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INITIATIVE SEEKS TO SILENCE TEACHERS

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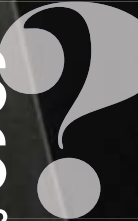
# California EDUCATOR

California Teachers Association March 2012 Volume 16 Issue 6

**TRANSITIONAL  
KINDERGARTEN  
NO LONGER A STATE MANDATE**  
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**ONLINE BULLYING  
TARGETS TEACHERS**  
» PAGE 16

**WILL BUDGET CUTS  
STOP THE BUSES**  
» PAGE 22





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## FEATURES



## 10 TRANSITIONAL KINDERGARTEN

The early years are essential to putting a student on the path to educational success. That's why transitional kindergarten is so important for children not quite ready for the traditional setting and curriculum.



## 16 ONLINE BULLYING... AND YOU ARE THE TARGET!

These days, students can start a rumor and disparage their teacher with the click of a mouse or the tap of a smartphone screen. What can you do if this happens to you?



## 22 THE FUTURE OF THE BUS GOES ROUND AND ROUND

With off-again, on-again funding, home-to-school transportation has been up in the air for many districts. If bus routes are canceled, especially for rural students, it puts their education at risk.

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- ▶ Student Kai Hally boards a school bus at Franklin Elementary in Redlands.

## Our state needs more revenue

AS A FORMER kindergarten teacher, I can sing all the words to “The Wheels on the Bus Go Round and Round” in my sleep. It’s a song children learn early on and take delight in singing. Happily, the state Legislature granted a reprieve for a proposed cut in school transportation, allowing school bus wheels to continue going “round and round” at least through this school year. It’s an important victory, especially for thousands of students who depend on school buses to get them to class every day.

Nevertheless, I can’t help thinking of the state budget as going “round and round” these days as legislators contemplate more cuts to schools. The latest program to hit the chopping block is transitional kindergarten, which the governor has now proposed to make voluntary, instead of mandatory.

In 2010, after years of debate, the Legislature passed a law, SB 1381 by state Sen. Joe Simitian (D-Palo Alto), that raises the kindergarten entry age, requiring children to reach their fifth birthday by Sept. 1. The bill also creates a “transitional kindergarten” (TK) program for children who will no longer be eligible for kindergarten under the change. Studies show TK programs may be beneficial in closing the achievement gap and reducing the number of kids who end up in special education classes or repeating grades. Unfortunately, under the current budget proposal, the mandated TK program will be eliminated, and along with it, the chance to prepare more children to succeed in school.

It’s a shame for the state to renege on these plans. Of course, we all know this comes down to the need for more state revenues. CTA continues to put pressure on the Legislature to approve a budget that will provide more funding to public education. The governor’s proposed spending plan increases K-14 funding by \$4.9 billion, but only if voters approve his tax initiative on the November ballot.

Thankfully, California voters are showing signs they may be ready to do that. They recognize the erosion to state schools and other essential public services caused by dwindling revenues and they are ready to do something about it. Unfortunately, voters may be bewildered by the choice of funding initiatives that are currently being circulated for signatures.



CTA President Dean E. Vogel

Gov. Brown’s proposal will get much-needed resources to our schools, colleges and other essential services and fix the state budget deficit. That’s why CTA is supporting it. The governor’s initiative works within the state budget structure to pay down the state’s current wall of debt, while at the same time it provides new revenue for public education and other essential services, and guarantees that local communities receive funds to pay for the services the Legislature now requires counties to provide. Without addressing this realignment issue, the state could be looking at another \$12 billion shortfall in the next 18 months.

We’re fortunate to be an important voice in advocating for the governor’s funding initiative — but our efforts to advocate for initiatives like this one, or for candidates, trustees, or other issues that directly affect our classrooms, could be seriously curtailed if another measure, the Corporate Power Grab Initiative, is approved by voters. This insidious initiative is designed to silence the voice of labor unions and middle-class Californians. We can’t let that happen.

Home-to-school transportation, transitional kindergarten programs, increasing funding to our schools and essential public services — these are all vital and worth fighting for. But can you imagine what will happen if our voice is silenced? We cannot allow it. I hope each of you takes time to think about why our voice matters, and to join us in the important work ahead.

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# CTA online

» WHAT'S NEW AT CTA.ORG



What my friends think I do



What my Mom thinks I do



What society thinks I do



What kids think I do



What I think I do



What I really do

# 15to1

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[www.cta.org/campaign2012](http://www.cta.org/campaign2012)



## RIF Resource Center is here to help

March 15 is the legal deadline for school districts to give RIF (reduction in force) notices to permanent and probationary teachers. If you receive a layoff notice, contact your chapter **right away**.

[www.cta.org/rifs](http://www.cta.org/rifs)



## March is Women's History Month

"Women's Education — Women's Empowerment!" Women's History Month is a time to recognize the role of women in U.S. history. Get resources to celebrate women's achievements and milestones.

[www.cta.org/women](http://www.cta.org/women)

## » VIRAL VIDEO



**The Daily Show:** Jon Stewart asks U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, "Isn't Race to the Top the exact thing that's demoralizing teachers even further than No Child Left Behind?"  
[www.thedailyshow.com/full-episodes/thu-february-16-2012-arne-duncan](http://www.thedailyshow.com/full-episodes/thu-february-16-2012-arne-duncan)



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**TOP TWEET**

@CTeachersAssoc:

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@PensionFacts:

Report: #Pensions supported 324,761 jobs and \$52.5 billion in economic activity in CA in 2009



**FAVORITE COMMENTS**

**Kim Clapp Swatzel**

9:09 pm | 29 Feb

I wouldn't dare judge my students based upon one measure. I am not only a teacher in my classroom, I am sometimes a counselor, sometimes providing discipline, and sometimes a parent. Yes, I get a two-month vacation during the summer, but it is barely enough time to recover from the intensity of the school year. So, it would be great if news organizations would stop making teachers seem like bad guys.

**Ernest Zarate**

12:13 am | 19 Feb

I just wonder when someone is going to come to the teacher and say, "You work in the trenches with these kids every day — what do you need to do your job better?" Instead we get all these people who have NO IDEA what goes on in a classroom, like Arne Duncan, telling teachers WHAT to do, HOW to do it, and threatening them with all sorts of actions if they don't get "results."

# calendar

APR  
6

NOMINATION DEADLINE

## 2011 John Swett Awards

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

[www.cta.org/Professional-Development/Awards](http://www.cta.org/Professional-Development/Awards)



John Swett

APR  
20-22

CONFERENCE

## Region IV Leadership Conference *Sheraton San Diego Hotel and Marina*

"Commanding the Road for Great Public Schools." This year's conference will focus on advocacy, professionalism, leadership and vision. Aiming to build a stronger union reflective of members' common core values, the conference is based on themes revealed during relational conversations conducted throughout Region IV last year. Together, members will continue the important work of proactively taking command in the fight to promote and protect public education. The keynote speakers will be CTA President Dean Vogel and Jonathan Kaplan, senior policy analyst with the California Budget Project.

[www.cta.org/conferences](http://www.cta.org/conferences)



Sheraton San Diego Hotel and Marina

APR  
27-29

CONFERENCE

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

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

[www.cca4me.org/news\\_events/cal\\_conf.html](http://www.cca4me.org/news_events/cal_conf.html)



Westin Mission Hills, Rancho Mirage



APRIL

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

MAY

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
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6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

APR  
30

APPLICATION DEADLINE

**IFT Grants**

CTA's Institute for Teaching has a competitive grant program for CTA members and chapters to support projects and programs that demonstrate the efficacy of strength-based, teacher-driven reform for students and public schools. Educator grants will be awarded to individuals and small teams of teachers in amounts up to \$5,000. Chapter grants will be awarded to associations in amounts up to \$20,000. Applications for the 2012-13 IFT Grant Program must be submitted by April 30. See story, page 28.

[www.teacherdrivenchange.org](http://www.teacherdrivenchange.org)

APR  
30

EVENT

**El Día de los Niños**

El Día de los Niños (Children's Day), a traditional festival in Latino culture, is a nationally recognized celebration of all children. Many public libraries will have events to promote literacy on this day.

[dia.ala.org](http://dia.ala.org)

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MAY  
4

APPLICATION DEADLINE

## Incentive grants for summer conferences

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

[www.cta.org/conferences](http://www.cta.org/conferences)

MAY  
7-11

EVENT

## Teacher Appreciation Week

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

MAY  
9

EVENT

## School Nurses Day



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

[www.nasn.org/AboutNASN/NationalSchoolNurseDay](http://www.nasn.org/AboutNASN/NationalSchoolNurseDay)



MAY  
9

EVENT

## California Day of the Teacher

2012 THEME: **California Teachers: Building a better state for public education.**

Day of the Teacher arose out of legislation co-sponsored by CTA and the Association of Mexican American Educators. State Sen. Joseph Montoya (D-El Monte) wrote the bill, and it was adopted in 1982 as Senate Bill 1546. California has patterned its celebration after the traditional Día del Maestro festivities observed in Mexico and other Latin American countries. Look for your Day of the Teacher poster in the April *Educator*. Resources will be available soon at [www.cta.org/dayoftheteacher](http://www.cta.org/dayoftheteacher).

MAY  
22

EVENT

## Harvey Milk Day

Harvey Milk Day is celebrated each year on May 22 in memory of Harvey Milk, a gay rights activist and the first openly gay man elected to public office in California when he won a seat on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. The observance was established in California as a day of special significance by SB 572 of 2009, signed by Gov. Schwarzenegger. Milk was assassinated in 1978.



Find out more about Harvey Milk and how to bring his mission of social justice to your school and community at [www.harveymilk.com](http://www.harveymilk.com).

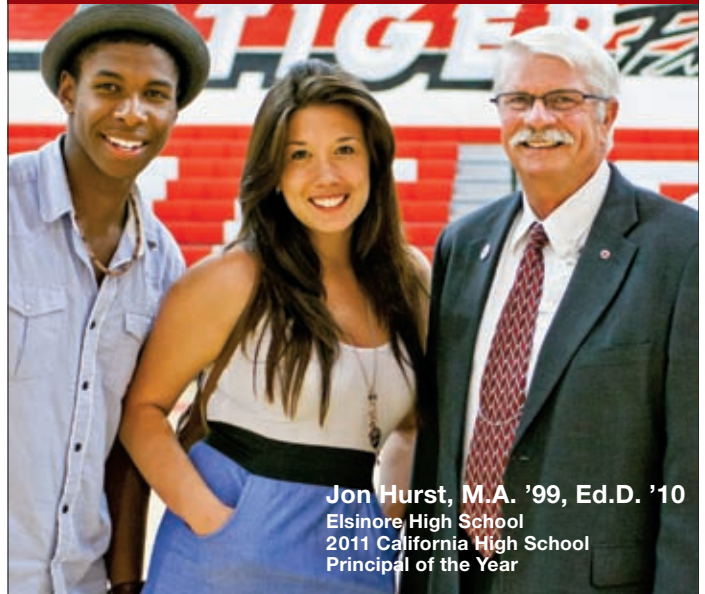
MAY  
22

EVENT

## CTA ESP Day

In recognition of the vital contributions of education support professionals, CTA observes ESP Day on the Tuesday of ESP Week (May 20-26). [www.cta.org/espdays](http://www.cta.org/espdays)

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**Elissa Kaplan** at Greendell Elementary in Palo Alto says the two-year kindergarten program has been “wildly successful.”





