

# *California* EDUCATOR

California Teachers Association

March 2011 Volume 15 Issue 6

Is your school  
a GLBT **safe zone?**  
Page 8





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# ¡Sí Se Puede! ¿Por Qué No?

BY CTA PRESIDENT DAVID A. SANCHEZ

I don't believe any child has ever been born a bully. I think they learn it from watching adults. And in schools, I believe, they are keenly aware of how we deal with bullying. Do we deal with it immediately and responsibly, or do we look away? Every day in schools across California there are opportunities for teachers, education support professionals and principals to turn bullying into teachable moments. In fact, respect and tolerance are lessons that can last a lifetime. What's more, confronting and addressing the bullying of *all* students is part of the California Education Code and the legal responsibility of educators.

Most people think they know bullying behavior when they see it, but what about when it relates to the bullying of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) students? It's an issue some people aren't comfortable talking about, but that doesn't make it any less important. In fact, when you look at the research, you may be surprised. Did you know that the suicide rate for GLBT student continues to be three to four times higher than that of other students? Two out of three GLBT students say they don't feel safe at school. And nearly 85 percent report being verbally harassed. That's no way for a student to spend their day at school — scared, hurt, unfocused on learning.

But students are not responsible for the safety of our campuses. Adults are. And we can't stand by while our students feel unsafe. School districts cannot back down from confronting incidents when they occur. Educators cannot dismiss homophobic language when we hear it. And we cannot wait for students to enter middle school or high school before we start teaching them about tolerance.

That's why I'm so proud of this issue of the *California Educator* and the resources that have been compiled for this feature. With GLBT bullying so prevalent in our schools, it's important we recognize it and stop it. The awareness we raise will not only promote a safer learning environment, it also has the potential to improve the lives of our students — in some cases, even save them.

I know the statistics on GLBT bullying aren't pretty, but we can make things better just by being aware of the issue and vowing to make our schools a safe zone for all students.

Our students are counting on us now, more than ever. In addition to bringing awareness to their differences and promoting tolerance and understanding, we must continue to speak out about the bullying tactics of Sacramento politics. The governor has proposed a balanced budget that relies on Californians having a choice to extend temporary revenues, but a handful of legislators don't want to allow us to vote and are threatening their colleagues who are even considering support.

Time is running out. More than \$20 billion in cuts to schools and colleges over the past three years have left our students with fewer teachers, fewer class options, and fewer opportunities to receive a well-rounded education. Even in the midst of this economic downturn, California maintains the eighth-largest economy in the world. We also maintain the largest student-to-teacher ratios in the country, and the latest round of 19,000 layoff notices that went out to teachers isn't going to make things better. We can and must do better.

As I write this, legislators have yet to reach an agreement on the state budget or whether to allow us to vote on the proposed tax extension. We must continue to make our communities aware of what is happening to their neighborhood schools and colleges. They must know that class sizes are too large, text books are outdated, arts and sports programs are being eliminated, and fees are increasing, because these conditions aren't good for our students and aren't good for California.

It's evident that our schools need more resources, but we can't wait for the politicians in Sacramento to agree on how to increase funding, or even allow us to extend the current revenues. Some, it seems, are more interested in partisan platforms.

Bullying behavior has no more place in the halls of our Capitol than it does in the halls of our schools — especially when so much is at stake.

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¡Sí Se Puede! [Yes we can! Why not?], words inspired by César Chávez,  
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"Making the Grade" provides links to Capitol staff analyses, voting records, and a progress report on how legislators are voting on CTA bills.

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

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**"I guess you need this more than me."**



# UPDATE

## Grading the California Legislature

Ever wondered how your state senator or Assembly member is voting on bills of importance to educators and students?

You can find out at [cta.org](http://cta.org) with a new feature that grades the Legislature in real time, "Making the Grade: A Progress Report on Legislative Action."

The new page, [www.cta.org/legislators-graded](http://www.cta.org/legislators-graded), tracks legislators' votes on every measure upon which CTA's State Council of Education has adopted a position. The page not only reports all legislators' votes on this position legislation, but also calculates a voting percentage that tells readers immediately how often the lawmaker is voting with or against CTA on these key measures.

Over the past 25 years, CTA has rated lawmakers on their votes on selected legislation at the end of every two-year legislative

session. However, this new tool, aided by a real-time computer program, includes legislators' votes on all CTA position legislation. The rating on the votes is available within hours of when they are cast.

The new page is a valuable tool for CTA members. Like a student's report card, it establishes accountability and transparency for lawmakers, and it represents a quick and easy way for CTA members to evaluate how their local lawmakers are performing.

It also means that when a CTA Legislative Contact Team visits a lawmaker, the team can provide the legislator and their staff with hard data about the legislator's voting behavior relative to schools.

"Making the Grade" will also serve as powerful tool for chapters to help educate their own members about the importance of getting in touch with their lawmakers on vital issues. And it will provide chapter members

with feedback about how their contacts with their lawmakers have affected the final vote on bills on important issues.

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# calendar

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# The Safe Zone

**IT CAN BE AN UNCOMFORTABLE TOPIC.** A student says in passing, “That’s so gay.” Another student is teased because of their perceived sexual orientation. Some teachers and principals don’t get involved. This might seem like an issue best left out of the classroom, but there’s a population of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) students who feel unsafe at school. Who are often being bullied in plain sight. Who are committing suicide at three to four times the rate of other students.

Educators have a responsibility to make schools safe for all children. They also have a legal responsibility to respond to GLBT bullying. When teachers speak up against intolerance, they model behavior that can become one of the most important lessons their students learn.

In the following stories, we examine the issue of GLBT bullying and explore four factors that create a safe culture in schools (page 10). Then we hear from students in a Gay-Straight Alliance who wrote personal accounts of what they wished teachers knew (page 14). There are tips on how to create a safe school environment (page 17) as well as CTA resources and legal interpretations (page 16).

When teachers allow for the rainbow of differences in a classroom, they make schools safer for GLBT students, which in turn makes school safer for all students. And that’s when true learning happens.

Story by **Dina Martin** • Photos by **Scott Buschman** • Illustrations by **David Julian**



# Four lessons to create

## GLBT bullying must be addressed



**MYNDI HARDGRAVE IS PROUD TO BE** the faculty adviser for the Gay-Straight Alliance — but she prays for the day when the club can be put to rest at Hanford West High School.

“Gay-Straight Alliances should not exist,” she says. “It is sad and shameful that in 2011 our society is still so ignorant and closed-minded that a GSA is necessary to protect our students.”

Still, GSAs are one of four key factors that the nationwide Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) identifies as helping to create safe schools for GLBT students. The other three are an explicit anti-bullying training with emphasis on sexual orientation and gender identity, the presence of supportive staff, and curriculum that includes GLBT figures.

At a time when GLBT students have killed

themselves after relentless bullying at school, these four factors become critical to a healthy school culture. Educators who work on these issues know that once you make schools safer for GLBT students, you’ve made it safer for everyone.

### **1 Lesson One: Establish a Gay-Straight Alliance**

Hanford West’s GSA now draws some 30 students to its meetings and is actively involved in campus and community events. There is a markedly different atmosphere at the school now, compared to six years ago when two gay students approached Hardgrave with a request to be the GSA adviser.

At the time, the English teacher had to do some soul-searching before agreeing to the students’ appeal. After all, although she is gay, Hardgrave hadn’t come out to the school

community and was resistant to doing so. She also worried that the students would be made targets. Despite her concerns, Hardgrave realized saying no to the students “went against everything I stood for.” So she said yes.

As she predicted, the action unleashed a firestorm in the conservative Central Valley town. The religious community organized protests, students were verbally attacked, and the Gay-Straight

Alliance became fodder for the local media for weeks on end. A parade of critics filled the school board meetings to denounce the GSA as promoting deviant behavior and demand that it be banned.

Hardgrave also took heat from some of her colleagues and the community — even receiving a death threat. In the end, both the administration and the school board defended the club’s right to exist. Six years later, Hardgrave not only continues to advise the GSA, she has set up a “safe zone” in her classroom for GLBT students, and she is known all over the campus as the “go-to” person when GLBT issues arise.

“Almost without fail, if the complaint gets back to me, I work with the administration to make sure it gets addressed,” Hardgrave says.

Establishing a GSA at Hanford West High was a crucial element in changing the school environment — as rocky as its beginnings were.

Founded in 1998, Gay-Straight Alliances are student-run clubs that provide a safe place for students to meet, support one another, talk about issues related to sexual orientation, and work to end homophobia. From its birth in the San Francisco Bay Area, the GSA network has expanded nationwide, and now includes more than 800 GSAs in California high schools and middle schools. While school faculty like Hardgrave serve as advisers, the energy and initiative behind the clubs come from students.

“We provide an environment that is safe for the gay community,” says GSA President Veronica Felts, a senior at Hanford West High who felt compelled to join the club as a straight ally after the bruising Proposition 8 anti-gay-marriage initiative.

**ABOVE:** Myndi Hardgrave, vice president of the Hanford Secondary Educators Association, heeded the call by students to be adviser to the district’s first Gay-Straight Alliance.

**RIGHT:** As a straight ally and GSA president, Hanford West senior Veronica Felts is passionate about standing up for the rights of GLBT students on campus.



# a safe school



**ABOVE:** Menlo-Atherton High School GSA President Max Philp was compelled to publicly "come out" to the student body following the four student suicides that occurred in September.

Felts had never been politically active before, but she became passionate about the issue and determined to stand up for GLBT students on campus.

"You still hear students saying 'That's so gay,' but I've found that when you call them on it, they apologize," she says. Still, Felts would like to see more teachers step forward to establish "safe zones" in their classrooms, where GLBT youth can go to find support. That too, she says, makes a difference.

Kirsten Barnes, a counselor at Hanford West and president of the Hanford Secondary Education Association, agrees that the atmosphere on campus has become more tolerant in the six years since the GSA was established, but the work isn't done.

"A lot of times, it's a matter of educating the teachers as well. We still have to let teachers know that name-calling is unacceptable, and they have a responsibility to stop it when they hear it," she says. (*See story on teachers' legal responsibilities on page 16.*)

A similar campaign is under way at Menlo-Atherton High School in Menlo Park where this year the Gay-Straight Alliance has teamed with the school's Peer Education Team in a yearlong GLBTQ



## Video extras

- > See Hardgrave's students respond to "That's so gay" at [cta.org/slurs-video](http://cta.org/slurs-video).
- > Learn how Hardgrave formed the Gay-Straight Alliance at [cta.org/GSA-video](http://cta.org/GSA-video).
- > Watch the Gay-Straight Alliance in action at [cta.org/bullying-video](http://cta.org/bullying-video).

(the Q is for Questioning) awareness campaign that includes fliers and posters around the campus, and will culminate with a training of faculty and staff by students.

GSA President Max Philp took to the school's public address system on Oct. 11, National Coming Out Day, to come out to the entire student body. He told the school: "I feel that the closeted, insecure and questioning students at Menlo-Atherton need to know that it is okay to be whoever you want to be. There are people who will love you for who you are."

