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Advocating for what works in teaching PAGE 44



PRINT

In an era of e-readers, many students prefer books PAGE 36

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YOUR OPINIONS AND LETTERS ARE WELCOME! There is a 250-word limit, and all letters will be edited. If you send photos or other materials, identifications and permissions are required. Letters must include your name along with your address, daytime telephone number or email address. Email *editor@cta.org*.

Vista scholarship fund

The teachers of Vista deserve recognition for a 27-year endeavor to provide scholarships to deserving students. Two-time VTA President Len Defabio believed if hundreds of us donated a small amount monthly through voluntary payroll deductions, we could reward and encourage many Vista students beyond teaching them in our classrooms. Thus, the Vista Teachers Association Scholarship Fund (VTASF) was formed as a California Public Benefit Corporation in 1988.

From its modest beginning, when six seniors shared \$4,125, the VTASF has grown immensely. Last year, \$38,000 was divided among 94 recipients. In its 27 years, the VTASF has provided nearly \$634,000 to approximately 1,500 students!

Perhaps a voluntary scholarship fund isn't exactly unique. However, VTASF is exceptional in several ways:

- The majority is given to graduating seniors.
- Dependents are allowed to apply for three years after high school graduation.
- A \$250 scholarship is set aside yearly for a graduating senior from each of the district's three continuation high schools.
- \$1,000 is provided yearly to the high school for students with disabilities who need financial help for wheelchair repair, field trips, etc.

Each year, several recipients are the first in their family to graduate from high school and attend college.

Vista teachers, like educators everywhere, can be proud of their efforts to help their students. I'd like to think that we in Vista have gone way beyond.

Paul Farrar, VTASF Chair Vista Teachers Association (retired)

Blogging: Take it to the limit

Blogs are a terrific way to document your experiences as a teacher, create a forum for discussion of education-related issues, and help other teachers in any number of ways. Truly, as your headline notes, "The globe's the limit." (December/January).

I began blogging in the 2007-08 school year, focusing on my experiences as an AVID teacher striving to guide more students to college. I published *High Hopes* on the Edublogs site, which is still thriving. Later, I published a blog about my interests in politics and literature called *Politerati*. When my teaching assignment changed a couple years ago, I began a personal blog about literary fiction by women authors called *Read Her Like an Open Book*

(*readherlikeanopenbook.com*), using Wordpress.

RHLAOB has gained a following in the thousands, allowing me to interact with people around the country and the world, as we share our love of reading and writing. It has enriched my life beyond my expectations.

I encourage teachers to consider starting their own blog. Using Wordpress, Blogger, or Edublogs, the learning curve is very manageable and blogging takes only as much time as you want to invest in it. You might find it more gratifying than you expect.

Bill Wolfe, Taft Union High School Teachers Association

Blogging is best when shared

As twin teachers, my sister Jody and I have been blogging for two years and found it has reinvigorated our careers.

Yes, blogging offers a wide community wellspring of ideas and support, but the time commitment can be discouraging. We found that by sharing the blog, the work was halved and the fun was doubled. Brainstorming topics first energized, then improved our posts.

Frankly, sometimes it's hard to know if you are doing a good job. Our blog gave us so much positive feedback from other teachers. We love sharing what we've learned and are learning from others. We realized our tips, lessons and special interest in California history actually had value.

It wasn't such a big step then to wonder if we could translate that into some extra summer cash. We shaped our unique lessons, tools and content into digital downloads for sale on education websites. Our love of California history dovetailed with fourth-grade social studies curriculum, and we found our niche. We won't lie — the extra money is great and surprisingly validating.

Blogging is a fantastic way to indulge your professional interests, feel part of a community, and share problems and solutions. Try it.

LeAnn Leyden, San Diego Education Association, www.thankateacherblog. blogspot.com

Correction In the introduction to David Goldberg's campaign statement in the February Educator (page 60), his local chapter was incorrectly identified. Goldberg is a member of United Teachers Los Angeles.

What is the role of teachers as leaders in ongoing school improvement efforts?

MEANINGFUL "REFORM" will have to be led and developed by educators, and that is a central component of CTA's long-term strategic plan. In some ways I wish the word "reform" had never entered the educational lexicon, because it implies that our public school system is broken. Some parts of an otherwise outstanding public education system do need change, but not for the reasons some people toss that word around. You don't hear a lot of talk about "reform" when it means lowering class sizes, providing adequate resources, or giving educators the tools we need to do our jobs.

Just days before I wrote this column, Assembly Republicans introduced a slew of bills in an effort to codify the same bad ideas expressed in last year's *Vergara* decision attacking due process. These proposals would eliminate the weight of experience and seniority during school district layoffs, increase the probationary period from two to three years, and change the evaluation system to a mandatory annual evaluation that puts educators into four categories: highly effective, effective, minimally effective and ineffective. Parent and student feedback would also be incorporated. Oh, and of course standardized test scores would play a larger role.

I won't go through all the arguments against these ideas here (we've rehashed them to death), other than to say that the evidence in the *Vergara* case — much of it coming from effective principals and superintendents showed that these types of changes would actually harm the students they purport to be trying to help. That's one of the many reasons we expect to prevail as the case is appealed.

These recent legislative proposals and other bad ideas are based on a simplistic view of what it takes for teachers to teach and for students to learn. High test scores translate to good school and good teachers. Lower test scores? Bad school, bad teachers. Due process for teachers? Bad for kids. Layoffs due to budget cuts? An opportunity to bypass a fair dismissal



process. These "reformers" rarely, if ever, tackle any of the real challenges that hold students back — poverty, family and social dysfunction, and language barriers.

Every day thousands of California educators help kids overcome those obstacles. Imagine how much more we

could do if lawmakers addressed those larger issues and saw teachers as part of the solution, not the problem.

To be blunt, some of these proposals we're seeing aren't just misguided, they're part of an overt hostility to public education that furthers a privatization agenda. People need to recognize them for what they are,



Inspiring our students about reading and the good company of good books is a big part of what teaching is all about."

"The stories of women's lives and choices encourage young women to think larger and bolder, and give young men a fuller understanding of the female experience."

and realize the best improvements happen when educators get the tools and support we need to do our jobs. Look at the school improvements made under the CTA-backed Quality Education Investment Act. The improved learning was fantastic. The funding for that is ending soon, and as we move beyond QEIA, we're transforming the profession. The Instructional Leadership Corps, for example, is helping our own members develop materials and strategies to implement the new Common Core standards, and our own members are developing and delivering outstanding professional development.

Teachers' primary role, then, as we take back our profession, is to tell our truths about what works and what doesn't in whatever forum it's being discussed. And we've got to take charge and drive the agenda. Educator-driven school improvement works because teachers know what we do is an art as much as it is a science, and it is a lot more than a test score. The best teachers understand their students' strengths and weaknesses, and adapt their practices to both. Real education improvement capitalizes on the fantastic pool of talent California has in classrooms today, and the diverse approaches we offer our students.

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Dean E. Vogel CTA PRESIDENT

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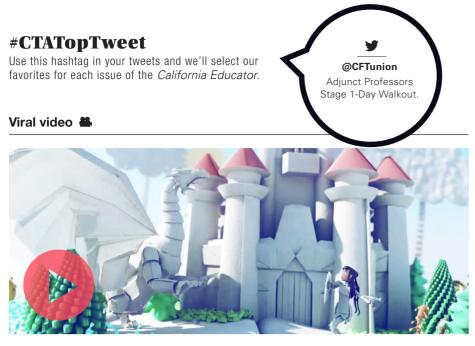
MISSION STATEMENT

The California Teachers Association exists to protect and promote the well-being of its members; to improve the conditions of teaching and learning; to advance the cause of free, universal, and quality public education; to ensure that the human dignity and civil rights of all children and youth are protected; and to secure a more just, equitable, and democratic society.









Share the magic of storytelling: This short, animated video by First Book and Disney/ABC promotes a program to distribute 1 million books to children in need. *www.firstbook.org/beinspired*

Most popular post



"Unions have been the only powerful and effective voice working people have ever had in the history of this country." – Bruce Springsteen

FEB 16 📫 347 likes 🖂 110 shares

More top tweets 9

@CohenD

CA teachers draw on union support to improve teaching and community engagement.

@chiang140

Are digital devices the new "marshmallow test" for future success?

@BagtheJunk

Moving recess to before lunch is a good way to get kids to eat more fruits and veggies at school.

@DenseKelly

"No profit left behind." Must-read exposé on how Pearson profits off our schools, by Stephanie Simon *aft.to/pearson*

Favorite comments **P**

Steve Dixon | FEB 25

BRAVO!!!! [Responding to California College Adjunct Professors Walkout Day.]

Roberta Jacobs | FEB 24

NCLB has destroyed the classroom and taken the craft away from professionals. It has created unnecessary paperwork, robotic thinkers, taken time away from basic skills and creativity, and created new tests that prove what?

Michelle Manning Labuski | FEB 24

Since the tests started in 1999, I have never felt that the tests drove my instruction or curriculum. I never felt pressured by the tests. My classroom is still filled with fun and engaging activities that I create and design. Nothing has suffered in my classroom because of the tests.

Debby Arroyo | FEB 25

NCLB left behind every child who did not come from an upper middle-class home. It completely destroyed everything good about teaching/learning.

Suzi Tornberg | FEB 26

Increased demands and pressure to be successful are increasing stress on our students. They are being asked to do more and more in an educational world where politicians are benefiting from efforts. This is compounded by the fact that tools, assessments, curriculum and instruction do not match each other.

CTA Online

What's new at cta.org

1 www.cta.org/women March is Women's History

Month This year we're celebrating the theme "Weaving the Story of Women's Lives"! See our resources page for more.

2 www.cta.org/swettawards

Newsies: Check out CTA's John Swett Awards The prestigious John Swett Awards program, named for CTA's founder, honors the coverage of public education by newspaper, broadcast and online journalists.

3 *www.cta.org/neadirectors* Meet the NEA Directors from

California Eighteen CTA members, including three alternates, serve on NEA's Board of Directors. These educators represent California for the nation's policymaking body.

4

www.cta.org/legal Educators Employment Liability Insurance is yours

Every CTA member receives coverage for legal defense costs in lawsuits arising out of his or her educational employment activities.

5 www.cta.org/emeid

CTA's goal: Leaders and staff representative of general

population CTA has a long-standing commitment to increasing ethnic minority leaders and staff. Check out CTA's Ethnic Minority Early Identification and Development program.

The legacy of advocacy

How long do you keep your kids' artwork around? My daughter is 27, and I still have a lot of hers in my house, especially those pieces that she entered into contests when she was in school.

Now, I'll not compare her pictures to those submitted for CTA's César E. Chávez Memorial Education Awards Program, because they're all great. I may think my daughter's work is just

more precious. The students' works demonstrate an understanding of the vision and guiding principles by which Chávez lived his life.

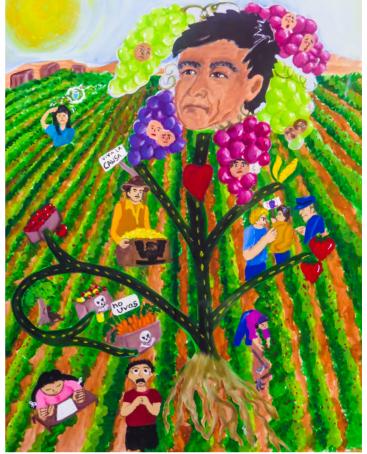
César Chávez Day, March 31, is a state holiday that commemorates the life of Chávez, who dedicated his energy to helping improve the plight of the American farmworkers. *Educator* writer Sherry Posnick-Goodwin wrote a profile on Gordon Williamson (page 24), who marched with Chávez and taught three of his six children in an after-school program called "Huelga School." Part of her research naturally centered on the United Farm Workers, whose activism improved the working conditions for many farmworkers.