# Transitional Kindergarten

Story by **Sherry Posnick-Goodwin**

Photos by **Scott Buschman**

**DISAPPOINTED THAT THE STATE** is renegeing on plans to move forward with statewide transitional kindergarten, CTA will “push back” against the governor’s proposal to make it voluntary instead of mandatory, says CTA President Dean Vogel.

In 2010, the Legislature passed a law, SB 1381 by state Sen. Joe Simitian (D-Palo Alto), that raises the kindergarten entry age. Until now, children have been required to reach their fifth birthday by Dec. 2 of the current school year. The bill shifts the cutoff date to Sept. 1 in stages over a three-year period beginning this fall. The bill also creates a “transitional kindergarten” (TK) program for children who will no longer be eligible for kindergarten under the change, to be followed by a year of regular kindergarten.

Under the budget proposed by Gov. Brown, the mandate for TK will be eliminated, and the funding will be withheld as a cost savings of \$223 million. There have been indications that some funding may be available for districts that proceed with TK. Not until the budget is approved sometime later this year will the precise status of TK funding for the 2012-13 school year be clear. Presently, the state provides ADA funding for most districts with existing TK programs for 4-year-olds.

Under Brown’s proposal, districts could enroll children who are still age 4 in November in regular kindergarten if they are granted a “waiver” establishing school readiness, but thousands would still be denied access to public schools if they are not granted a waiver or if their school district chooses not to offer transitional kindergarten.

Studies show TK may be beneficial to closing the achievement gap, notes EdSource, since children who start school later demonstrate better math and reading skills by first grade. A RAND Corp. research report concludes that delaying kindergarten has a positive effect on test score gains in early years.



**Anselmo Feliciano** points out letters and numbers on the board to Aida Herrera at Burnett Elementary in Long Beach.

“We were very excited about transitional kindergarten being mandated, because we were the ones that kept pushing for a change in the kindergarten age,” says Vogel. “Something had to happen to accommodate students who wouldn’t be allowed to start school, and having a place for them in transitional kindergarten was perfect. But the governor’s budget seems to be threatening TK, and we’re certainly going to push back on that. The governor is not putting these conditions on TK because it’s the right thing to do. It’s really about figuring out how to manage limited resources.”

#### **WHAT IS THE COST?**

The Legislative Analyst’s Office estimates the state would save \$700 million each year that it would have normally spent on kindergarten classes that include 4-year-olds. However, if TK classes were mandated, there would be no immediate cost to taxpayers, since funds used now to pay for 4-year-olds in kindergarten would simply be redirected. However, there would be a cost in 13 years, because the state would eventually pay for an additional year of public

schooling for students enrolled in a two-year kindergarten.

Preschool California asserts that schools could lose \$1 billion in ADA funding by eliminating TK, and that having TK statewide could actually save money by reducing the number of children who end up in more expensive special education classes or repeating grades.

“In the long run, there will be significant cost savings to the state,” asserts Preschool California. “Children will be better prepared to succeed in kindergarten and beyond. California’s economy will be strengthened by a well-educated, globally competitive workforce.”

Then there’s the emotional cost of pushing youngsters beyond their readiness levels, which can be damaging to students and teachers, says CTA Board member George Melendez, a longtime kindergarten

teacher in Palmdale.

“You have kindergarten teachers teaching students reading, writing and math, when kids come in unable to hold a pencil, use scissors or know their letters or numbers,” he says. “Transitional kindergarten is more developmentally

**You can’t rush maturity. But you can fill in some holes that may be there by providing more building blocks and basics that are really important with a child’s ability to perform in school.**

**RUTHIE FAGERSTROM**

story continued on page 14 ►



## Kids receive 'gift of time' in transitional kindergarten



*"Is there anything in your mouth that begins with the letter S?" Lisl Christie asks students sitting before her in circle time.*

"Slobber," yells one youngster enthusiastically. "Spit!" yells another. The teacher smiles and makes it a teachable moment. "The usual name that grownups use is saliva," says Christie. "Can you say sal-i-va?"

Playtime follows the phonics lesson, and students stack blocks, put puzzles together or work with Play-Doh — activities there is seldom time for in today's kindergarten. But these students are enrolled in a "transitional kindergarten" (TK) program at San Miguel Elementary School in Santa Rosa called KinderStart, designed for those too young or immature for regular kindergarten. The Mark West Union School District enrolls students from throughout Sonoma County in Christie's class.

Research shows that TK improves children's social and academic development and provides a significant boost to their test scores, especially for children from low-income families, says Catherine Akin, president of Preschool California. She observes that children who participate in school readiness programs like TK are also more likely to attend college and earn higher wages.

"Transitional kindergarten is very similar to what old-fashioned kindergarten used to be like," says Christie, a member of the Mark West Faculty Association (MARFAC).

"We teach phonemic awareness and all of the pre-reading skills, but we don't take the jump into reading, because they aren't ready.

They learn how to make friends, how to handle conflict, how to approach groups on the playground, and other skills that may be taught in regular kindergarten. We also have playtime three times a day."

Christie thinks it's a good thing that her students are not being pushed beyond their limits or pressured. School, she says, is "fun" and "exciting" for them, and most do extremely well when they leave her class and enter regular kindergarten the following year.

"We believe it has been wildly successful," says Elissa Kaplan, who has been teaching a TK class called Young Fives for six years at Greendell School in Palo Alto. "From what we hear, the kids do amazingly well when they leave here. We create leaders; they become confident."

The program was started in Palo Alto because parents felt they needed something in between preschool and kindergarten, so the district came up with the Young Fives program for those not quite ready for kindergarten. Parents are required to participate in the classroom at least once a week. Like most TK programs, students are screened beforehand to make sure it's the best fit.

"It was a hard decision," says Allison Blake, whose son, Tyras, is in the Young Fives. "He had several friends the same age, and I didn't want him to be separated from that group. But he was not ready to cope emotionally with kinder-



Kassandra Jauregui Aguirre, Erika Mitchell and Meika Mitchell have time for play in **Lisl Christie's** classroom, unlike traditional kindergarten.

**There is nothing like success to breed success, and here students can be successful.**

**ANSELMO FELICIANO**

garten. Everything is better when children are more mature. I decided: Why not give him that chance?"

Teresa Davenport says she was also on the fence when it came to her child, Tamia, who met this year's kindergarten eligibility deadline by just one day, but opted for TK.

"It was the best decision I ever made, and I highly recommend it," she says.

Kaplan says the program gives her the flexibility to "delve" into academics and repeat lessons, as needed, for youngsters. "We keep it energetic and fun," says the Palo Alto Teachers

Association member. "We have a lot of outdoor playtime and games."

Because Palo Alto's Young Fives program is only at one campus and students go off to different schools for regular kindergarten, there is no stigma for those in a two-year program, says Kaplan.

"I love it, because it gives my students the gift of time," says Anselmo Feliciano, who is teaching his first TK class this year at Burnett Elementary School in Long Beach, after teaching regular kindergarten for many years. "When students have a chance to mature, they don't feel pressured. They don't have a sense of failure. There is nothing like success to breed success, and here students can be successful."

The Teachers Association of Long Beach member fondly recalls the days when kindergarten allowed time for finger painting, socialization and fun. Nowadays, he says, it offers "rigorous" curriculum, and students are expected to reach the level where they will be able to write three sentences, read books and know numbers up to 100. He was very excited over plans to have TK fully implemented throughout the district, until the governor proposed making the program voluntary. On Feb. 7, the Long Beach Unified School District superintendent led community educators, parents, grandparents, business and civic leaders in a rally opposing Gov. Brown's budget proposal regarding TK.

"Many of my students may be eligible for regular kindergarten, but they aren't ready," says Feliciano.

"Without this class they'd be on retention 'watch lists,' or we'd be looking at interventions. This way they will be leaders by the time they reach kindergarten — and then become strong first-graders."

appropriate for many kids who really need to learn how to sit down, listen, develop self-control and become ready for kindergarten, so they can be successful.”

Some children go to kindergarten before they are ready, especially in low-income households, because parents can't afford preschool. Then teachers face the dilemma of holding students back and having them feel like failures, or passing them along to the next grade level where they may fall even further behind.

“I really hope the state decides to mandate transitional kindergarten,” says Melendez. “I think it's a wonderful idea.”

Ruthie Fagerstrom, chair of CTA's Early Childhood Education Committee, believes TK would level the playing field for low-income youngsters, since only about half of California children eligible for publicly subsidized preschool programs are enrolled. As a second- and third-grade intervention teacher at Stanton Elementary School in Glendora, she sees firsthand problems that youngsters encounter when they go into kindergarten without being ready.

“These are children that are recommended for retention; these children have a lot of interventions and they may be referred to other types of programs the school may offer,” says Fagerstrom, vice president of the Glendora Teachers Association. “You can't rush maturity. But you can fill in some holes that may be there by providing more building blocks and basics that are really important with a child's ability to perform in school.”

### **DISTRICTS ARE UNCERTAIN**

When legislation passed making TK mandatory, many districts put a great deal of effort into planning its implementation and curriculum. Now that it may be voluntary, many districts are rethinking their plans for TK — or canceling it.

Officials of 12 of the state's largest districts, contacted by EdSource, indicated a wide range of responses to the TK flip-flop. According to *Preschool California*, more than 100 school districts have started TK pilot programs on



Lisl Christie plays “telephone” with a banana at San Miguel Elementary in Santa Rosa with student Manuel Flores.

**Transitional kindergarten is more developmentally appropriate for many kids who really need to learn how to sit down, listen, develop self-control and become ready for kindergarten, so they can be successful.**

**GEORGE MELENDEZ**

their own, or plan to launch them in the fall regardless of the governor's budget proposal. Some are taking a “wait and see” attitude, including Lodi, Mount Diablo Unified and Capistrano Unified. Others canceled plans for TK outright, including San Francisco, Anaheim City and Garden Grove, says EdSource, which predicts most districts

will probably not have a program this fall if the governor's plan is approved by lawmakers.

Sen. Simitian has charged that this inconsistency will create “unequal access” to children in California because TK will be available for some children but not for all, which could impact the future success of low-income students.

“Education cuts at any level are foolish in a state in which schools are already starving,” writes Deborah Stipek, a former dean and professor at Stanford University's





School of Education, in an article for the *San Jose Mercury News*. “While we need to balance California’s budget, we also need to avoid cuts that will severely cost the state in the long run. Cutting funding for transitional kindergarten, as the governor proposes, may do just that.” 🎓

#### MORE INFO

For more information, or to learn how to advocate for transitional kindergarten, visit:

Preschool California,  
[www.preschoolcalifornia.org](http://www.preschoolcalifornia.org)

The California Department of Education (CDE),  
[www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/em/kinderfaq.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/em/kinderfaq.asp)

California Kindergarten Association,  
[www.californiakindergartenassociation.org/transitional-kindergarten](http://www.californiakindergartenassociation.org/transitional-kindergarten)

First Five California, [www.cffc.ca.gov](http://www.cffc.ca.gov)



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**Morgan Appel, Director of Education at: (858) 534-9273 or [mappel@ucsd.edu](mailto:mappel@ucsd.edu)**

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



# ONLINE BULLYING

AND YOU ARE THE TARGET!