## The price of intolerance

Educators were reminded of the tragic possibilities when GLBT students are not supported again last September, when four GLBT-identified students took their own lives in California, Indiana, Texas and New York. Among them was Sean Walsh, a 13-year-old middle school student in Tehachapi, Calif., who was on life support for nine days after hanging himself after being the victim of relentless bullying. As horrifying as these incidents were — and are — the tragedies create a clarion call for educators to re-commit themselves to stamping out bullying of GLBT-identified students.

Overall, the statistics are sobering. In

2009, nearly nine out of 10 GLBT students reported harassment at school, while 40 percent said teachers never heard, saw or intervened in the incidents, according to statistics from the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN).

According to GLSEN's 2010 National School Climate Survey, students who identified themselves as GLBT were more likely to miss classes, experience fallen grades, and suffer from an increased level of depression and anxiety. Despite the grim statistics, both GLSEN and the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice report advances in laws and policies, as well as a

decrease in homophobic remarks on campus. Educators and students also point to groundbreaking television shows like "Glee" — which has prominent gay characters and has focused on GLBT bullying this year — as having had a positive influence on students.

"It took educators — gay and straight — who realized students in their classrooms were being affected by an environment that was less than tolerant," CTA President David A. Sanchez says. "It is vitally important for all educators to continue the work of providing a nurturing, hate-free environment of awareness and acceptance for all students and colleagues in our schools."



## 2 Lesson Two: Provide anti-bullying training emphasizing GLBT issues

While a number of school districts offer some professional development in GLBT issues, teachers in the San Juan Unified School District in Carmichael, outside of Sacramento, have been at it for 10 years already. As part of its social justice commitment, the San Juan Teachers Association (SJTA) offers a three-day, 18-hour training titled “Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Issues.” The training consists of films, discussions, journaling, an overview of the law AB 537, and hearing from a panel of GLBT students. Through the discussions and self-examination that takes place, teachers report they are able to more deeply understand issues that confront GLBT students.

“We [SJTA] have been the driving force behind this training,” says SJTA President Steve Duditch. “But we also have a great partnership with the district. We are now developing programs together. No one wants to be out of compliance with the law and face a lawsuit.”

Like many educators, Duditch believes the training is about more than legal compliance; it’s about tolerance, acceptance, respect, and creating a positive learning environment.

“I want my class to be a safe space for everyone,” says Elaina Zarka, who recently began her teaching career at Sylvan Middle School. “I want my students to be comfortable and engaged, as opposed to

being afraid to come to school.”

Although she had previously talked to her students about bullying, Zarka hadn’t approached GLBT issues with them until she took the training.

“I decided to change gears one day, so I led a discussion about GLBT bullying. I was able to reiterate that it’s not about sex or sexuality, it’s about respect,” she says, noting that the students appreciated having the classroom discussion.

Lessons learned in the training translate into some very practical skills as well, especially in an area that has demonstrated against gay rights.

As a culminating exercise, for example, participants sat across from each other posing and answering questions they had generated, including: “Are you going to teach gay issues?” “Why do we have to share the locker with a gay guy?” and “Do you promote the homosexual agenda in class?” The teachers then switch places and attempt answering other sensitive questions.

“We want them to practice in a casual atmosphere so that they will feel comfortable when they encounter these questions from students and parents,” explains Vicky Velasco, a middle school teacher who is leading the exercise.

The answer that many of the teachers come back to is that ultimately, they are obligated to follow California law, and under AB 537, students (and teachers) in a public school cannot be discriminated against based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

“The bottom line is that we are here to educate our students, and we can’t do that if they feel unsafe or unwanted in our classrooms,” Velasco says.

## 3 Lesson Three: Develop the presence of supportive staff

Although middle schools are often thought of as ground zero for name-calling and bullying, it’s not the case everywhere. Eleanor Evans, a social studies teacher at Millennial Middle School, a science, technology, engineering and mathematics magnet school in the San Diego Unified School District, shares that she hasn’t heard a slur since she started school this year — while it had

been rampant when she taught high school last year.

“Last year, I heard words every single day. It was shocking,” she says. “This year, I haven’t heard a racial slur or GLBT name-calling. It’s almost an unreal world, but I think it’s because of the administration working with the staff. It’s a staff-driven school, and we make the decisions. Our school is extremely diverse, and we teach respect for each other from the first day.”

Evans is the San Diego Education Association representative to the district’s Safe Schools Task Force, which is working to develop a comprehensive policy on harassment as well as a district-wide program.

“I think educators are taking this more seriously. There’s more awareness,” Evans says. “Educators, whether it’s the bus driver or classroom teacher, must be aware and attentive. They know what’s right and what’s wrong. When they hear something, they need to stop it.”

To be sure, educators in the San Diego school district are taking their responsibility



Steve Duditch



**LEFT:** Vicky Velasco and Bill Simmons of the San Juan Teachers Association lead an exercise in which teachers practice responding to questions that may come up from parents and students. The exercise is just part of a three-day training in GLBT issues that the association sponsors for members.

seriously. Some make it clear at the beginning of the year that they have a zero-tolerance policy toward name-calling. At the same time, when it does occur, many use it as a “teachable moment.”

Myndi Hardgrave at Hanford West High has tried different approaches when students use offensive language.

“I was in a class when one boy turned to another and said, ‘You’re so gay,’” she recalls. Hardgrave immediately addressed the comment without getting angry. She asked her student to rephrase what he was trying to say without being hurtful.

Menlo-Atherton High School English teacher and GSA adviser Stacey Woodcock, who is a member of the Sequoia Union Teachers Association, also speaks up when she catches students using offensive language.

“I’ll say my sister is gay and I have many LGBT friends, and it can be really hard for people who are gay to hear ‘gay’ used as a putdown,” Woodcock says. “I aim for compassion and understanding, rather than reprimanding.”

Teachers of every orientation know that GLBT bullying is an issue they must address in order to create a presence of supportive staff in a school. Other teachers maintain it is an important lesson for self-identified GLBT teachers to come out at school so that students can see that being GLBT is normal.

“It was scary at first, but I feel it is important to take that risk,” says Melissa Bryden, who teaches math at Del Campo High School in Carmichael and was one of the leaders in the San Juan Teachers Association training. “I think it’s important to break down stereotypes. I find that kids look up to me, and know that they have someone to turn to.”

Coming out, of course, is a personal decision, and easier for some than others. Hardgrave acknowledges the difficulty in a more conservative area.

“In the Central Valley, most educators who are gay, even right now, have a fear of coming out of the closet. Even today, in this entire district, I’m the only one who is out,” she says.

Hardgrave doesn’t make a formal announcement to her students, but brings it up

when she talks to students about offensive language that won’t be tolerated in class. After that, it may come up in more casual references.

“I’m not preaching anything. I may refer to ‘my girlfriend,’ but I make it a normal part of my life,” she says.

Hardgrave acknowledges that the atmosphere in schools today is much more tolerant than when she was in high school some 20 years ago, and this is largely due to societal changes. But now that there are more openly GLBT students on campus, there may even be more of a need for supportive teachers, counselors and education support professionals.

“There are a lot of gay students,” Hardgrave says. “The fact that we’re here, that I have a rainbow on my lanyard, and I walk around openly — I know it makes a difference to those students.”

#### **4 Lesson Four: Include GLBT figures in the curriculum**

Students also need to see GLBT figures integrated into the curriculum to more fully develop a tolerant world view.

Many educators and schools are making use of specific GLBT anti-bullying curriculum in their classrooms. Through the work of NEA, GLSEN, the Human Rights Campaign and many other organizations, there are abundant materials available. Among them are resources through the Human Rights Campaign’s Welcoming Schools program, which offers tools on embracing family diversity, avoiding gender stereotyping, and ending bullying and name-calling.

Including lessons in tolerance doesn’t have to mean teaching an entirely new curriculum. Working with at-risk high school students at the Jack London Community Day School in Los Angeles, Edgar Angulo not only has found ways to infuse tolerance messages into his math, science and life-skills lessons, but includes GLBT figures as well. For example, during a math class, he may point out that it was a gay man, Alan Turing, who helped break the Nazi codes during World War II. He wants his GLBT and straight students to know there are prominent people in the world who happen to be gay.



**ABOVE:** Eleanor Evans, who represents the San Diego Education Association on the district’s Safe Schools Task Force, says educators are taking their responsibility seriously when it comes to preventing and stopping harassment of GLBT students.

Angulo, who is a member of United Teachers Los Angeles, has also worked to establish an atmosphere of tolerance in his classroom in other ways, including talking about the impact of slurs and being open about being gay.

“My work with these students is based on trust, so if I want them to open up to me, I need to open up to them. They see themselves as outcasts, and they began identifying with the same issues,” he says. “It’s taken awhile, but it’s made a huge difference.”

Of course, Angulo doesn’t just focus on GLBT issues in his class, but brings in women and racial and ethnic groups as well.

“I think it’s very important. We live in a diverse world and we run into all kinds of people. In my classroom there is a Rainbow flag, a Salvadoran flag, a Mexican flag,” Angulo says. “The message is that we are all here, we’re in a safe environment, and we’re here to learn and to have fun.”



Find more resources to help support GLBT students at [cta.org/glb- resources](http://cta.org/glb- resources).



# Students speak out

## What teachers need to know

The question was simple: What do you wish every teacher knew about the GLBT experience in school? Eight years ago, high school teacher Kurt Dearie started collecting the answers from the students he advised in the Carlsbad High School Gay-Straight Alliance. Dearie and his students believed the best way to create a more tolerant culture would be to encourage teachers to respond to GLBT bullying. To reach teachers, the students wrote pieces — excerpted on these pages — that told teachers about their lives and the help they needed. These pieces have been read by students at teacher trainings, and have helped change the school culture. We're publishing them without using student names, to protect the privacy of minors. Many of the pieces were originally written anonymously.

**Teachers stop students from using the phrase "That's so retarded" because it is insulting, but seem to be deaf to the phrase "That's so gay." ...**

**Why is it that teachers rarely seem to hear what students are hearing on a daily basis?**

**As I walk on campus every day, I hear hateful comments made against homosexuals and transgender people. They are rampant on campus, and I constantly fear the time when the discrimination will be turned directly at me because I am transgender.**

**I cannot even be myself at home for fear that my mother will throw me out of the house and I will have no place to live.**


**Yesterday a person in one of my classes called someone a homo from across the room. My teacher heard this, of course, but as usual [he] acted as though nothing was said. About 10 minutes later someone else called the same boy a retard, and [the teacher] said to the other kid that it was wrong to say that word.**

**To me this is very hypocritical, because basically he is saying that it is all right to call someone a homo but it's not OK to call them a retard. In my opinion, both words should never be used.**

**When I was in middle school people would walk up to me just to call me "faggot." It hurt! The worst part is that no one did anything about it.**


**If you would just tell students that saying these things is unacceptable — even things like "That's gay" — it would help a lot. If you don't stop these things from being said, there will only be more prejudice, more hate, more isolation and more unnecessary deaths.**






I know that being who I am makes it easy for me to be cut down and insulted. So I ask you: never assume. Never assume that anyone is or isn't gay. Never assume that silence equates to agreement, or that everything is fine. It may be that our silence is simply that, silence. You may have just injured someone greatly by speaking without thinking about the consequences.

