

california

educator

MARCH 2017 VOLUME 21 ISSUE 6

FAKE NEWS ATTACK

STUDENTS LEARN TO SORT FACT FROM FICTION
PAGE 34

GRAMMY WINNER
CTA MEMBER
KEITH HANCOCK
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DEALING WITH IMPLICIT BIAS
PAGE 13

TO THE RESCUE
STUDENTS ARE SAVING LIVES
PAGE 16

EMBRACING
THE GENDER SPECTRUM
PAGE 20





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WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

MAGAZINE

Sorting Truth From Lies

With fake news on the rise, educators help students learn how to distinguish fact from fiction. **PAGE 34**

Unconscious Bias

Rita Cameron Wedding on recognizing our implicit biases and what to do about them. **PAGE 13**

Search and Rescue

A unique program in Kelseyville has high school kids saving lives. **PAGE 16**

We Are Family

Grammy winner Keith Hancock teaches students about music, and more. **PAGE 45**

Capturing the Spark

Excerpt from new book on inspired teaching and thriving schools. **PAGE 39**

DIGITAL

Take the Pledge for Ed

Take CTA's pledge to stand up for all students, then show your support. **PAGE 11**

[f](#) [t](#) [i](#) [#WhyIPledgeforEd](#)

Social Justice for All

Our Social Justice Toolkit provides resources to ensure schools are safe havens for all. cta.org/forallstudents

An Inclusive Union

Learn all about the history and mission of CTA's Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee.

[▶ bit.ly/2mm5mpk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2mm5mpk)

2016 John Swett Awards

The nomination deadline for CTA's awards honoring media excellence is March 20, so hurry! cta.org/awards

Books Build Brains

PAGE 8 [#californiareads](#)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Good Guidance

CTA's Ethnic Minority Early Identification and Development (EMEID) program grooms leaders. **PAGE 10**

ESP Leadership

Get the skills to be a visible, vocal education advocate with NEA's ESP Leaders for Tomorrow program. nea.org

Wanted: Great Ideas

CTA's Institute for Teaching gives grants for innovative projects. Next deadline is April 30. teacherdrivenchange.org

Proud, United, Engaged

It's the theme of CTA's 2017 Joint Ethnic Caucus Issues Conference, May 5. ctago.org

MEMBER BENEFITS

Disaster Relief Fund

Affected by the recent storms? You may qualify for a grant. Or donate to help a colleague. ctamemberbenefits.org/drf

Summer Travel

Make plans now and save big on hotels, recreation and more with Access to Savings. ctamemberbenefits.org

Save for Retirement

Learn more about your CalSTRS and CalPERS plans. **PAGE 47** ctainvest.org

Beneficial Video

From insurance deals to an exclusive 403(b) plan, you'll see CTA membership has its rewards. [▶ bit.ly/2IEjKDC](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2IEjKDC)

Above, members of the CTA Board of Directors and CTA officers, with several lawmakers and elected leaders, in Sacramento in February. Photo by Claudia Briggs. Story on page 28.



FEATURE

TO THE RESCUE

K-CORPS, a unique program at Kelseyville High School in Lake County, teaches search and rescue skills to students. These youth are saving lives. **PAGE 16**

FEATURE

THE GENDER SPECTRUM

Supporting all students on the spectrum — meaning the full range of gender identities and expressions — allows educators and schools to build safe and accepting environments that help *all* children succeed. **PAGE 20**

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COVER:
Illustration by Patrick Boyer.

THIS PAGE:
Top left, K-CORPS students practice their tracking skills. Top right, Rhonda Martin, Rosedale Teachers Association, behind the camera ("See Me After School," page 49).

YOUR OPINIONS ARE WELCOME! We accept email and letters (250-word limit); we excerpt user posts from CTA social media platforms. Content subject to editing for clarity and space. Photos must have identifications and permissions. Editor@cta.org; #WeAreCTA

The Problem of Food Waste

I had to respond to your article "Hunger on Campus" (January/February).

Every day, our school throws away boxes of fresh fruit of all kinds, cereal, crackers in packages, etc., because federal guidelines prohibit anyone from salvaging it.

For several years, I would try to hide the extra food or have students pick up "deliveries" from the custodian in the cafeteria with our classroom Radio Flyer red wagon.

What did I do with this food? I would send it home with the children to their families. Our East Salinas neighborhood is home to many recent immigrants and farmworkers, who are among the poorest of the poor in our great state. All 12 schools in our district offer free breakfasts and lunches to all district school children because of the income levels.

Obviously, I think federal regulations should be changed so the food can go to the families in our schools, and to the homeless, or even to a pantry.

JEANNIE ECHENIQUE

Alisal Teachers Association

Different Views, Part 2

I am extremely thankful that you printed the letter "Respect for Different Views" (January/February Feedback). I sometimes feel like I am in such a minority being a public school teacher, yet feeling like the last eight years were not perfect and that we needed change.

Being in a family business before teaching, I saw the devastation of the crushing regulations on business in California. I also saw that we welcomed, housed, fed, educated and administered health care for free to nearly everyone who walked in, while making our working citizens pay more and more for those same basic necessities.

This cannot work. We will go broke.

Hunger on Campus

What is Food Insecurity?
Food insecurity is defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as a "state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food."
Estimates on just how many college students are food insecure vary depending on the location of the college and the socio-economic level of its students. A CSU study, "Measuring Displaced and Food Insecure Students in the CSU," reports survey data indicating 23 percent of students are food insecure. The survey asked students to respond to statements such as "I worry whether my food will run out before I get money to buy more" and "I've often hunger but don't eat because I can't eat enough food."
Other recent surveys report as high as 80 percent of college students (graduate and at the undergraduate level at UC campuses) experience food insecurity.

Solutions to rising food insecurity among college students
By Elena Martin
Photos by Sarah Beuchemin

Restigmatizing the problem
Reports, "Struggling to Survive" — Writing in *Harvard Food and Housing Inequality in the Community College* in December, "The Jones gave very beyond the student's own stereotypes. Although previous generations relied on success or hard work and chose to under-identify as poor," says Steven Wilton, professor of accounting and president of the CSU. "Students who are often first-generation, lower-income students of color who are perceived as being from the wrong background, working one or two jobs, and paying down loans."
In California as well.

Restigmatizing the problem
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In California as well.

It's not OK anymore. Someone had to draw the line and make it OK to do business in California so we can get taxes from folks who work for businesses. Spending ourselves into bankruptcy is not the answer.

I am hopeful. I support whoever is president, and will not resort to bullying Mr. Trump, his wife or daughter because they (rightly) think we need a change.

JEANNE CHASKO

Sacramento City Teachers Association

The "Respect for Different Views" letter concludes by saying, "No president is responsible for your well-being." If he is about to deport you or your parents, then indeed he is responsible for it. Never before has a

president so publicly threatened to deport a significant part of the population. Providing support to vulnerable children does not "encourage weakness." It shows compassion.

All presidents lie, but Trump has taken this to a whole new level with his "alternative facts," denial of on-camera statements, and continual flip-flopping. Even his supporters don't take his statements seriously anymore. This Orwellian "Truth is lie and lie is truth" is mentally abusive and undermines trust, especially in the young. It's not about respecting his viewpoints (which change moment to moment). It's about refusing to pander to a malignant narcissist.

MICHAEL SCHALLER

Temple City Education Association

Get in the Educator!

We'd love to hear from you. Email editor@cta.org with one of the categories shown in boldface below in the subject line. Include your full name, chapter and contact info.

Letter to the Editor: Respond to content that has appeared in the *Educator*, as on this page.
Picture This: Send us photos of you and colleagues at a CTA or chapter training, conference or event. Identify all members who appear and describe where the photo was taken.

Your Voice: Tell us about your experience with students, the art and science of teaching, and being an educator in the trenches (no more than 650 words).

Point/Counterpoint: Miss our feature where members discuss the pros and cons of various issues? So do we. Let us know if you're willing to write a 300-word argument for or against a topical issue in education. If you're selected to participate, we'll find you a worthy opponent.



CCTC Approved Reading and Literacy Added Authorization

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.

Program Highlights:

- 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
- This certificate is aligned with the requirements and standards established by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC).
- **100% online**

To view credential requirements, the program FAQs and to download an application please visit our Reading Instruction at extension.ucsd.edu/teachreading

UC San Diego Extension also offers accessible and affordable online programs for K-12 and Postsecondary Educators.

- New courses begin every month
- Most programs can be completed online within 1 year
- Interactive, Research-Based Programs with Practical Classroom Application

Programs include:

- CCTC-Approved Clear Credential Program
- CCTC Approved CLAD Through CTEL Program
- College Counseling Specialized Certificate
- Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) Specialized Certificate
- Teaching Adult Learners Professional Certificate
- Teaching Online Certificate
- Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Professional Certificate
- Professional Development/Salary Point Coursework

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

extension.ucsd.edu/education

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Subscription to the *California Educator* is \$10 per year, available to persons or institutions not eligible for CTA/NEA membership.

CALIFORNIA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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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.

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Educators Can Create Gender-Inclusive Schools

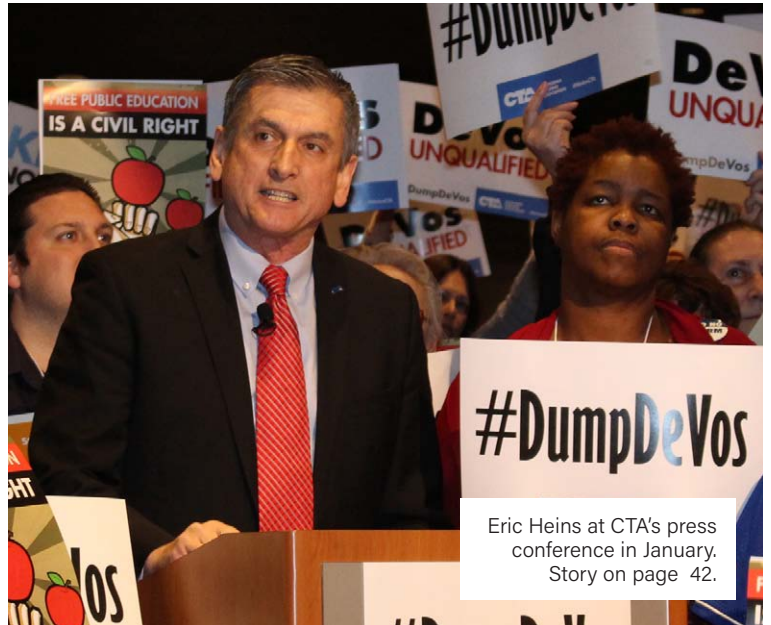
“When someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing.” —Adrienne Rich

Educators have a powerful role in helping students see themselves reflected in the world. For transgender and gender nonconforming students, who recently experienced their basic right to use the restroom consistent with their gender identity rescinded by the Trump administration, educators may be the only people who validate their identities, and classrooms may be the only place where these students can feel safe and be themselves.

In California, Governor Brown signed legislation in 2013 to ensure transgender students will have access to restrooms and locker rooms consistent with their gender identity, so we must ensure our students and communities know this has not changed in our state.

Still, access to bathrooms and public spaces is only part of the journey to create safe and gender-inclusive spaces for our students. Students who do not conform to gender expectations and stereotypes are more likely to experience harassment in our schools. This kind of bullying is more common in unsafe school climates, and it is our role as educators to make our classrooms, lunchrooms, buses, offices and schools safe for all students. If we do not do this, quality learning cannot happen.

How can we do it? Many of you already are. Creating a school environment that acknowledges and affirms gender diversity takes work, but thoughtful educators and institutions can build gender-inclusive conditions. Gender-inclusive schools recognize that harmful gender stereotypes impact all students, and work to normalize gender diversity. Educators who are gender-inclusive make an effort to question limited portrayals of



Eric Heins at CTA's press conference in January. Story on page 42.

Take action:

Go to cta.org/ForAllStudents and sign the pledge to protect and support all students, take a stand against bullying and discrimination, and make schools a safe haven for all.

Already signed the pledge? Let us know why you decided to take the pledge and share with us on social media, [#WhyIPledgeForEd](https://twitter.com/WhyIPledgeForEd).

How are you or your school creating safer spaces for all students? Tweet [@WeAreCTA](https://twitter.com/WeAreCTA) and let us know.

gender, support their students' self-reflection and identity, and teach empathy and respect. They use gender-neutral language and encourage critical thinking.

We wanted to help educators build gender-inclusive and safe classrooms for all our students, so we created “Advocating for All Students,” a social justice toolkit complete with posters, social media tools and other resources. Having signage and imagery that celebrates gender diversity is a great way to create visibility and send a message to students about the environment they are in. When you let your students know that your classroom is a “hate free zone” or that all DREAMers are welcome, you join educators across the state in making sure all students feel safe and are ready to learn.

Eric C. Heins
 CTA PRESIDENT
[@ericheins](https://twitter.com/ericheins)

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Authenticity, in All Its Forms

In “**Embracing the Gender Spectrum**” (page 20), several CTA members tell reporter Sherry Posnick-Goodwin that children are expressing their authentic selves at earlier ages. “Kids are way ahead of us when it comes to comfort around gender diversity,” agrees Joel Baum of Gender Spectrum, which offers professional development about gender-diverse students to school employees.

While our story focuses on transgender youth, supporting all students on the gender spectrum — meaning the full range of gender identities and expressions — allows educators and schools to build safe and accepting environments that help *all* children succeed. It also liberates students from the constraints placed on them by traditional gender norms.

What does that look like? Junior high school teacher Dawn Davis doesn’t ask students about gender or separate them into boys and girls when lining up or choosing teams. Educator Lucia Lemieux created a workshop for staff at her high school about gender-diverse lingo, the law, and compassion. “I treat all my students with honesty and empathy,” Lemieux says. “When they feel comfortable, they do well.”

Authenticity of a different sort has been in the spotlight lately: fake news, its proliferation, and the distressing number of people, including students, who cannot distinguish fact from fiction. Our story “**A Search for Truth**” (page 34) looks at educators who are helping students understand the importance of critical thinking,



Transgender student Lilly speaks with our reporter for the story on page 20.

Teachers of the Year: Any Questions?