**Social media and technology  
have radically changed bullying.**

Cyberspace is the new “bathroom wall” where cruel and untrue words are posted for the world to see. While cyberbullying among students has received a great deal of media attention, little has been said about teachers and other school staff who become the targets. There may be consequences for those who bully students online, but those who torment teachers may be protected under the First Amendment. In the following feature, educators and experts discuss the impact of cyberbullying on school employees, what can be done to prevent it, and what to do if it happens to you.

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



**Calisa Holm** helps Jolie Hossack and Mia Pambianco with a math lesson at Pacific Union School in Arcata.

## Is cyberbullying of teachers going viral?

**26%**

of teachers and principals in the U.S. have been **targeted**.

2006

National School Boards Association study

WHEN CALISA HOLM'S administrator entered her classroom at the end of the school day, the math teacher at Pacific Union Elementary School sensed something bad had happened. She soon learned unflattering comments about her had been posted on the Internet from an anonymous source. A person on a "rant" website said Holm was "mean" to students and a poor teacher, and something should be done about her. Readers were invited to post their own negative comments about Holm.

"I didn't know who was maligning my character," recalls Holm, a member of the Teachers Association of Pacific Union. "There was no way to address that person. I was in a vulnerable position. I felt powerless to deal with the ugliness of the situation."

Increasingly, teachers have been criticized, ridiculed and falsely portrayed on websites such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and RateMyTeacher. It may constitute "cyberbullying," which is defined as "harassing, mistreating or making fun of another person online or while using cell phones or other electronic devices" by the Cyberbullying Research Center.

A 2006 National School Boards Association study reports that 26 percent of teachers and principals in the U.S. have been targeted. A 2011 study from Plymouth University in England reports that 35 percent of teachers surveyed in the United Kingdom said they or a colleague had been subjected to online abuse, ranging from postings on Facebook to campaigns of abuse on Twitter or other sites. The three



**You do worry that your life could be destroyed.**

KELLY KIECH

most commonly cited forms were slanderous reviews on RateMyTeacher, Facebook “hate groups” that focus on a teacher, and nasty YouTube videos. The Plymouth survey found that 72 percent of cyberbullying was committed by students and 26 percent by parents.

Holm believes her attack came from a parent angry about homework. Shortly before the online rant, a parent took issue with her homework policy and sent her a rude note. Soon afterward, the family moved away.

“The words used were not junior high school words,” says Holm. “They were much too sophisticated.”

### **Internet abuse can devastate educators**

Those who have been harassed online commonly feel depressed, sad, angry or frustrated, and sometimes they feel suicidal, says Sameer Hinduja of the Cyberbullying Research Center, based in Wisconsin. Student targets he has interviewed said that they were afraid or

reluctant to go to school, and he believes the same applies to teachers who have been targeted. One of the teachers in the Plymouth study admitted to having a nervous breakdown over the summer.

“It made me feel incredibly sad,” recounts Holm. “I felt like crying at times. I felt embarrassed.”

Obscene allegations by students on Facebook against two Santa Rosa Middle School teachers caused them to experience personal anguish and worry about their careers. The Santa Rosa Teachers Association members considered legal action, but decided not to pursue it.

“You do worry that your life could be destroyed,” says Kelly Kiech, a PE teacher.

Kiech learned that a student who was outwardly friendly to him in class was making up vicious rumors about him. He immediately went to his principal. The rumors had been sent to more than 600 of the student’s Facebook friends. The principal called in the student’s parents, who knew the allegations were unfounded. The student wrote a new post on Facebook saying she had “ruined a great man’s reputation” and that she was sorry, but did not mention Kiech by name, which he had hoped for. The school suggested he let the matter drop.

Kiech is moving forward and trying to put the incident behind him. But it’s difficult, he says, especially when his own children went online and saw the lies that had been posted.

Kiech later found obscene allegations about math teacher Brent Jackson, so he told his school colleague and the principal.

“It was very hurtful,” says Jackson. “I could have sued the family for damages, but I didn’t want any more publicity — or to exacerbate the situation. But it definitely hurt my morale.”

Nan Cano feared for her life when a student created a “Hurt Cano” website targeting the former Agoura High School English teacher, now retired and an adjunct professor at California Lutheran

Spreading rumors is easier using technology. One message can exponentially reach hundreds of people.



University's Graduate School of Education. The student solicited ideas from others nationwide on ways to cause her harm — and responses ranged from spreading lies that she had sex with students to damaging her car.

An administrator knew about the website, colored in blood red, but did not inform her before the school day began. Alerted to its existence during the workday, Cano went online and promptly went into shock.

"I lost all composure," says Cano, a former member of the Las Virgenes Educators Association. "I couldn't believe my administrator knew about this and then innocently let me go about my job."

She took a week off and was assigned an armed guard upon her return. Police discovered the student behind the website and suspended him for the rest of the year. Although the district mishandled the situation at first, Cano says, administrators stood by her, and so did the union.

"I was devastated and went to therapy for a while," says Cano. "The student returned to the campus the next year, and

he was directed not to go near me. But I remained hypervigilant that year. I didn't go to concerts or school plays because I was afraid I would see him."

Her decision to retire, says Cano, had nothing to do with that incident, and she left three years later on a happy note, maintaining her love of teaching until the end.

"Still, it's hard for me to talk about, even now," she relates. "It was very, very damaging."

### **Why an increase in cyberbullying?**

"Mr. Villafana, is that really you on MySpace?"

When Miller Middle School math and social studies teacher Dave Villafana heard that question, he went online and found someone had used his picture to create a phony MySpace account. There was also a phony account set up for his administrator, and obscenities were being hurled between the two.

"The sites looked authentic," he recalls. "Many kids assumed that we were actually doing it. I gave MySpace a call and the site was shut down immediately."

Villafana, who is president of the Cupertino Education Association, believes teachers are constantly under attack in the media, so there is more tolerance for online bashing. It's common, he says, for students to go to RateMyTeacher and post hurtful things. Some will get friends from another school to post negative ratings about a teacher they have never met. He knows of cases where parents unhappy over a child's grade have made comments, pretending to be a student.

"Whenever I want a dose of humility, I'll go to that page," Villafana says wryly.

Villafana believes that when school districts and the media put teacher evaluations online for the world to see, it exposes teachers to public humiliation and is also a form of cyberbullying.

"Think of what happened to Robert Ruelas in Los Angeles," he says, referring to the teacher who committed suicide after

the *Los Angeles Times* posted information online labeling the young and dedicated teacher as "ineffective" based solely on student test scores.

"Posting detrimental things online is very hurtful and has a strong impact on morale. Teachers dedicate their lives to students, and it's difficult when they are not respected. When they are targeted online, they feel lost and sad. We have to be aware of the hurt that can be created with the widespread use of the Internet."

Nancy Willard of the Oregon-based Center for Safe and Responsible Use of the Internet believes cyberbullying is on the rise because students feel powerless and oppressed.

"We are making a lot of students feel as though they are failures because of high-stakes testing and No Child Left Behind," says Willard. "The backlash of cyberbullying may be partly because of that."

The Cyberbullying Research Center reports that there is a strong relationship between school climate and cyberbullying incidents.

"A positive on-campus environment will go a long way in reducing the frequency of many problematic behaviors



**Dave Villafana**, Cupertino Education Association president, was surprised to see his face on MySpace hurling phony insults at an administrator.



***I couldn't believe my administrator knew about this and then innocently let me go about my job.***

NAN CANO

# Targeted teacher fights back

Michael Guardino uses one word to describe his school's online cyberbully, and that's "coward."

The student opened up a Facebook account and posed as Guardino. He then "friended" other students at Carmel High School. Then he sent cruel remarks to a student with special needs, who actually believed his teacher was taunting him.

"The student with special needs thought he was being bullied by me," says Guardino, a member of the Association of Carmel Teachers. "He was the sweetest kid in the world and had enough on his plate. It nearly ruined his self-esteem. It happened during the summer, and he didn't have access to me. He kept wondering why I was doing this."

Once Guardino found out what was happening, he felt so "violated" that he decided to fight back. CTA provided legal services to Guardino through the Group Legal Services program and hired attorney Joe Cisneros of Monterey. Guardino then contacted the FBI, which subpoenaed the records from Facebook to find the perpetrator.

"Facebook does not cooperate with anybody about anything," says Guardino. "Yet it's so simple to open up a fictitious Facebook account and commit cybercrime."

*People don't have the right to steal a person's identity and use it in any forum.*

MICHAEL GUARDINO

I was lucky the FBI subpoenaed the records, because they made it clear that my case wasn't on the map compared to other priorities, such as pursuing violent methamphetamine dealers in Watsonville. Still, this kid was in violation of the federal Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, and it needed to be dealt with."

Once he had the student's name, he agreed to keep it confidential because the boy was a minor, and filed suit against "John Doe" and his family. It never reached trial; there was a court settlement with the boy's family in January 2010. The teacher won \$10,000. But after paying attorney's fees and taxes, Guardino was left with only \$2,000. He donated the remainder to CTA.

As part of the settlement, the judge told the student he must apologize to those he had targeted. According to Guardino, that never happened.

Guardino is glad that he took a stand, even though he felt somewhat embarrassed that the incident received coverage in the local press.

"I wanted to prove a point," he says. "People don't have the right to steal a person's identity and use it in any forum."

at school, including bullying and harassment," notes Sameer Hinduja. "Teachers must demonstrate emotional support, a warm and caring atmosphere, a strong focus on academics and learning, and fostering a healthy self-esteem. In schools that seek to create and promote an atmosphere where certain conduct is not tolerated — by students and staff alike — students know what is appropriate and what is not."

## Is it legal to cyberbully teachers?

Cyber threats, such as Nan Cano received, are illegal and punishable by administrators and police. When allegations and insults are nonthreatening and do not substantially disrupt the learning environment, students are protected under freedom of speech.

California enacted a law in 2008 that allows schools to expel students who cyberbully their classmates or school personnel. Only three states have anti-bullying laws that protect teachers; and only four states have laws that include off-campus behaviors, although three states are considering such laws. For details, visit [www.cyberbullying.us](http://www.cyberbullying.us).



*It was very hurtful. I could have sued the family for damages, but I didn't want any more publicity — or to exacerbate the situation. But it definitely hurt my morale.*

BRENT JACKSON

Cyberbully target **Brent Jackson** of Santa Rosa Middle School says the experience hurt his morale.





Under existing law, school districts can only discipline students if the attacks are likely to cause a “substantial disruption” in the school’s learning environment. In January, the U.S. Supreme Court left intact two lower court decisions that said schools could not discipline students who satirized their principals online. In those cases, Pennsylvania high school students created online profiles of principals suggesting one was a pedophile and another used illegal drugs and was gay. Neither of those cases was considered a “substantial disruption” in the learning environment. The Supreme Court let stand a ruling that allowed punishment of a student who harassed a classmate online.