I am not saying that speaking up for yourself is a bad thing; in fact, I sometimes wish I had enough nerve to do the same. Assuming that everyone agrees with you or that you won't hurt anybody by saying what you are about to say is simply wrong. It can hurt someone deeply, deeper than you can imagine.




One of the biggest problems in middle school is the use of the phrase "That's so gay" to negatively describe something. Racial slurs and other derogatory words were never allowed by teachers, but the use of "That's so gay" was always overlooked or ignored by anyone who had the power to stop it. The best way to help gay, lesbian, or bisexual students is to simply stop allowing this.



Now I have a hope for the future, of what I can be. What just a group of openly gay, lesbian and bisexual people taught me is that there is a hope for the future, where I may not have to walk down the hall where I face hearing faggot, homo, dyke and that's so gay from people who are in my classes and talk to me during lunch. I hope for a future where I can vote on laws that directly affect me and my friends.

I hope for a future where I can be myself. So, to finish this off, teachers, I am asking you to think seriously about being open to your students. I know you may have your own reasons for not sharing your sexual orientation, but you cannot comprehend the effect on LGBT students like me, who want to know that their teacher is someone they can look up to, someone who can give them hope for their future. And if this isn't possible, then at least show your support for us. Let us know that we can always come to you. It can change someone's life.



School is hard, hearing others harassed. Every time I hear someone yell "Fag!" across the field, I get this urge to tell them how much it hurts me, the bystander, as well as the intended victim.

I'd give anything to go one day, a mere seven hours, without hearing a single derogatory comment against me or anyone else.



## Tips toward a **safe school culture**

- > Be aware — take the risk and challenge offensive behavior.
- > Find a way to address anti-GLBT slurs like “That’s so gay.”
- > Display signs, symbols (rainbows/rainbow colors) and posters that identify the classroom and campus as a safe zone where GLBT students can feel supported.
- > Support GLBT student clubs, such as a Gay-Straight Alliance.
- > Present positive GLBT images and role models embedded in the curriculum.
- > Become aware of your own language and make changes if needed.
- > Ensure that school personnel and the school district enforce policies that protect against sexual orientation discrimination.
- > Work with your union or school district to offer training for staff. Both CTA and NEA offer specific trainings regarding GLBT issues.
- > Do not use stereotypes or biased language.
- > Respect the confidentiality of your students regarding their sexuality.
- > Be supportive and empathetic if a GLBT student comes to you with concerns, and if you can’t be, take the time to identify individuals who can.

*Compiled from the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network and “Creating Homophobia-Free Classrooms” by Eleanor Evans, San Diego Teachers Association*

## Educators legally must prevent GLBT bullying

by **Priscilla Winslow**, CTA assistant chief counsel

Standing up for students who are harassed or bullied by their peers isn’t just good policy and an ethical duty; it is required by state and federal law. Failing to do so can have dire financial consequences for both teachers and school administrators who ignore student hate crimes or harassment.

Just ask any of the administrators who were personally sued by several students who were either gay or lesbian or perceived to be by other students in the case *Flores v. Morgan Hill Unified School District*. The plaintiffs complained to principals and assistant principals about harassment and bullying they suffered, including being physically beaten by students who yelled, “Faggot, you don’t belong here.” Two girls who had started dating each other in high school were verbally harassed by boys in the school parking lot.

In both instances, when the students complained, the administrators responded in a perfunctory manner, such as urging the students to report the incident to the campus police, but failing to follow up. The boy who was beaten up was transferred to another school, and only one of his six assailants was punished. The court held that the administrators could be held liable for failing to take effective remedial measures to stop the harassment. “Effective” in this context meant taking further steps if the initial discipline was inadequate and doing a thorough investigation of complaints. Instead, the district failed to discipline the harassers, and failed to train students,

teachers and other school personnel about the district’s policy prohibiting harassment on the basis of sexual orientation.

State statutes also prohibit discrimination in schools on the basis of sex, race, sexual orientation or gender identity, physical disability, religion, and national origin (Ed. Code sections 200 and 220). The State Board of Education is charged with the responsibility of adopting policies directed at creating an environment in K-12 schools that is free from discriminatory attitudes and hate violence. This includes revising curriculum guidelines to include fostering an appreciation of diversity (Ed. Code section 233).

Students between fourth and 12th grades can be suspended or expelled if they engage in hate violence, which includes assault or battery or other violent acts that are motivated by prejudice on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical disability, etc. (Ed. Code section 48900.3; Penal Code sections 422.6, 422.7).

School districts have an obligation to develop, implement, and annually review a school safety plan (Ed. Code section 33280). Discrimination and anti-harassment policies must be part of the overall school safety plan, and school employees and parents should be involved in the formulation of such a plan (Ed. Code section 32282).

In addition, school safety is something about which the employer has an obligation to negotiate with the employee organization, so don’t hesitate to demand to bargain over any harassment or bullying issues that affect employment. ♡

# CTA workshops and resources can help

Resources for addressing GLBT bullying in your school include CTA trainings, legal education and scholarships for teachers who promote understanding. These include:

## **GLBT Guy De Rosa Safety in Schools Grant and Scholarship Program**

The grant and scholarship program was created to promote human and civil rights by making our public schools safe for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons. The grants support projects and presentations that promote understanding and respect for GLBT persons, while the scholarships support members enrolled in a teaching/counseling credential program who are pursuing a career in public education and who understand the importance of GLBT educators as role models in our public schools. For online information, see [www.cta.org/safety-in-schools](http://www.cta.org/safety-in-schools).

## **Legal Rights for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Employees and Students**

California law is clear and sweeping in its protection of gay and lesbian employees and students from discrimination because of sexual orientation. In addition to a brochure that is frequently updated and can be downloaded from the website, CTA also offers a wealth of information on GLBT protection in the members-only section of the website at [www.cta.org/glb-legal-rights](http://www.cta.org/glb-legal-rights). (You must log in to access this information.)

## **CTA GLBT Issues Conference**

CTA's annual GLBT Conference held in October addresses GLBT issues involving educators, students and the community. This conference is open to all CTA members and serves as a venue to discuss a variety of subjects affecting the entire membership and California's youth. Details will be forthcoming on

CTA's website at [www.cta.org/conferences](http://www.cta.org/conferences).

## **Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Leadership Development Program**

The CTA Human Rights and Community Outreach Department coordinates the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Leadership Development Program to promote the value of GLBT members' involvement at all levels within the association. For more information, see [www.cta.org/glb-leadership](http://www.cta.org/glb-leadership).

## **Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Youth: Breaking the Silence**

This training provides participants with strategies for reducing hostilities towards gay and lesbian students and teaches ways to create a safe free learning environment for all students. In addition, participants will learn what their Chapters and Service Centers can do to promote tolerance and understanding of these issues. For more information, see [www.cta.org/breaking-the-silence](http://www.cta.org/breaking-the-silence).

## **CTA Training: Bullying 101 and 102**

Every day in our schools, students and teachers are teased, threatened and tormented by bullies. Ignoring bullying creates a climate of fear, hostility and violence. Learn how to recognize bullying, examine its characteristics and find out what you can do as educators to prevent bullying among your students. Participants must attend 101 prior to attending 102 in order to fully understand and participate. Contact your chapter president or primary contact staff to arrange the training through CTA's Human Rights Department.

## **Let's Get Real**

CTA members may receive a deep discount on Let's Get Real, a documentary and curriculum guide on bullying and discrimination that provides an effective

way to intervene and stop school violence. To order, contact CTA Human Rights consultant Reena Doyle at (562) 942-7979 or visit [www.cta.org/lets-get-real](http://www.cta.org/lets-get-real).

## **Harvey Milk Day, May 22**

In October 2009, Gov. Schwarzenegger signed a bill to create a state day of recognition for gay civil rights leader Harvey Milk, to be observed on Harvey Milk's birthday, May 22. Resources for observing the day in classrooms can be found on CTA's website at [www.cta.org/harvey-milk-day](http://www.cta.org/harvey-milk-day).

## **"Bully Free: It Starts With Me!"**

A new initiative of the NEA Human and Civil Rights Department, the "Bully Free: It Starts With Me!" campaign aims to identify caring adults in our schools and communities who are willing to stand out as someone pledged to help bullied students. For more information, see [www.nea.org/bullyfree](http://www.nea.org/bullyfree).

"As long as GLBT kids are still being bullied, I feel it's important to educate the educators," explains Sue Cirillo, co-chair of CTA's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues Advisory Committee. The committee has initiated and promoted many of CTA's efforts, including the annual GLBT Issues Conference in the fall. ❖



## **Ask an educator**

Have questions about how to handle GLBT bullying? Write us an e-mail at [editor@cta.org](mailto:editor@cta.org). Other California educators who make up CTA's GLBT Issues Advisory Committee will help answer your questions.



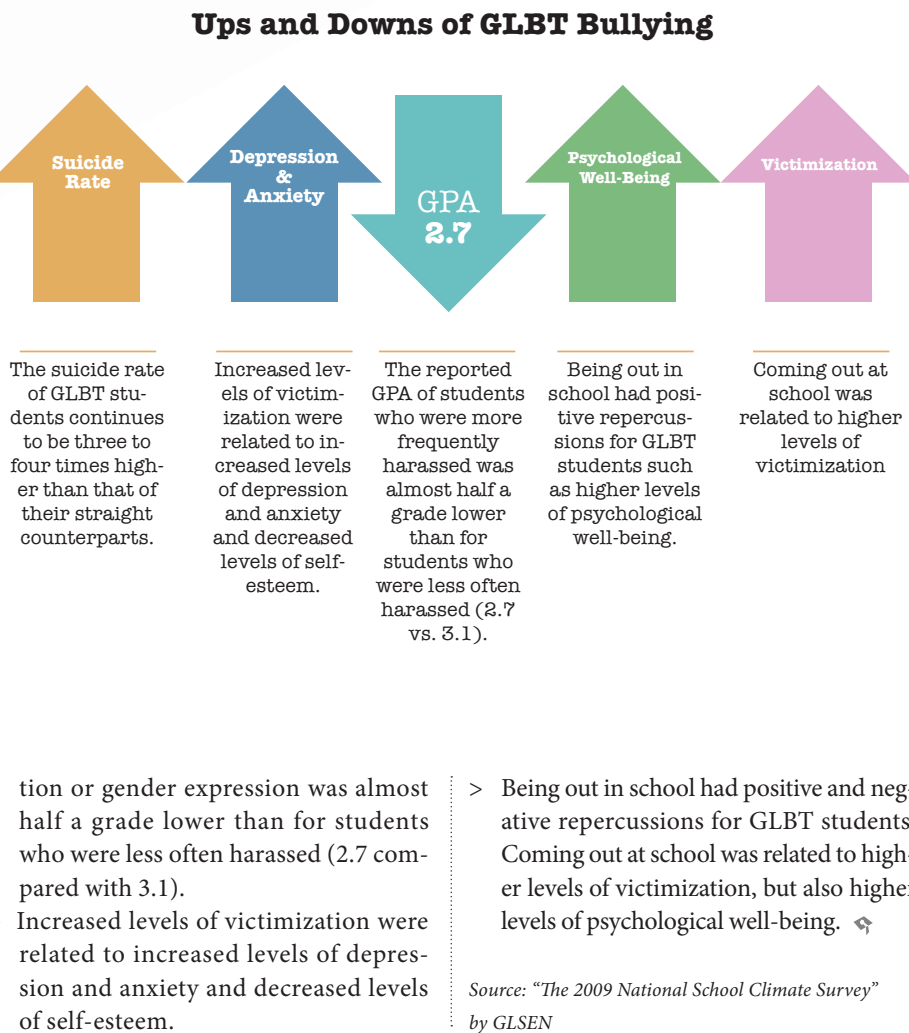
# Startling stats on GLBT bullying

Think GLBT harassment isn't a problem at your school? Think again. Nearly nine out of 10 GLBT students reported experiencing harassment on campus, while two-thirds reported feeling unsafe because of their sexual orientation, according to "The 2009 National School Climate Survey" by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network.