Between 1994 and 2002, UFW won 21 union elections and signed 25 new or first-time contracts with growers, according to the UFW website (*www.ufw.org*). They achieved the first agreement in 27 years with Gallo Winery, covering 450 vineyard workers in Sonoma County. Other victories included contracts with the largest winery in Washington state, the biggest mushroom producer in Florida, and the nation's largest rose producer in California. In 2001, UFW signed a contract protecting Ventura County field laborers at Coastal Berry Company, the largest U.S. employer of strawberry workers.

Farmworkers under most UFW contracts enjoy decent pay, family medical care, job security, paid holidays and vacations, pensions, and a host of other benefits.

Tragically, the majority of farmworkers in California and the rest of the nation still have none of these protections.

UFW made legislative progress at the state and national levels, too. In 2001, the California Legislature passed laws to end some of the worst abuses farmworkers suffer from growers and farm labor contractors.



And UFW continues pushing legislation that would allow undocumented farmworkers and family members to earn legal status. By 2014 Chávez Award winner Eduardo Abedoy, student of **Ramon Juarez**, Whittier Secondary Education Association.

CTA members supported these efforts by advocating for students; pushing for the California DREAM Act, which was enacted in 2011 and allows undocumented students to apply for Cal Grants and state university scholarships; and sharing information on DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), an executive order President Obama issued in 2012 providing deportation relief to undocumented immigrants who enter the country before age 16.

I can't help but think Chávez would be proud.

Our actions, even small ones, can become legacies. And legacies, like Chávez's legacy and CTA's contest in his honor, positively impact our students. That legacy of advocacy, like our kids' artwork and essays, is priceless.

Cynthia Menzel EDITOR IN CHIEF editor@cta.org

Redding Teachers were hospitalized after mold was discovered in their classrooms.

> **Salinas** Teachers are raising the alarm about the health impacts for kids because of pesticide use near schools, including lower birth rate and IQ.

yourschoo makin you sick?

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin, Mike Myslinski and Frank Wells Malibu Two school sites containing PCBs caused fear among staff and parents setting the stage for a media circus when a celebrity parent pulled her children out of school.

Lake Elsinore

A cluster of cancer cases and other illnesses prompted an investigation to determine the cause.

Huntington Beach Three schools were closed after classrooms tested positive for asbestos, which is carcinogenic if inhaled.

CHOOLS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE a safe place for students and staff, and most of the time they are. But on some California campuses, toxic substances may be responsible for health problems.

In a two-part series, we meet educators to discuss how their toxic school environment made them sick, as well as what you can do if you suspect a toxin at your school poses a threat to the health and well-being of students and staff.

9



E TEACHES IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA and doesn't want his name used, because doing so could jeopardize the settlement he received from his district. The CTA member, who breathed "contaminated air" in his poorly ventilated classroom, never had asthma as a child, but now takes

asthma medication daily. Sometimes he has asthmatic flare-ups and has to take time off from teaching. He isn't alone. Other CTA members have litigated over dangerous

air quality. In fact, three we talked to said they can't discuss what happened to them, due to settlements reached with their districts.

It's not known how many teachers are impacted by contaminants in their schools. Many schools are old and in poor condition with environmental conditions that pose increased risks to the health of staff and students, notes the EPA's publication "Sensible Steps to Healthier School Environments."

According to a CNN report, an estimated 14 million American children attend public schools that have unhealthy environmental conditions, including poor air quality. The report did not list the number of school employees who may

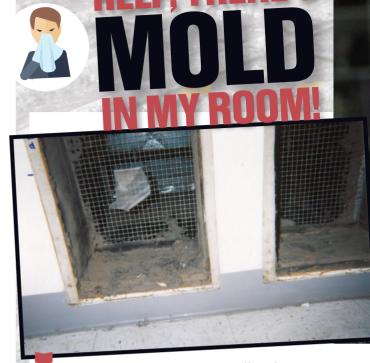
be impacted. Exposure to toxins impacts aca-

demic achievement. According to the EPA, "Reducing exposure to environmental hazards in school can help children's health. Healthier school environments enable children to learn and produce more in the Toxins come from a variety of sources.

classroom, which can improve their performance and achievements later in life."

Toxins come from a variety of sources. They may be spread from industrial plants in the area, or from pesticides sprayed on agricultural fields nearby. Materials thought to be safe in construction decades ago are now linked to illnesses. Then there's mold from water leakage, which causes asthma and other serious illnesses.

"Toxins in schools is definitely a big problem," says Paula Dinerstein, senior counsel for Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER), an organization in Washington, D.C., that represents government employees nationwide regarding environmental issues. "From what I can see, California has pretty good requirements



IT WAS AN EXTREMELY HOT DAY IN REDDING, so Karen Lawrence turned the air conditioner on in her classroom at Juniper

Elementary School. It

Karen Lawrence

was one of three teachers who became ill and one of two who ended up in the hospital.

wasn't functioning properly, and a look at the grids showed that the air conditioner was filled with black, furry stuff, the third-grade teacher recalls.

The next day, the right side of her face was swollen. She went to a doctor, who found a staph infection growing inside her sinuses.

The district sent someone to investigate, who found the air conditioner in her classroom tested positive for toxic mold she had breathed in. Over the weekend, her district called in a hazardous materials company to replace ductwork and air conditioners throughout the district.

Due to the staph infection, she needed surgery to have a growth in her sinuses removed. A month later she had to have a tooth extracted near the infected part of her jawbone — and part of her jawbone was also removed. For 50 days she was on an intravenous "PICC line," which injected antibiotics into the main artery of her heart.

"I missed two and a half months of work," she recalls of that time in 2001. "But I was lucky. Fifty percent of people with a staph infection of the blood don't survive."



She was one of three teachers who became ill and one of two who ended up in the hospital. Some students also became ill, and one ended up in the emergency room. Her fellow Redding Teachers Association members were very supportive, donating some of their sick days.

Mold commonly grows in building materials, furnishings or rugs that are damp for more than 48 hours. You may suspect mold is present if you see visible

 (\mathbf{a})

Go Online

For more information, see:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: "Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings" www.epa.gov/iaq/molds

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: "Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools" www.epa.gov/iaq/schools

New York City Department of Health: "Guidelines on Assessment and Remediation of Fungi in Indoor Environments" www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/ environmental/moldrpt1.shtml

growth or smell moldy odors. Exposure can affect the health of children and adults, and the severity of the reaction depends on the amount and type of mold, how close the person is to moldy areas, length of exposure, and a person's susceptibility. Toxic mold can cause problems that include headaches, asthma, skin problems, neurological conditions and autoimmune issues. It is so dangerous that in 2003, a mold-infested school in Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District was demolished.

At present, there are no medical tests to determine whether someone has been exposed to a mold toxin or whether mold

exposure has activated a mold allergy that may be present in an individual.

If you suspect mold in your school, immediately contact your administration and your chapter president, ask for the problem to be investigated, and ask to be removed from the suspected mold area until testing or removal takes place.

for an environmental assessment if a new school is going to be built or there's a major renovation planned. But you have a lot of old schools with all kinds of conditions, and you have no particular requirement to test them unless someone raises a problem."

Dinerstein notes that federal law requires that schools test for asbestos (see story, page 13) but not for other pollutants, unless a district is building a new school, constructing a new building or doing a major renovation.

PCBs in Malibu

Dinerstein advocated on behalf of some Malibu teachers and parents who expressed concerns about schools with PCBs, a class of compounds used in construction until they were banned in the '70s after they were found to cause cancer and damage immune and reproductive systems.

In 2013, three Malibu High School employees were diagnosed with thyroid cancer, raising concern it could be related to the school environment. PCBs have been linked to various types of cancer, including thyroid cancer. The district made national headlines when supermodel Cindy Crawford pulled her two children out of Malibu schools.

The district sought advice from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, the EPA, and the state's Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). The district also hired the environmental firm Environ, which developed a testing and cleaning plan for soil, groundwater and buildings at Malibu High and Juan Cabrillo Elementary School.

Deep cleaning was done last summer to limit exposure to dust until window caulking is removed, which is slated for June. Most of the ballasts have already been removed, with the remainder to be removed in summer.

Despite assurances from the district and Environ that "buildings are safe for students and staff," PEER says that is not the case,



based on independent testing of samples taken from classrooms showing that PCBs are still at a higher level than considered safe.

It has been a difficult issue to evaluate, says Sarah Braff, president of the Santa Monica-Malibu Classroom Teachers Association.

"Nothing is more important than the health and safety of our students, teachers and staff throughout California. But members cannot be expected to evaluate scientific data, whether it is from public agencies or samples taken from other sources. We need state leadership to help us with the evaluation of such reports."

Braff recommends that all local associations check with their school districts to make sure they are taking the following actions regarding PCBs:

- Review maintenance records to see if PCB-containing fluorescent light ballasts were replaced.
- Find out when your school was built and if your district is aware of the problem.
- Contact Steve Armann, PCB program coordinator for EPA Region 9 (armann.steve@epa.gov or 415-972-3352), if you suspect PCBs are present on your campus.
- If you don't get a response from your state or district, keep calling until you do.

Dinerstein believes that a lack of communication in the beginning stages of discovery may have contributed to anger in the Malibu community.

"The district sent out a cheery note saying they were going to be doing soil remediation in preparation for a building renovation. Most thought the district was doing something to prepare for building. It turns out the district removed more than 1,000 tons of contaminated soil in 2009, which wasn't known until years later."

Dinerstein says that there is no general law that requires a district to inform parents or teachers of environmental problems on campus, and would like to see standards put into place for notification procedures.

"It's not only a problem in Malibu." says Braff. "There are environmental concerns about PCBs at all schools built between 1950 and 1980 across the country. We cannot fix the problem in high-profile schools without a plan for all affected schools regardless of their status or income. This is also an issue of equity."

Who conducts an investigation?

While there is a lack of guidelines in communicating concerns about toxics on school sites, there is also confusion sometimes about which agency does what. For new school sites or renovation, DTSC assists with a comprehensive

"Nothing is more important than the health and safety of our students, teachers and staff," says **Sarah Braff**, pointing out toxic caulking in a classroom window.

ASBESTOS CASE STUDY: HUNTINGTON BEACH By Frank Wells

IMAGINE RETURNING FROM SUMMER BREAK and starting the first day of school surrounded by school renovation workers wearing hazmat gear. That's exactly what happened to students and teachers at Mesa View Middle School in Hun-

tington Beach in September as a districtwide asbestos scare began to unfold. Although Mesa View was ultimately determined to be safe, asbestos-related issues at other Ocean View School District sites triggered a local firestorm that closed three schools and had parents and educators blasting district officials as the scope of the problem grew.

The problem began in July as the district began a \$40 million modernization project at 11 sites. Although officials said they were assured that work would be completed by the start of school, the work dragged on, and the dangerous process of asbestos removal was still going on as students and staff came back from vacation.

On the first day of school, the main building of Hope View Elementary filled with what appeared to be smoke. When asked if the fire alarm should be pulled, the principal said that it wasn't smoke, but construction dust. At another site, College View Elementary, the principal advised staff in writing to "bring your dusters" for the start of school. One site administrator relocated her office while leaving clerical staff exposed.

The Ocean View Teachers Association was alerted to these problems and immediately began putting pressure on the district to ensure student and staff safety. Reports came in of staff and students suffering from migraines, bloody noses and coughs.

Community pressure grew as parents demanded action and answers. OVTA submitted a list of demands that included holding accountable a key administrator who had overseen the project. Finally, over a month later, the school board voted to close three schools. (Initially, they voted to close all 11 under renovation, but after

a closed session, they re-emerged and voted to limit the closure.) Oak View Elementary and Hope View Elementary students were relocated to schools in neighboring districts, while Lake View Elementary students remained in Huntington Beach. Approximately 1,600 students were affected.

Asbestos is an insulating and fireproofing material that was widely used in home and building construction for decades. When "friable," meaning easily crumbled, it poses a major health risk as a cause of lung cancer, including an especially virulent Legal recourse for those exposed is limited.

kind called mesothelioma. The Ocean View schools had been built with asbestos fireproofing on metal beams over ceilings. Over time dust settled on ceiling tiles — not necessarily a problem until the tiles were disturbed, sending potentially hazardous particles into the air. Testing found unacceptable asbestos levels at the three evacuated schools.