Nancy Willard notes that previous rulings define a “substantial disruption” as something that jeopardizes school safety and interferes with students being able to receive an education. This leaves school districts unable to mete out punishment for cyberbullying of staff in many cases.

Schools may not always be able to suspend students who cyberbully teachers, but teachers can file lawsuits against students and their families. Grounds for lawsuits might include defamation of character, invasion of privacy, intentional infliction of emotional distress, or representation in a false light.

“All of these things take a long time to prove and a lot of money, and lawsuits will continue the dispute for a very long time,” says Willard, author of the soon-to-be published *Cyber Savvy, Digital Safety and Civility*. “Yes, you might win and prove your point that the student did something wrong, but is it worth it?” (To see a story about a CTA member who sued, see facing page.)

For teachers who are harassed, it can be frustrating to see students go unpunished.

“There were no consequences,” says Kelly Kiech, the Santa Rosa teacher who had been the subject of obscene Facebook allegations. “The girl wasn’t even suspended. There needs to be some kind of consequences, so kids will know that is not OK.”

## What can be done?

Most cyberbullying is done anonymously, but it can be possible to find out who the culprit is using the process of elimination. For example, if there is a Facebook hate group for a teacher, says Nancy Willard, discern which “friends” are receiving the postings, and then see who, from that social group, is “missing.” That person is likely behind the online attacks.

“These are teenagers,” says Willard. “They leave a lot of digital footprints. Lots of students know who they are at school. And one of these students will be willing to confidentially tell the principal what is going on.”

Students often can’t be suspended, so Willard suggests that schools hold an “investigation” of the incident and also a “restorative intervention” between the teacher and student conducted by a neutral party, preferably a counselor or school psychologist from another campus. In this format, the student could talk about why he was angry at the teacher in the first place, and the teacher could tell the student how the cyberbullying incident hurt his feelings and affected his life. The goal, she says, is to mend the relationship, have

the student be held accountable and then move forward.

“Punishment from a legal perspective can get a school district into trouble, but if we throw our hands up in the air and do nothing, that’s not good either,” she says.

David Hernandez, an anti-bullying trainer from CTA’s Community Outreach Department, believes perpetrators should be strongly encouraged — perhaps with parental help — to issue an apology both verbally and in writing to the teacher and perhaps the school community. Students could also be asked to issue a public apology at an anti-bullying assembly on campus or perform community service.

“It’s not going to erase what has happened, but at least it will make the student think about what they did,” says Hernandez. “And it will send a message to other kids that this behavior is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.”

A few suggestions...

## If you have been cyberbullied:

- Tell your principal.
- If you feel you have grounds for a lawsuit, call your CTA primary contact staff.
- Contact Facebook, MySpace or the Internet provider in question, and ask them to remove the page or profile immediately.
- Do not personally retaliate online.
- Keep evidence of an incident by not deleting text messages, e-mails etc. Take a screen capture of materials including URLs or Web addresses.
- Look at the “friends” or others to whom the posting was sent, and see who is missing from that social circle. Ask students who received the messages to name the offender confidentially.
- Ask your administrator to discuss the situation with the student’s parents and request an apology.
- Schedule a training about cyberbullying from CTA’s Community Outreach Department.
- Hold an anti-bullying assembly at your school.

# The future of the bus goes round and round

**AS A STUDENT** growing up in Potter Valley, Paul Monlux rode a bus to school every day. He always looked forward to talking about the day's events with his friend, Earl Preffer, the bus driver.

"We called him Cooter," he recalls. "He was like a rock star to kids. He was one of those teddy bear kind of guys who seems a little rough around the edges, but is all about safety and kids."

Monlux grew up, went to college in Los Angeles and served in the Navy. Eventually he moved back to Potter Valley. A year ago, he was hired as a bus driver

for the Potter Valley Community Unified School District. Training him for the job was none other than Cooter, who then promptly retired.

"Just like Cooter, I always smile, say good morning and tell the kids to have a nice day when I pick them up," says Monlux, a member of Potter Valley Classified Employees Association (PVCEA). "A lot of these kids don't have stability in their homes. But one solid thing they do know is that the bus driver is going to be there for them every morning, smiling and saying hello."

For a while it seemed uncertain whether the bus driver

Selene Pasion waits to board school bus in Redlands.



*In Potter Valley, many of the district's 239 students travel more*



would continue to show up every morning in Potter Valley and other communities. In January, it looked like the end of the line for most school buses due to budget cuts. Gov. Brown cut \$248 million in state funding for school transportation as part of the trigger cuts, making California the first state in the nation to completely eliminate funds for busing. Then lawmakers granted districts a reprieve with SB 81, supported by CTA and the Education Coalition, which will transform proposed midyear school bus cuts into a general-purpose reduction that will impact K-12 districts evenly. After signing SB 81, the governor stated that he wants to replace specific transportation funds next year with a new block grant funding system that would allow districts to fund bus service if necessary, according to a weighted formula.

The reprieve was good news in Potter Valley, since many of the district's 239 students travel 25 miles or more to school each way on the district's two buses. Two years ago, the district ended buses for preschoolers and eliminated all transportation for after-school sports events and field trips to cut costs.

Enough is enough, say community members.

"If they had cut transportation further, it would have been disastrous," says Duval "Sam" Phillips, PVCEA president. "It could mean closure of our district."

Monlux and fellow PVCEA member Lorrie Hurn, a bus driver for 26 years, also worry about the possible loss of employment.

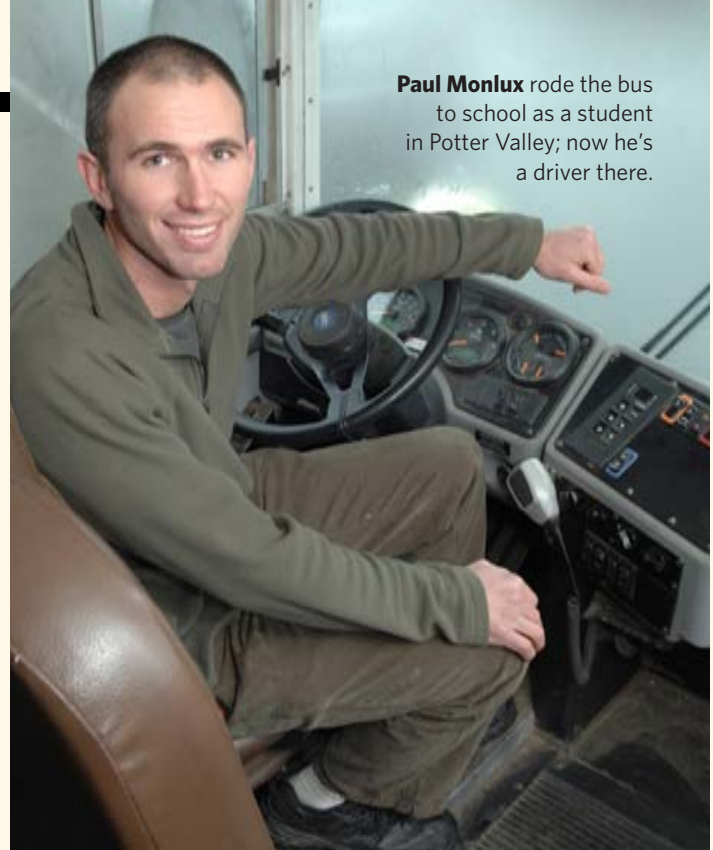
"It's scary," says Hurn. "It's my job, and it's what I have done for so long. I love these kids. It would be really hard for me and for many people in this community to do without a school bus."

### Bus rides provide equal access

Advocates believe that if school buses stop rolling, it will not only end a cherished American tradition, but also limit access to public schools for students who don't live within walking distance.

"It would be terrible, because school buses are a lifeline connecting students to public education," says CTA President Dean Vogel. "If buses are eliminated, there may not be public transportation to take up the slack. Students may have no way to travel from isolated areas to the larger world of school, friends and sports. It would put an unfair burden on their families, who may already be suffering economically."

Eliminating buses would increase congestion on roads and could also put more students at risk, adds Vogel, since records show school buses are safer for transporting stu-



**Paul Monlux** rode the bus to school as a student in Potter Valley; now he's a driver there.

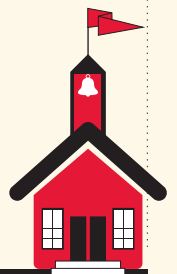
dents than cars. According to the Surface Transportation Policy Project, school buses make about 25 percent of trips taken by U.S. children during normal commuting hours, but account for just 2 percent of deaths and 4 percent of injuries sustained by children traveling to school. In comparison, roughly 74 percent of accidental deaths and 84 percent of injuries suffered by students commuting to school occur in automobiles.

Unlike most states, California doesn't require schools to provide busing except in limited circumstances, including special education. California also covers less of the cost than other states — on average about 40 percent, according to California Department of Education officials — and ranks last in school ridership with just 16 percent of California school children taking buses to school. Once free, school bus transportation now costs families hundreds of dollars for an annual bus pass in many communities. While some districts spend little or nothing on buses, it can be a huge expense for schools located in rural communities.

### A rural community fights back

In southern Humboldt County, teachers, parents and students were so angry over the possibility of losing buses that they organized a field trip — by school bus, of course — to Sacramento on Jan. 24, where they gave legislators an earful about the burden it would put on students and their families if busing were to be

*than 25 miles each way to school.*





**“I consider myself a counselor, a second mother and a friend who takes them to and from school.”**

VICKEY JOHNSON

**Imogene “Vickey” Johnson** always has a smile and a kind word behind the wheel in Redlands.

cut in their isolated community, which encompasses 773 square miles for 772 students. The tiny school district made a lot of noise and received a lot of media attention when it came to making a case for buses.

The school community is hopeful that the layoff notices issued to 11 transportation workers will be rescinded.

“It was a really effective protest,” says Leslie Yale, a South Fork High School teacher and member of the South Humboldt Teachers Association (SHTA), who traveled to the Capitol for the event. “We paid a visit to our legislators, including Assemblyman Wesley Chesbro and Senator Noreen Evans.”

Two school buses caravanned for the protest.

“It would be devastating in many ways for the rural community if there were cuts to school transportation,” says fellow South Fork teacher and SHTA member Aletta Sauer. “It would cause a tremendous increase in traffic on our country roads, which are narrow, winding and steep with no stoplights. There’s a lot of poverty, and many of our parents don’t own vehicles that are capable of making drives like that regularly, up and down the mountain, or have time in their workday to drive their children, some of

whom travel an hour or more each way.”

If the buses stop rolling, says Sauer, many families would opt for homeschooling or independent study. The district, she fears, could cease to exist. According to the school secretary, six parents moved their children out of the district because they were worried bus service would end.

Students were celebrating the news that buses would continue, and were delighted that they were able to play a role in the reversal of transportation cuts.

“It would have been very hard for me, because I ride the bus two hours each way to get to school,” says eighth-grader Fawna Meeks. “If they eliminated buses, I would probably have to go to independent study, because my mom is sick and not able to drive me. We wouldn’t have enough money for gas.