The suicide rate of GLBT continues to be three to four times higher than that of their straight counterparts. In some parts of the country, GLBT runaways may comprise up to 40 percent of the entire teen homeless population.

Key findings of GLSEN's most recent survey of 7,621 middle and high-school age students include:

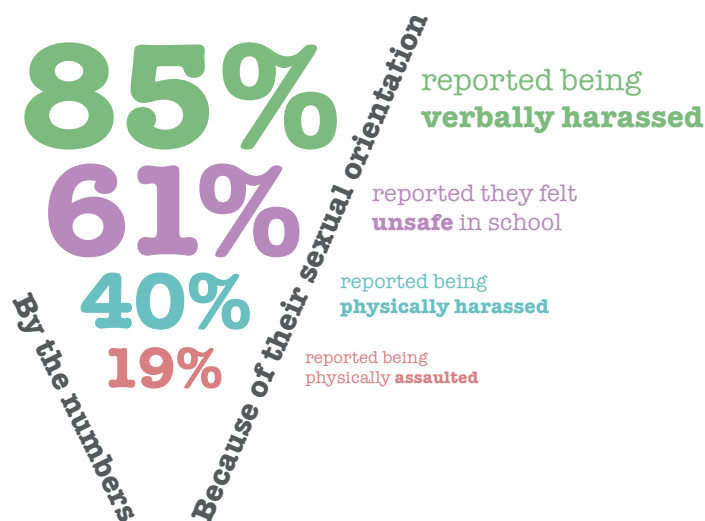
- > Because of their sexual orientation, 84.6 percent of GLBT students reported being verbally harassed, 40.1 percent reported being physically harassed, and 18.8 percent reported being physically assaulted at school in the past year.
- > Because of their gender expression, 63.7 percent of GLBT students reported being verbally harassed, 27.2 percent reported being physically harassed and 12.5 percent reported being physically assaulted at school in the past year.
- > 72.4 percent heard homophobic remarks, such as "faggot" or "dyke," frequently or often at school.
- > Nearly two-thirds (61.1 percent) of GLBT students reported that they felt unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation, and more than a third (39.9 percent) felt unsafe because of their gender expression.
- > 29.1 percent of GLBT students reported missing a class at least once and 30.0 percent reported missing at least one day of school in the past month because of safety concerns, compared with only 8.0 percent and 6.7 percent, respectively, of a national sample of secondary school students.
- > The reported grade point average of students who were more frequently harassed because of their sexual orienta-



tion or gender expression was almost half a grade lower than for students who were less often harassed (2.7 compared with 3.1).

> Increased levels of victimization were related to increased levels of depression and anxiety and decreased levels of self-esteem.

> Being out in school had positive and negative repercussions for GLBT students. Coming out at school was related to higher levels of victimization, but also higher levels of psychological well-being. ✦



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# A new twist on tests

Del Norte High School ties standardized tests to students' grades



Story by Sherry Posnick-Goodwin • Photos by Scott Buschman

**AS TEACHERS ARE GETTING READY TO** have students pull out No. 2 pencils for standardized tests, Del Norte High School in Crescent City has figured out a controversial way to make the tests relevant to students — link them to grades.

If students score “proficient” or “ad-

vanced” on the California Standards Test (CST), they can raise their semester grade by one level. Students can go from an F to a D, for example, which can mean the difference between failing a class and passing. It’s a radical departure from other schools, where students who perform well on standardized tests do

not receive any direct benefit and teachers become frustrated by students filling in the bubbles at random.

Del Norte Teachers Association members decided it was time to make students accountable for their test scores, and figured the best way to do it would be to offer them an incentive. Grades cannot be bumped up more than one level, and departments vary on the practice; in science, grades can only be bumped up as high as a B, while in English and math, grades can be bumped from a B to an A. As an incentive to students with A’s, some math teachers give bonus points on tests that will be taken the following year for students that score well. Grades are bumped up retroactively, since the test results are not released from the state until after grades are submitted. Still, there is no negative impact on grades if students do poorly on the state test.

The school’s principal, Coleen Parker, has no objection to the policy if teachers choose to adopt it. “We’ve got to come up with some way to motivate students,” says Parker. “They need to see that this test matters. It matters to us because our school is being judged on the test. For that reason, it needs to matter to students.”

Math teacher Dave Bokor came up with the idea because his students were always asking why they should do certain things. It dawned on him that his students put forth more effort when he explained the value of learning certain concepts or completing assignments.

“It would be nice if they performed

**ABOVE:** Math teacher Dave Bokor believes that his students are trying harder on CSTs since good scores can bump up their grades. “For the first time, kids are looking forward to knowing what their test results are,” he says. “Finally, they have an incentive.”

well on the tests for intrinsic reasons, but that doesn't always happen," says Bokor.

It's too soon to see if the policy has had an impact on overall school achievement; the policy was announced to students in spring of 2008, shortly before they took the test. But Bokor has noticed that his students are trying harder.

"I believe it's working," says Bokor. "Students are interested in knowing how they did on the test and whether it will have an impact on their grade."

Some students agree.

Classmate Jacob Hodge says, "I think it's amazing. I was sick a lot last year with bronchitis, and this helped me bring my grade up."

Both students say they have heard of students slacking off in homework assignments — in hopes of compensating with high test scores. But they believe those willing to take such a gamble are in the minority, and that if it does work for students, there's no harm done.

"Homework is a learning aid," says Napier. "This system rewards students based on their knowledge, and not on whether they complete meaningless busywork. If you understand the material and do well on your CSTs, what is the point of homework?"

Heather Golden-Young, chair of the English department, says staff wrestled with the policy. "But we came to the conclusion that having this policy is no different than college; students can 'test out' of certain subjects if they know the materials. And isn't having students know the material really the goal?"

Her students, she adds, are taking longer to complete their STAR tests. "They were really reading the questions," she says. "We saw an increase in effort. And now we are going to have to go back and make some grade changes."

Social studies teachers decided to opt out of the grading experiment, says department chair Tim Guzik, who fears that the policy could be unfair to students who are unable to raise their grades.

**RIGHT:** English Department Chair Heather Golden-Young says it wasn't an easy decision for teachers to allow standardized test scores to boost grades.

**BELOW:** Andrew Napier, a junior at Del Norte High School, says students try harder on their CSTs when they have a reason.

Social studies teachers are not the only ones with concerns. A parent who teaches at a nearby charter school has complained to the school board and the California Department of Education. The school also received a letter from the American Civil Liberties Union objecting to the practice.

"For some folks, this raises the flag," says Randy Fugate, chair of the science department, which uses the incentive system. "But flag-raising is OK, because it causes us to be more refined and consistent in our approach. And that's always good."

"My staff is taking a closer look at grading practices within departments to make sure that subjects are being graded

consistently," says Parker, the principal. "Because the state of California, our legislators and the governor are holding schools accountable with the use of this exam and it has no bearing on a student's grade, I applaud my teachers for coming up with a way to utilize the scores to bring value of this test to students." ❖







# Labor-management summit highlights collaboration

**T**he first-ever Advancing Student Achievement Through Labor-Management Collaboration conference was held Feb. 15-16 in Denver, and was attended by several CTA members who gave it mixed reviews. One hundred and fifty district teams — consisting of a teachers union leader, administrator and school board member — were selected by lottery to attend the conference designed to bridge the differences between labor and management. Teams pledged to work together collaboratively. Attendees spent two days in seminars led by presenting districts about reform models, and then teams regrouped for collaboration time.

The conference was sponsored by U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan in collaboration with the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the American Association of School Administrators, the National School Boards Association, and others. It was funded by the Ford Foundation.

Duncan, in his opening remarks, urged administration and union leaders to put an end to “ceaseless conflict,” and noted that collaboration is not for cowards. He told participants that he did not expect teams to emerge with new agreements, but was hoping for progress.

Here’s what CTA attendees had to say:

**Dennis Wright**, *president of the Monterey Bay Teachers Association*

“I was intrigued by the possibilities of working collaboratively with my district. We’ve done some things in the past that have worked to everyone’s benefit, and I wanted to find out what else was out there to help us improve the performance of students, teachers and the district as a whole. I brought back some tips on how to identify projects we can work on collaboratively and ways that we can build trust among teachers, administrators and school board members to improve communication. During sessions with other districts I found labor-management collaboration models that were useful and valuable and that we could clone outright or do a variation of. I had no interest in discussing ways of linking student performance to teacher test scores or merit pay.”



**Aaron Williamson**, *president of the Ravenswood District Teachers Association*

“I felt that merit pay and value-added assessment and doing away with due process were the hidden agenda behind this conference. I went to one workshop that promoted ‘innovation grants’ given by government, but to me the word ‘innovation’ meant throwing out the bargaining contract and union busting altogether. I felt like I had a target on my back in that room. But it was a valuable experience to be part of the dialogue. I wanted to understand the issues more in depth from a union perspective and a non-union perspective, since education is under attack from every angle. I did appreciate presentations about how other dis-

tricts are revamping their teacher evaluation systems. I think we can all agree that the current system doesn’t work. Some districts implemented extreme value-added evaluation systems, and other districts opted for multiple measures including peer evaluation. It was interesting to see districts willing to take risks and try pilot projects.”



**Arielle Zurzolo**, *president of Asociación de Maestros Unidos (and presenter for Green Dot Public Schools)*

“I was extremely glad to be part of the national conversation about school reform. I am proud of the reform efforts that my district is part of, including site-based decision making, a professional work-

day, and joint union-management committees. Working on a collaborative relationship between unions and management is best for students. Management has responsibilities that they must honor while making decisions (sustainability, etc.), and unions have different responsibilities (teacher autonomy, etc.), but the common interest should be student success. If conversations can be centered around this, with mutual understanding of everyone’s other responsibilities, a collaborative relationship can ensue.”