In late January, most Oak View students returned to their school, while the other two schools remained closed. Earlier that month, the controversial administrator at the center of the renovation fiasco was placed on leave.

Legal recourse for those who were exposed is limited. Generally, one can't sue over exposure unless they can show they have acquired an asbestos-related illness, and the latency period between exposure and illness can be 10 to 40 years.

"We hope no one suffers any long-term health consequences over something that should never have happened," says OVTA President Mike Vlachos. "Unfortunately, if something shows up years down the road, the people actually responsible may no longer be with the district, but it's the district that will still be held accountable." environmental review and the cleanup process for contaminants that may include arsenic, lead, DDT, PCBs and methane. The DTSC schools program generally doesn't include evaluations inside classrooms (mold, asbestos, lead-based paint, etc.), and interior issues are covered by OSHA, Cal/OSHA or public health agencies. DTSC is currently overseeing more than 80 school projects, and since 2000 has worked on more than 2,300 school projects, of which 10 percent required cleanup before the school could be occupied.

Investigating toxics at Lake Elsinore

At Elsinore High School, members of the Lake Elsinore Teachers Association (LETA) are working closely with district administrators to hold an investigation that will determine why 21 certificated employees — as well as some students — have developed cancer, autoimmune issues, fibromyalgia, and thyroid and other problems.

The Lake Elsinore Unified School District first had its insurance carrier look into the situation, but at the urging of LETA, the district hired Health Science Associates, a private environmental firm that will investigate school sites, buildings and soil to see if contaminants are present. At this point, the state is not involved.

"When something like this pops up, you have to figure out what's going on," says LETA President Bill Cavanaugh. "Everyone at the school has the right to know. An investigation will clear up one way or another whether we're in a bad situation that needs to be fixed — or there's no problem and it's just unfortunate circumstances. Let's take a good hard look at what's happening and see if there's any connection. Either way, people deserve to have a little peace of mind so we can either take action or put the rumors to rest."



Lake Elsinore TA President **Bill Cavanaugh** and Assistant Superintendent Gregory Bowers are working together to discover why 21 certificated employees, as well as some students, have developed cancer, autoimmune issues, fibromyalgia, and thyroid and other problems.

Next month



Fields of Fear: Teachers, studies respond to heavy pesticide use near schools

Next month, part 2 of our "Toxic Schools" report will center on dangers posed by pesticide use near public schools and how some Monterey County teachers, like Alisal Teachers Association President **Estela Mercado** and her colleague **Josh Ezekiel**, are raising community awareness. Of 15 California counties studied for pesticide use near schools, Monterey County is in the top 5 percent of schools with a large amount of pesticides used nearby and has the highest percentage of schools and students impacted.

"Agricultural Pesticide Use Near Public Schools in California," a report by the California Department of Public Health, also found that Hispanic children were 91 percent more likely than white children to attend schools where the most pesticides of concern were used. The report calls for more transparency and data collecting about pesticide near school properties. Other studies warn of health impacts for kids born to mothers who work in the fields and attend nearby schools — including lower birth weight and IQ, and poorer cognitive functioning. Read what colleagues are doing and find resources for advocacy in the April *Educator*.

What should you do if you suspect there's a problem?

"Members should document their concerns and ask their association to assist with resolution if they think there is a systemic problem," says Brenda Sutton-Willis, a CTA staff attorney. "Many chapter contracts have a health and safety component."

CTA's role is one of advocacy and coordination, she says, adding, "The association can assist in taking the issue to the district, since it affects the learning and teaching environment of all students and staff, not just the individual bringing the complaint forward."

The Williams Act has requirements for safe schools that could pertain to contaminants. And there are provisions in the Labor Code that govern a safe working environment.

For example, Labor Code Section 6400 states: "Every employer shall furnish employment and a place of employment that is safe and healthful for the employees therein." Section 6403, among other things, requires employers to do everything "reasonably necessary to protect the life, safety, and health of employees."

The CTA member with lingering respiratory problems who spoke anonymously also has some advice for members working at sites that may be toxic.

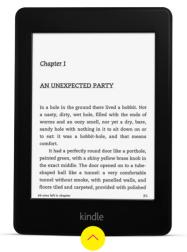
"School employees need to pay attention," he says. "Educators should take problems seriously. Don't be intimidated by your administrators into saying nothing. Insist on inspections and treatment for unhealthy buildings. Your future could depend on it."



Grants, awards, contests, resources and tips to share



TRISHA SCHOENFELD, SHOWN HERE WITH STUDENTS IN HER HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL RUNNING CLUB, SAYS SHE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT SHE WAS DOING WHEN SHE GOT THE PROGRAM ON ITS FEET. LEARN FROM HER EXPERIENCE AND FIND RESOURCES ON PAGE 17.



AMAZON KINDLE PAPERWHITE

The Kindle Paperwhite is Amazon's most popular e-reader, and it's not hard to see why. The 6-inch Paperwhite weighs a mere 7.3 ounces and can hold over 1,000 books. A single charge lasts up to eight weeks, and free cloud storage is available for all Amazon content. The Paperwhite features a 212-pixel-per-inch screen and built-in Wi-Fi.

KOBO AURA H2O

The Kobo Aura H2O is a premium waterproof and rustproof e-reader that allows you to take it worry-free to the beach or to the bath. Having an IP67 certification means it's completely waterproof and can be left under one meter of water for up to 30 minutes. The Aura H2O features a 6.8-inch 265-pixel-per-inch screen and weighs 8.2 ounces.



BARNES & NOBLE NOOK GLOWLIGHT

The NOOK GlowLight features Barnes & Noble's highest-resolution 212-pixel-per-inch E Ink display, and is also the lightest in our group of e-readers, weighing 6.2 ounces. The NOOK features an easyto-adjust GlowLight screen for a perfect reading experience in dim light or total darkness. With 4 gigabytes of storage, the NOOK GlowLight can carry more than 2,000 books.

> With Major Palgrave the terms were slightly different, Safari, Kikuyu, Elephants, Swahili,

But the pattern was essentially the same. An elderly man who needed a listener so that he could, in memory, relive days in which he had been happy. Days when his back had been straight, his eyesight keen, his hearing acute. Some of these talkers had been handscome coldierly old hows some same has

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PRICES FOR E-READERS are at an all-time low, making it a great time to buy one. The newest e-readers feature E Ink screens that are easy on the eyes, and draw minimal power. A single charge will last you weeks before you'll need to tether to an outlet. E Ink also reads very much like paper, with no annoying glare even in bright sunlight, unlike a reflective tablet or smartphone screen.

With more choices than ever before, we've chosen three to get you started on your way from paperback to e-reader. *By Terry* Ng

Resources



How Hoover Elementary 'Run 4 Fun' Club was born

By Patricia Borer Schoenfeld

I DIDN'T REALLY KNOW what I was doing when I started my students running at Hoover Elementary. I decided I could learn along the way.

In March 2012 I heard about a running program at another elementary and decided to try one with my students. PE coach David Contreras and I established a mile perimeter on our field.

Participating students were given an index card. As they passed each lap, they were given a checkmark, a different color for each day. The checkmarks were counted; the tallies were recorded on a spreadsheet. This process was very labor-intensive.

By the end of 2012, roughly 250 students had logged 1,500 miles and were recognized at our end-of-year assembly. Our top runner ran 75 miles.

The next year, I knew that manually tracking laps was not going to work. I found StrideTrack, which allows us to track data for any given student, class and school, thus allowing me to print reports for teachers so students stay informed of their progress. Students can also track their progress via the Internet.

Each student is given a card printed with a bar code, and the card is read by a handheld scanner every time they complete a lap.

We used a display case and PA announcements to encourage runners. Students earned small plastic charms for every five miles accumulated.

So in 2013-14:

- Roughly 50 percent of our students, the highest number in many years, passed the physical fitness test. Our coach said maybe four students passed it when he first got to Hoover eight years ago.
- Some kindergarten teachers also got on board last year. For recognitions and awards, kindergartners earned two miles for every mile run. This gave them the chance to run and earn awards like the older students. We even had two kindergartners reach 100 miles because of laps before school with a parent or sibling.
- We also had students from the Indio High School track and field team run laps with our students.

We ran 6,500 miles, which surpassed our mileage from the previous year by 400 percent, and it blew past anything I could have expected. Approximately 300 students took part.

This year, we are at 6,030 miles as of Friday, Jan. 9. What makes this year different?

- 100 percent support from an amazing staff.
- First- and second-graders eagerly volunteer to hold the scanners. I tell them to run a lap first, so they race around the field to make sure they get to an available scanner before the other students.
- Teachers borrow scanners and log the times they walk with their students, which count for PE minutes.
- Families are getting involved and logging laps with their kids.

Recently, on a quiet Friday afternoon, a second-grader showed up with his mom. She said, "He told me I had to come out and walk with him." He grabbed his card, and off they went. It was an amazing feeling, as I watched this young man, normally full of energy, quietly walk the track with his mom, holding hands. I wished there were more parents on the track enjoying a quiet moment with their children.

Ultimately, it is not about the mileage. We want students to have a love for walking, running and being healthy. I hope it becomes a natural part of their lifestyle as they get older. I want to help them understand the tie between academics and being healthy.

Trisha Schoenfeld, Desert Sands Teachers Association, teaches fifth grade at Hoover Elementary in Indio. This is an abridged version of Trisha's step-bystep process. Go to cta.org/runningclub for the full story!

Know&Tell Tips to share





The more children read, the better they read

And the more they read outside of school, the better they do in school

WE TALKED WITH members of CTA's Read Across America Committee to get tips on teaching reading. Our panelists are: Committee Chair Janet Robertson, first-grade teacher, Fairfield-Suisun Unified Teachers Association; Reagan Duncan, first-grade teacher, Vista Teachers Association; Alberto Nodal, kindergarten teacher, San Lorenzo Education Association; and Bill Sammons, high school teacher, president of Black Oak Mine Teachers Association.

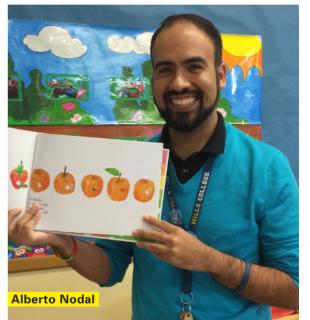


Bill: I like to offer a students a combination of assigned reading materials, as well as materials they are free to choose. I think it is important for students to have a fair amount of choice in what they read, because that fosters interest and develops a love of reading

Janet: Read to young children every day. Allow the children to touch the books, experience the books, and talk with their peers about the books. Students should have opportunities to read by themselves or with peers, and with and to the teacher, on a daily basis. Alberto: Make reading fun. It takes practice and discipline, but bringing in books that your







students enjoy will reel them in. Because most of my students are barely starting to read, illustrations as well as length are important in keeping their attention. As a Spanish bilingual teacher, I teach reading in a slightly different way. Spanish is very syllabic, so through the use of our phonics program, Estrellita, I lay the foundation that helps my students see themselves as readers. We begin with initial sounds, and now we are putting syllables together to make words and sentences. Once they uncover the key to decoding, their fluency will increase, which will allow me to focus on comprehension during guided reading groups.

Reagan: Start with phonemic awareness, basic blending and segmenting. Teach those high-frequency words and give your younger kids plenty of time to practice them. Let them pick the books that they would like to read, even if they choose a book that isn't at their level — let them picture-walk. Remember, you want them to want to read!

How do you use California Reads book recommendations?

Alberto: I introduce new books to my students. As teachers, we often get so immersed in our classroom and routines that we use the same books year after year. Seeing a new book that I can tie into a particular theme always makes me excited because of how I can relate it to math, art, or other curricular areas.

Reagan: I always pick up a copy of the pre-K or lower elementary book. This year I lucked out because the selection is *One*, by Kathryn Otoshi. I love this book, such a great take on standing up to a bully. It just takes one!