At CTA State Council’s meeting in March, I’ll be lucky enough to meet up with several of the 2017 California Teachers of the Year, including Jenny Chien Anderson, Shaun S. Bunn, Isela Lieber and Corrie Traynor. (See earlier coverage at bit.ly/2kIT8K1.) Have a question for these outstanding educators? Send it to editor@cta.org with your name and chapter, and I’ll make sure to get an answer — possibly published in the *Educator*.

credibility and fact-checking when it comes to sorting truth from falsehoods.

With the Internet and social media’s often indiscriminate dissemination of news and information, learning to recognize what is real and true is crucial to becoming an informed, discerning citizen. As high school journalism teacher Mitch Ziegler says, “Teaching students how to evaluate information is the most important reading skill we can give them.”

Teaching students how to save lives is valuable in a different way, as the educators behind the K-CORPS program at Kelseyville High School know. “**To the Rescue**” (page 16) describes this unique program, possibly the only one of its kind in the nation, where juniors and seniors learn how to track and assist persons lost in wilderness or hurt in disasters. Not surprisingly, instructors say that K-CORPS develops students’ leadership skills and confidence.

Educators’ leadership skills are at the heart of our excerpt from *Capturing the Spark: Inspired Teaching, Thriving*

Schools, a new book by David B. Cohen (page 39). The excerpt details how members of the Fresno Teachers Association, the San Juan Teachers Association and the Fortuna Union High School Teachers Association are leading the drive to improve schools and teaching, ensure professional growth for colleagues, and create innovative new programs.

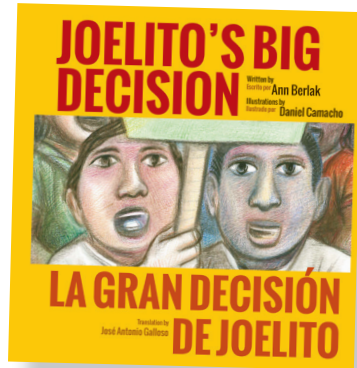
The core of what these and other educators teach and stand for is authenticity — searching for and teaching truth, being true to themselves and to others, and encouraging students to do the same. As John F. Kennedy once said, “The goal of education is the advancement of knowledge and the dissemination of truth.” Educators are real leaders and beacons of truth.

Katharine Fong

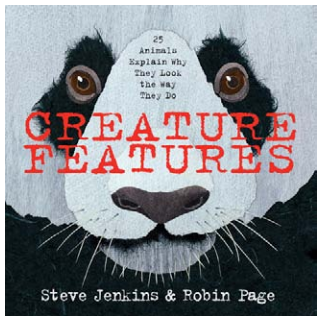
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Spring
READING



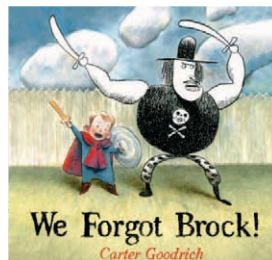
Why do giraffes have purple tongues? Twenty-five animals explain why they look the way they do in *Creature Features* (grades 1-2), by Steve Jenkins and Robin Page. In addition to gorgeous visuals, the book is packed with facts on where certain animals live, what they eat, and how their unique features help them exist in this world.



In the bilingual *Joelito's Big Decision* (grades 3-5) by Ann Berlak and illustrated by Daniel Camacho, young readers learn about workers' fight for dignity and security. As Joelito and his family approach their favorite restaurant, a crowd protests outside, including Joelito's friend Brandon and his parents. The restaurant workers are asking for higher wages so they can pay their bills,

and Joelito, whose own parents picked grapes in the past, realizes he needs to stand with his friend so that others can have a better life.

In *We Forgot Brock!* (pre-K, kindergarten) by Carter Goodrich, Phillip and Brock are best friends, though only Phillip can see Brock. When they become separated at the fair, can another pair of pals — similarly, one real and one imaginary — help reunite them?



See more teacher-recommended books at cta.org/californiareads. #californiareads

▼ Yvonne Walker



MARCH IS WOMEN'S
HISTORY MONTH

This year, Santa Rosa-based National Women's History Project honors several trailblazers, among them two labor activists with California ties.

Yvonne Walker, president of SEIU (Service Employees International Union) Local 1000, advocates for economic and social justice — efforts felt not only by her California constituents but by workers across the country and abroad. She

represents more than 95,000 public and private sector employees, fighting against cuts to pensions, wages, benefits and health care. Known as a problem solver and innovative thinker, Walker is the first African American woman to serve as president, a post she has held since 2008.



Dusty Roads in a scene from a PBS Makers documentary.

Barbara "Dusty" Roads is a former flight attendant who fought against the airline industry's sexist working conditions and regulations, such as stewardesses' forced dismissal at age 32, in the 1950s and '60s. She was a contract negotiator and union officer in Los Angeles, later moving to a national role in Washington, D.C. In 1965, she filed the first antidiscrimination complaint with the newly opened Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which was ultimately successful. In 1977, Roads helped form a new independent union for flight attendants.

For the full list of honorees, see nwhp.org. #womenshistorymonth



Cesar Chavez Day

California has an official state holiday on March 31, the birthday of labor leader Cesar Chavez. Learn about Chavez's life and philosophy and find activities and resources, including a link to the California Department of Education's model curriculum, at cta.org/chavezday.

CCA SPRING CONFERENCE

APRIL 21-23 CONFERENCE

Marriott Manhattan Beach. The Community College Association's spring conference highlights advocacy and features the presentation of CCA's WHO (We Honor Ours) Awards.

► cca4me.org

EMEID LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

APRIL 28 APPLICATION DEADLINE

The Ethnic Minority Early Identification and Development Program identifies ethnic minority members who want to expand their roles in CTA. Participants work with coaches to define and achieve goals, and must commit to attending the Emerging Leaders track at Summer Institute. Applicants notified by May 19. See story, page 10. ► cta.org/emeid

EL DÍA DE LOS NIÑOS

APRIL 30 EVENT

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. ► dia.ala.org

IFT GRANTS APRIL 30

APPLICATION DEADLINE

CTA Institute for Teaching's grant program shows what teachers can do when they have the freedom to create and invent. CTA members can apply for Educator Grants up to \$5,000 and Impact Grants up to \$20,000. Recent grantees include Imperial Valley Discovery Zone (Dan Gibbs, Imperial Teachers Association), where high schoolers facilitate teacher-generated, NGSS-aligned lessons for elementary students (above, left); and Babies and Beads (Stacy Williams, San Diego Education Association), which provides job training, mentoring, classes and career planning to at-risk students (above, right). ► teacherdrivenchange.org

DEMAND SAFE, INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

MAY 1 STATEWIDE DAY OF ACTION

CTA leads a day of action at local school sites to support safe, nurturing schools for all students and to stand against attacks on public education and immigrant rights. Join in and take the pledge.

► cta.org/forallstudents

JOINT ETHNIC CAUCUS ISSUES CONFERENCE

MAY 5-7 CONFERENCE

Marriott Manhattan Beach. "Be Proud, Be United, Be Engaged for California Public Schools." Open to all CTA members, the conference offers a wide variety of workshops on the issues of diversity and equity and how to advocate for change. Hotel cut-off date is April 21. ► ctago.org

NATIONAL TEACHER DAY

MAY 9 EVENT

National Teacher Day is on Tuesday of National Teacher Appreciation Week (May 7-13). ► nea.org/teacherday

CALIFORNIA DAY OF THE TEACHER

MAY 10 EVENT

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

► cta.org/dayoftheteacher

SCHOOL NURSE DAY

MAY 10 EVENT

Since 1972, National School Nurse Day has honored school nurses on the Wednesday of National Nurse Week (May 6-12). ► schoolnurseday.org

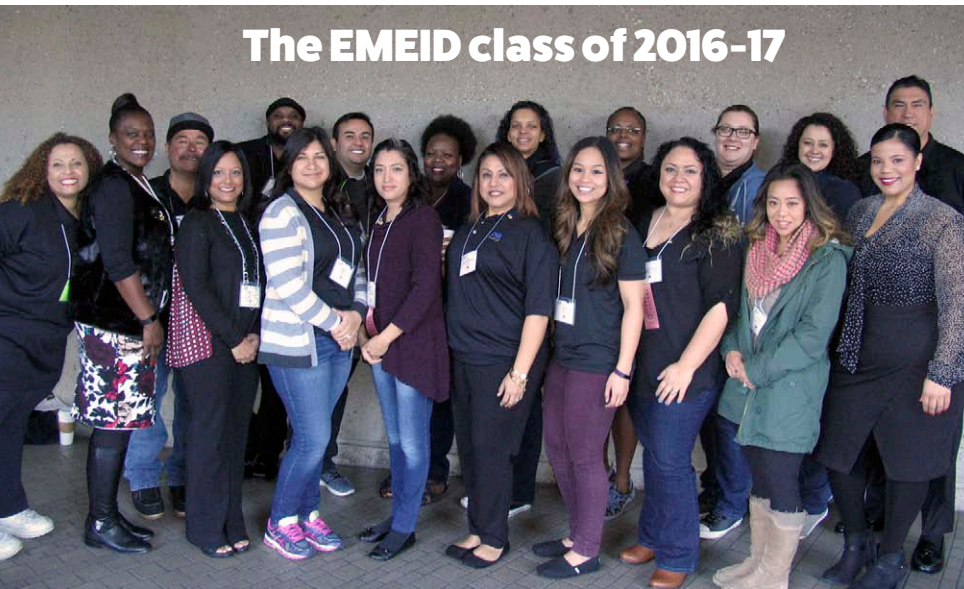
CTA ESP DAY

MAY 23 EVENT

Recognize the vital contributions of education support professionals during ESP Week (May 21-27). ► cta.org/esp



The EMEID class of 2016-17



Step Up to Lead

CTA's Ethnic Minority Early Identification and Development (EMEID) program identifies ethnic minority members who are interested in expanding their roles in the organization.

Those accepted in the yearlong program are paired with a coach and a CTA Board member, who guide them in setting and achieving their goals. Those goals could include building skills in leadership, bargaining, member engagement, and more.

EMEID builds on existing CTA/NEA programs, trainings, conferences and events. Participants are required to attend the Emerging Leaders track at

CTA's Summer Institute (July 30–Aug. 3).

About 20 participants from all four CTA regions are selected each year for EMEID, which began in 2006. "Over the past 10 years, EMEID has helped more than 150 members learn more about and contribute to the union," says Nicole Love, CTA co-consultant to the program. EMEID graduates include two current CTA Board members and several State Council representatives.

See cta.org/emeid to apply. The application deadline for the class of 2017-18 is April 28; applicants will be notified by May 19.

2.6 million

UNION MEMBERS IN CALIFORNIA

UNION STRONG

According to a news release from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the state with the largest number of union members last year (2.6 million) was California.

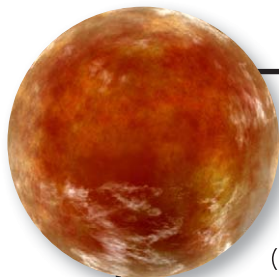
In 2016, the union membership rate (the percentage of wage and salary workers who were members of unions) was:

- 15.9 percent in California (same as 2015).
- 23.6 percent in New York.
- 19.9 percent in Hawaii.
- 18.5 percent in Alaska.
- 10.7 percent nationwide (down from 11.1 percent in 2015).

Of the eight states with union membership rates above 15 percent, four border the Pacific Ocean (Hawaii, Alaska, Washington and California) and four are in the Northeast (New York, Connecticut, New Jersey and Rhode Island).

Of the nine states with rates below 5 percent, seven are in the South (Virginia, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina) and two are in the West (Utah and Arizona).

See the news release at bit.ly/2m8KpBF.



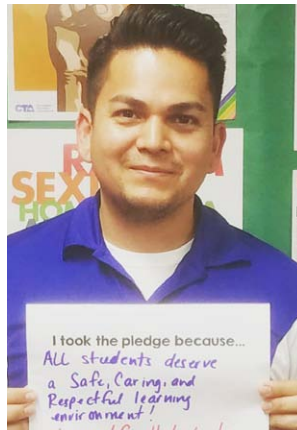
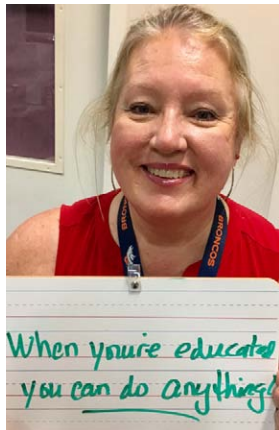
MEDIA ARTS AND MARS

A bill to improve media arts education so students will be better prepared for jobs in movies, animation, video games, virtual reality and other media arts fields was introduced by Assembly Member Patrick O'Donnell (D-Long Beach) for the 2017-18 legislative session. According to O'Donnell, AB 37 would enhance the state's standards in visual and performing arts (VAPA), which currently apply to visual arts, dance, theater and music.

AB 37 would establish standards for new forms of creative expression made possible by the dramatic changes in technology since the VAPA standards were adopted in 2001. If it passes, students could be designing (for example) 3-D models of human settlements on Mars, complete with agriculture, energy production, architecture, transportation, tools and clothing.

By @samdemuro

Jamestown TA President Greg Haney, Desert Sands TA member Sandi Mangan, Arvin TA President Michael Flores-Castaneda.



Why I Pledge for Ed

Show that you stand up for the public education *a//* students deserve. Here's how:

- First, take the pledge. Visit cta.org/forallstudents.
- Second, visit bit.ly/WhyIPledgeForEd and print out a sign.
- Fill in why you took the pledge.
- Have someone take a photo of you holding the sign.
- Send us the photo at social@cta.org, or post on Twitter/Instagram with the hashtag [#WhyIPledgeForEd](https://twitter.com/WhyIPledgeForEd). Can't wait to see you!

Things to Do Now

Following Betsy DeVos' confirmation as U.S. secretary of education, *Upworthy* published a list of 20 things you can do to support public ed. (Among them: Get involved with NEA/CTA!) When we posted the story to Facebook, members had a few items to add:

Karen Leslie Coulthard: Take your child, neighbor, grandchild, sibling to the nearest museum and talk about art. Ask them about classes free or otherwise. Donate supplies or your time.