**Lloyd Walzer**, *president of the Lucia Mar Unified Teachers Association*

“I met with our superintendent and school board president

for over an hour to discuss how we will incorporate the conference goals of improving student achievement through labor-management collaboration. We agreed to have transparent communications and to meet regularly to re-evaluate our progress toward improving student achievement. It was a fine opportunity for us to get to know each other in a non-threatening way."

**Tyra Weis**, *president of Associated Pomona Teachers*

"Our district is ahead of the game when it comes to collaboration. We are already communicating, and this conference made it clear to us that we are on the right path. We saw paths we don't want to go down — value-added teacher assessment and merit pay. I was in an audience

two years ago where Mr. Duncan was soundly booed, and I was one of the people booing. I'm not cheering now, but I'm glad not to be booing. I was happy to be included in this discussion, but as an educator, I *expect* to be part of the discussion. If you're not at the table, you'll find yourself on the menu."



**Greg Gadams**, *president of the Fresno Teachers Association*

"I went out of curiosity to

see what was being proposed at the national level. I wanted to see what was being said in the room, and I wanted to have the opportunity to say that value-added assessment, or tying teacher evaluations to test scores, is *not* the way to go. But the format wasn't set up so that you could do that. In the main room with Duncan, the message he kept hitting on was value-added assessment and financial incentives (merit pay) for teachers. I didn't feel the conference was worthwhile, although it would have been so if we had been able to discuss the *real* issues."

**John Ennis**, *president of the Twin Rivers United Educators*

"In many cities and states there are reforms in place,



and they're worth watching and evaluating. These reforms are not going away. It is better to get on board and participate than to be left behind. As long as collective bargaining and binding arbitration are in place, what is there to be feared? This could be a way to steer federal officials away from the Race to the Top nonsense."

SHERRY POSNICK-GOODWIN

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# Cooks stir up fun for Read Across America

Youngsters at Las Americas Preschool in San Francisco were so captivated by the reading of *Armadilly Chili* that they begged for a second helping when the story ended.

"Again!" they implored CTA President David A. Sanchez when he finished the final page. "Again!"

They were among millions of children throughout California and the rest of the nation celebrating Read Across America, a March 2 tradition sponsored by NEA and CTA designed to foster a love of reading in children. CTA members were joined by celebrities, parents and city officials at many participating school sites, and Las Americas Preschool was no exception. Chef Tom Pizzica, host of "Outrageous Food" on the Food Network, shared reading duties with Sanchez.

"When you have a book you

can't put down, it's a great feeling," said Pizzica, one of three honorary co-chairs for RAA, whose theme this year was "Serve Up a Good Book." (Another co-chair was Joan Scharff, vice president of Garden Fresh Corp.)

The youngsters were hungry for more, and Sanchez asked them in both English and Spanish to answer questions about *Armadilly Chili*, a book written by Helen Kettman that emphasizes cooking and friendship as essential ingredients in life. Afterward the youngsters happily donned paper chef hats distributed by the adults.

"I like reading," said 4-year-old Rafael. "It helps you to learn about people, animals, cooking and other things."

"We really should be celebrating reading every day," said Sanchez. "It's wonderful when parents and friends take the opportunity to model reading for



Photo by Scott Buschman

our students so they can be good readers themselves."

Unfortunately, budget cuts may threaten children's access to books and school libraries, said Dennis Kelly, president of United Educators of San Francisco, who attended the festivities along with Bonnie

**ABOVE:** CTA President David A. Sanchez reads from *Armadilly Chili* for the March 2 Read Across America celebration.

Shatun, CTA Board liaison for the statewide event.

Farther south at the Toyota Learning Center at Loma Linda University Children's Hospital, "The Next Food Network Star" finalist and honorary RAA co-chair Doreen Fang joined CTA Vice President Dean Vogel and CTA Board member Mikki Cichocki to spend the morning reading *Armadilly Chili* to ill and

**LEFT TO RIGHT:** CTA Vice President Dean E. Vogel and Read Across America Honorary Chair Doreen Fang read to young patients at Loma Linda University Children's Hospital. Students enjoy a reading by Honorary Chair Tom Pizzica and CTA President David A. Sanchez at Las Americas Preschool in San Francisco. To the far right, CTA Board member Jim Groth, Lakeside Teachers Association President and first-grade teacher Cathy Zmijewski, Souplantation public relations specialist Tracy Marks, and CTA Secretary-Treasurer Gail Mendes read to students in Zmijewski's classroom in suburban San Diego.



Photos (left to right) by Frank Wells, Scott Buschman, Scott Buschman, Scott Buschman, Bill Guy



## Elsewhere throughout the state:

- Los Angeles chef and caterer Paul McCullough read to second-graders in two assemblies at Gratts Elementary School, in an event attended by CTA Board member Tyrone Bell.
- In Riverside, several celebrity readers visited Tomas Rivera Elementary, including Los Angeles Dodgers and members of the 163rd Reconnaissance Wing from March Air Reserve Base.
- Hundreds of Compton Unified students from 41 district schools were treated to readings by Hollywood celebrities — including Ana Ortiz of the cast of “Ugly Betty”; Melissa Rivers, daughter of Joan Rivers; and Emma Caulfield of TV’s “Buffy the Vampire Slayer” — along with public officials, community leaders and Compton Education Association members.
- In the Franklin-McKinley School District in San Jose, older students read to younger students at Meadows Elementary School, which also hosted a family reading night featuring children’s writer Marcus S. Marcus, author of *The Tiger and the Turtle*.
- In Stockton, students at Ansel Adams Elementary School wore pajamas for story time and held a “book swap” among the many activities to celebrate reading.
- CTA Board member Toby Boyd and Bobby Weist, vice president of California Professional Firefighters, read to children at Jed Smith Elementary School in Sacramento.



CTA photo by Bill Guy

**ABOVE:** PTA parent helper Rachel Guler hands out muffins to three second-grade students at Lakeview Elementary in Lakeside.

nated book and a big hug from the culinary star.

In Lakeview Elementary School in San Diego County, students in the first-grade classroom of Lakeside Teachers Association President Cathy Zmijewski were joined by CTA Secretary-Treasurer Gail Mendes and CTA Board member Jim Groth. After the readings, each student received a white chef’s hat and a certificate for a free meal, all courtesy of new RAA partner Souplantation.

SHERRY POSNICK-GOODWIN

recuperating children. The facility’s teacher, Lee Anne Gridley, is a member of the San Bernardino County Teachers Association.

Vogel concluded the celebration by distributing chef’s hats, which the smiling youngsters and teenagers wore enthusiastically.

“No matter how sick these

kids are, you can see the light in their eyes and the hope there,” said Vogel. “We do large and small Read Across America events, but the intimacy of this setting with these kids and their reaction is really uplifting.”

Fang attended school in the Loma Linda area. “It’s been a re-

ally moving experience to help make these kids feel a little better about being in the hospital,” she said. “Reading is so important and a great way to help them use their imaginations to take them anywhere.” As the morning concluded, the young patients lined up eagerly for an autographed do-





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## CTA promotes asthma education

**M**elanie Driver is president of the Fairfield-Suisun Teachers Association. She is also asthmatic and admits there are days in her classroom when she isn't sure whether she should reach for her inhaler or head for the emergency room. When an asthma attack happens to her — or her students — it can result in missed school days, fatigue and poor morale.

Driver offered her perspective about asthma health risks posed by environmental triggers in schools at the state Capitol on Feb. 28 in a policy briefing titled "The Burden of Asthma on California's Schools." Sponsored by CTA's *Teachers for Healthy Kids: Healthy Air, Healthy Kids* project, the event is part of a continuing effort to raise awareness about what teachers and schools can do to prevent asthma and asthma triggers and maintain indoor air quality in schools. Also in attendance were members of the California School Boards Association, the California School Employees Association, the Regional Asthma Management and Prevention Program, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Asthma is a chronic, lifelong respiratory

disease that causes breathing problems due to inflammation of the airways in the lungs. Symptoms include coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath and tightness in the chest. One out of six children in California under the age of 18 has been diagnosed with asthma, which is the number one cause of student absences due to chronic disease. Students with asthma not only miss school, but also miss out on social interaction with other children and may experience trouble with concentrating due to medication. There is no cure, but it can be managed and controlled by minimizing asthma "triggers" in the classroom — reducing dust mites, improving ventilation, using "green" or nontoxic cleaning products, eliminating scented products, and eliminating moisture and mold.

Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District demolished Crescent Elementary School in Suisun in 2003 due to black mold contamination, which has been linked to asthma. Driver decided to become involved in changing things districtwide when her classroom at Wilson Elementary School developed a leak and students began adversely reacting to the mold that resulted. In her testimony to the panel, Driver described how a district effort supported by CTA's *Healthy Air, Healthy Kids* project changed things for the better.

**BELOW:** F-SUTA President Melanie Driver and CTA Board member Don Bridge confer during a policy briefing about asthma in California schools.



CTA photo by Len Feldman

“Our success at reducing the levels of indoor pollutants was totally based on communication and a commitment to shared priorities,” she told legislators. “We included the superintendent, the school board, the building and custodial staff, the EPA, and the Solano County Asthma Coalition. We taught teachers how to identify and report asthma triggers in their classrooms at the earliest stages using an EPA-adapted classroom checklist so they could be quickly addressed at the source.” (To access the checklist, visit [www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/managingasthma.html](http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/managingasthma.html)).

CTA Board member Don Bridge also attended the policy briefing, which was hosted by Assembly Member Julia Brownley (D-Santa Monica). Bridge noted that legislators learned from EPA spokesman Shelly Rosenblum’s presentation that budget cuts might be exacerbating asthma problems in some school sites because rooms are being cleaned less often resulting in increased dust, and that deferred maintenance may

result in more leaks and dirty air filters. Bridge also noted that portable classrooms — which were intended to be temporary — have become permanent fixtures at many school sites and tend to leak more than regular classrooms over time.

CTA’s Community Outreach staff, which oversees the *Healthy Air, Healthy Kids* project, wrote and helped produce a DVD and other materials on how teachers can become more proactive in their classrooms and at the district level in promoting healthier practices and policies in schools. Community Outreach staff also educate CTA members at workshops and conferences and at the local association level on how to reduce asthma triggers in their classroom, and can be contacted at (650) 552-5468 for more information and materials.

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# Human Rights Award winners celebrated

In communities across California, the winners of the CTA 2011 Human Rights Awards are educators who understand that our diversity is what makes us whole, and that it takes many kinds of education to keep our society focused and fair.

At the 20th annual CTA Equity and Human Rights Conference at the Fairmont Hotel in San Jose on March 5, CTA President David A. Sanchez praised these activists. He told an audience of 500 educators that these awards are how we are “reminded of your dedication to our union and students — and to justice, tolerance and equal rights in our communities.”