Bill: I read the recommended books aloud to my classes. This year, I am teaching independent study. I will allow my students to read *I Am Malala*, by Malala Yousafzai, as an introduction to a research project that will culminate with a written report.

Janet: I read many of the books to my students so that they can be exposed to quality fiction and nonfiction. I also have shared the book recommendations with our local public library.

How about online resources?

Reagan: I still love [the PBS TV series] "Reading Rainbow," and yes, there's an app for that at **ReadingRainbow.com**.

Alberto: My students love **Starfall.com**. Many of my bilingual kindergartners speak English at home with their siblings, so even though they are learning to read and write in Spanish in my class, they love reading books and playing the games in English as well.

Janet: I especially like *arbookfind.com*. One can search for Accelerated Reader books based on authors, topics, and titles of books.

Bill: Amazon.com.

Go Online

www.cta.org/californiareads

CTA's California Reads program offers teacher-approved quarterly book recommendations for multiple age groups, including adults. Find a list of this year's recommended books at **www.cta.org/recommendedreading**.

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Perspectives (2)

Members' opinions and practical advice, plus guest columns and reviews

omething of a hero GORDON WILLIAMSON RISKED HIS LIFE FOR CÉSAR CHÁVEZ.

Should students be allowed to attend school without immunizations? YES NO

Scott Cobun: Yes. We should educate people on why it makes sense to vaccinate, not become a society that forces people to do things. If we focus on educating with facts, we don't have to resort to heavy-handed government. My kids are vaccinated, but I will not support the forcible vaccination of others. This would also have a disparate impact on minority communities.

Randy Daniel: Yes. You have an immune system, use it! As the late George Carlin said, it needs practice to get better and to be more effective.

Janis Brown: Yes. The government should not be mandating forced use of drugs. There are too many vaccines. Chicken pox is not needed, and Gardasil can have devastating side effects. Actually they all can. Reasonably speaking, terrible side effects are unlikely, but still, the government should not be able to mandate that risk if parents do not want to take it. The fact that there is a law to pay those injured by vaccines should speak for itself.

Joy Caspers: I wish the MMR [measles, mumps and rubella] vaccine could be administered as separate vaccines. My first son got that separately. The second got them all together in one shot. I was never comfortable with that. I asked for the old vaccines, but the doctor said he couldn't administer them because of insurance. I said I would pay cash. He said no. I think the options should be available to parents.

We asked this question on **CTA's Facebook** page, and the response was overwhelming. These are just a few of the 230 people who responded, most of whom answered no. If you have an opinion, you're welcome to share it on CTA's Facebook page or send your comments to editor@cta.org.

Kari Weber: No. I get fined if I don't vaccinate my dog, but can allow my unvaccinated child to infect dozens?! How is that fair?

Leslie A. Mesic: Scientists and doctors did not spend decades (centuries even) trying to develop immunizations for diseases and conditions that killed hundreds of thousands of children (or left them disabled for life) for no reason.

Kevin Kirschman: Medical reasons, yes, otherwise, no. In fact, liability should be a factor for those who refuse immunizations and whose choice causes economic or personal loss to others.

Nancy DaSilva Hagmann: Not public school. You might have the right to a free public education, but you don't have the right to put others at risk!

John Sullivan: Teachers are exposed to enough sickness. Adding a preventable disease is an unnecessary risk and jeopardizes not just the teacher but the other students' education.

Bridget Landgraf Martinez: Absolutely not. I have a student who has had a transplant so was only given one MMR shot — it is everyone else's duty to keep him safe by vaccinating their kids! Herd immunity!

Amanda Kosmala Wade: My students and I should not be put in danger. A measles outbreak is occurring in a nearby district. Why should my students and I be put at risk?

CTA's policy on communicable diseases CTA believes communicable diseases present serious health risks for students and school personnel. Appropriate health education programs are essential to prevent the spread of communicable diseases in the learning environment. CTA supports immunization and testing for communicable diseases as recommended by the health department. Districts should include Hepatitis B vaccines for all school employees, who on a daily basis, come in contact with bodily fluids.

Students diagnosed as having communicable diseases should be educated in appropriate settings, as defined by local agencies, which would protect the dignity and civil rights of the students, their peers, and school employees.

Guest column Perspectives @

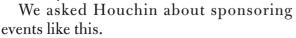


Promoting Wellness

THE SANTA BARBARA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION (SBTA) is so committed to promoting health and well-being for students and teachers alike, they added a "wellness" section to their website (*mysbta.org/teacher-wellness*). The website notes that healthy students learn better, while healthy educators are more sat-

isfied with their jobs and are able to perform at a higher level.

SBTA also sponsored a screening of the documentary film *Fed Up*, which reveals the root causes of childhood obesity and the power of the big sugar and soda industries. The two-night January event was an "unqualified" success, according to SBTA President **John Houchin**, pictured above with Laurie David, who produced the Academy Award-winning documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*.



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fedupmovie.com mysbta.org

When is the best time for an event like this?

Sponsoring a special event for teachers can be tricky to schedule. We chose a Tuesday, thinking educators would be more likely to show up early in the work week. We chose the second day of the semester, which actually created a challenge because many of our school sites had grading deadlines to meet for their first semester grades. Too, we were competing with the opening night of the Santa Barbara International Film Festival and a Patti Smith concert. The bottom line is that there's probably no such thing as a perfect day for an event during the school year.

Any suggestions for local chapters?

- Advertising and media coverage are essential. Sending multiple fliers and email reminders helped with attendance.
- Delegate! In our case, we discussed over event over a three month period at Rep Council, and once the date was set and everything secured, we relied on our site representatives to distribute fliers and tickets. They did a fantastic job! Also, depending on the size of your local, gather a committee and allow others to engage and share responsibilities.
- Securing film licensing is necessary.
- Appeal to foundations and organizations for sponsorship and support. Our event was co-sponsored by SBTA, CTA, the Orfalea Foundation, and the Dreier Family Rent Subsidy Trust, which helped defray some costs of the theater.
- A good guest speaker can really increase attendance. In our case, we had the film's executive producer, Laurie David, who is a great advocate for healthy foods in schools.
- Hold a raffle. Four of our site reps volunteered to obtain gift certificates from local restaurants. We had seven certificates total, and our guest speaker did the drawing at the end of the presentation. It was lots of fun!

How did your members benefit from this event?

Holding free events for educators is a great way to build community in your local chapter, and to bring members together for a common purpose. In this case, members learned about how powerful the sugar lobby and soda industry are, and how our culture has allowed children and students to become victims of advertising. They also learned about the varying quality of school lunch programs and what they can do about it.

When the union can bring teachers together for an event that goes beyond contract issues, new meaning is added to membership. Educators in every community appreciate and benefit from participating in enriching and productive activities like this. There will be a ripple effect, and hopefully, our teachers and students will live healthier lives as a result.

Perspectives Profile

REMEMBERING CÉSAR CHÁVEZ

HESPERIA TEACHER PUT LIFE ON THE LINE IN UFW STRUGGLE

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin

GRON WILLIAMSON'S KINDERGARTNERS will enjoy a day off from school on César Chávez Day, March 31. But first they will learn how Chávez, a Latino like themselves, became a national hero and a symbol of courage for leading a revolution to organize farmworkers.

They may not know it, but their teacher is also something of a hero.

Most have no idea that kindly, soft-spoken Williamson put his life on the line during the United Farm Workers (UFW) struggle decades ago, fighting for the rights of migrant workers to unionize.

Growers threatened to run him over with their trucks while he stood on the picket line. He served as a bodyguard for Chávez when there were threats against his life. He taught the children of UFW activists in an after-school program, including three of Chávez's six children.

WILLIAMSON'S TIPS FOR INCORPORATING SOCIAL JUSTICE INTO THE CLASSROOM

- Discuss heroes who stood up for the oppressed. Go beyond the "I have a dream" speech by Martin Luther King Jr. and explain that César Chávez was a Chicano leader. Discuss the social problems these leaders were actually dealing with, such as having to drink from separate water fountains in the South or being forced to labor in the fields under terrible conditions.
- Recognize social justice issues that are happening in today's world and connect them to past events and struggles. Discuss what actions can be taken to improve the lives of others.
- Involve students in community service projects, such as recycling bottles, and using the proceeds to help others.
- Demonstrate compassion and fairness. Ask students to explain how another child might feel when there's a dispute, rather than focusing on who was right and who was wrong.
- Focus on building relationships and respect with students, so they know they are being listened to, cared for and understood. Get to know their families and culture. Model and reward kind acts and words.

A revolutionary in the classroom?

Yes, it's true, he admits, although the graying ponytail is a bit of a giveaway. And then there's the gleam in his eye as he takes out a stack of photos and articles chronicling the grassroots movement that bettered conditions for farmworkers — and ignited a surge in cultural pride and political activism among Latinos nationwide.

"More than anything else, it was really a fight about dignity," says Williamson. "When you hear people living



in desperate poverty saying 'For the first time in my life I have dignity,' that makes the movement compelling and important."

These days, CTA benefits from his activism. He is vice president of the Hesperia Teachers Association and chair of the CTA High Desert Service Center Council, fighting for adequate funding and good working conditions for teachers and students.

Williamson is proud of CTA's history supporting UFW. Many CTA members marched alongside

César Chávez in the mid-1960s. The association, an advocate for the education of migrant children since the Depression Era, was a major influence in the establishment of California's Migrant Education Program in 1967, and CTA-sponsored events boycotted grapes at the request of UFW. CTA also established the CTA César E. Chávez Memorial Education Awards Program, which recognizes students and teachers who demonstrate an understanding of the vision and guiding principles of Chávez in artwork and essays.

THE BEGINNINGS OF A AN ACTIVIST

admits that in the beginning, it was all about a girl.

"I was strongly attracted to a wild-eyed radical woman who was traveling to Mississippi."

That was in 1964, when the Yonkers, N.Y., native was attending Union Theological Seminary in that state.

"I was attracted to the leftist fellow student who was organizing the trip, without any idea what I was getting into. I went to Mississippi for a week to work on the Freedom Election (registering blacks to vote in a mock election to prove that blacks wanted voting rights) and got arrested twice."

The relationship didn't last, but the idealism did. He saw the fact that not everyone enjoyed the life of privilege and opportunity that he experienced growing up.

During the summer of 1965, he was a chaplain in clinical training at Central Islip State Hospital, which at that time housed more than 5,000 mentally ill patients.

striking grape pickers, where a contractor tried to run him over with a truck. "The violence was completely foreign to me. I didn't know I was getting into."

Williamson

was on the picket

line in Coachella with

"Both the clinical training and patients gave me more of an awareness of the human condition."

For the next four years, he was part of the Student Interracial Ministry formed by Union Theological Seminary students. He worked with street kids in Washington Heights, N.Y., assisting a Puerto Rican Lutheran minister who was opening a storefront church. Then he became an associate minister of a black United

Church of Christ in Queens.

"The minister there was a Southern Christian Leadership Conference member. In addition to working with the church groups and other pastoral duties, he encouraged me to get involved in community activities and the tutoring project Queens College students were running. I made an effort to relate to and work with these children whose lives were so different from mine."

THE CHILDREN MAY NOT KNOW IT, BUT THEIR TEACHER IS SOMETHING OF A HERO.

Political activist Chris Hartmire recruited him to join the California Migrant Ministry, which became the National Farm Worker Ministry, working in support of UFW.

"His reaction to what I'd had been doing was: 'That's what we need for strike families in California.' So off I went."

ON THE FRONT LINES With his wife Felicia and infant daughter in tow, Williamson headed to the Golden State, which was not so golden for those laboring in the fields. Pay, housing and conditions for migrant workers were miserable. Adults and children worked in fields contaminated by pesticides that endangered their health.

He spent a week on the picket line in Coachella with striking grape pickers, where a contractor tried to run him over with a truck. It was a terrifying experience.



"The violence I was seeing was completely foreign to me. I knew very little about what I was getting into."