It would really be a big deal, because kids our age need to interact with other kids, and it would prevent a lot of kids from being able to go to school.”

“It would also be hard on me,” says Drew Yates, also in eighth grade. “Without buses, I would be homeschooled. I would definitely like to see the buses stay.”

### Student safety is jeopardized

“I tell every child to have a blessed day — not just a good day,” says Imogene “Vickey” Johnson. “I am not just



Aletta Sauer



a school bus driver. I consider myself a counselor, a second mother and a friend who takes them to and from school.”

Johnson, a bus driver for Redlands Unified School District for eight years, fears that children will be put at risk without buses and caring drivers to ensure their safe passage.

“Sometimes when we pick them up it is still dark out in the morning,” explains Johnson, a member of the Redlands Education Support Professionals Association (RESPA). “I’m definitely worried about their safety.”

Two years ago, the district eliminated all high school busing and extended the bus boundaries for middle school and elementary schools, says Jolene Tripp, RESPA president and a bus driver for 10 years. With fewer routes, drivers lost jobs and students had increased difficulties getting to school.

“We just keep on making cuts and putting everything on the chopping block until there is nothing left to chop,” says Tripp. “I worry that without busing, more students will drop out. It’s hard enough to keep students in school. Why put one more barrier in their way?”

### Urban areas need buses, too

More than half of the nearly 800 students attending 186th Street Elementary School in Los Angeles rely on school buses to transport them through a dangerous urban area.

“Without buses, our students would have to walk down a very busy street and cross a freeway onramp,” says Rebecca Johnson, a pre-kindergarten teacher and United Teachers Los Angeles member. “Our school is located in an industrial area that is heavily traveled by trucks. There is also a lot of gang activity. A few years ago, a young girl was shot to death by gang members. Understandably, parents are very nervous, because they rely on the school bus to get their kids to and from school safely.”



Rebecca Johnson

186th Street Elementary School has a “late bus” so students can participate in after-school programs such as tutoring and classes in art, music and dance, which help close the achievement gap. Last year, funding for the late bus was cut, but it was restored after parents signed petitions and sought private donations to help cover costs. The school is one of seven in the district that provide transportation for students; LAUSD officials had planned to sue the state to halt the school bus cuts.

“Most of our parents are low-income, and many of them don’t drive,” says Johnson. “If we eliminate buses, we’re just taking one more thing away from the neediest population.”



Preschoolers board **Lorrie Hurn's** bus in Potter Valley.



# MAKING A DIFFERENCE

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VISIT [WWW.CTA.ORG/RAA](http://WWW.CTA.ORG/RAA) TO LEARN MORE AND SEE FUN PHOTOS!

## READ ACROSS AMERICA



Illustration © 2011 by James Burks and Barry Chung.

Once again, Read Across America has inspired children of all ages to discover the joy of reading. Educators and parents were joined by firefighters, professional athletes, news anchors, city officials and community members in reading events celebrating Dr. Seuss’s birthday on March 2.



Assembly Member Tony Mendoza presents CTA Board member Toby Boyd with an Assembly Resolution honoring Read Across America.



James Burks, author of *Gabby and Gator*, reads to students at Madison Elementary in Redondo Beach.



CTA President Dean Vogel and Lou Paulson, president of California Professional Firefighters, read *Boris Ate a Thesaurus* to Susan Lopez's first-grade class at Nicholas Elementary in Sacramento.





CTA Vice President Eric Heins and Lennox Teachers Association President Julie Smith help students "sink their teeth" into a good book.



CTA Secretary-Treasurer Mikki Cichocki visits with eighth-graders at Riverside's Central Middle School.



"Pajama Day" adds to the fun at Glenshire Elementary in Truckee.



All students get into the Seuss spirit!



*Boris Ate a Thesaurus* illustrator Barry Chung teaches Central Middle School students how to draw Boris.



Los Angeles County firefighter specialist Eddie Pierce reads *I Want to Be a Firefighter* at Palmcrest Elementary in La Cañada Flintridge.



## Students focus on Native American culture with a CTA Institute for Teaching grant



Potter Valley TA member Carrie Mayfield, Potter Valley Classified Employees Association President Duval "Sam" Phillips, and PVTA President Stephanie Bearden are using a CTA Institute for Teaching grant to work with students in the district's Multicultural Club to enhance awareness of the area's Pomo culture.

### Apply for an IFT Grant

You have a creative idea for an innovative project for your students, but all you need is the extra cash to make it a reality. That's where CTA's Institute for Teaching can help!

The IFT's 2012-13 Grant Program is accepting applications now for individual grants of up to \$5,000 and chapter grants of up to \$20,000 from CTA members, teacher teams and local CTA chapters for next school year. "IFT is eager to assist projects and programs that demonstrate the efficacy of teacher-driven approaches to school change," says IFT Director Dick Gale.

The grant application deadline is April 30. Gale says a grant selection committee composed of teachers from around the state will review the applications in May for grants that will be awarded in June.

#### MORE INFO

For complete details, including application forms, visit [www.teacherdrivenchange.org](http://www.teacherdrivenchange.org).

"WORKING WITH my colleagues, school maintenance employee Sam Phillips, art teacher Carrie Mayfield, and the students in our Potter Valley Multicultural Club has been the best thing I have experienced as a teacher in years," says Potter Valley Teachers Association President Stephanie Bearden.

Relying primarily on funds from a CTA Institute for Teaching grant, Bearden, Phillips and Mayfield are engaging their rural Northern California students in a series of projects that focus on Native American culture, primarily the history and culture of the area's Pomo people.

After researching with tribal officials and at area museums, art teacher Mayfield worked with club students and with Phillips, a member of the Pomo people and president of the Potter Valley Classified Employees Association, to create and mount a mural featuring intricate Pomo basket designs indigenous to the area (shown at right). A large group of students from local schools, educators, community members and Pomo representatives participated in the November 2011 mural unveiling ceremony. "As

a nonnative artist, the most important thing to me in creating the design was accuracy to the native culture," says Mayfield. "The mural needed to be more than just a pretty picture on the wall in order to help educate our students about the deeper history of the area."

Currently, Mayfield is working with other teachers at the school to develop curriculum to help students better understand the mural and other aspects of local Native American culture. "The mural is just the

first step in a long journey this community must make to help recognize and honor the earliest inhabitants of our valley so that their descendants, including our students, may feel pride in their heritage, their culture and themselves," says Mayfield.

"We are so appreciative of the Institute for Teaching grant," says Bearden. "In addition to the mural, it has enabled us to fund field trips and other experiences for our students."

By Bill Guy



Edna Campbell Guerrero, Northern Pomo Elder, 1907-1995



**MATHIEU H. AUSTIN**, a member of the Acton-Agua Dulce Teachers Association and a business teacher at Vasquez High School in Lancaster, was pleased to find out the impression he made on one former student. Austin writes, "This is the most recent and the most humbling letter I've ever received."

Dear Mr. Austin,

On Monday I started college. I chose business as my major, not because I expect to be a rich entrepreneur or because I want to rule the stock market. I chose business because the theories and relevance of the field of flowing money and transactions interest me. The relationship between the details of the legal aspects and the general picture of a successful venture is something that I want to learn more about and ultimately apply in my life. Maybe I'll want to build headphones, maybe I'll want to set up a record label, maybe I'll want to be a valuable asset to an existing company. I might not always succeed in everything I pursue, but I will be knowledgeable enough to pursue dreams without getting caught in loopholes and (hopefully) debt. You were my favorite teacher, and not just because of my grade. You made sure things weren't vague, you took an active role in teaching, you graded fairly based on content and not semantics, and you gave me hope for a higher education. I wanted to take the time to thank you for all you've taught me, and the way you taught it. I hope many more students of all kinds get as much out of your class as I did. And, I appreciated your sense of humor.

**JOHANNA RAUHALA**, a seventh-grade English and history teacher and a member of the Mount Diablo Education Association, was thrilled to receive an e-mail this year from a student she taught 12 years ago. "This young man had been a student of mine 12 years ago," she writes. "He was born in Afghanistan, had been living in Saudi Arabia, but was visiting the U.S. for only one year. When I read his words, I am reminded of the power of literature and the humanity of our work."

I was in the U.S. for a year only, but that year made a huge difference to me in many ways: culturally, socially, academically, and in more ways that I can describe.

I spent some time recalling the memories I had there and they were very fond indeed: reenacting a scene from *Number the Stars*, a novella that deeply touched me; I wasn't aware of the persecution of the Jews during WWII until then. Also, I remember having so much fun cracking a coconut open with a rock under a candlelight with fellow classmates (it was my first time eating a coconut as well) and drawing woolly mammoths with chalk. I think the project was to experience what it was like to be a caveman.

Anyway, I doubt you remember and I don't really expect you to reply to this strange and unexpected e-mail, but I just want to say thanks for everything you did. I have a great deal of respect for all of my old teachers that put the time, effort, patience, creativity and sincerity to my education, growth and well-being. It was a great experience, and I hope to never forget that memorable year in your classroom.



The Oscars may be given for outstanding achievement in motion pictures, but for many CTA members, receiving a thank-you letter from a current or former student is like winning an Oscar. At least, that's what some of the educators tell us who have shared these letters.

**JONELLIA GUINN**, a member of the Association of Classified Employees, has received numerous letters in her 15 years as principal secretary at Culver City High School. She forwarded a few, noting, "It's letters like these that make my job so rewarding." One of those letters was from a graduating senior.

Dear Mom Guinn,

Thank you for your words of encouragement and for helping me through this college process. Thank you for always having a positive attitude and making me want to be a better person. Culver City High School could not function productively without you. You are the heart and soul of the entire school. Please keep in contact with me after high school because I consider you family and now you are stuck with me!

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**KNOW YOUR NUMBERS — READ ABOUT THE GOVERNOR’S TAX INITIATIVE AT [WWW.CTA.ORG/CAMPAIGN2012](http://WWW.CTA.ORG/CAMPAIGN2012).**

# LEGISLATURE BEGINS REVIEW OF GOVERNOR’S BUDGET INITIATIVE’S PASSAGE WOULD HEAD OFF \$4.9 BILLION IN CUTS

**CTA IS PRESSING** the Legislature to approve a new state budget that will provide public education with more funding.

Both houses of the Legislature have begun their review of Gov. Jerry Brown’s proposed 2012-13 budget. Lawmakers are working against a June 15 deadline for sending their version back to the governor for his signature.

The governor’s proposed spending plan provides K-12 schools with an additional \$4.9 billion in desperately needed Proposition 98 funding, but there’s a catch. Trigger cuts would eliminate the increase if voters turn down his proposed temporary tax initiative in November. (See the sidebar for more information about the initiative.)

Schools are already reeling from more than \$20 billion in cuts in recent years, and the loss of the additional revenues would trigger additional cuts that would continue to keep class sizes high, boost the number of layoffs, and decimate instructional programs.