This year's Human Rights Award winners, by category, are:

**Robert Ellis:** At his school in the West Contra Costa Unified School District, Robert Ellis makes sure his students know about the rich history and heritage of African American culture. This tireless United Teachers of Richmond

activist shows a clear passion for education. For his work, he was awarded the Lois Tinson Award, named after CTA's first African American president.

**Les Nakasaki:** A primary grade teacher for 36 years, the winner of the Pacific Asian American Human Rights Award is an inspiring leader in the area of Pacific Asian American issues, struggles and accomplishments. His CTA work as a Garvey Education Association member includes serving as the union's liaison to the California State PTA and as a 15-year member of State Council's Pacific Asian American Caucus. In his work, Les Nakasaki keeps his eyes on the prize, advocating for an inclusive society in which all people have a voice.

**Janet Eberhardt:** She is a paraprofessional and an activist member of United Educators of San Francisco, where she's also vice president of the UESF Council of Classified Employees. She is a longtime member of the executive board

and bargaining team for UESF, which represents 6,000 San Francisco Unified employees. For her dedication, Janet Eberhardt is the CTA Member Human Rights Award winner.

**Aurora Vinci:** She earned the Physically/Mentally Challenged Students' Issues Human Rights Award for her 27 years of outstanding service as a special education teacher in the New Haven Unified School District in Alameda County. Her James Logan High School students are inspired by her belief in the potential of all students, and she has mentored more than a half-dozen other special education teachers in the district.

**Clyde Hodge:** He is the current National Education Association Pacific Regional Director for the American Indian/Alaska Native Caucus, president of the California Indian Education Association, and a remarkable advocate for the American Indian community. The Stockton Teachers Association activist and

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member of the Muscogee Nation of Oklahoma routinely gives talks at schools and events, speaks out against the harm resulting from the use of Native American mascots on sports teams, and donates his time as a dancer at countless powwows. For his work, Clyde Hodge earned the Jim Clark American Indian/Alaska Native Human Rights Award.

**Daniel Reynolds:** The winner of the CTA Peace and Justice Human Rights Award designed and implemented a course called Human Rights Education in his Mt. Diablo Unified School District in Contra Costa County — a course that promotes understanding of human rights issues around the world. He inspired the formation of an Amnesty International student group, serving as its faculty adviser, and volunteers for the Mt. Diablo Peace and Justice Center.

**Andrés Ramos Martin:** A high school counselor in Ramona Unified for more than 10 years, the winner of the César Chávez “Sí Se Puede” Human Rights Award works to help students gain scholarships and financial aid to attain their goal of going to college. He is vice president of the BECA Foundation, which has awarded \$1.7 million in scholarships to 712 students over the past 27 years.

**Lisa Buckner:** The winner of the Nancy Bailey Leadership in Lesbian and Gay Issues Human Rights Award has a long history of fighting for GLBT causes in Kern County, where she is a member of the Bakersfield Elementary Teachers Association. Lisa Buckner began her work more than 30 years ago fighting the Briggs Initiative, which would have banned gays and lesbians from teaching in California public schools. She established a Bakersfield group for the GLBT community and was a strong opponent of Proposition 8, the ban on same-sex marriage strongly opposed by CTA.

**Mt. San Antonio College Faculty Association:** This chapter in Los Angeles County earned the CTA Chapter Human Rights Award for its 12-year-old annual variety show, *Puttin’ on the Hits*, which raises about \$20,000 for student scholarships. It also builds solidarity among staff, faculty, administrators and students. The two-hour show often sells out and has at least 100 participants. Accepting the award were the show’s director, Joan Sholars, and chapter president Jennifer Galbraith.



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## California teachers join in the Wisconsin fight



CTA Photos by Rosemary Mangino

It may have been a small sacrifice compared to what their colleagues in Wisconsin were going through, but Adelanto District Teachers Association members Dee and Mark Heitkamp thought showing their support for collective bargaining was important enough that they drove 400 miles from Victorville to turn out for a union rally in Sacramento on Feb. 22 — and then turned around and drove back that night.

"If we take turns, I think we can get back around 2 a.m. so we can teach tomorrow," middle school teacher Dee Heitkamp said, minutes before the candlelight vigil began on the West Capitol steps. The Heitkamps joined a crowd of 2,500 to protest the heavy-handed proposal by Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker that eventually was passed by the Wisconsin Legislature to eliminate that state's collective bargaining rights.

Joining in the rally co-spon-

sored by CTA were several other unions, including the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1000, the California Labor Federation, and the Sacramento Central Labor Council, and a large contingent of Tunisian-, Egyptian- and Libyan-Americans who filed in after their own protest nearby. Smaller vigils were held in Oakland and Palm-dale, and even larger rallies took place throughout the state and nation. CTA local chapters and members that couldn't attend also sent messages of solidarity through CTA's Facebook page. (See sidebar on the next page.)

"My husband and I have been watching the news for weeks," said Dee Heitkamp, who teaches at Mesa

**LEFT:** "We are with you tonight, we will be with you tomorrow, and we will be with you as long as it takes," said CTA President David A. Sanchez at the rally in support of Wisconsin workers.

Linda Middle School in Victorville. "We are so concerned about what this means for the middle class. Public workers are not the root of all evil, and we shouldn't be demonized."

Her husband agreed. "I'm here because I'm afraid that if we get rid of collective bargaining, we'll have no say over our jobs or be able to advocate for our students," said Mark Heitkamp, who teaches third grade at Eagle Ranch School in Victorville.

Wisconsinites became outraged when their newly elected governor surreptitiously slipped a proposal to eliminate collective bargaining into his plan to

cut public employee pensions and benefits. In the ensuing weeks, teachers agreed to concessions in their contracts, but drew a line in the sand when it came to the elimination of collective bargaining.

Using what's being called "the nuclear option," Walker and the state's Senate Republicans stripped out the financial components of the governor's unpopular budget repair bill on March 9. That allowed them to vote on provisions to eliminate collective bargaining without the presence of the 14 Senate Democrats who had fled to Illinois to prevent its passage.

The result is that Wisconsin state public employees' rights to negotiate over pay have been severely curtailed, and their rights to bargain over

**BELOW:** Thousands gathered in front of the West Capitol steps in Sacramento to support collective bargaining rights.



other conditions of employment have been eliminated.

Wisconsin teachers have joined the campaign to recall eight state Senate Republicans in an effort to overturn the legislation under the leadership of the Wisconsin Education Association Council and the National Education Association.

NEA President Dennis Van Roekel said: "This is an affront to teachers, nurses, students, firefighters, construction workers and other everyday people who stood up, spoke out, and learned how much their voice mattered to their elected leaders. The response will be unified and the collective voice of millions of working Americans from all across this nation will only grow louder."

Although the erosion of collective bargaining in California is not imminent, bills have also been introduced here as well.

Speaking to the crowd at the Capitol in Sacramento, CTA President David A. Sanchez invoked the words of President Dwight D. Eisenhower: "The labor movement did not diminish the strength of the nation but enlarged it."

Sanchez continued: "It enlarged it by raising the standard of living for millions of workers and working families. Every one of us here today, our children, and our communities have benefited from unions and their collective bargaining rights.

"I can tell you that collective bargaining has not only improved working conditions of educators, it has improved the learning conditions of students. Through collective bargaining we have achieved smaller class sizes for our students, improved safety in our schools, better professional development pro-

On Feb. 11, CTA posted an article to its Facebook page about Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker calling on the National Guard because he was about to put forward a bill to remove collective bargaining rights from all public employees under the guise of "balancing the budget." CTA's Facebook community was outraged. And as this story unfolded, largely over the Internet, hundreds of thousands across the country became outraged too.

No one can deny that social media played a major role in fueling the Wisconsin protests. Largely ignored by mainstream media, Twitter and Facebook have been a treasure trove of latest news and developments, personal stories and in-depth analyses by bloggers. Thousands of viewers watched live streams of the protests from directly inside the Wisconsin State Capitol.

NEA affiliates across the

grams, and more productive collaboration with parents."

Other CTA members at the candlelight vigil drove in from Modesto, San Leandro, San Francisco, Redwood City and El Dorado County to demonstrate their outrage.

"Collective bargaining is the way we achieve some sense of fairness in what we do for a living," said Dane Oliveira, a sixth-grade teacher and member of the Modesto Teachers Association. "We deserve to have a voice in how we are treated."

## Social media revitalize labor organizing



country stood strong with their Wisconsin colleagues and aggressively advocated on Twitter using the #WeAreWI hashtag, which became a "Trending Topic" (among the top 10 tweets worldwide at that moment). #WeAreWI connected classroom teachers with protesters, elected representatives, news outlets, and a growing community of people standing in solidarity. Participation and sharing among CTA's Facebook fans spiked dramatically, and CTA gained nearly 900 new fans in three weeks.

In the face of these attacks on workers' rights, many who had never done so before found a way to speak out and defend their

profession. Social media provide a voice and a venue for change with a much broader reach than traditional organizing and at a lightning pace. CTA is embracing this, and welcomes all members to join on Facebook and discuss the issues

that are important to them. As recent events have shown, the support and encouragement CTA's members provide for one another is astounding. CTA's Facebook page Wall is testament to that.

TIFFANY HASKER

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San Lorenzo Education Association member Mike Jones, a U.S. government and economics teacher, had created a PowerPoint presentation he had shown for his students regarding the role of unions in building our nation.

"Fifty years ago, Wisconsin was the first state to get collective bargaining. Seventy-five years ago, AFSCME began in Wisconsin. Unions have fought for too many things beyond our own self-interest. We must defend the rights and livelihood of

working and middle-class people in this country," he said.

Although the situation in Wisconsin is getting the most attention, there is a growing list of states where collective bargaining is under attack, including Idaho, Indiana, Ohio, Florida and Tennessee.

DINA MARTIN

*To stay informed about attacks on the rights of educators around the country and what you can do to help, visit [www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org) and [www.educationvotes.org](http://www.educationvotes.org).*



# ACTION

## CTA presses for tax extension ballot measure



CTA photo by Len Feldman

**C**TA members and hundreds of other school employees, school board members, parents and administrators rallied at the state Capitol on March 14 to urge lawmakers to support Gov. Brown's budget proposal and to place before the voters a ballot measure to extend the state's temporary taxes.

The rally and lobbying, supported by the Education Coalition, came one day before the deadline for school districts to give certificated educators their preliminary layoff notices. (CTA and other Education Coalition partners were expecting thousands of school supporters to wear red on March 15 to show their solidarity with the educators who are receiving the notices. More than 19,000 had received notices at press time.)

These efforts in the Capitol and around the state aim to achieve two objectives: to muster legislative support for Gov. Brown's budget proposal that seeks to protect schools; and to secure the two-

thirds vote required to put the temporary tax extension measure before the voters.

As the *Educator* went to press, the Legislature had passed many of the measures implementing the cuts side of the governor's spending proposal, a plan that would reduce state programs by \$12.5 billion. But Republican lawmakers were refusing to vote for two other key measures, denying the bills that needed a two-thirds vote. They were refusing to support the governor's proposal to put the tax extension before the voters. They were also refusing to vote for a measure that would transfer funds from redevelopment agencies to schools, a change that would provide education with more than \$13.7 billion over the next decade.