Williamson became involved in the "No on 22" campaign, fighting a grower-backed measure that attempted to make it illegal for farmworkers to unionize. Williamson was among those who helped defeat the measure by proving

> that voter fraud was being committed by "Yes on 22" proponents, who pretended to offer farmworkers "secret ballot elections."

> "I helped interview people who were defrauded and trace the defrauding to the people who did it," says Williamson. The ballot measure was defeated.

> Under the leadership of Chávez and Dolores Huerte, momentum grew as millions of Americans boycotted lettuce and grapes to put economic pressure on growers to sign contracts

with UFW. Chávez had quit his job as a community organizer in San Jose in 1962 and moved to rural Delano to try to bring unionism to California's lettuce and grape fields after others had tried for decades.

There were numerous death threats against Chávez, and little assurance of police protection.

"I was among those who did guard duty outside César Chávez's home in the middle of the night in Delano," says Williamson.

When asked to describe the man he risked his life for, Williamson takes a moment.

"It's hard to put into words," he says finally. "César's commitment to social justice and the farmworkers was something he felt was a personal mission from God. He

had an expansive vision of this mission. He also had a sense of humor, because you couldn't survive in the UFW without a sense of humor. He was charismatic and knew how to organize people using nonviolence."

That was put to the test in 1972, when two strikers were shot on the picket line in Kern County following the murder of another striker who was hit by a car in Florida.

"César's response was that no matter what happens, UFW would not be responsible for

"Our program had a huge impact on children," says **Williamson**, here with Vincent Flores. "Many claim that it was transformative and attribute everything good in their lives to what they learned at Huelga School." more violence," says Williamson. "His response, instead, was to go on a fast."

Throughout his life, Chávez would fast many times in the name of nonviolence, once consuming only water for 36 days. Chávez also made a 343-mile march from Delano to Sacramento in 1966 to garner support.

A SCHOOL FOR "STRIKE" CHILDREN

In 1969, Williamson and his wife used funds from the Migrant Ministry to create the "Huelga School" in Delano, which started in an old UFW office. Huelga is Spanish for strike. The school was touted in UFW publications as being "a permanent part of the farmworkers' movement for social justice" and offered after-school tutoring to children who were involved in the grape strike. At that time, it was legal for growers to use child labor in the fields.

UFW members felt their own school was necessary since migrant children experienced so much discrimination in public schools during that era. Williamson recalls that one teacher in a Delano school complained loudly in front of students, "I can't teach anything to dumb Mexicans," and another school would not let a Latino student take a class because it would make him eligible for a scholarship.

César Chávez attended a 1991 State Council meeting and thanked delegates, especially those from UTLA, for their efforts on his behalf. He is shown here with former CTA Secretary-Treasurer Ron McPeck. Members marched with Chávez and the UFW in the 1960s. CTA was a major influence in establishing California's Migrant Education Program in 1967. State Council sanctioned the boycott of table grapes in 1988 and boycotts of Vons and Safeway in 1991. Today, CTA's César E. Chávez Memorial Education Awards recognize students who demonstrate an understanding of the vision and guiding principles by which Chávez lived his life.

went to work on the boycott in Philadelphia from 1973 to 1978. After that, until 1984, he worked in Casa Para Aprender (House for Learning), a child care program at UFW headquarters in Keene, where youngsters included Chávez's grandchildren. By then, Williamson had two more children.

Years of boycotts and picket lines takes a toll on family life. Williamson and his wife divorced. He has since remarried.

Williamson always loved working with children, so he decided to teach in public school. He was hired in the Hesperia Unified School District on an emergency permit and enrolled in a master's program in early child education at CSU Bakersfield, where he also took courses toward his credential. He has taught students at Maple Elementary School since 1984, most of whom are Hispanic.

Today, as a CTA activist, he is proud to be part of an association that promotes

Huelga School students voted to picket Safeway and made signs as a project. Their messages were very forceful. In Spanish and English they wrote "We want César out of jail" and "Don't shop at stores that sell scab lettuce" and "We are fighting Safeway and we will not give up."

The school offered project-based, self-paced learning with an emphasis on political activism.

"Our program had a huge impact on children involved in the movement. Many claim that it was transformative and attribute everything good in their lives to what they learned at Huelga School."

WILLIAMSON SEGUES INTO PUBLIC SCHOOL

In response to what UFW perceived as the Teamsters "raiding" the grape contracts, Williamson and others critical-thinking skills over high-stakes testing and values the whole child.

"I'm also very excited about CTA's strategic plan," he says. "I'm proud that CTA is moving forward. I am an enthusiastic supporter of teachers taking back our profession, because teachers understand what is best for students. I am also pleased that increasing teacher diversity is part of the strategic plan, because diversity in our profession is essential. And of course, so is an emphasis on promoting social justice."

Williamson says proudly that he holds high expectations of students. He visits their homes and has gotten to know their families and become part of the community. Many parents in his school know of his sacrifice to help migrant workers and have expressed their appreciation.

"I was lucky to play a role in the historical events of UFW. It was very inspiring to be continually working with people who care more about others than themselves — and were committed to making positive change in the world. I'm proud to be a part of that."

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News from the legal, legislative, bargaining and education policy fronts

Remembering John Mockler

THE WORK OF CALIFORNIA'S "EDUCATION GURU" WILL IMPACT GENERATIONS OF STUDENTS. READ ABOUT THIS HONORABLE MAN AND HIS CONTINUING LEGACY ON PAGE 32.

Advocacy 🎔 Legislative

CTA Board Member Terri Jackson and Sen. Bob Wieckowski (D-Fremont) discuss funding and recruitment issues.



CTA leaders urge lawmakers to fully fund schools, get 'teacher pipeline' flowing

by Len Feldman

CTA LEADERS ARE SPENDING time in the state Capitol urging lawmakers to help boost California from its dismal 46th place nationally in per-student spending and to support efforts to rebuild the teacher workforce.

Speaking with Republican and Democratic state senators and Assembly members in February, CTA Board members stressed that while Proposition 30 funds have been helping schools recover from nearly a decade of horrific cuts, schools and students still have vital unmet needs, and still lag behind most of the country in per-pupil funding.

According to the most recent annual report on school funding by *Education Week*, California has been spending \$3,427 per student less than the national average and \$10,574 per student less than the top-ranked state, Vermont.

The CTA educators spoke from their hearts about their classroom

experiences, educating lawmakers about the challenges students and teachers are facing every day in schools in their legislative districts.

A key challenge facing schools is to replenish the

Advocacy 🎔



CTA Board Member **Kendall Vaught** and Assembly Member Tom Daly (D-Anaheim) discuss securing desperately needed funding and maintaining a highly qualified educational workforce.



Other key issues

During their conversations with lawmakers, CTA representatives also talked about:

- Tax fairness. CTA believes that all Californians should pay a fair share of the costs of running the state and maintaining high-quality public education. Unfortunately, loopholes often allow wealthy, corporate special interests to pay less than they should. CTA will continue to advocate for tax fairness and for closing tax loopholes that benefit corporate interests.
- Charter school transparency. CTA supports legislation to increase transparency and accountability for California charter schools. All public schools, including charter schools, should be held accountable for their use of taxpayer dollars and their effectiveness.
- **Common Core.** CTA is working to ensure that schools receive sufficient funding to continue to implement the new state standards. Implementation should include funding for professional development to help teachers and instructional staff ensure the effectiveness of the new programs.

Assembly Member Shirley Weber (D-San Diego) discusses educational funding and local school governance issues with CTA Board Member **Jim Groth**, one of her constituents.

Did you know? With CTA's help, a growing number of elected officials have teaching backgrounds. In 2014, CTA helped elect Assembly Member Patrick O'Donnell (D-Long Beach), who taught in Long Beach and served on CTA's State Council. He chairs the Assembly Education Committee.

Other lawmakers taught at the elementary, high school or community college level before their election to the Legislature. Among them is Assembly Member Jose Medina (D-Riverside), who was a member of the Riverside City Teachers Association and served on State Council.

"teacher pipeline." Budget cuts and layoffs have led to a 50 percent decline in enrollments in teacher education

programs, CTA Board members told lawmakers. Schools are already critically short of teachers in special education, mathematics and science.

During their meetings with lawmakers, CTA representatives shared copies of CTA's "Teacher Preparation and Early Career Support" report (*cta.org/teacherprepreport*) as a guide to the best approach to ensure that new teachers

have the supports they need to enter the classroom prepared and ready to reach, teach and inspire.

Many of the challenges facing public education stem from years of underfunding. Voter-approved Proposition 30 stopped further cuts and is restoring some funding. Educators, parents and students are concerned about what will happen when the temporary taxes put into place by Proposition 30 expire. This year alone, Proposition 30 brought more than \$10 billion in funding for public schools and colleges.

EDUCATION COMMUNITY CELEBRATES THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF PUBLIC EDUCATION GURU JOHN MOCKLER



Former California Secretary of Education John Mockler dies at 73

WHILE KNOWN FOR his wry sense of humor and for being a staunch defender of California public schools, John Mockler was best known as the chief architect of the state's minimum school funding law, Proposition 98. He passed away March 3 after a long battle with cancer.

Mockler served as California's secretary of education and executive director of the State Board of Education. He also worked many years as legislative staff in the state Legislature, serving as deputy chief of staff to Assembly Speaker Willie Brown. He was a recognized expert in education finance issues in California and founded John Mockler and Associates, an educational consulting firm based in Sacramento. In "retirement," Mockler shared data and his outlook on public schools in reports such as "California's K-12 Public Schools: Great Results with Diminishing Resources," which showed schools are anything but failing.

He has been a trusted adviser of CTA for more than 20 years. "John was a true education guru. No one knew more or cared more about public education policy and how that impacted kids than John," says CTA President Dean E. Vogel. "He believed in the value of public education and had the rare gift of transforming good policy into what would work in classrooms and actually helped ensure every student had a true opportunity to succeed. He will be missed by all who knew him, but his legacy will live on with the graduation of every high school senior and the enrollment of every kindergartner."

"His brilliance, tireless energy and wicked sense of humor never allowed bureaucracy or politics to get in the way of what's right for kids," says CTA Executive Director Joe Nuñez. "He solved more state budget crises on the back of a napkin than any governor and did it faster than any computer could be programmed. It was a privilege to have known and worked with John. It's often said that anyone can be replaced. John was the exception to that rule."

John was a tireless advocate for public education and spent the last several years speaking about the success of public schools and educators. Always the first to look at facts not rhetoric, Mockler in 2012 documented how California's public schools have been on a steady path of academic growth for 10 years with all groups of students increasing their achievement and traditionally lower-achieving students doing so at a faster pace. And as he showed, California was doing this with far less money and support than other states.

When asked in a 2012 *Educator* interview about those who attack public education, Mockler put it this way: "I attribute this to the consistent drivel of the CSSI or the California Schools Suck Industry, which has profited by declaring that public education students are not making sufficient academic gains and that public schools suck. You have people from business roundtables and chambers and big foundations criticizing public schools who are in favor of privatization. They are wealthy and successful people whose anger about schools borders on hysteria, even though most of these people have kids in private school. They say certain things are 'facts' when there is no evidence to support what they have to say."

Mockler was born in Chicago but raised in San Diego. He graduated from El Cajon High School and received a degree in economics from UC Santa Barbara before beginning his career in politics. His first organizing job was the executive director of Youth Against Proposition 14, a 1964 ballot measure that would have repealed California's fair housing law.

Mockler was an avid golfer and world traveler. He is survived by his life partner, Carol Farris, two children and five grandchildren. He will be missed by many.

Anaheim school board rejects 'parent trigger' petition

By Frank Wells

t a packed meeting Feb. 19, the Anaheim City School District Board of Education rejected an attempt to use California's "parent trigger" law to shut down Palm Lane Elementary School and reopen it under yet-to-be-determined charter management. The board said that after signature verification, petitioners fell short of 50 percent of parents; petitions failed to include all information required by law; and the school wasn't even eligible to be targeted, because the state last year suspended standardized tests needed to ascertain if the school made adequate yearly progress.