Dianne Antonio: If you have children or grandkids, turn off electronic devices and discuss everything, read, read, read and let them see you reading and writing. Provide journals or blank paper. Increase your child's vocabulary by seeing things, doing things, going places, and discussing every aspect. Stress science. Visit libraries and study. Shop at your local college or university book store.

Heather Orr: Put teachers on committees to write standards and curriculum, not businessmen.

Matt Fuller: Become a teacher is top of my list.

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 youtube.com/californiateachers

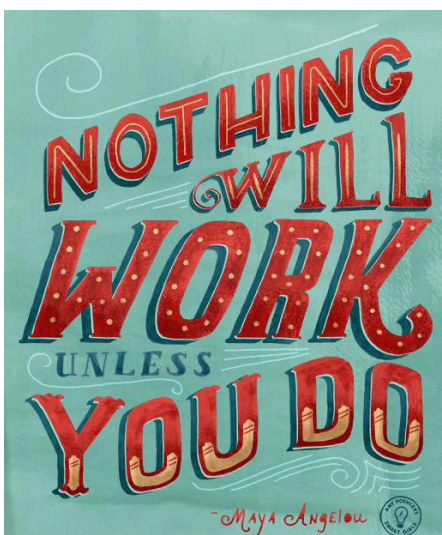
 [@WeAreCTA](https://twitter.com/wearecta)

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For our full social media directory, see cta.org/social

Meme of the Month



CTA California Teachers Association
February 13 at 6:16pm

Did you evacuate your home because officials feared that an #OrovilleDam emergency spillway could fail? Keep your receipts! And check out the CTA Disaster Relief Fund.

Don't live in the Oroville area? You can donate to the fund and help our education colleagues.

Disaster Relief Fund

The Disaster Relief Fund is a separate, special fund just for members of CTA. The fund is endowed to provide financial assistance to CTA members who have experienced significant losses due to disasters in California

CTAMEMBERBENEFITS.ORG

CTA's Disaster Relief Fund

CTA educators were on the front lines helping their communities during the recent floods and evacuations. Social networks continue to be a great way to spread the word and help others during times of need. A post about our Disaster Relief Fund reached more than 11,000 people. Apply for a grant or donate at ctamemberbenefits.org/dr/f.

Quotes & Numbers

Compiled by Mike Myslinski



“To take back basic rights of transgender students at public schools nationwide sends a clear message: This administration does not care about all students. At CTA, we do. We have led the way in providing safe learning environments for transgender and all students, and we are not about to stop now.”

—CTA President **ERIC HEINS**, from his Feb. 23 press statement criticizing President Trump’s decision to roll back the rights of transgender students. California law still allows transgender students to use restrooms and locker rooms consistent with their gender identity.

“All students deserve a safe and supportive school environment. California will continue to work to provide that environment for our lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students, regardless of any misguided directives by the federal government and the Trump administration.”

—State Superintendent of Public Instruction **TOM TORLAKSON**, in a Feb. 22 news release.

“I went into teaching thinking that it was all about the music. And I quickly realized after that, that music is just an avenue to teach them how to live their lives.”

—2017 Grammy Music Educator **KEITH HANCOCK**, choral director at Tesoro High School in Capistrano Unified School District, in a Feb. 8 CBS TV news interview. See our story on page 45.

“The district has made these decisions without speaking to educators, parents or students about what they need or don’t need. We are the ones at the schools every day, working with students, supporting students, and giving everything to ensure our students succeed.”

—San Diego Education Association Vice President **KISHA BORDEN**, speaking at a Feb. 27 news conference to oppose reckless proposals by San Diego Unified to lay off hundreds of educators next year due to overreaction to preliminary budget projections.

“They build walls. We build communities.”

—Slogan on a Los Angeles billboard with two large photos of President Trump and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos beside numerous photos of educators and students, part of the ongoing United Teachers Los Angeles campaign to protect public schools.

5TH

Excellent national ranking of California high school graduates for the percentage who scored at least 3 out of 5 on an Advanced Placement exam during their high school years, according to a Feb. 22 California Department of Education news release.

164

Estimated number of San Francisco Unified School District jobs that will remain unfilled at the start of the new school year this fall, the *San Francisco Examiner* reported in a Feb. 27 story about United Educators of San Francisco contract talks, the teacher shortage, and soaring housing costs.

\$185,669

Average salary of a San Francisco tech worker last year, compared with \$68,130 for the city’s teachers, counselors and librarians this year, the *San Francisco Examiner* reported.

21%

Percentage of generated wealth by which CalSTRS’ defined-benefit pension exceeds a 401(k)-style plan for educators who begin working at age 25 and retire at 55, according to recent research at UC Berkeley.

44%

Percentage of Americans who approve of how President Trump is doing in office, according to a national NBC/*Wall Street Journal* poll published Feb. 26; 48 percent disapprove.



Implicit Bias and Positive Change

Rita Cameron Wedding raises awareness of racial and cultural biases

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin Photo by Scott Buschman

In the recent spate of shocking police shootings of black men, a disturbing incident occurred last July in Florida. An unarmed black man — therapist to a man with autism who'd wandered off — was told by police to lie on the ground and put his arms up in the air. He complied with the directive, but an officer fired anyway, wounding him in one leg.

When he asked the police officer, "Why did you shoot me?" the officer answered him with these three words: "I don't know."

For Rita Cameron Wedding, it was a most telling moment — and it shows why she's motivated to train law enforcement officers and others to be aware of how implicit bias can impact decision-making.

"When the police officer said 'I don't know' and admitted he had no idea of why he shot this man, it reinforced the point of my training: The police officer shot this man because he looked dangerous to him," says Cameron Wedding, California Faculty Association. "It's become our cultural norm to see black men as being dangerous. It's killing people, and it has to stop."

As professor of ethnic studies at Sacramento State University, where she was chair of women's studies for over 20 years, Cameron Wedding has long been aware of how race, gender and social stratification affect society. She has developed curriculum on implicit bias to train police, judges, district attorneys, social workers and public school staff so they can recognize their racial and cultural biases and can make positive changes. Most recently, she trained Sacramento Police Department officers.

When participants first arrive at her trainings, they may be a little bit stiff and defensive. So the very first thing she does is put on music and ask them to dance. Yes, dance. It loosens them up and makes them more receptive to what she has to say. It helps that she has a radiant smile.

"In the beginning, people cross their arms and tell me they don't




"We all have unconscious biases. And we can all do something about it if we choose."

want to be here. They say, 'I don't even notice race and gender, and treat everyone the same.' I help them to understand we *all* have unconscious biases. We tend to treat people according to race, class and gender. And we can all do something about it if we choose."

Ethnic studies and women's studies are the two most controversial disciplines in the university, she muses, but her approach to teaching is anything but contentious.

"My goal is to create an environment that brings people together rather than pits people against each other. I have to show I am someone who can be trusted. I do not hide my biases, but I also give the students space to examine theirs without judgment."

Through the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ), Cameron Wedding has trained juvenile and family court judges on implicit bias throughout the country since 2007. Her work includes trainings for the National Association of Counsel for Children, the Children's Bureau in Washington, D.C., the Child Abuse and Neglect Institute, and the New York State Judicial Institute.

NCJFCJ evidence suggests her training has had a positive effect on judicial decision-making. Family judges have shared that since becoming aware of their bias, they believe they are displaying more fairness and equity in the courtroom, fewer children are being removed from their homes, and more juveniles are being given the benefit of the doubt or second chances. 

“I’m not just offering theory and definitive descriptions. I’m giving participants some tools to put theory into practice and change what they do,” says Cameron Wedding. “We do exercises and activities that apply to their work. We identify what stereotypes look like, what disrespect looks like, how these things might affect outcomes, and what they can do to change that.”

For example, behavior from a white youth in a suburban setting may be perceived as being respectful, while the same behavior from a black youth in an urban setting wearing dreadlocks and baggy pants may be perceived as disrespectful — and convey that the youth is a threat, which results in escalating tactics and sometimes tragedy.

“Think about how you approach someone,” she urges police. “If you see a businessman in a nice car, you assume it’s their car and say, ‘Good morning.’ You don’t assume they have stolen the car. But the first thing a police officer may say to a black person is ‘Is this your car?’ It gets off to a really bad start. If you don’t assume that every person who looks a particular way is bad and show empathy,

you are less likely to get a quick escalation of negative events.”

Cameron Wedding also enjoys providing workshops at school sites, where she believes her trainings can help diverse students succeed.

“Implicit bias impacts which students get into the gifted and talented programs at school and who gets suspended and ends up on the street — which is how the school-to-prison pipeline kicks in. Educators may assume that black kids from poor neighborhoods who dress and talk a certain way are not as intelligent, which isn’t true.”

Her training is not affiliated with Black Lives Matter, but she supports the movement and appreciates that it has raised awareness of social justice issues. She believes that those working in law enforcement and the judicial system are good people at heart who want to do the right thing. She is happy she can offer them some tools for creating more positive outcomes.

“I think of myself as an activist scholar. This is how I fight for social justice.” ■

“Implicit bias impacts which students get into the gifted and talented programs and who gets suspended and ends up on the street.”

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A TEACHER'S JOURNEY

Educator overcomes challenges, obstacles to achieve her dream **By Kim Loisel**



“I teach with my heart and my soul, not my mouth.” —Jaime Escalante

AFTER I’D SPENT my entire childhood dreaming of being a teacher, the reality when I graduated in 1990 was that there were not enough jobs. I spent six years as a secretary for nonprofit organizations as well as a personal assistant. By 1996, I was ready to embark on my dream.

I finished my credential at a wonderful private university on the San Francisco Peninsula in 1998. The job I was offered, to teach a fourth- and fifth-grade class of 27 students at a public elementary school that was one of two alternative schools in the district, was completely over my head. The school’s philosophy was based on project and hands-on learning. The kids were taught by ability, not grade level, and I had not been prepared for this type of classroom.

I was given math and history textbooks; I had a huge shelf with a mishmash of literature books. I needed one-on-one lesson-planning help. I needed a true partner teacher. I did not have anyone who helped me figure out what to teach.

My BTSA coach couldn’t show up until December. The principal hired a retired teacher to help educate me on the school’s philosophy, but she ended up criticizing me and meeting secretly with my students’ parents.

In February the principal divided up my fifth-graders among my grade-level partners, leaving me with 14 fourth-graders. It was made clear to me I didn’t belong there.

I was devastated, but stuck out the

rest of the year thanks to my BTSA coach and my students. At the school promotion, I was excluded from sitting with the other fifth-grade teachers, but my former students, one by one, walked around to hug me. Thankfully, I was given a formal apology by the superintendent of human resources, which validated me and gave me the will to continue.

That summer I attended our church’s annual trip to the barrios of Mexico to build homes. Those four days put my entire life in perspective. No matter what I thought my problems were, they were nothing compared to these beautiful people who endured unspeakable poverty. I ended up participating four more times and the experiences have impacted me to this day.

Still too insecure to get a full-time position, I was gifted with two long-term subbing jobs in 1999-2000 at South San Francisco Unified. I learned how to plan, how to implement curriculum and how to encourage students, and I was given praise I didn’t think possible.

After two years at another district, I was let go for a reason that still eludes me today. I felt I was the only person in the history of teaching to be let go from two school districts. Then my credential adviser guided me to Fremont Unified, which changed my life. Not only did I meet with amazingly supportive colleagues, but I met my future husband there as well. We were married two years after I was hired and two months after I was given tenure! I was 37.

For the past six years, I’ve been an active union member and teaching leader, serving as my school site rep. As a result, I know

“My advice to new teachers in tough situations: Believe in yourself. You’re not alone — know that there are people you can turn to for support.”

our contract and am able to advise new teachers and do my best to stand up for them so they do not have to experience the difficulties I did. I also voice my hope that new teachers will have more support and rights. New teachers often don’t want to rock the boat — they’re too fearful, as I was.

My advice to new teachers who are in tough situations is: Believe in yourself. You’re not alone — know that there are people you can turn to for support. If you don’t feel comfortable with school colleagues or administrators, go to your colleagues in the union — your site rep or local chapter president — to ask for help and let them know what’s going on. These are people you can trust. Ask what your options are to improve your skills, such as a Peer Assistance and Review program. Make sure someone explains all the procedures and options.

Teaching is a job you are putting your heart into each day. I love the creativity, autonomy and the daily excitement students give unconditionally. For the last eight years, I have taught first-graders whose enthusiasm amazes me and fills me with joy I never knew in any other job. ■

Kim Darling Loisel, Fremont Unified District Teachers Association, teaches first grade and is a site rep at Ardenwood School in Fremont.



FEATURE

TO THE RESCUE

In a disaster, K-CORPS is ready to roll

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

▲
K-CORPS
students practice
securing and
transporting
a "victim."



“Through this program, students learn things that very often lead to a career path. They develop leadership skills and confidence. And they are helping so many people in the process.”

—Taryn Larson, Kelseyville Unified Teachers Association



▲ K-CORPS is taught by Joanie Holt, left, assisted by Taryn Larson.

In rural areas of Northern California, it’s not unusual for people to need rescuing. A hiker may wander off the trail; a child might leave a campsite when nobody’s looking; a plane crash can require search parties to scour mountainous, densely vegetated areas on foot. Then there are natural disasters such as wildfires and floods.

Those in jeopardy are sometimes surprised that it’s not just adults lending a hand. High school students also join search and rescue efforts to perform lifesaving work.

K-CORPS (Kelseyville Community Organization for Rescue and Public Service) is a unique program that has been in existence since 1975 at Kelseyville High School in Lake County. Taught by Joanie Holt with assistance from Taryn Larson, both members of the Kelseyville Unified Teachers Association, it’s the only program of its kind in California and possibly the nation.

Both Holt and Larson are graduates of Kelseyville High who went through the program themselves. Their experiences as students made such a strong impression that they decided to pay it forward and not only continue the program, but strengthen it.

Back when Holt was a high school

student in 1984, she participated in the rescue of a dentist who crashed his plane into Mount Konocti with two daughters aboard. All the passengers survived.

“When we found the airplane, we had to cut a path through the manzanita,” recalls Holt, who also teaches PE and health. “The chainsaw snapped, so we had to keep the survivors warm by lighting a fire until the firefighters could bring a firefighting convict crew with a new chainsaw and cut a path to the plane. It was very emotional and scary. We had to make sure they wouldn’t go into shock. I remember thinking, ‘What if this was *my* family?’”

