as well. Online registration is available at [www.cta.org](http://www.cta.org). The workgroup also discussed progress being made at schools like Susan B. Coombs, where district administrators and the Riverside County Office of Education Achievement Team have also provided vital support.

"We are lucky to have QEIA," Lanthripp says of the law's potential for helping her students achieve. "Our students are making some progress. That's what matters."

MIKE MYSLINSKI

## Counselors

Continued from page 27

CSU Northridge this year," says Hunzeker. "I talked her out of quitting high school and have helped her through the college application and financial aid process. She said, 'Can I call you this summer if I get confused?' I said, 'Honey, I'm not working there anymore.' These kids come to you for all kinds of personal stuff and now they may have to figure things out pretty much for themselves."

"There is a great need for the service provided by counselors," says Mark Lewis, president of LACEA. "Without counselors, students will not be aware of all the opportunities and options available to them. Our goal is for these students to become productive members of the community. This is a devastating blow."

SHERRY POSNICK-GOODWIN

## Social Security

Continued from page 23

support repealing the GPO/WEP and will work to do so as president. The Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset have a serious detrimental impact on hundreds of thousands of educators and your spouses."

CTA has worked for years with NEA to pass laws to repeal the WEP and GPO. Marc Sternberger, a teacher in Pittsburg Unified who was recently elected the CTA Board member representing California delegates to the NEA Board of Directors, also spoke at the rally. Two federal bills to repeal these unfair laws are pending in Congress: H.R. 235 by Rep. Howard Berman (D-Los Angeles) and S. 484 by Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-California).

As local newspapers reporting on the rally noted, the state Assembly earlier in May voted 62-13 in favor of Assembly Member Tom Torlakson's Assembly Joint Resolution 10, urging Congress and President Barack Obama to repeal the provisions. The resolution was pending before the state Senate at press time.

Speakers at the rally included Torlakson (D-Antioch); Janet Roosevelt Katten, the niece of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt; Rep. Barbara Lee (D-Oakland); and past CTA President Ed Foglia, now president of CTA/NEA Retired.

MIKE MYSLINSKI

To stay up-to-date on this issue, go to [www.socialsecurityfairness.com](http://www.socialsecurityfairness.com) or visit [www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org).

SHERRY POSNICK-GOODWIN

## Calexico

Continued from page 35

"We have so many grievances, we can't even keep up with the paperwork," says Durazo on a day when the mercury has climbed to 105 degrees at Calexico High School. "Needless to say, morale has been really low, and tempers have been rising along with the temperature."

"We are happy to have a contract, and our negotiating team did a wonderful job," adds Durazo. "But we will continue fighting for justice and fairness, because that's what a union is for."



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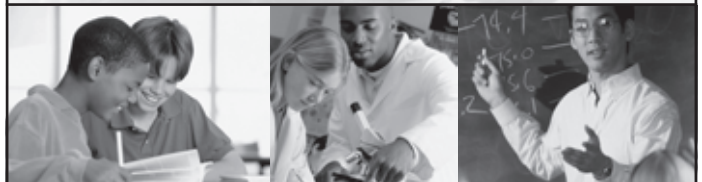
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## member profile

LESLIE HONG



CTA photo by Dave Earl Carpenter

“It’s our job as SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS to take students from their world and show them it’s OK to join us in this world.”

Leslie Hong’s manner is quiet and encouraging as she leads a young student with special needs by the hand to a kid-size beanbag. Her classroom at first glance looks like any preschool: alphabet letters ringed about the walls, miniature chairs, kids aimlessly bouncing about in various stages of unrest. But Hong, a special-needs preschool instructor at Cleveland Elementary in Pasadena — who teaches a class designed specifically for children with autism — begins this class giving every student close, one-on-one contact.

“My class is a sensorimotor class, so we’ve found that physically holding students is kind of mind-opening for them,” says Hong, wrapping a blanket around each of her students in turn and letting them bask for a few moments on top of a cushy beanbag.

Each child in the class sits at attention waiting their turn — a clear look of antici-

pation on their small faces as they watch their classmates being rocked in the comfort of the blanket.

“When I squeeze them like this, it calms them down and helps them to focus,” she explains. “Proprioception — which is movement of the joints — gives information to the joints and produces calmness.”

Hong became a special education teacher four years ago after her involvement in college working at a junior high after-school program. She had developed a bond with a young girl in the class with Down syndrome. It was her connection with that girl that led Hong to specialize in special education. She knew that’s where she could make a difference.

Hong walks a student named Fernando over to work with a picture-communication system and talks about mainstreaming her students into the typical preschool class next door. “For my kids, this pre-

school is their first experience with school, so my goal is to get them ready to be able to sit and pay attention in a blended inclusion class. Not everybody is going to achieve that — and that’s OK.”

Hong is realistic about the challenges her students face. She is also a natural at working with kids with special needs — a human conduit connecting these students with autism to the rest of the world.

“The best thing about this job is that the smallest victory can make your day. Last week, one of our kids raised her hand and motioned during ‘If You’re Happy and You Know It,’ and that was the very first time in two years that she did a hand motion with our class.

“That might be a small thing for someone else,” says Hong proudly, “but for our staff that was the best day ever.”

DAVE EARL CARPENTER



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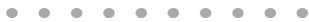
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