THE LAW ALLOWS A PETITION signed by a majority of parents at a qualifying underperforming school to impose one of five reform models on the school, which include replacing the principal, turning the school over to outside charter management, and closing the school altogether.

CTA Board member Kendall Vaught sounded the alarm for other area chapter presidents when parent trigger organizers first came to Anaheim. She urges chapters with trigger-qualifying schools to get active. "It's really important for schools to be constantly strengthening those parent relationships. By the time organizers show up with clipboards and petitions, it's going to be a much more difficult struggle."

While lawmakers may have seen the parent trigger as a grassroots tool for parents, it has proved to be anything but that, and is sometimes referred to as "AstroTurf" reform. The people who created the law, former Senator Gloria Romero and the Los Angeles-based group Parent Revolution, have spearheaded every parent trigger effort so far and have used paid organizers to get parents to sign petitions.

Palm Lane is the fifth California school to have petitions submitted under the law. The first trigger target, McKinley Elementary in Compton, was a CTA-sponsored Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA) school that had shown dramatic test score gains since entering the program. That trigger attempt was ultimately tossed out in court over faulty petitions and bad signatures.

Perhaps the most telling example is in the outcome of the nation's first successful attempt, at Desert Trails Elementary School in Adelanto. After a bitter battle that ended when a San Bernardino judge ruled that parents could not rescind their signatures after the petition was submitted, the school was turned over to a local charter operator.

The new school was sold to parents with promises of programs and improvements that it has so far been unable to deliver. During the school's first year, most of the staff either quit or were not renewed, and an investigative piece by the website Capital & Main revealed allegations of discrimination against special education students and efforts to artificially raise test scores. Since that exposé appeared, the school hired a public relations consultant tied to Parent Revolution.

Concerns CTA expressed since the law was introduced have been validated in each trigger attempt. When the Anaheim Elementary Education Association began holding a series of parent education meetings in response to the trigger, they heard from parents who had been misled by petition circulators, who didn't understand what they were signing, or who had not been asked to sign and only became aware of what had happened when they read about it in the newspaper.

Others asked why the law didn't require all parents be notified, and why there were no open forums to hear all sides of the issue. Some said they had been promised more technology and more programs at the new school, a difficult promise to make since no new school operator had yet been selected.

Trigger promoters tried to mischaracterize those meetings, the first where parents actually got accurate information about the law, as "union propaganda." The concerns and complaints about the law came from the parents themselves.

"The parents we heard from were deeply concerned that this trigger process was incredibly flawed and misleading," says AEEA President Kristen Fisher. "And most were extremely supportive of Palm Lane and its staff."

Despite repeated examples of the flaws of the parent trigger concept, laws similar to California's have now popped up in other states. And Anaheim's petition denial is probably not the end of the trigger effort for Palm Lane. Under the law, petitioners have 60 days to correct deficiencies in the petition and cross the 50 percent threshold. Issues related to the school's eligibility may wind up in court. In the meantime, AEEA has vowed to continue to help parents and the community get accurate information about the parent trigger and its ramifications.



It's time to get No Child Left Behind right!

THERE WAS A FLURRY OF activity around the reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), otherwise known as No Child Left Behind, including a "Twitter Storm." Thanks to CTA members' tenacious calls and messages to members of Congress, we were on our way to having a law that is acceptable and beneficial to all students, until House GOP leaders abruptly canceled a scheduled vote on the bill.

It was uncertain whether the bill would pass, given conservative concerns about the federal role in education, and the chaos surrounding funding the Department of Homeland Security took precedence. At press time, the wrangling was continuing.

We need the final reauthorization of ESEA to promote opportunity, equity and excellence for all students.

"It's time to return ESEA to a system of support where students and teachers can focus on learning over testing," says CTA President Dean E. Vogel. "What happens in the next few weeks may determine what kind of education we are able to deliver to our students for the next decade."



What does getting ESEA right mean?

A final bill must reflect NEA members' demand for more opportunity for all students, as well as provide more time and support for students to learn and teachers to teach. Specifically, we want:

- Key indicators to identify and close opportunity and resource gaps, to ensure all students have access to a well-rounded education.
- Less testing, so students have more time to learn.
- More flexibility for states and school districts to determine an assessment system that provides the most useful information to help students.
- A decoupling of high-stakes testing and accountability.
- A final bill that empowers educators with a greater voice in educational and instructional decisions.

ESEA — the cornerstone of the federal presence in K-12 education — is designed to support programs to level the playing field for the most vulnerable, including children of poverty, students with disabilities, and English learners. CTA and NEA are urging Congress to listen to the voices of educators when it comes to making sure No Child Left Behind lives up to its promise to close achievement and opportunity gaps for our students.

Vogel says, "We must engage in this fight, not only to change a failed policy, but to strengthen our association's capacity to act as one united, strong organization of dedicated professionals."

He encourages members to visit **www.getESEAright.com** to send an email to Congress or find more information.

Advocacy Update

See these stories and more at **cta.org/bargainingupdates**



Campus-based equity

More than 150 **California Faculty Association** leaders and activists, representing faculty at CSU campuses, gathered in Millbrae during CFA's 2015 Spring Kickoff Feb. 6 and 7 to learn more about campus-based equity programs and efforts to see that campus presidents correct years of neglect regarding faculty salaries. Campus-based equity programs are part of the new faculty contract ratified in November.

Work with Student CTA

The **Monterey Bay Teachers Association** led an educational forum on Common Core for **Student CTA** members that included a discussion of pros and cons of Common Core as well an explanation of the value of CTA membership in addressing different reform measures and their impact on classroom teaching.

How will CCSS funds be spent?

Sacramento City Teachers Association's agreement with Sacramento City Unified School District's Academic Office outlines how Common Core implementation funds will be spent for the remainder of this school year and in the 2015-16 school year. Specifically, it clarifies how monies will be spent if the district receives additional funds above and beyond those already negotiated. The district has \$1.77 million for the rest of this year and \$2.6 million for 2015-16.

Bargaining TOSA role in LCAP

The **Eureka Union Teachers Association** and the neighboring **Roseville Teachers Association** in Placer County are becoming more involved in their districts' Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) process. Plans call for bargaining the creation and ongoing use of teachers on special assignment (TOSAs) to assist in curriculum planning and instruction.

New member "Sherpa"

The **Unified Association of Conejo Teachers**' "Sherpa" program gives new members in Ventura a safe person to go to for answers, concerns and training. The "Sherpa" is an experienced member at each site who helps new members navigate the school and their first year of employment.

CAVA teachers want a union

In preparing for the March meeting of the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB), where PERB is expected to OK their bid to form a union, **California Virtual Academy teachers** networked with parents online. Teachers shared concerns with parents over the erosion of student contact time because of increasing administrative tasks. Parents have been supportive of teachers' attempts to have a voice over these and other academy-related issues.

CAVA is a statewide online charter school with over 750 teachers and 15,000 students. CAVA received \$93 million from the state in 2012-13, and \$55 million went to K12, a for-profit corporation based in Virginia.

Better learning conditions for students

Members of the **Hemet Teachers Association** (HTA) ratified an agreement Thursday, Jan. 29, after a 19-month contract dispute, which includes an 8 percent retroactive pay increase and an additional 2 percent raise in July. HTA also negotiated maximum student contacts for teachers in grades 6-12.

"We owe this settlement to our parents and students. At the school board microphone, on the streets, and out in the rain with us, the students and parents of Hemet made all the difference," says HTA President Bob Hudson.

Parents took over the public session of a Jan. 20 board meeting, and with their children at the microphone, they demanded a settlement that would translate into well-resourced classrooms to ensure all students have the public education they need and deserve.

Head Start teachers get pay and benefits back

After 10 long months, **El Dorado County Head Start teachers** are getting their hours, salaries and health benefits restored. During spring 2014, the El Dorado County Office of Education (EDCOE) pink-slipped all preschool teachers, saying it had to reapply for the federal Head Start grant. The \$4.1 million grant came through for five years, and teachers started to get called back to work. However, with letters of employment came cuts in hours and pay, some teacher salaries dropped nearly \$20,000, and health benefits were cut by 15 percent.

Unfair labor charges, letters to the editor, ongoing picking, phone calls, and community outreach put pressure on EDCOE to settle. Said one member: "EDCOE would never have restored one nickel to its preschool teachers if those very same teachers just sat back. They fought back and won. Never underestimate the power of preschool teachers in El Dorado County."

Lucia Mar teachers, parents rally to retain quality educators

So many **Lucia Mar Unified Teachers Association** members and supporters showed up for the board meeting in Arroyo Grande that school officials called the fire marshal. The hundreds of supporters who did not fit filed past for 15 minutes urging the superintendent and board of education to settle their contract now and avoid a strike.

LMUTA members have been working the school year without a settled contract. They want to make Lucia Mar better able to recruit and retain quality educators, instead of wasting money on outside consultants and public relations. Community support for the union's efforts has grown in recent weeks, with many area businesses posting supportive signs in their windows.



THE GREAT DIVIDE:

PRINT PRINT ?

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

36 california educator • www.cta.org



"Not all of my students learn the same way," says **Sherri Saucedo** of Karlie Rogers, Matthew Stoffel, and Vicki Nguyen.

hree seventh-graders at Frank Augustus Miller Middle School have the option of reading a social studies chapter on a computer screen or in a textbook. Two of the three sharing a table read an actual book, while the other reads a digital version.

The students' choices reflect what studies show: They may live in the digital age where most of what they read is online texting, Facebook or Instagram — but the majority prefer books when it comes to reading for comprehension and pleasure.

"A real textbook is just easier," explains Viki Nguyen. "You can look through it and find information."

"I like the feeling of having an actual book in my hand," says classmate Karlie Rogers. "It's easier for me to find things."

Matthew Stoffel says reading on a computer screen saves him the trouble of "flipping" through pages.

"Plus, it's up to date," he adds. "The district can't afford to buy us new books, but the online books have current information."

Their teacher says she is happy that students have a choice.

"Not all of my students learn the same way," says Sherri Saucedo, Riverside City Teachers Association, who chairs her school's seventh-grade social studies department. "Some students want a hard copy and the feel of paper in front of them. For others, words just float by in a textbook, and reading on an iPad or phone keeps them engaged. Sometimes they read on their phone, which is fine; it's glued to their hand anyway."

HAS CALIFORNIA REALLY GONE DIGITAL?

Amid much fanfare, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2009 visited Calabasas High School to introduce the nation's first Free Digital Textbook Initiative, designed to save the state millions by terminating textbooks, which he referred to as "dated," vowing that high school students would have access to digital science and math textbooks the following year.

Six years later, the transition has yet to happen. Patti Harris, a journalism teacher, was at the "launch" and quoted in the local newspaper about her excitement at going digital.

"We have not yet taken the leap to e-readers and/or tablets for the students," says Harris, Las Virgenes Education Association. "I have students who use digital book technology. However, almost 90 percent use the paper version, regardless if it is a book for fun or textbooks."

The district, says Harris, never made a true digital conversion. "My best guess is there was no money and it was wishful thinking on the part of the governor. I am somewhat disappointed, because I felt it was an easy way for students to access literature and textbooks. There is talk that tablets are going to begin rolling out next year."

The California Department of Education doesn't keep records on how many schools use e-textbooks. The reality is that most school districts



Print isn't dead, any more than digital is the devil. Most of us have room and time for both.

Alex Christie, San Francisco Chronicle

are struggling to find the money to build the infrastructure to support e-textbooks and provide students with the tools necessary to access digital materials, say teachers.

More students are using e-books in colleges, because in 2012 Gov. Brown approved that the state fund 50 open-source digital textbooks to be reproduced by the state's universities. The books became available recently and are considered an "experiment" designed to lower expenses for students, costing just \$20 apiece.

Some K-12 districts made progress, such as Riverside Unified School District, the first school system in the state to adopt and implement digital textbooks. Students have Chromebooks and other devices for e-reading in the classroom.

"Students at Miller Middle School are encouraged to bring their own devices from home, too," says Saucedo. "They like digital textbooks and are reading more."