Larson, who teaches math at Kelseyville High, is proud to follow in the footsteps of her former K-CORPS teachers and partner with a school alum.

“When I was a student, it was an honor and a privilege to be a member,” she recalls. “And today, it still is. I’m just so





▲ “Oldies” (senior students) training “greenies” (juniors) on how to build a lowering system. Photo courtesy K-CORPS

proud of these kids. Through this program, students learn things that very often lead to a career path. They develop leadership skills and confidence. And of course, they are helping so many people in the process.”

TRUST, LEADERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY

During the two years that students participate in the program, they work closely with Lake County Search and Rescue and the Sheriff’s Department. Cross-trained as first responders, the 12 juniors and 12 seniors are certified in CPR and trained in packaging and transporting victims; technical rope rescue and rappelling; radio communication; tracking; swift water rescue; map and compass use; and disaster training. Recently, students flew in a helicopter with members of the National Guard, who taught them how to properly lower ropes for rescue operations.

K-CORPS members are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. In emergencies, they may be asked to go to Marin, Sonoma, Contra Costa, Mendocino, Trinity and other counties. It is not uncommon to receive a call in the middle of the night telling them to report to school in 15 minutes.

In addition to searching for and rescuing missing persons, they assist with body recoveries and searches for evidence. All students must protect the confidentiality of those they are assisting and their families.

Sometimes K-CORPS members play “victims” for mass casualty trainings conducted by hospital or law enforcement agencies. They also provide traffic control for community events, serve as CPR instructors for middle school students, run canned food drives, and assist organizations in Lake County.

“This is an amazing group of kids,” says Holt. “They may be high

schoolers, but they are the best of the best. They can handle just about anything.”

READY FOR ACTION

Over the past few years, Lake County has been devastated by wildfires, and members of K-CORPS played a key role in helping residents who were forced to flee their homes. During the Valley Fire in 2015 and the Clayton Fire last year, K-CORPS members helped operate evacuation centers, assisted with traffic flow, looked for evidence of missing persons in burned areas, and informed residents when it was safe to return home. In both fires, students organized themselves in shifts to offer help 24 hours a day.

“We enjoyed helping out during the fire,” says Juan Villa, an “oldie,” or senior student. “There were a lot of people coming together in the community, and it was a touching time for everyone.”

Oldie Kallianne Otte handed out masks and supplies for residents who lost their homes.

“One lady started crying, and we all gave her a hug,” Otte says. “It was eye-opening to realize the impact we can have on the lives of others.”

In Mendocino County in 2007, members assisted in a search for a missing woman who had been lost for 36 hours. They helped locate her at the bottom of a hill that wasn’t safe to walk down. While responders from several nearby counties also assisted, K-CORPS was the only team

that had ropes and technical rescue gear on hand, as well as the training to use them. Students successfully rescued the woman, and after a debriefing following the incident, received a standing ovation from the other agencies involved.

During another search in Lake County the same year, K-CORPS members assisted in finding a missing elderly woman with Alzheimer's. After hiking through thick brush, they located her in a deep ravine. She had injuries that prevented her from being able to walk out, and the terrain prevented them from carrying her out, so they built a fire to keep her warm and dry. The team stayed with her overnight, and in the morning packaged her so the helicopter could lift her out and transport her to the hospital.

"There's nothing like it," says Cassidy Holmes, a senior squad leader who has been on many callouts with K-CORPS. "It's great to be able to help someone in need and help to save a life."

Recently, a Bay Area man hiking in snow became lost. Holmes was among those who helped find him. "He was so scared and said, 'Thank God you're here.' He was so thankful. It was really emotional and rewarding to help someone in need." The man recently came to the K-CORPS classroom to personally thank the students and tell his story.

Holmes was also involved in efforts to locate a 5-year-old boy who became lost in the Willits area.

"We found him at the top of a hill when the sun rose. It was the best feeling ever."

K-CORPS FOSTERS COMMUNITY

Budget cuts have threatened the program over the years, and at times K-CORPS has been on the chopping block. But community members rallied in support of the program because they see it as providing an important service.

The program has received a commendation from the Office of the Attorney General and a Golden Bell Award from the state superintendent of public instruction, and has logged more than 80,000 man-hours of service.

Students say they love knowing they are making a difference. K-CORPS gives them the opportunity to build strong bonds with their peers, which last long past graduation. The program also can help them choose their careers, and some graduates have segued into law enforcement and medical careers.



▲ Joanie Holt checks Carli Mendonca's helmet in front of the students' emergency packs.



▲ Joanie Holt demonstrating how to rappel off a bridge. Photo courtesy K-CORPS

GREENIES AND OLDIES

The Kelseyville Community Organization for Rescue and Public Service course is broken down into two phases, the "greenie" year for 12 juniors and the "oldie" year for 12 seniors. New members are chosen by instructors Joanie Holt and Taryn Larson and the current oldies, with final approval from the Lake County Sheriff's Department. Students must keep a minimum 2.5 GPA to remain in the program.

Greenies spend their first year learning necessary skills, which they teach to new members the following year. The academically challenging course is taught during seventh period at day's end.

At the end of the year, all greenies attend a five-day overnight practical final at a state park, where they are tested on what they have learned. Depending on their performance during class and this testing period, greenies are placed in leadership positions they will assume as oldies.

Oldies are organized into squads, and some are chosen to specialize in specific functions such as trackers, medics and techs (technical rescuers). Although each oldie is fully qualified to perform all these duties, the specialists are the first to be called when a specific need arises.

Timothy Wichlaz, a "greenie" or junior, says he will never forget the moment when he was invited to join the group that has made such an impact in his life.

"I had been struggling the previous year, and Mrs. Holt pulled me aside and told me that joining would be a great way to build leadership skills and be part of a team. I'm so glad I did. I love coming here every day. It feels just like a second family to me." ■

EMBRACING the GENDER

Spectrum

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

Every day, educators deal with situations where gender plays a central role, whether it's curriculum that reinforces gender stereotypes or bullying in the schoolyard.

They're encountering a range of gender identities and expressions among both students and colleagues. While school settings can be tolerant, challenges remain: A recent national survey of 28,000 transgender individuals by the National Center for Transgender Equality found that 17 percent experienced such severe mistreatment at school, including verbal harassment and physical violence, that they left.

Educators in public schools must lead the charge to a greater understanding of the gender spectrum. Under California Education Code Section 234.1, in fact, they are required to provide a supportive learning environment and protect every student from discrimination and harassment.

In the following pages we'll meet some educators who are doing exactly that, with compassion. They take their cues from the brave students who choose to live outside traditional norms and are a model for moving forward.



Lilly

is 13. She loves photography, dance class and gymnastics. She is friendly, smart, and like many girls her age sometimes giggly.

When she was born, her parents assumed she was a boy. But deep inside, she “always knew” she was a girl. Even at age 2, she wanted to dress up as a princess and play with dolls.

At age 4, she informed her parents that she was a girl, not a boy, and they accepted her as a daughter.

“We didn’t know what to expect, but Lilly, with all her strength and courage, brought us along,” says her father, Eric Nilsson, a former teacher and retired school principal. “She told us, ‘This is who I am.’ She led the way.”

Her mother, Julie Nilsson, a Title I coordinator and member of the Chico Unified Teachers Association (CUTA), was also supportive of the transition.

“It’s not a choice,” she explains. “We have to honor a child who expresses who they are and how they want the world to see them.”

Classrooms more gender-diverse

Transgender students like Lilly are becoming more common in classrooms, expressing their authentic selves at earlier ages, sometimes even in preschool, say CTA members. There is no hard data



“It’s something I think people should know about, so they can understand. We are just like anybody else — and want to be treated like anybody else.”

—*TRANSGENDER STUDENT LILLY, AGE 13*

on the numbers, but a 2015 survey in Wisconsin found that 1.5 percent of students identified as transgender.

People who are transgender identify differently from the sex they were assigned at birth based on their anatomy. Some compare it to being “trapped” in the wrong body. When a student transitions to the gender they identify with, they often change their name, pronoun, hairstyle and clothing. Their transition may include taking hormones to prevent the “wrong” puberty from taking place, or surgery. However, not all transgender individuals seek medical care as part of their transition or have access to such care.

“At the beginning of the year, I learned that I had a transgender student in my classroom,” recalls Dawn Davis, an English teacher at Chico Junior High, located in a rural Northern California college town. “Shortly afterward, I had another trans student come out to me. Later, I was introduced to a third. Two of the three were female to male. Prior to this year, I had never been aware of any transgender students.”

Davis, a member of CUTA, doesn’t ask students about gender or

separate them into boys and girls when lining up or choosing teams. When Lilly shared at the beginning of the year that she was transgender, Davis reacted positively.

“I said, ‘That’s fantastic! What can I do to help you feel safe and comfortable at school?’ That was a gift she gave me — the gift of trust.”

Where students fit on the gender spectrum

People who are transgender have received lots of media attention, but it is just one option on the gender spectrum, which has expanded from the binary system of two genders (male and female) to being “gender expansive” with a range of identities and expressions.

Students may identify:

- As “gender nonconforming,” because their gender expression falls outside what is considered typical for their assigned sex at birth.
- With both genders as “ambigender.”
- With neither gender as “agender” or non-binary gender.
- As “gender fluid,” not having a fixed gender.
- As “questioning,” which means they are unsure of or exploring their gender identity.

THE PRONOUNS



Feminine: she, her, hers, herself

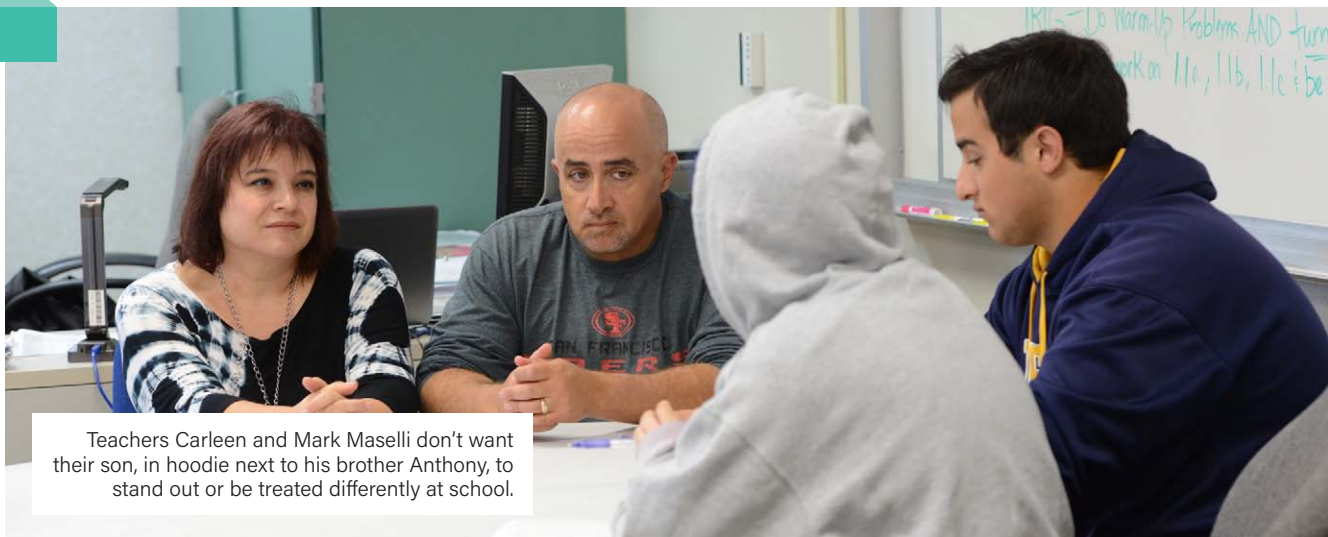


Masculine: he, him, his, himself



Gender-neutral: they, them, their, themselves; ze, hir, hirs, hirself (pronounced zee, hear, hears)





Teachers Carleen and Mark Maselli don't want their son, in hoodie next to his brother Anthony, to stand out or be treated differently at school.

Most people, gay and straight, are “cis-gender,” meaning their gender assigned at birth, also called their biological sex, matches their gender identity.

Gender identity is often confused with sexual orientation, one’s romantic or sexual attraction to people of a certain gender. Along with gay, lesbian, bisexual and straight, sexual orientation now includes the terms “pansexual,” where individuals are attracted to people regardless of gender identity or biology, and “asexual,” where there is no attraction to people of any gender. Everyone has a gender identity and sexual orientation.

For Davis, such flexibility feels like a further shattering of gender stereotypes that has been taking place over decades.

“We grew up in a culture where boys wear blue and girls wear pink. But more people believe girls don’t have to wear pink and girls can be scientists — or that boys can wear tutus. We are letting people express themselves in ways they want to, without putting them into little boxes. As teachers, we want kids to accept themselves and love themselves. I want my students to know that if they are transgender, I will help them feel safe, welcome and treat them with dignity.”

Transgender students and the law

At a school in Southern California last year, a second-grader announced he would wear girls’ clothes, use the girls’ restroom and assume a girl’s name. Staff were

flummoxed. A teacher blamed the parents and called Child Protective Services. An investigation ensued, and the family was traumatized. They were eventually cleared of wrongdoing.

“The other kids in the class were perfectly fine and didn’t have an issue with it, while the adults were freaking out,” recalls a CTA member there. “Eventually teachers calmed down and got used to it.”

Students in California have been allowed to wear clothing, use restrooms and locker rooms, and participate on sports teams matching their gender identity since enactment of the School Success and Opportunity Act — the so-called restroom law — in 2014. This covers all students regardless of age.

Not all educators are entirely comfortable teaching transgender students, observes *Schools in Transition: A Guide for Supporting Transgender Students in K-12 Schools*, a publication developed by Gender Spectrum, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, the ACLU, NEA, and the Human Rights Campaign. However, regardless of an educator’s comfort level, it is their responsibility under law to provide a supportive learning environment and protect every student from discrimination and harassment.