“Our students, our schools, and our members have been hard hit by these reductions,” says CTA President Dean

*CTA is supporting the governor’s initiative so that we can begin to deal with the state budget deficit responsibly while we increase funding for our schools and colleges.*

**Dean E. Vogel**

E. Vogel. “CTA is supporting the governor’s initiative so that we can begin to deal with the state budget deficit responsibly while we increase funding for our schools and colleges.”

To avoid additional staggering cuts in funding, the governor’s budget assumes that voters will pass his proposed initiative.

The nonpartisan Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO) — an advisory body to the Legislature — has been recommending that lawmakers work slowly toward the adoption of a budget so that they can rely on updated revenue forecasts. The LAO is looking toward April tax collections that could come in higher than projections.

Among variables in the mix is how much the state will garner from pending initial public offerings (IPOs) from companies like Facebook. These releases of stock often generate millions of dollars for the company’s owners, obligating them to pay taxes on their stock capital gains.

Few observers believe, though, that such revenues will take the place of the modest income tax boost on the wealthy and the temporary sales tax that the governor’s initiative would implement.

## A close-up on the governor’s initiative

### THE GOVERNOR’S PROPOSED TAX INITIATIVE WOULD:

#### Raise a total of \$6.9 billion by:

#### → Increasing income taxes on the wealthy.

- 1 percent for household earnings of \$500,000 to \$600,000.
- 1.5 percent for earnings of \$600,000 to \$1 million.
- 2 percent for earnings over \$1 million.

#### → Increasing the sales tax by one-half cent.

These taxes would be in place for five years.

#### Fund schools within the Proposition 98 guarantee

and pay down the budget deficit — including money owed to schools. (Note: The governor’s initiative is the only pending measure that does both.)

#### Provide schools with \$4.9 billion in 2012-13

under the terms of Proposition 98. Similar increases in the following years would lead to a \$15 billion cumulative increase in funding toward the Proposition 98 guarantee by the year 2015. That’s the equivalent of \$2,400 per pupil.

**By Len Feldman**

## Educators and community rocked by abuse allegations

ON JAN. 31, educators and parents of Miramonte Elementary School in Los Angeles were stunned by the revelation that a former staff member, a classroom teacher, had been arrested and charged with committing 23 lewd acts against children, allegedly in his own classroom. Just a few days later, as the bizarre nature of the allegations in the case propelled Miramonte into an unwanted national spotlight, the school was rocked by the arrest of a second teacher on charges of unlawful contact with two students (one charge has subsequently been dropped).

As Los Angeles Unified School District stood in the glare of the national media and questions began to arise about how the district had handled this and other cases, LAUSD Superintendent John Deasy took the extreme step of removing and replacing the entire staff of the school. Met with fierce opposition from parents, many of whom threatened to keep their children home until their teachers returned, and from United Teachers Los Angeles, which held a news conference in front of the school saying the district had gone back on its word to return staff to the site, the district issued a statement later that day reassuring teachers and parents that the staff would be returned once the district completed an investigation into what happened and how. Betty Fuentes, 18, whose brother attends the school, lamented the disruption caused by the sudden transfers, adding that with parent conferences and standardized testing coming up, “the timing couldn’t have been worse.” UTLA, meanwhile, called for a “thorough, fair, and vigorous” investigation of all allegations and committed to help rebuild the Miramonte community.

During news interviews, UTLA President Warren Fletcher reminded the public that no one is more concerned with student safety than teachers and suggested that at Miramonte the district was dealing with an awful situation by “using a hatchet when a scalpel would be more appropriate.” Fletcher’s point was a necessary reminder that educators are as horrified as anyone when something like this happens. But that point was lost on some talk radio hosts who jumped on the tragedy to bash all teachers and unions, and even furthered their attacks on public employee pensions. The media circus continued to grow as some of the children involved went on “Dr. Phil” to give their versions of events.

At press time, the Miramonte investigation continues, and there have been additional news reports alleging district mishandling of cases at other sites. In response to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing’s criticism of the district’s failure to report



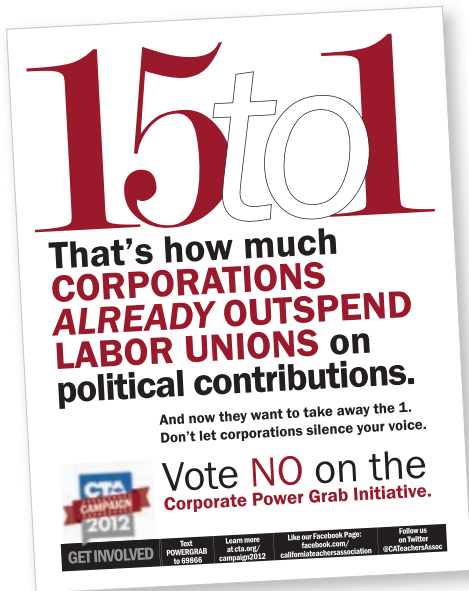
Parents and students support teachers during the media circus at Miramonte Elementary School.

an earlier incident in a timely manner, Superintendent Deasy has called for changes to teacher dismissal laws and has vowed to report all allegations of teacher misconduct to the CTC (neither of which would have done much to prevent the alleged crimes at Miramonte). Educators agree that protecting the safety of students must be the top priority, but it must be done in an atmosphere that doesn’t encourage a witch hunt or that tarnishes an entire school or profession based on the alleged criminal actions of one person. And the sooner that Miramonte students get their teachers and a sense of normalcy back, the sooner they’ll be able to put this tragedy behind them.

*The sooner that Miramonte students get their teachers and a sense of normalcy back, the sooner they’ll be able to put this tragedy behind them.*

By Frank Wells





## Misguided Corporate Power Grab Initiative seeks to silence your voice

HAVE YOU EVER thought what it would be like if you had no say in improving your profession? What if you were muzzled when it came to advocating for your students or yourself? These are the questions you need to think about before the November general election, because a new initiative designed to do just that has qualified for the ballot.

The so-called “Stop Special Interest Money Now Act” is a classic corporate power grab. This deceptive name and measure seek to deceive voters into passing a law that would change the rules to benefit wealthy corporate interests at the expense of middle-class workers and their unions at a time when corporations already outspend labor unions 15 to 1 on political contributions.

If this initiative passes, CTA would no longer be able to advocate effectively for increasing funding for schools and colleges, preserving adequate salaries and secure retirement plans, protecting our right to collectively bargain, Class Size Reduction, opposing No Child Left Behind, and even taking a stand on local school board races and ballot measures. “Defeating this initiative is CTA’s top priority,” says CTA President Dean Vogel. “While things aren’t as good as they should be in California’s schools and colleges, without a strong voice for students and educators they will surely get worse.”

### MORE INFO

Learn more about the Corporate Power Grab Initiative at [cta.org/campaign2012](http://cta.org/campaign2012). You can also download fliers like the one above to share with colleagues and friends.

## We asked our facebook friends: “Why do you feel it’s important for CTA to have a voice in politics?”

### Here’s what you had to say:

**Sue Kenmotsu** Do I think CTA should have a voice in politics? YES and YES and YES. Yes — the rules and regs for schools would be in the hands of the Legislature with no accountability without a strong voice from CTA. Yes — the MONEY that means the difference between cuts and recovery come from the Legislature and we need CTA there. YES, that means politics. As long as politicians mess with education, we need CTA in politics!

**Karen Wallace** Because everything we do in our classrooms has to do with politics.

**Edward Mooney Jr.** Because those who would destroy public education are so well financed, and without CTA the other side would steamroll poor and middle-class kids.

**Todd Finlay** We are a voice for the children.

**Vicki Props Lawhorn** To be a mouthpiece for our state’s children, and hopefully EDUCATE the legislators who typically don’t know one iota of how the system, let alone a classroom, operates. It’s all about the kids, and what’s best for them.

**Christina Prola** It’s important because CTA is one of the few political voices that actually represent teachers. No one else cares about education as much as teachers do. No one else has the knowledge of education that teachers have. No one else will stand up for public education like teachers will.

**Jennifer Waters** As long as politicians are making decisions that will affect how and what we teach and our rights as educators, we need a voice in endorsing representatives and initiatives and working to support or defeat them. Democracy matters and our ability to come together makes our voice stronger.

**Erik Dabel** Because people that do not teach and have never taught should not be writing and pushing legislation regarding education.

**John Savage** We don’t have a choice! We can’t just sit on our hands and complain about the state of things. We have to take a proactive role in protecting public education!

**Ken Johnson** Only \$10 or 1% of your dues dollars support candidates or issues. And that \$10? By law, you can request it remain in CTA’s general fund. Any decisions on CTA policy are made by the CTA State Council, a body of 800 educators that are democratically elected by the members of their locals. If you’re a member of CTA, you vote for people to represent you. There is plenty of opportunity for admin to get rid of teachers that don’t cut the mustard. CTA needs to be involved politically because if you don’t want to be at the table, then you will be on the menu.

**DC Curtis** Because Corporations who want to privatize education, turn it into McTeaching, cut pay, and produce Widgit-Students already have a voice in politics. No, wait, correction, they already OWN politics. We need CTA and other organizations like it to push back against that system.

**Katie Burnette** It’s important because otherwise people will listen to those folks bashing us who know NOTHING about what it takes to teach or to be a teacher. We need to be part of deciding the future of education or it will be decided by politicians who have NO clue (for example, No Child Left Behind).

**Moyra Contreras** Educators need to be making decisions about education, not politicians!

## Bargaining updates around the state

**ASSOCIATED CALEXICO TEACHERS** members say that despite a healthy reserve balance and end-of-year surpluses the last several years, the Calexico Unified School District consistently refuses to bargain fairly. "If there is indeed a fiscal crisis, then why is the district continuing to spend funds for outside consultants, unnecessary legal fees and inflated 'phantom' expenses?" says ACT President Enrique Cervantes. "They have ample reserve funds, yet they are spending less and less on direct services to students." ACT members are rallying at school board meetings, conducting informational picketing throughout the community, and meeting with groups of parents and citizens. "We are determined to do whatever it takes to get better services for our students and a fair contract for ACT members," says Cervantes.

**BELMONT-REDWOOD SHORES TEACHERS ASSOCIATION** members will be enjoying raises soon. The chapter reached a tentative agreement on a contract providing a 3.5 percent raise on the salary schedule, retroactive to July 1, 2011. Educators also won an additional one-time 2 percent payment to help pay for an increase in their health benefit premium. The agreement, which came on the second day of a session with a state mediator, was expected to be ratified by mid-March.

**ELK GROVE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION** has gone to the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) to initiate the fact-finding process over health care and lottery compensation issues reopened under the 2010-12 collective bargaining agreement. EGEA continues to believe that the best way to resolve these issues is through the negotiation of the 2012-13 contract.

**FULLERTON SECONDARY TEACHERS ORGANIZATION** members have ratified a new two-year agreement that includes two furlough days each year. Although no employee health care contribution is required in the first year, the second year calls for a hard cap of 105 percent. A new position for special education caseload managers will limit student numbers to 65. "The contract also includes language that would require any increase in unrestricted funds to go toward buying back furlough days," says FSTO President Mary Wild.