Her students have a set of "hard" textbooks in class and at home, so they don't have to lug them around. They can access e-books at home, or anywhere else for that matter.

"I was at a softball practice and saw students accessing their e-textbooks on tablets. It's great when you have the option to do homework anywhere, which they do. Times are definitely changing."

SCHOOL LIBRARIES GOING DIGITAL

Students have a choice of checking out e-books or print books at Peterson Middle School in Sunnyvale, says Nicole Piscionere, school librarian. "They can read e-books at school or at home, or access e-books through the school library website," says Piscionere, United Teachers of Santa Clara. "A lot of them use both."

The school purchased online reference books that students access through the Gale Virtual Reference Library, which the library subscribes to. While books can be read on a computer, they cannot be downloaded. However, the library has a "downloadable" library it is also piloting, where students can check out books for weeks at a time.

When it's "due," the book vanishes from the student's device, so there are no fines. Some of the most popular e-books, like

"Students can read e-books at school or at home or access e-books through the school library website," says **Nicole Piscionere** with Jessica Nguyen. "A lot of them use both."



Divergent and *The Hunger Games*, have "holds" on them like regular books, and can only be checked out a few at a time. Some e-books must be repurchased annually by the district.

"I remember everyone saying librarians will be obsolete and libraries will be empty because of digital reading, but that hasn't happened," Piscionere says. "I'm teaching lessons and using both print and digital for these lessons. And the Common Core is so aligned with library standards that we're an integral part of the curriculum."

DO STUDENTS DIGEST DIGITAL BOOKS AS EASILY AS PRINT?

Researchers at the University of California and the California Digital Library recently reported that a survey of college students reveals a majority still prefer print.

Researcher Naomi Baron, a linguistics professor and executive director of the Center for Teaching, Research

Do your students prefer print or digital?

A sampling of responses on CTA's Facebook page.

Kevin Kirschman

Ripon Unified District Teachers Association

"We bought the online edition of a book, at a third of the cost of a paper book, but students still wanted a paper book. Now, give them a screen to play on and that's a different story."

Summer Hellewell

San Diego Education Association

"My students read *Tom Sawyer* online, which worked for most students. But many students still want to read in a book and find reading online challenging. Not to mention the logistical issues with getting out computers each day, battery levels, the time involved, etc."

Kelly Payton

New Haven Teachers Association

"The struggle for me is finding online text at the student's instructional levels without having to purchase pricey programs."

and Learning at American University, also studied university students' reading practices and preferences from four countries.

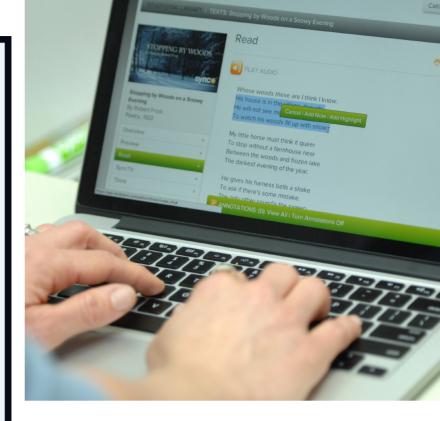
"The students were far more likely to prefer reading in print over digital screens," she says. The reason is that on some level students understand they retain what they have read in print, more so than what is read on a computer.

"I asked students if they were more likely to reread text on a screen or hard copy, and most said they were more likely to reread something in print, because of comprehension or because they liked what they read," says Baron.

Research from other sources shows people skim the surface of text that's read digitally. When scrolling, it's difficult to find a point to return to. Another challenge is that digital reading can be distracting. Emails,



DeAnna Jensen worries that digital reading for hours can cause eyestrain, but it saves her students money.



embedded photos and videos, and other interruptions lead to "multitasking," which interferes with concentration.

DeAnna Jensen, English teacher at Riverside Community College, has seen such distraction in her class, where students are supposed to be reading on a device and instead are shopping online and answering emails. She worries that digital reading for

> hours can cause eyestrain. But it's "worth it" because her students save money.

"You have to police your

classroom, even in college," says Jensen, Riverside Community College Faculty Association.

Baron believes young people with the best intentions have challenges reading digitally.

"Eighty to 90 percent of my students reported they were likely to take a quick look on Facebook or watch a YouTube video while doing homework, while only 25 to 30 percent multitasked when reading in print."

Baron's book, *Words Onscreen: The Fate of Reading in a Digital World*, will be published soon by Oxford University Press. And yes, there will be a digital version.

"In no way am I suggesting that digital reading is going to go away," she says. "But we need to find a way to do it productively."

This is even more true now that standardized testing is conducted entirely on computers.

Read More On page 45, find

Catlin Tucker's strategies and resources for reading digital material properly to maximize comprehension.

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Members' best practices, teaching ideas and education trends

Tiger Mother

0

Increasing Catlin Tucker Comprehension

WHETHER STUDENTS PREFER BOOKS OR E-READERS, **CATLIN TUCKER** SHARES IDEAS FOR HOW TO HELP THEM IMPROVE DIGITAL READING SKILLS AND TECHNOLOGICAL LITERACY. READ THEM ON PAGE 45.

The second in an ongoing series

Assess your knowledge of assessments

This month: Determining achievement levels (cut scores)

AT A SERIES OF educator and stakeholder meetings (which included California educators), participants reviewed Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) test items, ranking them from easiest to hardest as part of the work to create performance recommendations (or cut scores). Cut scores determine if a student meets the goal of being proficient.

Three educator and stakeholder panels — for grades 3-5, grades 6-8, and grade 11 — were divided into English language arts and mathematics. Working in these grade level and subject area groups, the panels reviewed field test items and ranked them. Ultimately, their recommendations became the thresholds of four achievement levels (Levels 1-4), which were based on the knowledge and skills of students needed to achieve each of the Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs).

The CTA Assessment and Testing Committee did the same thing as part of the process for developing six recommendations that were presented to and passed by State Council in January (see the February *Educator*). They reviewed and ranked questions from the sixth-grade math practice test, and

had rich conversations about student achievement and performance levels. Based on those conversations and learnings, they proposed that the State Board of Education change the SBAC cut scores because they are not aligned with California state stan-

Can parents opt their children out of statemandated testing? In case you're asked, you can find the answer, provided by CTA's legal team, at www.cta.org/optout.

dards and will therefore misrepresent student achievement.

Now, you are invited to experience the same process by ranking these questions per the directions, and discussing the results with your colleagues.

At the next State Council meeting in April, the committee members will review the test items for each level and see if they match with the ALDs. You are welcome to do that, too.

Next month, we'll reveal how the committee members ranked these test items.

DIRECTIONS:

- Rank the test items from easiest to hardest on your own in this magazine or online at cta.org/grade6math.
- Discuss the ranking with colleagues, and reach agreement with them.
- You're invited to review the sixth-grade math Achievement Level Descriptors (www.smarterbalanced.org/

achievement-levels) and see how they match these test items.

Good luck!

BANKING: easiest hardest TEST 1 Which number line shows the correct locations of all the given values $\frac{1}{2}$, -4, -2 $\frac{3}{4}$, $1\frac{1}{4}$ -4 -2 ⑧ ◀····♦····|··●|····|·● -2 © **≺**+++**♦**++++**|**++**|**+**♦**+**|**+++**|●**++**>** −4 −2 0 2 $^{-4}$ -2 0

TEST 2

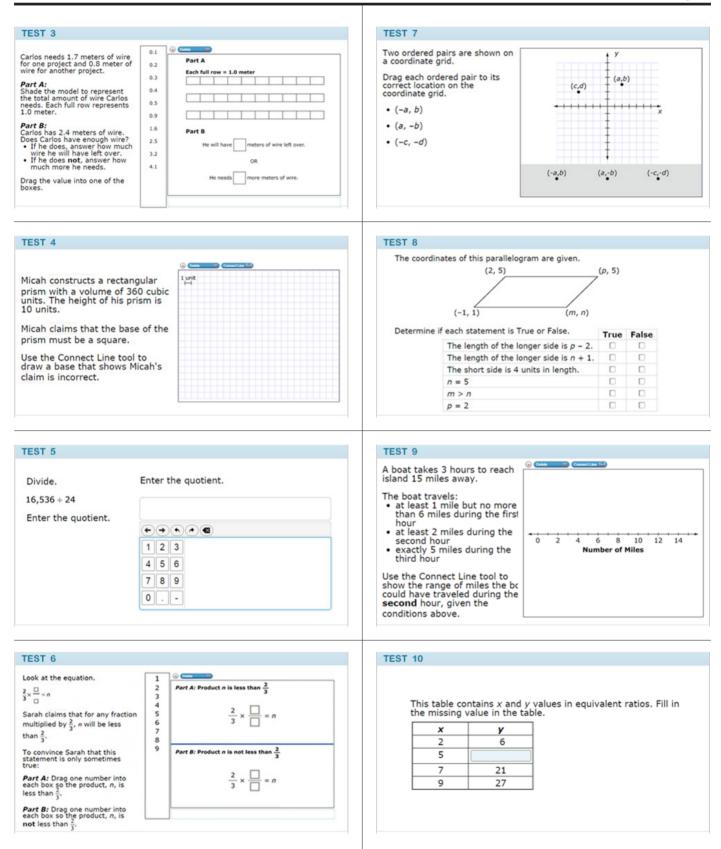
Sea level is 0 feet in elevation. The elevation of land represents its height above or below sea level. This table shows the lowest elevation in some states.

	State	Lowest Elevation (ft)	
	Arizona	72		
	California	- 282		
	Louisiana	- 68		
	Tennessee	178		
		tatement about the low		vation
s correct.	Select True or F	False for each statemer		False
s correct. The eleva	Select True or F		nt.	

The elevation at the lowest point in Louisiana is higher than the lowest point in California.

42 california educator • www.cta.org

Learning 🕸



Learning 🕸 Best practices



Exploring teacher leadership

Front row: Peggy Brookins, NBPTS vice president; Kareina Lee, Tucson, Ariz.; **Emily Flores**, Oakland Education Association (OEA); **Crystal Carrillo**, United Educators of San Francisco (UESF); **Elizabeth MacNab**, UESF; and **Athena Lafferty**, UESF.

Back row: Nancy Lucero, UESF; Jessica Tucker, OEA; Emma Bean, Austin, Texas; Kristin Hart, Palo Alto Education Association; Renata Sanchez, San Jose Teachers Association; Catherine Theilen Burke, UESF; and Michaela Miller, NBPTS outreach and engagement director.

Opportunities for advocacy, instruction and change

SOME 120 ACCOMPLISHED educators explored teacher leadership in the areas of instruction, association and policy at Stanford University in February. To lead the profession, CTA is actively supporting members who are stepping into leadership roles in various areas. That means working directly with members and partnering with other organizations, such as the National Resource Center and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), which sponsored the networking opportunity with CTA.

What should teacher leaders be doing? "Articulate what we know about what matters for good instruction," said Linda Darling-Hammond, Stanford professor of education, in her keynote remarks. "What we know matters for student learning, for their support and welfare. It's important for teacher leaders to advocate — in our local school, at the district level, by writing that letter to the editor, and by talking to our legislators."

"Professionals advocate based on the knowledge they have. We demonstrate how our knowledge is used to make kids successful," added Darling-Hammond.

She noted there are new conversations taking place nationally that focus on "test, instruct and support," not "test and punish." Educators learned about opportunities for advocacy, instruction and change.

The day ended with a celebration of new National Board Certified Teachers (shown in photo above) and those who completed renewing their certification. Find a list of California's NBCTs at *cta.org/CaliforniaNBCTs*.

Helping students go deep with online reading

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin

CATLIN TUCKER doesn't think students are taught how to read digital material properly to maximize comprehension.

"With Common Core assessments on the horizon, my concern is that most students do not have the digital reading skills or technology literacy needed to be relaxed or confident in this digital testing environment," says Tucker,

an English teacher at Windsor High School. To be successful on computerized exams, says Tucker, students need to develop reading stamina, transfer active reading skills from paper to the computer screen, answer text-dependent questions, identify textual evidence to support answers, and practice navigating the tools embedded in the computerized exam.