California’s restroom law led the way for other states to follow. Opponents predicted it would cause problems, such as students pretending to be transgender to sneak a peek, but this has not been an



“As teachers, we want kids to accept themselves and love themselves. I want my students to know that if they are transgender, I will help them feel safe, welcome and treat them with dignity.”

—DAWN DAVIS, CHICO UNIFIED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

issue. A 2015 study by Media Matters in America of 12 states with restroom laws found none reported harassment or inappropriate behavior as a result of allowing transgender students to access facilities they are comfortable with.

According to AB 1732, signed into law in September, all single-stall public bathrooms in California, including ones in businesses, government buildings and

Gender-DIVERSE STUDENTS

DO:

Have students introduce themselves on the first day of school with the name they would like to be called instead of reading off a roster, so students can share the name they are most comfortable with.

Seek opportunities to infuse information about gender diversity into lessons and examine gender stereotypes when possible. In math, for example: "There were 15 girls, 12 boys and two non-binary students on the playground. How many in all?"

Ask *all* students their PGP (preferred gender pronoun) when you meet them. Just because they look one way doesn't mean they are. They may prefer male, female, or gender-neutral such as "ze" and "hir" (see sidebar, page 21).

If you have a PRIDE month curriculum, and most schools should, make sure the T is not silent in LGBTQ.

Actively include transgender people in curriculum, such as Sylvia Rivera, founder of the Gay Liberation Front, and fellow activist Marsha P. Johnson.

Use gender-neutral language. Instead of "ladies and gentlemen" use terms such as "students" or "scholars."

DON'T:

Ask a student about their anatomy or whether they are taking hormones or having gender-reassignment surgery. This information is personal and private.

Out a student to school staff, parents, or others in the school community.

Make an LGBTQ+ student the "poster child" for sexuality or gender issue discussions or call attention to a student on the gender spectrum.

Ask students to line up by gender or pick teams of "boys vs. girls."

Make assumptions. Not all transgender people — or those on the gender spectrum — may express their gender in stereotypical ways.



Educator Julie Nilsson, mother of Lilly, supports her daughter's transition.

schools, become gender-neutral — open to everyone — on March 1, 2017.

President Obama ordered a policy under Title IX allowing transgender students to use bathrooms of their choice in all states, but this decision was overturned by a federal court in Texas, and President Trump rescinded the policy in February. That won't impact California, but some fear the new administration could make life more difficult for students who defy gender norms.

The right to know?

A common legal question is whether others in the school community have a right to know about a student's transition. The answer is no. A student's transgender status, legal name and sex assigned at birth are confidential medical information, and disclosure may violate the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and

constitutional privacy protections. Without permission from the student and the family, such information should not be shared with anyone, including other students, parents and school personnel. The school district should implement safeguards to prevent such disclosures.

When it comes to informing parents that their child is transgender, the law is less clear. But most advocates including the ACLU believe the decision to share gender status should be up to the student, not the school. According to a 2015 survey by the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE), 10 percent of transgender people who came out to their immediate families reported that a family member was violent toward because they were transgender; 8 percent were kicked out of their home; and 10 percent ran away from home — a third before the age of 15.

"Schools should not out LGBT students without their consent," says Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) executive director Eliza Byard. "Outing a student not only violates their right to privacy, but also could compromise their safety. Parents can be notified of their child being bullied at school, but without schools' disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity."

Protections "beyond the bathroom"

Enacting laws is one thing, implementing them is another, observes Joel Baum, senior director of Gender Spectrum, a Bay Area-based organization that offers professional development to school employees throughout the U.S. about gender-diverse students.

"We have policies and law, but





"I treat all my students with honesty and empathy, and when they feel comfortable, they do well."

—**LUCIA LEMIEUX**, UNIFIED ASSOCIATION OF CONEJO TEACHERS

schools may have an implementation gap when it comes to what educators are supposed to do with that information in the classroom or when supervising kids on the yard. What happened with the teacher who called Child Protective Services is not uncommon. It shows a lack of information and understanding, which caused that teacher to make a judgment call."

The fact that students weren't fazed in that particular classroom while adults were panicking is typical, adds Baum, who notes, "Kids are way ahead of us when it comes to comfort around gender diversity."

But transgender students are often the victims of bullying and harassment by peers at school. The NCTE 2015 survey of 27,715 people who were openly transgender in school found that 77 percent experienced some form of mistreatment during their school years: 54 percent were verbally harassed, 24 percent were physically attacked, 13 percent were sexually assaulted, and 17 percent left

school to avoid mistreatment. Students who experience higher levels of victimization based on gender expression are more likely to be at risk for substance abuse, suicide, not going to college, and problems finding employment.

For Lilly, school has always been difficult. She was teased after transitioning in elementary school. And when she entered middle school, students who knew her in elementary school told others that she used to be a boy and harassed her. The teachers and principal were welcoming and supportive, but she felt singled out, which is awkward for anyone in middle school.

Eventually the pressure became too great, and she decided to leave school. Davis, her former teacher, cried when she heard Lilly decided to be homeschooled.

Lilly's parents were saddened that their daughter did not feel safe at school, but pleased to hear that the district will improve its efforts to help gender-diverse students succeed.

Lucia Lemieux created training for staff at her school to become more educated about students on the gender spectrum.

Resources FOR A GENDER EXPANSIVE CLASSROOM

Gender Spectrum offers professional development and resources, including *Schools in Transition: A Guide for Supporting Transgender Students in K-12 Schools*.

► genderspectrum.org/resources/education-2

GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network) has been providing K-12 education resources to schools since 1990. ► glsen.org

PFLAG has chapters working in local communities to provide training and resources for schools to create an environment free of bullying and harassment. Formerly known as Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, it has expanded to include support for those who are transgender. ► pflag.org

"Having bathroom laws is a good start," says Julie Nilsson. "But schools still have a long way to go, and it's time for educators to start thinking beyond the bathroom."

Lilly says she misses hanging out with her friends and hopes that by the time she's old enough to enter high school, being transgender won't be a big deal.

"I'd really like to educate people about what it means to me, so they aren't always asking questions," says Lilly. "It's something I think people should know about, so they can understand. We are just like anybody else — and want to be treated like anybody else. My goal is to be an advocate about this."

Working with families to ensure a smooth transition

For 14 years he lived as a girl, but he now identifies as a boy. He's out to close friends and school staff, and his parents have worked closely with Benicia High School to ensure a smooth transition. His mother, Carleen Maselli, teaches at his school, and

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE 'GENDER LIBERATED'?

By **Sam DeMuro**

Many cisgender people (those whose gender identity matches their biological sex) live their lives without questioning or thinking about their gender. Yet today there is increasing discussion about gender equity, challenging gender stereotypes and roles, and gender liberation. What does it mean to be "gender liberated"?

Some of us believe that the way we wear and style our hair, the clothes we choose, the way we walk, speak or act is biologically determined. Many sociologists, psychologists and gender theorists argue that it's important to see a difference between what is biological and what is a social construction. When we talk about biology, such as chromosomes, hormones, internal and external sex organs, we're talking about *sex*. *Gender*, on the other hand, is a social construction we place upon people, comprising the characteristics, norms and roles that our society deems as feminine or masculine.

The more we learn of people of trans experience, and talk with those who express gender differently and challenge societal norms, the more we realize that gender is more fluid and diverse than just simple feminine and masculine categories. Cisgender people are also challenging gender norms. Many women are the breadwinners in their homes. Some dads are staying home to have a more active role in rearing children. Some of us may feel constrained by only two gender options, especially if those options limit how we're able to express ourselves and live our lives. Restrictive gender norms affect us all.

Adults, families, educators and peers all play a role in reinforcing these norms. Using phrases like "Boys don't cry," "Be more ladylike," "Boys will be boys," "Man up!" and "Girls don't do that" may seem harmless, but can have a real impact on how a child expresses emotion and develops a sense of self.

Gender norms and expectations can have harmful effects on children. Research at the University of Warwick in 2014 found that placing unnatural gendered expectations on kids is a detriment to their physical and mental well-being. Young girls expressed feeling they had to downplay their own abilities,

As educators, we can create gender liberated spaces by welcoming all the diverse ways to express gender, and not limiting what girls and boys can do in the classroom.

his brother Anthony is a student there, so he has a built-in support system.

Last summer he announced he was transitioning from female to male. His mother, a math teacher and member of the Benicia Teachers Association, and his father, Mark Maselli, a teacher in nearby

Pittsburg and a Pittsburg Education Association member, met with an administrator and a counselor before school began to share what was happening.

"Teachers here haven't had much experience with this, so we wanted to make sure things went well," says his mother. "The

important thing for transgender students is that they should not stand out or be treated differently. All parents want for their kids is to find joy in life and to know they are loved for who they are."

The student, who does not want a facial photo or first name published,



Download posters for your classroom or school, including the one at left, at CTA's Social Justice Toolkit at cta.org/forallstudents. (Take the pledge to support public education while you're there!)

and had to pretend to be less intelligent and less interested in sports for fear of being "unfeminine." Young boys expressed feeling they had to constantly prove their masculinity and power over others, such as by suppressing their emotions to appear strong and picking fights. When there are strict gender norms in place, kids are likely to bully others who do not fit into the gender "box."

The truth is, kids have much more open-minded ideas about gender. No one wants to feel constrained by their gender, and adults talking about it with kids at a young age will help them recognize when something is limiting their potential.

To be gender liberated, then, is not necessarily to erase gender, but rather to expand our ideas of what gender can look like and how it's expressed, and allow the space to define it for ourselves. Someone who is gender liberated is not confined by gender stereotypes and roles, but instead chooses to express their gender in ways that feel comfortable to them.

As educators, we can create gender liberated spaces by welcoming all the diverse ways to express gender, and not limiting what girls and boys can do in the classroom. We can still celebrate our differences and acknowledge challenges, but be open to new ideas of gender expression.

Free resources to learn more and spark conversations about gender can be found at CTA's Social Justice Toolkit (cta.org/forallstudents).



says that things have been OK at school for the most part, and his teachers are using his correct name and the pronoun “he.” He is doing well in his classes, and he’s glad staff aren’t making a fuss over him. He says he is not teased or harassed.

When asked his goals, he replies, “I just want to get through school quickly and quietly.”

(Gender Spectrum observes that the majority of transgender students hope to “escape notice” in school and survive rather than flourish.)

The student says it’s a relief to finally live life as the boy he always knew he was.

“You acknowledge it and move on,” he shrugs in typical teenage fashion. “It had to happen.”

There is no one-size-fits-all plan to help a student transition at school. In some situations it is private; in others, public. In either case, schools and parents working together

in the best interest of the student should be an ongoing process, and school employees should follow up with transgender students regularly to assess their well-being. Schools can also provide the family with referrals to local resources, nonprofits, mental health providers and support groups if additional support is needed.

Schools may consider training some educators to be advocates for LGBTQ+ students and make it known to students that there is a go-to person on campus.

Making schools more inclusive

English and creative writing teacher Lucia Lemieux has taught six students she knew were transgender at Newbury Park High School in Thousand Oaks. She suspects she has taught others without knowing.

Inside her classroom is a rainbow flag and a sign proclaiming that her room is a “safe space.” She relates to students who have been bullied; a few years ago, she was bullied by adults in her community for organizing a Day of Silence on her campus to create awareness of the struggles of LGBTQ+ youth. The bullying against her included some hateful emails.

When her school decided to develop a training for staff to become more educated about transgender students and others on the gender spectrum, she was asked by her principal to create it.

“As a straight but not narrow woman, I cannot ever know what it is like to walk in their shoes, but I can listen and advocate,” says Lemieux, a Unified Association of Conejo Teachers member who serves as adviser for the Gay Straight Alliance on



Joel Baum

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California Schools Employee Benefits Association



campus. "Being an adolescent is hard enough, let alone having to deal with one's gender identity."

Her training, "Cisgender, Transgender and a Lot in Between," covers the lingo, the law and important issues relating to gender-diverse youth. "But it's also a matter of being compassionate," she tells colleagues. "I treat all my students with honesty and empathy, and when they feel comfortable, they do well."

The best way to help gender expansive students succeed is simple: Create a school environment that is welcoming and gender inclusive for all students, beginning as early as kindergarten with age-appropriate materials, rather than waiting until it's perceived that there is a need. Students can understand that all individuals are unique and there is no single way to be a girl or a boy. When

Lilly's father, Eric Nilsson, says, "She told us, 'This is who I am.' She led the way."



school environments respect and affirm gender diversity, students also become more accepting of different races, religions and people. Also, schools should address harassment and bullying with research-based interventions and social justice programs.

"You can either put the fires out or be in the business of fire prevention," says Baum.

"Ongoing learning is key. Educators need to engage in regular professional development to build a school climate that avoids gender stereotyping and affirms the gender of all children. Every child has the right to learn in a safe and accepting school environment. And supporting gender expansive students gives schools an opportunity to help all children succeed." ■



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CTA Board members Roberto Rodriguez and Barbara Dawson flank Assembly Member Todd Gloria (D-San Diego).

Legislative Update

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT that educators are involved in the political process? Because it's where most decisions are made about education policy, learning conditions of our students, and working conditions of all education employees.

The CTA student-centered advocacy agenda, "The Public Education All California Students Deserve" (see cta.org/advocacyagenda), outlines strategies that improve and enhance student learning, are essential to providing a quality public education to all of California's 9 million students, build stronger local communities, and help maintain public education as the cornerstone of our democratic society.

On Feb. 22, the CTA Board of Directors held a meet and greet with lawmakers while representing their fellow 325,000 educators. Led by CTA President Eric Heins, Vice President Theresa Montaño and Secretary-Treasurer David Goldberg, CTA Board members spoke with lawmakers about key priorities for educators this session, all based on the advocacy agenda.

They talked about CTA's Resolution of Unity, Resolve and Resilience: A Call to Action for the Public Education *All* California's Students Deserve, which calls for a strong, inclusive, safe and innovative public education system that ensures all students can succeed; and they invited lawmakers to sign the resolution. (You can view the resolution and sign it at cta.org/forallstudents.)

They also presented lawmakers with CTA's Social Justice Toolkit (on the same webpage), which has resources to help educators

ensure schools are safe havens for all students; encourage local school boards to adopt the resolution; report incidents; and speak up and share on social media.