**KNIGHTS FERRY TEACHERS ASSOCIATION** has been certified to fact-finding after rejecting an offer that would have meant accepting five unpaid furlough days and a permanent 2.24 percent salary cut, resulting in an overall 5 percent decrease. The six-member association has also filed an unfair labor practice charge alleging the district

engaged in regressive bargaining and refused to participate in good faith in the impasse procedures established under the Educational Employment Relations Act. While the teachers in the 120-student district are among the lowest-paid in Stanislaus County, the full-time release principal/superintendent received a 3 percent raise.

**OAK PARK TEACHERS ASSOCIATION** in January ratified an agreement that includes a retirement incentive of \$25,000, has no furlough days, and protects class sizes.

**PASO ROBLES PUBLIC EDUCATORS** is at impasse. The school district is asking for six furlough days this year and nine for 2012, which would remain each year until renegotiated out. PRPE has already offered significant concessions to help the district deal with its current financial issues. A mediation session Feb. 29 failed to achieve a settlement; a second session was scheduled for March 12.

**ROSS SCHOOL DISTRICT TEACHERS ASSOCIATION** negotiated a 2 percent salary schedule increase retroactive to July 1, 2011. Teachers in this Marin County district ratified their new contract agreement in January.

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\*APUS Alumni Employer Survey, March 2006-September 2010  
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LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR LABOR HISTORY  
AT [WWW.CTA.ORG/LABOR](http://WWW.CTA.ORG/LABOR).

# 100 YEARS AGO THE STRIKE FOR LOAVES OF BREAD PROMPTED SONGS AND PICKETS

*“What the woman who labors wants is the right to live, not simply exist. ... You have nothing that the humblest worker has not a right to have also. The worker must have bread, but she must have roses, too.” Rose Schneiderman, date uncertain*

ON JAN. 1, 1912, a new Massachusetts law that reduced the work week from 56 to 54 hours for women and children took effect. In response, textile mill owners speeded up the machines. When workers in the city of Lawrence received their paychecks with two hours less pay, the equivalent of three fewer loaves of bread per week, they spontaneously walked out.

For the first time in American history, thousands of workers banded together to fight for fair wages and working conditions. Women and children took to the streets to demand bread and roses — basic necessities and a decent way of life. The strike included more than 20,000 workers and lasted more than two months.

The strike was led by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) after the American Federation of Labor declined the opportunity, saying a diverse, generally unskilled female and immigrant workforce could not be organized. Strike funds were raised by surrounding textile towns allowing the IWW to provide support, food, medical care and other essential services for the duration of the strike, which occurred in the dead of a New England winter.

The strike committee, made up of two representatives from each ethnic group in the mills, took responsibility for all major decisions. Organizers provided translation in 25 different languages to strikers, who included both immigrant and U.S.-born workers with varying degrees of skill and privilege. More than half of the workers were between the ages of 14 and 18.

A new strategy, walking a picket line, was born, and hundreds were injured and jailed during the daily marches and pickets at the mills.

### SONGS BECAME A COMMON LANGUAGE

For those who couldn't read, singing was political education, a way of learning about the world and putting their

own struggles in a larger context. The words to familiar melodies were rewritten to reflect the theme “Solidarity Forever.” Workers opened and closed their meetings with songs and marched through the streets singing. On the picket line, singing became a common language, the means of uplifting their spirits and forging solidarity.

In order to help relieve their financial burden and to gain wider support, the strikers began sending their children to stay with sympathizers in other cities. The strike's turning point came on Feb. 24 when, at the behest of the textile manufacturers, police tried to prevent this mass exodus of children by clubbing a group of women and children at the Lawrence railroad station. The beating and detention of the striking women and children was extensively covered in the press. The violence prompted congressional investigations which began to shed light on the working conditions of the industry.

On March 12, 100 years ago, the owners gave in and agreed to the workers' demands. In what is considered a major victory in U.S. labor history, Lawrence workers gained an increase in wages of 5 to 11 percent, with the largest increments to the lowest-paid workers. They also received overtime pay and a no-reprisal agreement to protect those who struck.

By **Emma Rosenthal and Andy Griggs**

*United Teachers Los Angeles member Emma Rosenthal is an educator, activist, artist and writer. A retired social justice educator, Andy Griggs co-chairs the CTA Peace and Justice Caucus.*

### MORE INFO

Events, lesson plans, books, online resources, music and songs of the labor movement:

[zinnedproject.org](http://zinnedproject.org)

[exhibit.breadandrosescentennial.org](http://exhibit.breadandrosescentennial.org)



Supporters and children of the Lawrence strikers lead a solidarity parade in New York City.

## Contributions of GLBT and disabled persons added to social studies curriculum

IN AN EFFORT to build a more tolerant atmosphere in the classroom and curb an epidemic of student bullying, schools in California will now be required to include the historic contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons and people with disabilities in their social studies instructional materials.

The new law amends the California Education Code, which prohibits discriminatory instruction and materials against certain categories of people. Specifically, SB 48, the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive and Respectful Education Act by state Sen. Mark Leno (D-San Francisco), adds the roles and contributions of GLBT and disabled persons to the current list of under-represented ethnic and cultural groups already included in social science instruction. Co-sponsored by Equality California and the Gay-Straight Alliance Network, the bill was signed into law by Gov. Jerry Brown last July and went into effect in January.

“Given that the Education Code already requires that the role and contributions of African Americans, Mexican Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, European Americans, females, and other communities be included in the social studies curriculum, it seemed the role and contributions of LGBT and disabled were being censored,” Leno says.

During hearings on the bill last spring, Leno and others pointed to

research that indicates students who learn about the LGBT community find their school environments more accepting of LGBT youth.

“Children have a right to feel safe when they come to school. Currently, there is a heightened severity of bullying that is an epidemic,” Leno says. “We’re failing our kids.”

The bill also prohibits teachers from leading, or a school from sponsoring, any activity that promotes discriminatory bias on the basis of race or ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, or sexual orientation.

In addition, the bill requires the State Board of Education and local governing boards to adopt textbooks and instructional materials that accurately portray these groups.

The bill was the focus of heated opposition by the Campaign for Children and Families and so-called parents’ rights groups, who maintained the bill would promote sexual indoctrination and create a separate GLBT social class. Opponents of the law failed at an attempt to collect signatures to

qualify a referendum to overturn the bill last year, but are circulating petitions to place an initiative to repeal it on the November ballot.

C. Scott Miller, co-chair of CTA’s Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues Committee and a member of the Santa Ana Educators Association, called their concerns “ridiculous.”

“This has nothing to do with sex.



Mark Leno

*Children have a right to feel safe when they come to school.*

## Teaching resources

Textbooks that reflect new social studies content may be a few years off, so teachers will have to sort through a variety of resources that are currently available online. Below are websites of various organizations that offer resources for implementing the FAIR Education Act. Some of these websites also offer resources for teaching lessons in tolerance, bullying prevention, and creating a safe school.

### YO!

YO! (Youth Organizing! Disabled and Proud) connects, organizes and educates youth with disabilities. YO! gives youth leadership opportunities, social networks, resources, and more. Its website offers a number of resources that teachers can use to implement SB 48.  
[www.yodisabledproud.org/organize/disability-history.php](http://www.yodisabledproud.org/organize/disability-history.php)

### UNHEARD VOICES

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), and StoryCorps have collaborated to create Unheard Voices, an oral history and curriculum project that will help educators integrate GLBT history, people and issues into their instructional programs. At the core of the program are brief audio interviews with individuals who bore witness to or helped shape LGBT history in some way.

[www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/unheardvoices.html](http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/unheardvoices.html)

### LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE LESSONS AND ACTIVITIES

Gay-Straight Alliance Network, one of the sponsors of the FAIR Education Act, provides a list of resources including films, books, timelines and websites that offer lessons and activity ideas for teachers.

[www.gsanetwork.org/fair](http://www.gsanetwork.org/fair)

### THE STONEWALL NATIONAL MUSEUM

The Stonewall National Museum and Archives is a publicly accessible cultural and educational resource that preserves, interprets and shares the heritage of the GLBT community.

[www.stonewallnationalmuseum.org](http://www.stonewallnationalmuseum.org)

### TEACHING AND LEARNING WITH THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Learning Network, a *New York Times* educational blog, provides a collection of materials for implementing the FAIR Education Act including lesson plans, student opinion questions, and other teaching materials, along with multimedia and feature articles, including historical articles published since 1980.

[www.learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/11/22/teaching-and-learning-about-gay-history-and-issues](http://www.learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/11/22/teaching-and-learning-about-gay-history-and-issues)

### EQUALITY CALIFORNIA

The largest statewide LGBT rights advocacy organization in California, Equality California (EQCA) has moved California from a state with extremely limited legal protections for LGBT individuals to a state with some of the most comprehensive civil rights protections in the nation. Teachers can find information on current news events and issues on its website.

[www.eqca.org](http://www.eqca.org)

story continued on page 36 ▶



► continued from page 35

It was designed to reduce bullying by showing role models to students. We do know that role modeling works. When students see that a variety of groups have made contributions, it creates a more tolerant atmosphere for everyone in school,” Miller says.

The bill has forged a coalition between the GLBT and disabled communities, which are working together to protect the law and to develop resources for teaching.

“Learning the contributions made by activists of the disability rights movement is essential to a full understanding of our history, just as an understanding of the civil rights movement and the pioneers of women’s suffrage and the LGBT rights movement are an essential part of our history lessons,” says Teresa Favuzzi, executive director of the California Foundation for Independent Living Centers.

“The FAIR Education Act truly is a step in the right direction, and it’s important for us to make sure that this landmark victory that promotes understanding in our schools is upheld because it’s time for our history classes and textbooks to accurately reflect the rich and diverse history of California.”

Don Romesburg, a Sonoma State University professor of women’s and gender studies who was a consultant for the Gay-Straight Alliance on the bill, says it’s been inspirational to see how well the disability folk and the GLBT communities are working together. “Both groups are groups that are seen as unwelcome and unwanted. It’s fascinating to see how much they overlap. Ultimately, education is about teaching

young people to become citizens, and that’s what this work is about.”

As a result of budget cuts, however, the state process for the development and review of K-8 instructional materials is on hold, and adoption of new material may not come before

2015. When it does occur, the adoption of new textbooks that include contributions by GLBT people is likely to have a ripple effect around the country, since California’s huge textbook market drives the rest of the country. Miller predicts it will make for interesting discussion in states that haven’t yet adopted a law similar to SB 48. In this way, California once again breaks new ground.

Despite the absence of textbooks, the law remains in effect, and school districts will be expected to comply with its requirements (see resources sidebar on page 35). Decisions on materials, however, will be up to the individual school districts. The new law does not dictate when, where and how much time should be devoted to incorporating these new groups into lessons.

“Right now, we’re trying to figure out what it all means,” Miller says.

“Materials have to be historically accurate. You can’t just assume someone is GLBT, or a minority, or disabled. But this allows us the opportunity to present the positive contributions these groups have made.”