"These are no small tasks," says Tucker, Windsor District Educators Association.

She published her first book, *Blended Learning for Grades 4-12*, in 2012 and co-authored *Creating a Google Apps Classroom*, which was published in 2014. Her blog, "Blended Learning and Technology in the Classroom," can be viewed at *catlintucker.com*.

Tucker includes more digital texts in her curriculum, such as articles at *Newsela.com*, a news website where

educators can search by subject to find articles on a variety of topics available at a range of Lexile levels. (A Lexile measure indicates the level of an individual's reading ability and the difficulty of a text.) A teacher simply clicks at the Lexile level appropriate for a student, and the article's vocabulary and sentences change without altering the topic or information being "With Common Core assessments on the horizon, most students don't have the digital reading skills or technology literacy needed to be relaxed or confident in this digital testing environment," says **Catlin Tucker**, with Casandra Vargas.

presented. This makes it possible for teachers to differentiate instruction while exposing students at differing reading levels to the same information.

To help students retain information they have read digitally, she encourages them to annotate online and provides strategies to identify and define unfamiliar words, underline words or phrases, predict what will happen next, etc. It's similar to highlighting and writing notes when reading regular books.

Learning 🕸

Teaching ideas

"The trick for 21st century students is to transfer these classic pen-and-paper annotation strategies online. It's too easy for students to skim online articles and texts without thinking deeply about what they are reading."

A website she recommends is *StudySync.com*, which has an extensive digital library composed of excerpts from classic and contemporary literature, poetry, short stories, famous

speeches, and nonfiction texts. It has a built-in annotation tool students can use to highlight and create notes, which are saved in their virtual binders. Study-Sync also has Common Core aligned assignments and writing prompts that encourage students to take their close readings of the online text and apply what they've learned.

To be successful students need to develop reading stamina and practice navigating the tools embedded in the computerized exams. "This creates an incentive for students to read closely and think deeply, because they know they will have to apply that information."

Another favorite is *Diigo. com.* "Students click a hyperlink on our class website and go directly to the article I want

them to read and annotate. On their device, they can upload the Diigo toolbar so they can easily annotate anything they read online. There is even a Diigo Chrome extension for students using a Chrome browser."

With Diigo, which is free, students can highlight in several colors and write notes as they read, automatically saving their annotations to their Diigo accounts. When they are done reading and annotating, they can click "share" and send their annotations to Tucker.

Tucker may be a digital pioneer, but her school is using textbooks for most subjects and no e-books at all. She is nonetheless committed to helping students think deeply about what they read online and creating opportunities for them to engage with information on a screen.

"I'm not a fan of standardized tests, but I don't want students to sit down and struggle with computerized tests. I want them to feel confident about reading digital material. It's about building confidence and cultivating a skill set that will prepare them for the future."

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UC San Diego Extension offers the CCTC Approved Reading and Literacy Added Authorization (previously referred to as Reading Certificate) which is a comprehensive program of study that provides students with a solid foundation in the research and methods of reading instruction.

The Reading and Literacy Added Authorization program is geared towards teachers with the potential to become leaders and mentors in the area of reading. It will provide educators with the right tools to improve student achievement.

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- The program provides participants with the skills to develop a research-based program of reading instruction for implementation in their own classrooms or as a resource for other classroom teachers
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Read Across America

TODAY A READER, **TOMORROW A READER!**

CALIFORNIA READS AND NEA'S READ ACROSS AMERICA



MARIACHI BANDS, posters, celebrity readers and proclamations were the order of the day for Read Across America Day, March 2. Across the nation, thousands of schools, public libraries and community centers organized activities to share the joy of reading.

The day included a surprise for Jefferson and Tibby elementary schools in Compton, when NEA presented each school with a \$1,000 check to spend on its campus library.

"We will use it to buy some great books for our kids that will help them continue on their journey of falling in love with reading," said Tibby Principal Ontrece Ellerbe.

"Reading is the key to everything," said CTA President **Dean Vogel**. He read to **Janet Robertson**'s third-graders, who "recommended books to me, and the diversity of their interests was amazing. This school, Orchard Elementary in Vacaville, was the last school I worked at as a classroom teacher, and now I'm here in my last year as CTA president. This has a very special meaning."





Celebrity readers, pledging to read, eating green eggs and face painting were just a few ways the love of reading was celebrated across California March 2.









CTA Vice President Eric Heins pointed out that reading should be valued all year round rather than on just one day, which is why CTA launched California Reads, a program that strives to make regular readers of young people and increase their odds of completing high school. California Reads offers teacher-approved quarterly book recommendations for all age groups, including adults.

"It's a way of firing up the imagination," said Heins. "It's not just the learning. It's making kids curious about their interests and making them lifelong learners."

CTA&You 🕈 💦 🕻

Conferences





GOOD TEACHING CONFERENCES AGAIN MEET INSTRUCTIONAL NEEDS

Technology, depth of knowledge, standards, classroom management CTA CONTINUES TO MEET THE NEEDS of members by supporting teachers in their classrooms with the changing instructional climate and by providing quality professional development through the Good Teaching Conference North, held in February in San Jose, and the Good Teaching Conference South, which runs March 20-22 in San Diego.

Popular sessions center on technology, writing strategies, implementing the new standards, and classroom management. Some sessions address new state laws and human rights issues, such as "Developing Positive School Disciplinary Alternatives Through the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP)" and "Including the FAIR Act (SB 48) in the Classroom." There are special education workshops geared toward moderate to severe learning disabilities and integrating the Common Core State Standards.

A pre-conference session, "Putting the Common Core Standards Into Practice," includes a review of four domains delineated by the Instructional Leadership Corps (ILC): students, pedagogy, content, and the new Smarter

Balanced assessments. (ILC is a "teachers teaching teachers" project, the result of a partnership between CTA, the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, and the National Board Resource Center. These ILC concepts are embedded in CTA trainings so presentations are framed around supporting student learning. See page 52.)

Also offered is another pre-conference session, "The Educator's Guide to Saving and Investing for Retirement."

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APRIL 17 Application Deadline Join the Instructional Leadership Corps

Teachers Teaching Teachers www.cta.org/ilc

We believe that teachers are the best ones to provide professional development for their colleagues. If you believe that, too, apply for the Instructional Leadership Corps (ILC).

The ILC is creating local educational and instructional experts, bringing together teachers and administrators to develop expertise in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. This includes supporting educators to enrich instruction in their schools, and improving the adult learning conditions in schools and districts.

Now starting its second year, the ILC will accept 80 educators into the program. The deadline to apply is April 17.

The Instructional Leadership Corps Project is a joint collaboration project among CTA, the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education (SCOPE), and the National Board Resource Center at Stanford (NBRC).



CALENDAR 2015



MAY 1 Application Deadline EMEID Leadership Program

The Ethnic Minority Early Identification and Development Program identifies ethnic minority members who want to expand their roles in the organization. Participants are paired with a coach who assists them in defining goals and identifying appropriate steps to achieve those goals. Applicants will be notified by May 29. Find out more: *www.cta.org/emeid*

APRIL 9 Nomination Deadline 2014 John Swett Awards

The 56th annual John Swett Awards for Media Excellence honor journalists for outstanding coverage of public education issues in publications and electronic media during 2014. Nominations must be submitted by CTA local chapters or Service Center Councils. Entries are judged by panels of independent media professionals. Find out more:

www.cta.org/swettawards

APRIL 24–26 Conference CCA Spring Conference and WHO (We Honor Ours) Awards

Hilton Orange County, Costa Mesa The Community College Association's spring conference will highlight lobbying and contract enforcement issues. Find out more: www.cca4me.org

APRIL 30 Application Deadline IFT Grants

CTA Institute for Teaching's grant program demonstrates what teachers can do when they have the freedom to create and invent. CTA members can apply for strength-based Educator Grants up to \$5,000 and Impact Grants up to \$20,000. Find out more: www.teacherdrivenchange.org

APRIL 30 Event El Día de los Niños

El Día de los Niños (Children's Day) is a traditional festival in Latino culture. Many public libraries have events to promote literacy on this day. Find out more: *dia.ala.org*

MAY 5 Event National Teacher Day

National Teacher Day is on Tuesday of Teacher Appreciation Week (May 4-8). Find out more: **www.nea.org/teacherday**

MAY 6 Event School Nurse Day

Since 1972, School Nurse Day has honored school nurses on the Wednesday of National Nurse Week (May 6-12). Find out more: **www.schoolnurseday.org**

MAY 13 Event

California Day of the Teacher

California's celebration, arising from legislation cosponsored by CTA and the Association of Mexican American Educators, is patterned after the traditional Día del Maestro festival.

Find out more: www.cta.org/dayoftheteacher

MAY 19 Event CTA ESP Day

Recognize the vital contributions of education support professionals during ESP Week (May 17-23). Find out more: **www.cta.org/esp**

CROSSWORD SOLUTION



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Extra Credit

CROSSWORD

By Craig Hamilton

THE NINE CLUES IN ITALICS celebrate the 2015 National Women's History Month Honorees, selected by the National Women's History Project (*www.nwhp.org*). Solution on page 53.

ACROSS

- 1 When tripled,
- a Seinfeld catchphrase 5 *ABC's "20/20"*
- correspondent Lynn
- 10 Hall-of-Fame catcher Carlton
- 14 Modern cab service alternative
- 15 Explorer _____ de León
- **16** Prime draft classification
- **17** Neighbor of Colo.
- **18** Dr. Seuss tree hugger
- **19** *"Latinas in the United States" historian Vicki*
- 20 Collage-maker's need
- 21 Yellowfin tuna
- 22 Winter jacket
- **23** Mohegan tribal elder and anthropologist Gladys
- 27 Don't be a hog
- 29 Ice cream treat
- **30** Fastens to a bulletin board
- **32** NYC clock setting that starts in March
- **33** Former trans-Atlantic fliers, for short
- 37 Tiny hill dweller
- **38** Dance like Bill "Bojangles" Robinson
- 40 Bit of granola
- 42 Common Father's Day gift
- 43 Snorkeling site
- 45 Dylan or Dole
- 47 Kid's racer
- 49 Highland girls
- 52 Prices
- **53** It crosses 42nd Street at Times Square
- 57 Shareholder's substitute
- 58 Half a school yr.
- 59 Spanish custard
- 62 Drought ender
- 63 Young woman at a ball
- 65 Bog down
- 66 _____ of Skye

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
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66	+		┢		67						68			
69	+				70						71			

- 67 "Zorba the Greek" setting
- 68 Tolstoy's "_____ Karenina"
- 69 First, second or reverse
- **70** Clothesline alternative
- 71 ____-do-well

DOWN

- 1 "Chinese Women of America" author Judy
- 2 Brother of Cain
- 3 Society girl
- 4 In _____ (behind on payments)
- **5** Sound of a bug hitting a windshield
- 6 Uproars
- 7 Spanish form of Henry
- 8 Color TV pioneer
- 9 "Oedipus ____
- **10** Looks for food
- 11 Accustom (to)
- 12 Japanese watch
- 13 "East of Eden" director Elia
- 22 Kissing on a city street, e.g.
- 24 Not fem. or masc.
- 25 "Go back" on an edit menu
- **26** Dog collar attachment
- 27 Practice boxing

- **28** Historian Darlene Clark, who writes about African American women
- 31 Blue Ribbon beer brewer
- **34** Where you might see a "Welcome to Nevada!" sign
- 35 Tucker out
- 36 Movie studio locations
- **39** Swanky
- 41 Ripped
- **44** Historian of the women's movement Eleanor
- **46** First black woman newspaper columnist Delilah
- **48** *"Women Teachers on the Frontier" author Polly Welts*
- 50 Whichever
- 51 Sleek and graceful
- **53** Bit of parsley
- 54 Rub out
- 55 "Here it is!"
- 56 Arab leader: Var.
- 60 U.S. Education Secretary Duncan
- **61** Folksinger Holly
- 63 Grades below A
- 64 Mess up



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