The governor had hoped to have the budget completed and the tax extension approved for the ballot by mid-March. His ambitious timeline would have had a state budget in place more than three months earlier than required

**LEFT:** Backed by Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson and hundreds of education leaders and parents, CTA Board member Toby Boyd (at lectern) tells reporters that class sizes have grown to 40 or more, making it extremely difficult for teachers to give students the individual attention they need.

by the state constitution. He is still pushing lawmakers to move the budget package quickly and give the needed two-thirds approval for the tax extension early enough so voters can cast ballots in June.

The Republican lawmakers with whom he has been negotiating have been demanding a high price for their votes. The items on their list include a spending cap that could prevent the state from restoring education cuts. Other items include massive cuts in teacher and public worker pensions, something being touted as "pension reform" by proponents.

During the March 14 Capitol rally, school supporters made clear exactly what was at stake. State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson told reporters, "We're here for a simple reason: Our schools face a financial emergency — and they can't

wait any longer for our help."

Toby Boyd, a member of the CTA Board of Directors and a kindergarten teacher in the Elk Grove Unified School District just south of Sacramento, reported that 700 of the teachers in his district would receive layoff notices by March 15. He said class sizes in his district were approaching 40, a number making it virtually impossible to provide students with the individual attention they need.

Speaking for the Education Coalition, Bob Wells, the executive director of the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), said he was confident voters would approve the tax extension measure if lawmakers would just move it to the ballot. The refusal to give voters the choice would be "undemocratic," he emphasized.

CTA and coalition members have been contacting all legislators. These contacts have included the person-to-person meetings in the Capitol, meetings with constituents in legislators' home district offices, and phone calls and letters to both locations.

LEN FELDMAN

### What CTA members can do to help

- Check the CTA webpage ([cta.org](http://cta.org)) and follow links to the Legislative Action Center.
- Use the prompts to identify your state lawmakers.
- Send them a simple message: Approve the governor's budget package and vote to put the tax extension measure on the ballot so that voters can decide.
- Keep checking the CTA webpage often for updates and for other calls to action.

# State budget cuts are shortchanging students' futures

"Our teachers lost their jobs, but our students lost their inspiration, motivation, and the people they looked up to every day." This poignant statement by Portola Elementary PTA President Mandi Heathcote, at a March 15 Day of Action news conference held at Portola Elementary School in San Bruno, expressed the sadness and dismay felt by students, parents and supporters of public education statewide on the deadline day for California school districts to issue pink slips.

CTA President David A. Sanchez — joined by the CTA Board of Directors and state Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson — gave participants the grim news that nearly 19,000 pink slips had gone out, and predicted that the number would increase to more than 20,000 once all the schools had reported. "In my 30 years as a kindergarten teacher, I have never seen such unprecedented cuts that are so deep and impact so many," said Sanchez.

The Education Coalition-sponsored event was just one of many similar events held through-

out California on "Wear Red for Ed" Tuesday as CTA members and supporters of public education, reeling from the unprecedented cuts, conducted news conferences, participated in rallies and marches, and demonstrated at school board meetings to bring attention to the devastating impact that the loss of so many teachers and education support professionals will have on California's students.

"Teachers, like those here in San Bruno, are struggling to give students the time and assistance they need to learn, as class sizes soar due to state cuts," said Sanchez. "What kind of message are we sending to our students when we cram more and more of them into a classroom, or cut their music, arts and PE programs, take away their counselors, close the doors to their libraries, or reduce their school year? Otherwise, we are shortchanging the future of the students in this room, and the futures of the 6.2 million K-12 students we serve."

Here's a snapshot of events around the state.

## Union City

In Alameda County, teachers,



Photo by Scott Buschman

administrators and parents in the New Haven Unified School District conducted a 6:30 a.m. news conference March 15 in the Alvarado Middle School's brand-new library — a facility that will close in the fall as part of \$10 million in cuts if the governor's budget plan and tax extensions are not approved and a May 3 parcel tax fails. The district has issued 60 pink slips.

Speakers included CTA Board members and Bay Area teachers Eric Heins and Don Dawson; a pink-slipped kindergarten teacher, Quyen Tran, who is six months pregnant; a high school librarian; and New Haven Teachers Association President Charmaine Kawaguchi.

The Alvarado Middle School jazz band — also on the chopping block — performed at the news conference.

## Sacramento

At the state Capitol, members of the Sacramento City Teachers

**ABOVE:** CTA President David A. Sanchez announces the grim news at a March 15 San Bruno news conference that at least 19,000 California educators had received preliminary pink slips. That number is expected to rise.

Association stood some two hours in the rain at a rally sponsored by MoveOn.org to "Defend the Dream." Teachers joined a crowd of labor and community organizations to protest the recent attacks on collective bargaining rights in Wisconsin and around the country, and to highlight the impact of federal and state budget cuts.

In addition to sending out 400 pink slips to teachers, counselors and librarians, the Sacramento City Unified School District approved a "worst-case scenario" budget just two weeks earlier, threatening to cut financial support for sports, band, cheerleading, choir, drama, yearbook and debate. The school board has also voted to increase class sizes in all grade levels.

In all, the district is planning for a budget shortfall of \$22.35 million. If the tax extensions that Gov. Jerry Brown proposes make



CTA photo by Mike Myslinski



it to the June ballot, SCTA President Linda Tuttle observed, the district “would only need to cut \$6 million to \$9 million,” an amount she still considers “ridiculous,” although bearable.

## Fresno

After receiving 257 layoff notices, members of the Fresno Teachers Association took their pink slip protest directly to the school board on March 9. FTA members filled the board room and tumbled out to the streets, where they shouted “Yes we can!” and waved signs that read, “Support kids, support teachers.”

The Fresno Unified School District also proposes cutting 73 temporary teachers, as well as cutting teachers’ salaries 5 percent. Among the programs that would be cut are home economics and vocational

education programs.

“These are not fluff classes or hobby classes — these are life skills classes,” Mary Jo Stott, a Fresno High School home economics teacher, told the school board. As it is, the proposed cuts address just \$53.8 million of the anticipated \$71 million shortfall.

## Pomona

Members of Associated Pomona Teachers in Los Angeles County — who are facing another massive round of layoff notices in a district whose Adult and Career Education and its Child Development programs are in danger of being gutted — organized a “Code Red: Stand Up for Public Ed!” rally on March 15. Hundreds lined the street in front of district headquarters urging passersby to contact lawmakers and press

**RIGHT:** At a news conference packed with Bay Area media, New Haven Unified kindergarten teacher Quyen Tran describes the stress of getting a pink slip while being six months pregnant.



Photo by Marc Sternberger

them to protect education funding by placing the governor’s proposed tax extensions on the ballot.

APT President Tyra Weis spoke to the crowd about the unfair California tax system, which has led to the state slipping nearly to the bottom of the nation in per-pupil funding. APT was joined in the rally by parents, district classified staff and administrators, school board members, CTA local leaders from nearby Clare-

mont and Chaffee, and local community activists, including representatives from *MoveOn.org*.

## Los Angeles

Members of United Teachers Los Angeles, in the nation’s second-largest school district, held an 8:30 a.m. press conference March 15 outside the offices of the Los Angeles Unified School District to decry massive cuts

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\*The Wall Street Journal, 9 June, 2009

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planned by the school board.

Later that same day, ignoring a mandate from parents and, in some cases, the recommendation of its own superintendent, the school board voted to give away four schools to outside operators, to reconstitute two existing “focus schools,” and to issue more than 7,000 pink slips to teachers and school personnel.

“Today, politics won over pedagogy. The parents’ voice has been silenced, and the true agenda of the school board majority has been exposed,” said UTLA President A.J. Duffy. “The school board majority clearly was doing the bidding of the mayor and his billionaire allies who want to privatize public education.”



**ABOVE:** Some 1,200 San Diego Education Association members rallied before a school board meeting March 10 to protest the district’s plans to pink-slip over 1,000 teachers and education support professionals.

## San Diego

Timing of a San Diego Unified School District School Board meeting — held on Thursday, March 10 — necessitated that the San Diego Education Association’s advocacy around layoff notices take place a few days prior to the March 15 Day of Action, when some 1,200 members protested the board’s vote to slash more than 1,000 jobs in the district.

“SDEA members and our sup-

porters stood up to show that we are ready and willing to take on the fight to rescind each and every one of these layoff notices,” said SDEA President Bill Freeman. “SDEA members know that when we stand united, we win. We know that through experience. This year is no different. If we fight together to protect each other and our students, we will win.”

In solidarity with their fellow CTA members throughout the state, SDEA’s 8,000-plus members proudly wore red at their school sites on the March 15 Day of Action.

## New season of awareness events kicks off

Energized from the impetus of the Day of Action’s kickoff of a new season of protests, CTA’s 325,000 members now move forward in the task of helping generate support for Gov. Jerry Brown’s proposed budget — including a June special election to extend some current taxes.

If the governor’s budget and tax extensions are not approved, schools could lose another \$2.3 billion, the equivalent of \$377 in cuts per student or more than \$9,700 per classroom. If worst-case scenarios come true, the state legislative analyst predicts the additional cuts could be as high as \$4.6 billion, slashing nearly \$19,500 from each of California’s classrooms.

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you need to organize locally, including English and Spanish fliers for parents, at [cta.org/march-15](http://cta.org/march-15).

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# CTA to hold election for vice president

**A**t the April State Council meeting, an election will be held for the office of CTA vice president. Running for the position are Eric C. Heins, Gail Mendes, and A.J. Duffy.

Heins is a member of the CTA Board of

Directors and the Pittsburg Education Association. Mendes is the current CTA secretary-treasurer and a member of United Teachers of Richmond. Duffy is president of United Teachers Los Angeles.

Following are unedited campaign state-

ments submitted by the candidates, limited to 400 words. Duffy did not submit a campaign statement.

*Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed are those of the candidates and not necessarily those of CTA.*

## CANDIDATES FOR CTA VICE PRESIDENT

### ERIC C. HEINS

Let me begin by saying "Thank you!" Thank you for your participation in the day-to-day challenges of being a public school employee and a public education advocate. Thank

you for your participation in the daily life of our students as a hands-on worker and leader. Finally, thank you for your participation in the democratic process of our union.

I am a 20 year elementary teacher in Pittsburg, CA. I value the many years I've spent working with my students and gaining experience at every level of our Association. I am currently serving on CTA Board of Directors.

I've learned more fully with each passing day that, whatever your life experiences or backgrounds may be, we really are one CTA family. We share the same characteristics and ideals: strength, compassion, hope, vision, honesty, and the touch of humor that can get us through difficult times.

We are currently in a time of transition. Public education, pre-school through graduate school, is being attacked as never before. How we, CTA and public education, emerge from this time depends on the actions we have taken today. We will have to change. With you, I want to be on the cutting edge of that change, using our core values to reshape public



Heins

education to meet the needs of all our students and to ensure that CTA remains strong and relevant.