"We are social justice advocates because we care deeply about *all* students. We support safe-haven schools, sanctuary cities, and immigration rights that keep families together and allow DREAMers to go to college," said CTA President Eric Heins. "We are proud to co-sponsor AB 699 by Assembly Member Patrick O'Donnell, which prohibits discrimination based on a student's immigration status and provides protections."

Did You Know?

- Charter schools are not subject to open meetings and open records laws, so parents and taxpayers don't have full transparency and can't see how the money is being spent. They ignore requirements to enroll all students from the community — turning down students with special needs.
- Evidence shows this lack of accountability has led to financial gains for for-profit charter operators, but has too often been disastrous for thousands of California students and has cost taxpayers millions of dollars in waste, fraud and abuse.
- Public education should be about kids, not profits. Instead of subsidizing corporate charter schools run by for-profit companies with taxpayer dollars, we should be using the money to strengthen local neighborhood public schools for all California children.

member Reggie Jones-Sawyer (D-Los Angeles), and SB 808 by Senator Tony Mendoza (D-Artesia) are three bills CTA will be working to enact this legislative session. They are aimed at ensuring all students attending our public schools have the quality education they need and deserve. ■



Now Hear This

Radio ads for CTA's Kids Not Profits campaign against California's corporate charter schools are being broadcast on multiple stations. The campaign developed out of concern from educators, parents, civil rights and community groups for greater accountability and transparency for privately managed charter schools. Hear the ads at kidsnotprofits.com.

Kids, Not Profits

Backed by a group of billionaires with their own agenda for public education, a new industry around charter schools is growing in California. Charter schools are taxpayer-funded public schools that are frequently operated by for-profit corporations. While these privately managed corporate charter schools receive billions in California taxpayer dollars every year, they are not required to follow the same laws and regulations that regular neighborhood public schools must follow.

CTA is once again co-sponsoring legislation calling for higher standards and more accountability for these privately managed charter schools.

AB 1360 by Assembly Member Rob Bonta (D-Alameda), AB 1478 by Assembly Mem-

Making the LCAP Work

Chapter leaders talk about using LCAP to improve schools, empower educators

The Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) is a powerful tool to build and engage membership and organize. Together with the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), LCAP decisions have great impact on students and schools — not only in test scores, but in broader indicators such as school climate and English learner progress. These indicators are monitored in the new California School Dashboard, part of the state's new accountability system. (See cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/cm.)

Local chapters are embracing this opportunity to get involved in the LCAP process. At January State Council, CTA held a forum on how several chapters are using the process to advance their priorities and empower educators. Panelists included **Lorena Garcia**, Southwest Teachers Association president; **Trish Gorham**, Oakland Education Association president; **Brian Guerrero**, Lennox Teachers Association president; and **Greg Price**, Visalia Unified Teachers Association president.

The leaders discussed how the LCAP process can engage members in the work of the union; advance teacher-led professional development; create a common agenda with the community for needed school programs and resources; and build new relationships with district administration. We excerpt their comments here.

To see the forum in full, go to bit.ly/2kO8f1q.



LORENA GARCIA:

We've been able to unify, organize and empower members and parents.

We knew we had to engage members and go out to the community and parents about district programs and priorities. We talked to members about what's important to them.

Face to face communication is key. We went to site meetings. We had one-on-ones. We took the temperature of members with surveys. Students are surveyed in grades 5-8 — a climate-type survey about how they feel at their sites; do they feel safe?

We used all that to guide us with LCAP. Our executive board met with the district. We insisted that they have parent meetings with translators. We made sure to include counselors, nurses. Retirees helped us. They stood outside and gave info to parents.

The district gave us rough drafts throughout the process. If our priorities were not reflected in the rough drafts, we made sure to communicate that to the school board and community. Sometimes that meant filling the room, which we did a lot last year.

We had to revise how funds are being used. The LCAP is not set in stone; it can be adjusted.

We keep organizing. The theory of action behind LCFF is that all major stakeholders are involved in making decisions.



TRISH GORHAM:

We have been showing up in the community, not to lead but to work with and be present for those communities. Sometimes it means connecting on a social level or political level. That interconnectedness has given us great inroads into the community because we are part of the community — 65 percent of Oakland teachers live in Oakland. So we can leverage that.

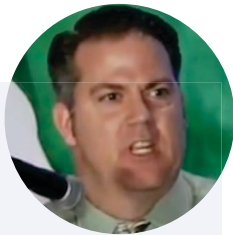
Four keys groups we work with around the LCAP are Californians for Justice (a student organization), Oakland Community Organizations (a local PICO network), Parent Leadership Action Network, and Public Advocates. We trust them to take leadership; it is better that it is the community leading.

In the first year, the district was going around with PowerPoints trying to tell us what their priorities were. Teachers and the parents did not buy that at all, but our voices were heard — with each meeting, the message from the district changed based on what was said at the previous meeting.

OEA did organizing, education and some agitation around the school site council (SSC) — that's where the on-the-ground organizing has to be. Rules and regulations around SSCs are very powerful to get the message across to get the programs at the school site that are truly needed. In the first year we touched 40 schools with training in the SSC.

The LCAP has to come out from the school site and be developed based on what your school community needs are — that is its promise. We redirected the discussion from how to spend money to what are the programs we really need for our kids. You can't spend anything unless it's in the SSC program. (Photo: Matthew Hardy)





BRIAN GUERRERO:

We have been participating since the beginning. Lennox was fortunate to be involved in the Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA) program, so we maintained a lot of those programs, and pushed the idea of teacher leadership. Teachers were involved in how much money should be spent. Teachers were in position to lead. The district saw this and worked with us to develop plans to benefit students.

Our LCAP committee has teachers from every one of our schools. Because of our relationship with parents, we pushed to get a parent from every school.

Working together, we've been able to establish an elementary PE program, and a planning period at our middle school. Every one of our schools has a counselor, and the middle school has several. We maintained QEIA class sizes — we use LCAP money to show district and parents that size matters. We started intervention programs. We've been re-evaluating to see if they're working.

It's not just a committee decision. All teachers go back to teachers at their sites. Parents have responsibility as well; the community members and parents can go before school board meetings the next year to ask why certain things didn't happen.

We out-engaged Parent Revolution by asking parents, "Do they really represent your kids? We are the ones advocating for your kids in the classroom, in schools, in districts." Parents will come to us and ask if something is true, because we have a relationship.



GREG PRICE:

With LCAP, when there is change, there is opportunity. We should be out there talking to parents and schools, and getting things done for our kids. Our district doesn't engage parents — the real trick is to get parents to believe their voice matters. There is opportunity to establish parity between labor and management.

Our LCAP process is unique. All of our supplemental and concentration grants are in LCAP. The grants are meant to bridge the achievement gap. I'm getting buy-in from the community, school board members and staff. Our SSC training required principals to attend; they had an "aha!" moment of understanding what LCAP should be. Every school site is given \$100,000 to do things they need to do with kids. That's important.

We're working together in partnerships, with principals and school site members. We talk about how we're going to impact kids. We will focus on eight of the schools with highest needs, in areas such as math intervention teachers for first- and second-graders and smaller class sizes. We have one of our reps and one of our school site members attend the meetings.

We want to replace all of our band uniforms in a four-year cycle — this costs \$80,000 per high school. We're gathering signatures for our plan, and will present this to our board to say this is what we want to do with our LCAP program.

We look at the funds. Is the district actually spending the money? We hold them to what they spent and where the rest of the money went. Districts have a habit of moving funds around. Getting answers in written form is important.

LCFF: What to Know

The Local Control Funding Formula, passed by the state Legislature in 2013, was designed to provide:

- More resources to meet education needs of low-income students, English learners and foster youth.
- More autonomy and flexibility to local districts on how to spend the money, requiring them to engage with parents, teachers and the community in setting funding priorities.
- An equal "base grant" per student, with additional grants for 1) each high-need student served and 2) each high-need student served by the district over a 55 percent threshold.

Districts are required to develop a three-year spending and academic plan, called the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), which guides and measures goals and outcomes.

Resources are available to help local chapters prepare for opportunities presented in the new LCAP. Consult with your chapter and CTA staff member. What more do you want to know about the LCAP process? Send questions to CTAPresident@CTA.org.

CALIFORNIA SCHOOL DASHBOARD The California School Dashboard, which helps parents, educators and the public evaluate schools and districts, identify strengths and weaknesses, and provide targeted assistance, is up and running (see cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/cm).

Educators can sign up for spring workshops offered by the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence, focused on the relationship between the Dashboard (formerly known as LCFF Evaluation Rubrics) and the LCAP Template. Workshops are in March and April around the state and are open to all — including parents/guardians, students, community members, school and district staff. See ccee-ca.org.

Vindicated Redding charter educators, from left: Rosanne Blevins, Cindy Silva, Candy Woodson, Robin Thorne, Peggy Youmans, Christy Gadbois-Vail, Wendy McBroom, Mark Youmans. Not pictured: Shana Seitz. Photo by Timothy M. McBroom.



Photo: Marcie Mitchell

SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO SEEKS FAIRNESS

Frustrated with being denied fair raises despite a teacher turnover problem and their school district's reserve of \$51 million, members of the **South San Francisco Classroom Teachers Association (SSFCTA)** held a protest at the school board meeting in February, joined by students and parents.

The South San Francisco Unified School District refuses to adequately invest in educators to halt their exodus to better-paying San Mateo County districts, says Allison Light, president of the 420-member SSFCTA.

"Students are being harmed by the district's indifference at the bargaining table," Light says. "Instead of investing its massive reserves to prevent teacher turnover and help resolve our teacher shortages, the district refuses to make students and the recruitment and retention of educators the top priorities."

The sides reached impasse last fall, and a third session with a state mediator is set for March 17.

Bargaining Roundup

Details of these stories at cta.org/bargainingupdates

CTA SECURES LOST WAGES FOR REDDING CHARTER EDUCATORS

The Academy of Personalized Learning (APL) will pay lost wages to teachers who were wrongfully and abruptly fired for forming a union, the **Academy of Personalized Learning Education Association (APLEA)**. The settlement was reached Feb. 7, thanks to CTA legal help.

APL is the charter school in Redding that CTA contends illegally fired nine highly qualified teachers in 2014 and 2015 after they formed APLEA. (See the *Educator's* coverage of the incident at bit.ly/2ldRrKN.)

The teachers say they feel vindicated. "When we saw student learning was endangered, public money spent shamefully and the law broken, CTA stood with us and supported our fired colleagues," says Candy Woodson.

On numerous occasions APLEA members asked Gateway Unified School District, APL's sponsoring district, to investigate allegations regarding APL's operations, including that it cherry-picked students and hired unqualified teachers. Teachers also voiced concerns that state funds designated for the classroom were paid to a hedge fund in Palo Alto.

Records show APL paid "more than \$500,000 in taxpayer money for attorney's fees, rather than do right by students and teachers," Woodson says. "It's important to stand up for the students in our schools, and that's what we APLEA members did. Except for CTA, it felt like we were the only ones advocating for our students, and for public school funding to be spent appropriately."

The settlement includes a provision that APL will close operations by June or July. In January, Gateway Unified told APL officials it would cancel its charter after a court ruled that charter schools must be in the boundaries of the host district.



Photo: Ed Sibby



PERRIS PARENTS: NO CONFIDENCE IN SCHOOL BOARD

The **Perris Elementary Teachers Association** has moved through impasse and mediation with Perris Elementary School District in Riverside County, and is scheduling a state fact-finding hearing while continuing to seek a settlement.

Meanwhile, parents joined students and educators at the district school board meeting in February to deliver a no-confidence declaration to the board and the superintendent — and to demand an end to the contract dispute that has increasingly affected teacher and community morale.

Parents, some of whom had to stand outside the packed room because of crowd size, spoke passionately about the impact on their children and the community when teachers leave Perris for better pay and benefits elsewhere. Educators

have complained of bullying tactics by administrators and school board members; many were disturbed by school board President Jose Garcia's comment that teachers should "take a bullet" and accept the district's proposal during discussion at a board meeting.

CALAVERAS TALKS STALL OVER CLASS SIZES

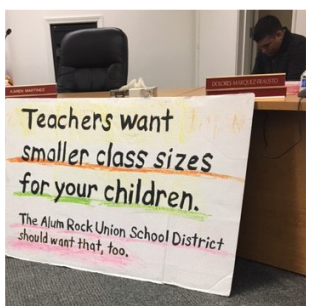
The **Calaveras Unified Educators Association** (CUEA) is at impasse with Calaveras Unified School District (CUSD). Talks stalled over class sizes.

CUEA proposed a class size limit of 24 students for grades K-3, 30 in grades 4-6, and 180 student contacts per day in grades 7-12. CUSD wants to keep class sizes at its current 30-to-1 level for all classes.

"Our biggest concern is being able to give the students in Calaveras County the education they deserve," says CUEA President Lorraine Angel, noting that smaller class sizes help educators give more attention to students and make the district a more attractive destination for teachers.

CUSD says it is facing a possible \$1.9 million deficit in 2019-20 and does not have the funding to add teachers to accommodate smaller class sizes. The district is already planning to cut 2.5 certified teachers by 2018-19.

Photos courtesy AREA



ALUM ROCK TEACHERS HOLD 'GRADE-IN' PROTEST

Unable to secure small class sizes for students and accomplish other priorities after one year of fruitless contract negotiations, members of the **Alum Rock Educators Association** (AREA) in San Jose held a "grade-in" at the Feb. 9 school board meeting.

Grading papers and holding protest signs, their purpose was to demonstrate how much grading and other tasks are done by teachers outside of the required work day. In response to stalled negotiations, educators have been refraining from doing extra work not required by contract since Jan. 3.

Alum Rock Union Elementary School District and the 600-member AREA were heading into a state fact-finding hearing in late February in an attempt to reach a settlement, says AREA President Jocelyn Merz. "It will cost the district more in legal costs than if they settled these talks fairly."

By Cynthia Menzel, Mike Myslinski and Ed Sibby. #OurVoiceAtTheTable

ONE VOICE, MANY EYES

Chapter's expanded bargaining team includes educators and community

By Cynthia Menzel and Cindy Long

The Sacramento City Teachers Association (SCTA) has discovered that engaging both educators and the community is a natural way to reach its goal.