C. Scott Miller

*Right now, we’re trying to figure out what it all means. Materials have to be historically accurate.*

*You can’t just assume someone is GLBT, or a minority, or disabled.*

*But this allows us the opportunity to present the positive contributions these groups have made.*

By Dina Martin

#### MORE INFO

Build your awareness of GLBT and disability issues at CTA’s annual Equity and Human Rights Conference and GLBT Conference. Register at [www.cta.org/conferences](http://www.cta.org/conferences).



Susan Solomon, United Educators of San Francisco secretary, pickets outside an Oakland theater where Michelle Rhee is speaking.

## RHEE-DICULOUS REFORMS Michelle Rhee takes her unproven reform ideas on the road

**WHO IS MICHELLE RHEE?** She’s not a Hollywood celebrity or an elected politician. But she is a self-proclaimed public education reformer whose confrontational approach to education reform has landed her on the cover of *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines, as well as on “Oprah” and a number of other TV programs.

It’s not her approach to education reform that’s so disconcerting, it is the reforms themselves.

Now based in Sacramento, Rhee wants to carry on methods she touted during her 2007-10 stint as chancellor of the Washington, D.C., school system, where she fired hundreds of teachers, closed schools, and sparked a standardized test erasure scandal still under federal investigation. She supports unproven schemes like school vouchers (twice rejected by



CTA Photo by Mike Myslinski

ciation members in front of the Paramount Theater to spell out why Rhee’s agenda is wrong. Teachers carried protest signs with messages such as “Why is the 1% Banking on Rhee-Form?” and “Seniority Honors Experience.” Another sign urged the public to “Rhee-fute, Rhee-ject, Rhee-fuse” the true goals of Rhee, whose corporate backers want to weaken unions.

Other Oakland educators taped their mouths shut to dramatize Rhee’s opinions that unions have little or no role in negotiating school policy decisions.

“Oakland teachers are no strangers to what happens when corporate reformers pretend to ‘stand for children’ — their real agenda is about undermining union protections and creating a false separation between teachers and our students,” says Betty Olson-Jones, president of the Oakland Education Association. “We know that teachers’ working conditions are our students’ learning conditions, and we wanted to give Michelle Rhee the clear message that her brand of ‘reform’ is not welcome in Oakland!”

The Bay Area members are not alone in their protest. Sacramento City Teachers Association President Scott Smith joined other teachers wearing blue tape across their mouths in a silent protest at a Jan. 25 Rhee speech in Sacramento, where she was joined by her husband, Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson. California Federation of Teachers members leafleted when she spoke in Marin Feb. 6. Craig Childress, president of the San Mateo Union High School District Teachers Association, joined his executive board member Suzanne Flecker and others to leaflet and educate people entering a San Mateo venue to hear Rhee speak on Feb. 8.

“I think she is spreading misinformation and that her messages are dangerous for public education,” Childress says. “Her attacks on seniority-based layoffs are about depriving students of experienced teachers. Experience breeds success, and excellence

in the classroom and seniority are based on experience.”

Rhee attacked seniority-based layoffs again in her Feb. 15 speech at a school in Los Angeles. Her next scheduled appearance is a March 22 town hall meeting in San Jose, according to a Rhee watchdog website that tracks her events and controversial career, [www.rheefirst.com](http://www.rheefirst.com).

Classroom teachers know what works best for their students, says Vogel. “The best school reforms come from conversation, not confrontation, among all of us dedicated to keeping our public schools improving in these tough economic times.”

By Mike Myslinski

California voters since 1993), ending seniority-based teacher layoffs, using unreliable testing data to grade teachers, and weakening collective bargaining rights.

“She seems to be all about privatizing public schools and scapegoating teachers, which is a very divisive agenda,” says CTA President Dean E. Vogel. “California educators know that proven reforms like smaller class sizes, more collaboration among all stakeholders, and adequate funding are what really work for our students and our communities.”

A Teach for America alumna who has advised conservative governors launching anti-union education reforms, Rhee has vowed to raise \$1 billion over five years to carry out her schemes through her Sacramento-based political lobbying operation, StudentsFirst.

Recently, as Rhee has been traveling around the state on a speaking tour sharing her reform ideas, she’s been greeted by public educators. More than 200 Bay Area teachers, parents and students showed up to protest outside an Oakland theater before Rhee’s Feb. 7 event.

Teachers from San Francisco, Berkeley, San Jose, Union City, Richmond and San Lorenzo joined Oakland Education Asso-

*Rhee has vowed to raise \$1 billion over five years to carry out her education schemes.*

## Michelle Rhee in her own words

**COLLABORATION:** “I think if there is one thing I have learned over the last 15 months, it’s that cooperation, collaboration and consensus-building are way overrated.” (September 2008 Aspen Institute’s education summit, quoted by *Washington Post*)

**BARGAINING RIGHTS:** “Unions can collectively bargain over basic things like salary, but they don’t have a place in getting involved in policies, and so I think that the move to limit what they bargain over is incredibly important.” (Fox News Channel, March 2011)

**UNION’S ROLE:** “People tell me the unions are an inevitable part of this [school reform]. My thing is, what has that gotten us so far? All the collaboration and holding hands and singing ‘Kumbaya?’” (2008 roundtable talk at Fordham Institute, *Washington Post*)

**TEACHER JOB RIGHTS:** “Teacher tenure is in place to protect ineffective teachers, not students. It essentially gives teachers a job for life.” (From Rhee’s StudentsFirst website)

**TEACHER CREATIVITY:** “People say, ‘Well, you know, test scores don’t take into account creativity and the love of learning.’ ... I’m like, ‘You know what? I don’t give a crap.’ Don’t get me wrong. Creativity is good and whatever. But if children don’t know how to read, I don’t care how creative you are. You’re not doing your job.” (*Time* magazine story, Nov. 26, 2008, with infamous picture of Rhee on the cover holding a broom in a classroom)



## Parent trigger misfires again

**ATTEMPTS TO INVOKE** California's controversial "parent trigger" law for the second time have again resulted in chaos, this time in the small High Desert community of Adelanto. The law, which allows parents at

an underperforming school to impose one of five reform options if they can get a majority to sign a petition, has again divided a school amid allegations of petition organizer misrepresentation and harassment.

like local parent control over hiring and firing staff. While parents were circulating that petition of demands, the same parents and Parent Revolution also circulated a parent trigger petition that would turn the school into an independent charter run by an as-yet-unnamed entity.

On Jan. 12, those parents submitted charter takeover petitions that they said represented 70 percent of the school. Almost immediately, parents who disagreed with the petition or who had not been asked to sign began to organize and, working with the Adelanto District Teachers Association, began to have conversations and meetings with parents who had signed. Although state regulations passed last summer were an attempt to avoid another debacle like Parent Revolution's Compton attempt, some of the same problems soon surfaced: Some parents had been misled, others had been harassed, many didn't realize they were asking to replace the staff or convert to

At the center of the controversy at Desert Trails Elementary School is Parent Revolution, the well-funded Los Angeles-based education reform group that was deeply involved in last year's failed trigger attempt at McKinley Elementary School in Compton. Parent Revolution was invited by an ousted former Desert Trails principal to Adelanto, where it helped a small group of parents with concerns about the struggling school form a "parent union" to leverage a list of demands for things



Parents felt misled by Parent Revolution's tactics.

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a charter, and the fact that a second petition of demands was also circulated only further confused and complicated things. Parents of nearly 100 students asked to rescind their signatures.

On Feb. 21, the Adelanto School District Board of Trustees rejected the trigger attempt, citing the large number of rescissions and an even greater number of bad signatures on the submitted petitions. Parent Revolution countered a week later with a news conference in which it alleged fraud in the rescission effort and implied that CTA was somehow behind it. These allegations are completely false. As the petition effort began to unravel, Parent Revolution continued making false charges that CTA was running a rescission campaign, even making up stories about “cadres of CTA operatives” being flown into Adelanto from Sacramento.

*Parents of nearly 100 students asked to rescind their signatures.*

Petition backers have additional time to correct problems on their petitions, and it will be up to the school board to determine if they have met the legal threshold and how to proceed from there. But regardless of the outcome, this second attempt to pull the parent trigger spotlights

what a divisive law it is and how, instead of helping parents implement reform at a struggling school, it pits them against each other in a sometimes bitter battle that is more like a political campaign than a step forward for the school. In both places it’s been tried, the parent trigger law has had awful consequences for the involved communities. Let’s hope lawmakers learn from their mistake.

By Frank Wells

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## Helping girls make better choices

Castro Valley counselor Connie Iglesias launches Latina support group

CASTRO VALLEY High School senior Bianca Arias plans on becoming a nurse, and she has applied to several universities to achieve her goal. She gives much of the credit for her academic success to the “strong support system” she receives from belonging to *Mujeres*, a group that meets regularly with school counselor Connie Iglesias.

“Instead of thinking short-term, I’m thinking long-term,” says Arias, who is the club’s president.

Iglesias founded the club because she saw some female students getting into fights, not succeeding at school, and even dropping out. She worried that they were making choices that might lead to a “rougher life” in adulthood — affecting their future relationships, career choices and overall well-being.

The Castro Valley Teachers Association member wanted to put these girls, mostly Latina, on a better path, and asked some of them to join a group called *Mujeres*, which is Spanish for “women.” Programs reaching out to minority youth, she observes, often focus on boys rather than girls, who may fall through the cracks.

“Traditionally, these kinds of girls don’t talk to adults and might be failing in class,” she says. “I can be that caring adult who wants them to succeed. I know what it’s like.

I am a Latina, and some of my family members did not graduate from high school. I call their parents. I do a lot of hand-holding.”

*This club makes me more serious about my grades, staying motivated and serving as a good example for freshman students.*

**Stacey Aguilar**



Connie Iglesias (left) with Bianca Arias.

Founded three years ago, *Mujeres* meets weekly for lunch to discuss life, coping skills, and how to be successful in school. During meetings, Iglesias shares advice for taking the PSAT and SAT tests, keeping up with schoolwork, and applying to colleges. There are also meetings to discuss issues such as self-esteem, family, friendships, peer pressure, romantic relationships and gangs.

“I try to connect them with school culture,” says Iglesias, who came up with the idea for *Mujeres* while earning her counseling degree in graduate school. “Sometimes the Latino population has trouble feeling that connection when they are in a big school setting, which is why they have the highest dropout rate. I tell my girls that they need to change the stereotype people have of Latinos by working hard, not fighting, and doing well in school.”

While the group is geared toward helping Latinas, it is also open to any female students who wish to join. The goal is to help

members close the achievement gap, feel more confident, and make good choices for the future.

Stacey Aguilar, 16, says the club opens both “eyes” and “doors” for its members. Her older sister didn’t even know what a UC campus was until Iglesias explained to her that “college” could be different from a community college. Today her sister is a freshman at UC Santa Cruz.

“I also want to get into a good school so I can have a good job,” says Aguilar, the club’s vice president. “This club makes me more serious about my grades, staying motivated and serving as a good example for freshman students.”

Iglesias is proud to see the progress and personal growth of her students.

“I love these kids so much, and it’s great to see them take up a leadership role within *Mujeres*,” says Iglesias. “If they have a plan — whether it’s college or vocational school — they will learn how to take care of themselves, reach their goals, and eventually become role models for others.”

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin  
Photo by Scott Buschman



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