Like you, I know that every strong and healthy organization needs to stop periodically to ex-

amine and reexamine itself. We can do that with our CTA: take a good look, ask tough questions, have the difficult conversations, hold on to all that is good, and have the courage to cast away what is no longer of service. When we do, we will emerge even stronger and healthier.

Let's connect our core values with the power we've gained, through our organizing, at the bargaining table, and in the legislative arena to strengthen our union. Let's build up our profession with our hearts and minds to claim and respect that is rightfully ours. We can marry the strong profession with the strong union — for a better CTA and a public education system that provides an education second-to-none for all students.

Please visit my website, [www.Eric4CTAVP.com](http://www.Eric4CTAVP.com), or send me an email at [eric4ctavp@comcast.net](mailto:eric4ctavp@comcast.net). Share with me your thoughts, questions and vision.

I am Eric Heins, Candidate for CTA Vice President. Bold Leadership Lighting the Way! Believe! Energize! Advocate!

### GAIL MENDES

I'm Gail Mendes, your CTA Secretary-Treasurer and I'm running for Vice President because I'm tired. I'm tired of our teachers being forced to take cuts to their sal-

aries and benefits. I'm tired of our students losing valuable instructional time to furlough days. I'm tired of our Educational Support Professionals having their hours slashed and our educators outside of the core curriculum areas being treated like disposable educational fluff. I'm tired of our students arriving at the doorsteps of California's colleges and universities, fully prepared to learn, only to discover that all the classes are full. I am tired of the media targeting educators as the problem rather than the solution. Most of all, I'm tired of us not organizing to take control of our profession.

To take public education back from the profiteers, we must start playing offense not just defense. It is vital that we create a vision for public education! It is critical that we craft a vision that reflects our values and concerns, and then as if we were writing an Individual Educational Plan for a student, we have to build an organizing plan to achieve our vision.

We must create a long term



Mendes

organizing plan that engages all 320,000 of our members, draws upon the expertise of each department within CTA and utilizes the experience and energy of our entire union.

Tired as we are, each of

us must recommit to ourselves, our students and to each other that we will organize to take back public education. Failure is not an option. We must hold ourselves and each other accountable as if our lives and the lives of our students depend upon it, because they do.

The vision upon which we build our organizing plan cannot be written on stone tablets handed down from on high, it must be a vision shared by all of our members. Your input is vital to our success. Please share your vision for public education and the ways CTA leadership, staff and the other 319,999 members of CTA can support you to take back public education. Send your thoughts to [TalkWithGail@aol.com](mailto:TalkWithGail@aol.com). I will compile and distribute your vision and organizing plan to the members of State Council at the April State Council meeting.

Ask your local union President who represents you on State Council, and ask your representative to vote for Gail to be your voice, your Vice President.

# CTA to hold election for secretary-treasurer

**A**t the April meeting of State Council, an election will be held for the office of CTA secretary-treasurer. Running for the position are Mikki Cichocki and Mark Andrew Kotch.

Cichocki is a member of the CTA Board

of Directors and the San Bernardino Teachers Association. Kotch is a member of the Delano Union Elementary School Teachers Association.

Following are unedited campaign statements submitted by the candidates. They

were limited to 400 words.

*Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed are those of the candidates and not necessarily those of CTA.*

## CANDIDATES FOR CTA SECRETARY-TREASURER

### MIKKI CICHOCKI

California public education is under attack and the next generation of CTA leadership will determine the future of our union. In fact, the next generation of union leaders will help determine the fate of public education.

Our members and students face many challenges due to the massive state budget cutbacks. As a Youth Services teacher in San Bernardino City Schools, where non-traditional students face shrinking alternative educational programs, I understand the stress our members are under. CTA must remain strong to rise above these challenges.

I have the experience, leadership skills, and energy to move CTA forward. From becoming a site representative for the San Bernardino Teachers Association during my first year of teaching, to being elected to the CTA Board of Directors I have proven my commitment to our union by engaging and connecting to the rank and file membership. Whether out in the field supporting teachers or lobbying in Sacramento, my experience in building relationships makes me the most qualified candidate for CTA Secretary-Treasurer.

It has always been the voice of the members I represent that drives me to action. I fought to bring childcare to State Council so



Cichocki

that members with families could fully participate in our representative process. As part of the San Bernardino County Coalition, I helped craft Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) language that was adopted

by chapters across the state as well as bringing programs such as Survive and Thrive, I Can Do It, and Verbal Judo to our members. As a leader, I have always done what is right for my members and will continue to do so as Secretary-Treasurer. I will continue to actively listen to our members and help create a stronger and more effective organization. I will make sure that every member has access to all levels of our organization and provide ongoing opportunities for members to grow into leadership positions.

Now is the time for an experienced leader with the drive and energy to navigate us through the challenges and opportunities before us. As Secretary-Treasurer, I will ensure that CTA is fiscally sound. I will fight for the rights of our members. I will work to protect and enhance funding for public education. I will champion CTA as the driving force for a quality education for every student. We must work together to protect public education.

I ask for your vote for CTA Secretary-Treasurer. Mikki Cichocki

### MARK ANDREW KOTCH

I do not know where I would be today without access to the community college and state university systems. As a blue collar worker, I went back to school during the Reagan Recession of the early 1980's, when double-digit unemployment created misery for millions of people. I had a UAW card before I had a CTA card.

I transitioned into teaching from work as a Gardener (ESP/CSEA), and have never looked back. Teaching has provided me with both personal joy and continued enthusiasm for educating a new world of responsible citizens. I can honestly state that Public Education changed my life and sent me in a positive direction.

In 1996, after six years of teaching 7th Grade English Language Arts for the Delano Union School District, I became President of the Delano Union Elementary School Teachers Association, DUESTA/CTA/NEA. I did so at the urging of my CTA Field Representative. I was inspired and motivated by the strength that grew from educating and empowering DUESTA membership.

For eleven years I served as President of the union, all the while remaining a fulltime classroom teacher. During my tenure, DUESTA prevailed in all major litigation and was



Kotch

deeply involved in curriculum issues. It was crucial that we analyzed and investigated the School District's budget, which we did year after year. As a result, we still have the fully paid health benefits that I initially negotiated

in 1996, with coverage for spouses and children.

Currently, I serve as Chairperson for the CTA State Council School Safety/School Management Committee. I have also attended NEA Rep. Assemblies since 1999 as both a state and local delegate, and I received a WHO Award from DUESTA for the 2008-2009 school year.

I am running for CTA Secretary-Treasurer as a voice for the common classroom teacher. I will stand up for those who have experienced the oppressive burdens of NCLB and the impacts of arbitrary decisions made by anti-union forces. There are well-funded groups seeking to dismantle and destroy Public Education. After 27 years of public education employment, I believe I have the skills, experience and knowledge to help CTA maintain its obligation to fight the good union fight, for its members and Public Education.

I ask for your vote as CTA Secretary-Treasurer. CTA has the high ground. As your elected officer, I will help us take advantage of that position in the education arena.



# President-elect's statement

**A**t the February meeting of CTA's State Council of Education, Dean E. Vogel was elected president of CTA. Vogel, a member of the Vacaville Teachers Association, is currently serv-

ing his second term as CTA vice president. His term as president begins June 26.

Although Vogel ran unopposed, a campaign statement was submitted by the candi-

date. This unedited statement was limited to 400 words. Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed are those of the candidate and not necessarily those of CTA.

## DEAN E. VOGEL

The conditions of teaching and learning today are dreadful. Every day teachers are being asked to do more with less, even as expectations rise and opportunities for authentic roles in decision making decrease. Teachers are overworked, disrespected and discouraged daily, yet they continue to give even more, to be creative, to do what they know is right. They need their union to support and protect them when they do. Teachers are ready to fight back, but not alone. Teachers are ready to stand up in support of their students and their families. They need their union standing with them.



Vogel

Teachers and educators who work with students every day are the people who know best how to meet their needs, not bureaucrats far removed from schools and classrooms. If you want to know how a child learns to read, ask a teacher, not a bureaucrat. If you want to know how to build positive interpersonal relationships, ask a counselor, not a politician. You wouldn't hire a chef to build a rocket ship, and it doesn't make sense to have an investment banker telling us how to teach reading.

We must take back our profession, our schools, and our right to shape the education of California's children. And it had better be soon. To that end, the Califor-

nia Teachers Association must focus its effort not only at Sacramento but also into the classrooms and schools in every community. Too many people with no experience and less understanding of the dynamics of teaching and learning have bought their way into the offices of the power brokers and the policy makers.

The mission of the California Teachers Association is very clear, "...to protect and promote the well-being of its members; to improve the conditions of teaching and learning...." It's time that every teacher not only reads that in CTA publications and on the website, but believes it, and holds it as a truth that empowers them to meet the serious chal-



lenges facing all of us.

The disconnection that teachers are feeling between their classrooms and CTA is real, and it's CTA's responsibility to do something about it. Teachers and educators are being asked to do more with less every day. CTA must ask the same of itself. As President, I will take this responsibility seriously. I look forward to standing with you as we take our profession back.

## Heads up!

### Conferences

#### **Presidents Conference** **Asilomar Conference Grounds, Pacific Grove** **July 18-22, 2011**

This conference brings together chapter presidents from across the state for five days of instruction ranging from time management to the president's role in negotiations. For more information, visit [www.cta.org/conferences](http://www.cta.org/conferences).

#### **Summer Institute** **UCLA (De Neve Plaza and Sunset Village)** **July 31–Aug. 5, 2011**

The premier workshop of its kind, CTA's Summer Institute offers sessions in a variety of areas that assist chapter leaders in the day-to-day representation and support of members, and features hands-on activities to hone the skills needed to meet the challenges of the coming year. Sessions include strands/tracks on Communications, Instruction and Professional Development, Emerging Leaders, Bargaining, School Finance, Health Care Benefits and Issues, Legal, Member Benefits, and Community Outreach. For more information, visit [www.cta.org/conferences](http://www.cta.org/conferences).

### Deadlines

#### **Incentive grants for summer conferences** **April 29, 2011**

Small chapter and minority incentive grants are available for the Presidents Conference (July 18-22) and Summer Institute (July 31-Aug. 5). Apply by Friday, April 29. Each grant pays for transportation expenses and the conference fee, including materials, meals and housing based on double occupancy. Minority incentive grants are offered to members of racial-ethnic minority groups to encourage minority leadership within the association. Small chapter incentive grants are awarded to chapters that represent a unit of 100 or fewer members for collective bargaining. In addition, Summer Institute offers incentive grants for participants in the Emerging Leaders Track and the Member Benefits Strand. The Presidents Conference offers additional grants for first-time participation (available to new participants from a chapter of 1,000 or fewer members) and first-time chapter participation (available to participants from a chapter of 150 or fewer members that has not previously participated). You can register for summer conferences and apply for incentive grants online at [www.cta.org/conferences](http://www.cta.org/conferences).



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