"Our goal is to make Sacramento the 'destination district' that families want their kids to attend," says SCTA President Nikki Milevsky. "We are on the verge of making huge improvements to our schools and forcing the district to prioritize our students."

Educators in the Sacramento City Unified School District have been working without a contract since December. During its bargaining campaign, SCTA has worked hard to engage more community and union members in the process.

Teachers, nurses, psychologists and special education teachers are now part of the 60-person bargaining team, which includes representatives from each school site. Most have never been involved in bargaining, let alone the union. Community members are also on the team. There is a chief spokesperson, but everyone on the team has an equal voice.

"I decided to join because working for the change I want to see is more beneficial than complaining with a group of colleagues," says Nafeesah Young, a school psychologist early in her career. "I'm hopeful that my participation will show the district that psychologists are more than test givers and report writers."

Special education teacher Mary Rodriguez says, "We have great site reps, but

with all the work they already do, I wanted to support them by becoming part of the team and sharing some of their volunteer workload. As a special educator, I felt it was important to be part of the discussions."

Now SCTA members with questions about the negotiations can walk down the hall to ask the team member in their school, rather than calling the SCTA office. The team member can also speak to colleagues about specific issues as they arise, instead of delaying negotiations or relying district communication.

Frank conversations

Community members on the team say their experience has been positive.

"We have one voice and many eyes," says Carl Pinkston, a member of the Black Parallel School Board, a local community organization.

He says he's been surprised at district representatives' view of meetings he's attended and their comments that they can't do something "because of the teachers union." He has challenged that mischaracterization, since he is *on* the bargaining team.

Pinkston says there are frank conversations in the bargaining caucus, which reviews and develops proposals. "We don't always agree, but we are united." The result of caucus meetings is a list of what SCTA wants to accomplish for students. The bargaining team says it is determined to improve student learning conditions.

The bulk of the proposals are focused



Clockwise from top: SCTA President Nikki Milevsky and Nafeesah Young, Carl Pinkston, Mary Rodriguez. Photos: Cynthia Menzel

on students: lowering class sizes; making arts, music and physical education available to all students in the district; allowing more inclusionary practices for students with disabilities; increasing the number of school nurses, psychologists and other program specialists consistent with national standards; developing an early intervention program; and implementing a resourced, bottom-up restorative practices culture throughout Sacramento's public schools.

The district has so far rejected SCTA's comprehensive proposals. If no progress is made by April, SCTA and its members are prepared to strike.

Young urges everyone to get involved by supporting the bargaining team.

"If you don't participate in your local association, you won't have a voice," she says. "Participation is not something that should be taken for granted, whether you're a first-year educator or knocking on the door to retirement. Things in this country are changing, and it is important for us to maintain our unions, keep them strong and get involved." ■

See video of SCTA's bargaining process at NEA's YouTube channel.



Cherina Betters' seventh-grade class found it challenging to distinguish fake news from real news.

A SEARCH FOR TRUTH

Real-life lessons about fake news

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin Photos by Scott Buschman

Fake news — misinformation found in publications and on websites that look deceptively newsy — has always been around. But as the Internet and social media have made distribution and sharing of fake news faster and easier, its impact has been distressing. Many times fake news has been accepted as real.

Students in particular have a hard time discerning fact from fiction. A 2016 Stanford University study found that, for example, 80 percent of students could not distinguish between ads dressed up as news stories and the real thing. Four in 10 believed the headline of a photo of deformed flowers was strong evidence of toxic conditions near a nuclear plant, despite no source or location given for the photo.

Educators are helping students understand the importance of critical thinking, credibility and fact-checking when it comes to sorting truth from falsehoods.

High school journalism teacher Mitch Ziegler says use of social media makes students even more susceptible to fake news.



RECENTLY A STUDENT entered Cherina Better's seventh-grade world history class excitedly waving an example of a fake news story for her homework assignment. In the article, Maine Gov. Paul LePage was quoted as saying that civil rights leader and Georgia Congressman John Lewis should be grateful for what Republican presidents have done to help black people; that Presidents Ulysses S. Grant and Rutherford B. Hayes fought against Jim Crow laws; and that the NAACP should apologize to white people.

"It has to be fake, right?" said the girl.

"That was an 'Oh my goodness, we have to stop what we are doing and have a lesson' moment," says Better, a teacher at Mesa View Middle School in Calimesa.

Better hated to crush her student's enthusiasm, but the story was true. The governor of Maine actually said those things. (However, Jim Crow laws didn't exist during the Grant administration, and Hayes' presidency set the stage for the creation of Jim Crow laws.)

Helping students discern real news from fake news isn't easy, says Better, a member of the Yucaipa-Calimesa Educators Association. When students were asked to find examples of fake and real news for a classroom discussion, she was surprised at how challenging it was.

Mandatory teaching about fake news?

Her students' confusion mirrors a 2016 study from the Stanford Graduate School of Education, which concludes youths are easily duped by fake news. Researchers asked 8,000 U.S. middle school, high school and college students to evaluate online tweets,

comments and articles. The majority couldn't discern whether information was credible. Most judged stories and tweets as reliable sources of information without bothering to click on the link to reveal the source of the data.

Currently, schools aren't required to teach the difference between real and fake news, but California lawmakers recently introduced legislation to make it mandatory.

AB 155 by Assembly Member Jimmy Gomez (D-Los Angeles) would incorporate analytical skills for online information into English and other subjects at middle and high schools, while SB 135 by state Sen. Bill Dodd (D-Napa) would add media literacy training to social science standards for grades 1-12.

Better thinks the proposed legislation is a good idea.

"Fake news isn't going anywhere. Kids are constantly bombarded by tons of information, and teachers have to help them figure it out so they can make informed decisions."



Julie Shankle

Students are confused

Fake news was once obvious and mostly in tabloid publications like *National Enquirer*. Today it's on newsy-looking websites, popping up as links when visiting other websites, and spread on social media. It's usually in two categories, reports the *San Francisco Chronicle*: "The kind that seeks to manipulate people, spread misinformation, and cast doubts on traditional media and public institutions — and the kind that uses sensational and false stories to attract enough readers to make money through advertising." →



Billie Joe Wright, who teaches high school social studies, says the line between TV anchors and reporters and “talking heads” has blurred.

For students, it’s confusing.

“Kids fall victim to fake news because it looks official and they are naive,” student Marina Ortega explains to Julie Shankle, her journalism instructor at North High School in Torrance.

The class recently discussed an online story about a pizzeria with a pedophilia ring involving Hillary Clinton. Students knew it was fake, but were stunned to learn some people believed it, and one man drove to D.C. from North Carolina, entered the restaurant and fired shots with an assault rifle. Students asked why anyone would write something like that — or believe it to be true. (News flash: Reports say Macedonian teens are a big source of fake news stories for pay.)

Along with blatantly fake news is an alarming trend in mainstream news of spreading unsubstantiated reports, which cause just as much damage as fake news, says Shankle, Torrance Teachers Association.

“Voters who were on the fence were influenced, I believe, by the steady stream of unfounded and oft-repeated claims that Hillary Clinton had acted illegally with her emails. We heard about it over and over in unsubstantiated reports.”

Some describe this as the “continued influence effect,” where it’s difficult to prevent information someone knows to be false from

“I tell them they can either be the player or get played, and I’m helping them realize how not to get played.”

—Billie Joe Wright, Hacienda La Puente Teachers Association

affecting their judgment, because they hear it so often.

Social media, media bias and talking heads

Using social media makes students even more susceptible to fake news, says Mitch Ziegler, a Redondo Union High School journalism teacher, because students hear misinformation from online “friends.”

Ziegler agrees with experts that social networks create an echo chamber, where people only follow tweets and postings of those on the same political page. When someone with a similar point of view shares “news,” it’s then likely to be viewed as more credible, explains the Redondo Beach Teachers Association member.

According to BuzzFeed News (recently accused of publishing fake news about allegations against Donald Trump), 23 of the 50 top news hoaxes on Facebook focused on politics — and fake news about politics accounted for 10.6 million of 21.5 million total shares and Facebook comments. Facebook has vowed to address false news.

News reporters who strive for objectivity may find it difficult if they work at partisan news sites. Ziegler displays a chart in his classroom depicting the political leanings of news organizations, with Fox News as conservative, MSNBC as liberal, and CNN in the

Continued on page 38

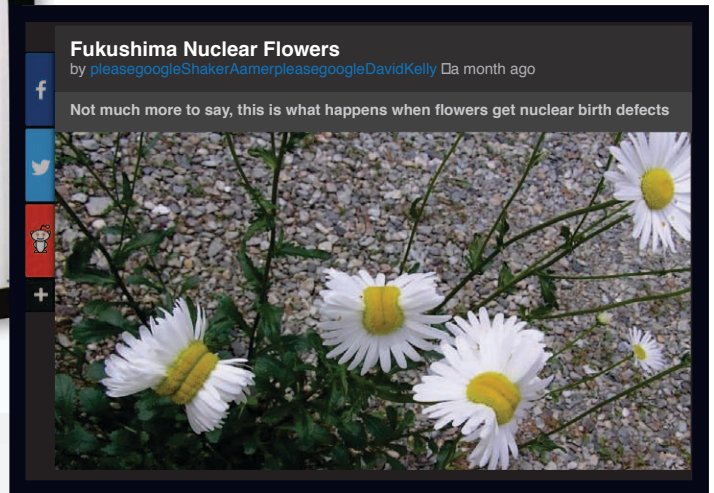


Fend Off Fake News

Use PBS *NewsHour*'s lesson plan at to.pbs.org/2lnifzl, or KQED's lesson plan at bit.ly/2kqYutO, to teach students how to detect fake news. The questions below can help students assess the likelihood that a piece of information is fake news.

1. Gauge your emotional reaction: Are you angry? Are you intensely hoping that the information is true? False?
2. How did you encounter it? Was it promoted on a website, on a social media feed, or sent to you by someone you know?
3. Consider the headline or main message: Does it use excessive punctuation(!!) or ALL CAPS for emphasis? Does it claim to be secret?
4. Is it designed for easy sharing, like a meme?
5. Consider the source: Is it well-known? Is an author's name attached? How does the website describe itself? Are there editorial standards? Does the contact email address match the domain (not a Gmail or Yahoo email address)? Does a search for the name of the site raise any suspicions?
6. Is there a current date on the information?
7. Does it cite a variety of sources, including official and expert sources that you can verify? Does this information appear in reports from (other) news outlets?
8. Does it hyperlink to other quality sources (that have not been altered or taken from another context)?
9. Can you confirm, using a reverse image search, that its images are authentic (not altered or taken from another context)?
10. On fact-checking sites such as Snopes.com or FactCheck.org, is it labeled as less than true?

Source: *The News Literacy Project and Checkology*. For the full list of questions, see bit.ly/2hWjpC2.



A STUDY BY the Stanford History Education Group (SHEG) used this image of deformed daisies posted on a photo-sharing site in 2015 with a headline linking it to a 2011 disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in Japan. The caption included the statement: "This is what happens when flowers get nuclear birth defects."

SHEG asked more than 170 high school students if the post provided strong evidence about conditions near the power plant. "Nearly 40 percent ... argued that the post provided strong evidence because it presented pictorial evidence about conditions near the power plant," reports SHEG. Most "relied on [the photo] to evaluate the trustworthiness of the post. They ignored key details, such as the source of the photo."

The study administered 56 tasks to students across 12 states for a total of 7,804 responses, testing young people's ability to reason about information on the Internet. Its final assessment: "bleak"

See the executive summary of "Evaluating Information: The Cornerstone of Civic Online Reasoning" (2016) at stanford.io/2gkkfXe.





“I stress the importance of reading opposing views on any topic to foster more profound engagement with the issue and to reach a sound conclusion through evaluation.”

—Leyla Fikes, Centinela Valley Secondary Teachers Association

“It’s definitely challenging to confront students about fake news if they are invested in believing it,” says Lawndale High School social studies teacher Leyla Fikes. “But it’s necessary. Adolescents are prone to believe tall tales, which is why it is so important to help them refine their critical thinking skills.”

The Centinela Valley Secondary Teachers Association member encourages students to get news from reliable sources, such as the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *The Economist*.

“We discuss the importance of proper citation when conducting research for essays and research papers, and that it is acceptable to use Wikipedia to generate ideas and find references, but not to cite Wiki itself as a source. We also examine the risks faced by relying too heavily on one source for information. We discuss the need to visit legitimate sources in print, online and on TV for authentic information and the need to weigh bias.”

As for social media sites, she urges students to have “friends” of all opinions.

“I stress the importance of reading opposing views on any topic to foster more profound engagement with the issue and to reach a sound conclusion through evaluation.”

Shankle urges students to read in-depth stories about subject matter and watch documentaries. She also thinks it is a good idea to weave the subject of real and fake news into *all* classes.

“When we read Jonathan Swift’s ‘A Modest Proposal,’ we asked where Swift might publish this in today’s world. My sophomore English team is looking at how to incorporate fake news in units on dystopian novels like Orwell’s *1984* and Huxley’s *Brave New World*.”

She isn’t convinced legislation should mandate separate lessons on news reliability; she believes they can easily be incorporated into the new standards, which direct students to gather relevant information from multiple legitimate print and digital sources.

In an age of alternative facts and a president who is at war with the media, it’s critically important for students to seek credible news sources so they can make informed decisions that can positively impact the future, says Ziegler.

“With so many voices reporting what’s going on, whoever’s the loudest and draws the most attention is sometimes believed. Teaching students how to evaluate information is the most important reading skill we can give them.” ■

middle. It’s important, he tells students, to be aware of bias from those who are delivering information.

There is also the blur between television commentators and news reporters and anchors, says Billie Joe Wright, a social studies teacher at Workman High School in City of Industry.

“More and more talking heads are replacing reporters and anchors,” observes the Hacienda La Puente Teachers Association member. “Anchors are acting more like referees to liberal or conservative commentators who are debating and arguing, rather than doing actual reporting. Those watching may not realize that what they are hearing is just commentary. And they are being duped by it.”

Understanding the difference

Lately Wright has been teaching his students how to differentiate between real news and fake news, with the help of an interactive PBS *NewsHour* lesson. (See sidebar, page 37.)

“It’s not just motivating them to learn this stuff, but helping them take the initiative to not want to be fooled. I tell them they can either be the player or get played, and I’m helping them realize how not to get played.”

During research for *Capturing the Spark*, Adam Ebrahim was a member of the Fresno Teachers Association and a teacher leader in CTA's Instructional Leadership Corps. He now works with Collaboration in Common, a platform that organizes professional learning communities in California.



Inspired Teaching, Thriving Schools

How unions work with schools, districts to improve education

Text and photos by **David B. Cohen**



Veteran high school English teacher and CTA member David B. Cohen spent the 2014-15 school year visiting public schools throughout California, discovering how students flourish when teachers capture the spark of curiosity and inspiration. The result is *Capturing the Spark: Inspired Teaching, Thriving Schools*, which was published at the end of last year.

In the book, Cohen takes readers into more than 60 schools. Among other things, he chronicles how teachers blend traditional and innovative practices, how quality teacher training makes a difference in a teacher's career, and what we can learn from teachers who create and lead new schools.

Cohen also looks at what unions are doing to improve education, and writes of the many positive outcomes he found. The following are excerpts, edited and condensed, from Chapter 9, "Unions and Education: Working Together to Improve Teaching and Learning."

Think of various ways, large and small, that we might improve education. *Innovative school design reforms. Partnerships with community organizations. District, community, university partnerships for historical study. Parent outreach and education. Robust teacher evaluations and peer evaluations, with support for new or struggling teachers. Mathematics competitions. Global education initiatives. Outdoor education. Arts in the community. Union activity.*

If you're thinking "union activity" doesn't seem to fit in that list, consider this: Every other item on the list describes one or more initiatives endorsed, fiscally supported, or carried out by state or local teacher unions in

California. If that fact surprises you, then this chapter deserves your closest attention. I learned about many of these activities through my involvement with a state-level union organization, the Institute for Teaching (IFT), a nonprofit branch of the California Teachers Association (CTA) dedicated to strength-based, teacher-driven change in public education. IFT grants, totaling close to \$1 million from 2014 to 2016, funded many projects, some of which are described in this chapter. IFT also supports several teacher think tanks in various regions of the state, work I've been involved in for several years.



Adam Ebrahim, Fresno High School

Adam Ebrahim has a busy day ahead, but then again, most of his days are busy, involving a combination of teaching, professional development work, and being the vice president of the Fresno Teachers Association. The day begins with his ninth-grade human geography class at Fresno High School; it's a uniquely structured course, with classes meeting only once a week, for two hours. The course content blends history and current events, with elements of economics and environmental science.

As his union's vice president, Adam has much to share with school site union representatives at their rep council meeting [later that day]. My visit runs less than an hour, but the most interesting part for me is seeing Adam's presentation relating to website improvements and an evolving association collaboration with the district to improve the professional growth of Fresno teachers.

More than any other teacher observed as part of this book, Adam practices a brand of unionism that emphasizes the development and continual improvement of teaching, alongside the usual labor issues that unions negotiate and advocate, such as salaries, benefits, and working conditions.

Working through a union framework has given Adam a national reach, and he's also a leader at the state level: Adam is among the teacher leaders in California's Instructional Leadership Corps (ILC), a joint project of CTA, the National Board Resource Center, and others to promote Common Core training by teachers for teachers.

While the Common Core adoption remains controversial among some educators, Adam suggests that when the Common Core fades or evolves, as educational reforms invariably do, his hope is that models like the ILC will have taken hold, demonstrating that teacher leadership builds the capacity of districts and schools to meet the needs of their teachers and students and that it is more effective and more economical than having outside consultants and publishing representatives deliver training. Such leadership opportunities also meet a clear need felt by many teachers who seek new challenges and responsibilities that don't require them to give up classroom teaching.

"Encina Preparatory High School's improvement is predicated on three key elements: Teachers had genuine leadership roles in the school's redesign, they continue to have genuine leadership opportunities in the ongoing work at the school, and there's a focus on community partnerships."



Barry Roth

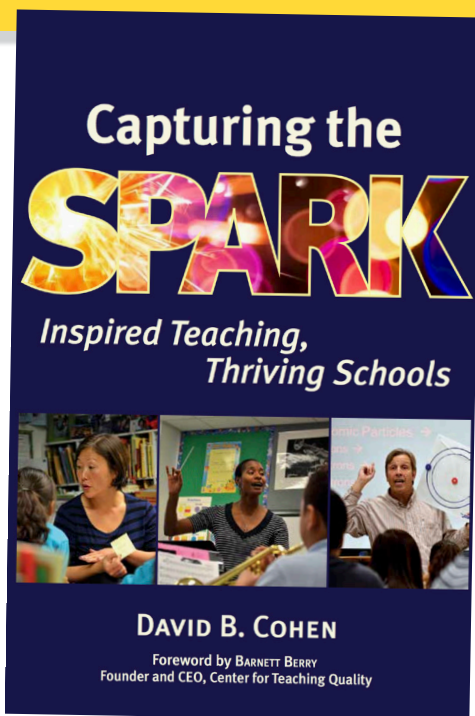
Encina Preparatory High School, Sacramento

The San Juan Teachers Association (SJTA) has had a leadership role in CalTURN [Teacher Union Reform Network] for many years, and it has been leading by example in the work of promoting quality teaching and learning through labor-management collaboration.

Almost everyone I talked to about Encina Preparatory High School in San Juan Unified School District described it as needing major changes when it entered a redesign process in the 2010-11 school year. The teachers at Encina, as well as other teacher leaders in the district, all agreed that Encina has shown significant improvement, predicated on three key elements: Teachers had genuine leadership roles in the school's redesign, they continue to have genuine leadership opportunities in the ongoing work at the school, and there's a focus on community partnerships.

Union engagement at each step reflects a strong labor-management relationship; for contrast, teachers noted that Encina had been through a top-down redesign effort about 10 years earlier, and it had failed to take hold. Teacher Barry Roth explains the difference in part by noting that both excellent and poor administrators tend to leave quickly; "teachers are the glue" holding a school together. The teacher-driven, union-supported model has Encina headed in the right direction.

Understanding the improvement at Encina requires some understanding of the student body. The high school absorbed a neighboring middle school and now serves grades 6-12. Most sixth-graders enter the school reading at a second-grade level or



“Tara Nuth Kajtaniak is the kind of teacher who welcomes a challenge, and she has equipped herself to meet those challenges in part through her [CTA] Institute for Teaching think tank involvement.”

below. The school includes high percentages of families in poverty, English learners, and students with special educational needs; roughly a third of the students do not have stable, permanent housing. By the time a given class reaches its senior year in high school, teachers tell me, there’s roughly 80 percent turnover in students.

On a continuum of teacher vs. administrative leadership, Encina is more teacher-led than most schools in its district, and San Juan Unified has more teacher leadership than most districts. SJTA President Shannan Brown was one of the 2011 California Teachers of the Year, and she is an effective advocate for teacher leadership at the local and state level. During her leadership of SJTA, the union and district have negotiated for the creation of school leadership teams at each school site, ensuring that teachers have a guaranteed voice and role in leading each school.

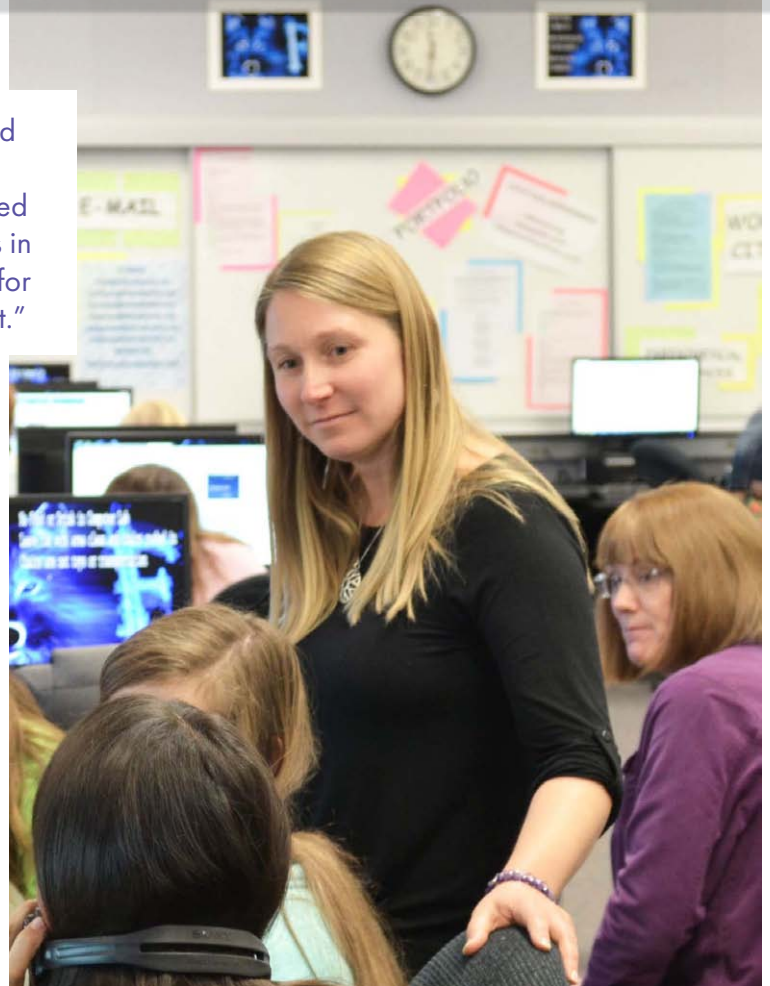
To extend this idea even further at Encina, the union and district worked out a memorandum of understanding that added flexibility for the school and expanded responsibilities for teachers.

Tara Nuth Kajtaniak, Fortuna High School

I had an opportunity to visit a teacher who has both the IFT think tank and grant recipient experiences. Tara Nuth Kajtaniak teaches English and global studies in the small Humboldt County town of Fortuna, a bit south of Eureka.

Tara fills me in on some of the key differences in understanding small towns, their schools, and their people. I would have anticipated the advantages of having a tight-knit community, but there are disadvantages as well, including a degree of skepticism about change that can slow down innovation. Tara is the kind of teacher who welcomes a challenge, and she has equipped herself to meet those challenges in part through her IFT think tank involvement. (She drives or flies 250 miles or more to participate in these meetings.)

Not only does this kind of engagement inspire and fuel her efforts to improve, but the IFT connection has also helped



Tara and multiple colleagues land multiple IFT grants. Tens of thousands of dollars have helped her create a vibrant global studies course, helped a PE teacher develop a new fitness education program, and helped another colleague initiate a school-community partnership in which graduating seniors create projects that “change the world” (in a “think globally, act locally” kind of way).

Tara’s continued involvement with IFT provides her with an opportunity to exert a positive influence on teaching around the state. Her IFT think tank came up with the idea of organizing an IFT Innovation Exposition, organized as one of the preconference options for a CTA Good Teaching Conference. The union offers multiple education conferences around the state each year, helping thousands of teachers learn from each other and improve their craft. The IFT Expo brought together dozens of grantees to share their work and inspire fellow teachers. After seeing these exciting examples, expo attendees heard from IFT board members and grant application readers, who gave advice designed to help newly inspired teachers craft winning IFT grant applications. ■



Shannan Brown

CTA President Eric Heins, center, surrounded by more than 700 delegates to CTA State Council at the news conference in Los Angeles in January. Photo by Mike Myslinski



Unity, Resolve and Resilience in Support of Students

“We call on all Californians to join us in supporting a strong, inclusive, safe and innovative public education system. We send a clear message about California’s values to those looking to privatize our schools, deport our students, or demean our profession.”

—CTA President **Eric Heins**, from his speech to State Council

At the opening of its January meeting, CTA State Council of Education unanimously passed a Resolution of Unity, Resolve and Resilience in support of the education *all* students deserve.

The resolution asks all Californians, including elected leaders regardless of party affiliation, to join us in supporting a strong, inclusive, safe and innovative public education system that ensures all students can succeed. Our public schools must remain centers of our communities, and must not become corporate profit centers. We hold these values because all children, regardless of family circumstances, where they live, where they were born, how they look, who they love, or the language they speak, have the right to a public education that helps them reach their full potential.

In addition, State Council delegates and leadership held a news conference in which CTA President Eric Heins called for the rejection of Betsy DeVos as the next U.S. secretary of education. Her

blatantly extremist, anti-public school political agenda violates every student’s civil rights at the most basic level. CTA members are standing together against any policies that undermine students’ right to attend school free of fear, bullying and discrimination.

Delegates urged all CTA members to visit cta.org/forallstudents to:

- Take the pledge to support public education that ensures all students can succeed, and ask colleagues, friends, family and community to do the same.
- Read the full resolution.
- Take action on social media by sharing CTA’s memes and messages.

Chapters can use CTA’s Social Justice Toolkit at cta.org/forallstudents, including posters, sample social media posts, etc., to create safe zones, encourage their local school board to adopt the resolution, respond to hostile acts at school, improve school climate, and more.



After the news conference, educators called their congressional representatives urging rejection of Betsy DeVos as secretary of education, and several spoke with the media.



One of 24 posters available at CTA's Social Justice Toolkit (cta.org/forallstudents).

Election of Officers

Eric C. Heins, Theresa Montañó and David B. Goldberg were re-elected as CTA president, vice president and secretary-treasurer, respectively. All ran unopposed. Their two-year terms begin June 26.

LCFF/LCAP Forum

An LCFF/LCAP forum was held during the general session. Four educators spoke about how their chapters and districts are involved in the local control process. See page 29 for highlights of the discussion.

President's Report: California Leads the Way

President Eric Heins noted that the November election in California was affirming and historic in many ways. In California, we support public education and believe in diversity. CTA and its members led the charge to pass Proposition 55 and secured stable funding for our schools and community colleges for the next 14 years. Educators' influence helped Prop. 55 pass with 63 percent of the vote — an unprecedented majority on a tax measure.

Prop. 58 won with 73 percent of the vote, sending a clear message to all students that we value their languages, too. CTA is now working to help schools implement Prop. 58. And thanks to the funding and work of the CTA/ABC Committee, we won 34 local school measures and elected more than 230 pro-public education candidates, including the first Indian-American to serve in the U.S. Senate, Kamala Harris.

But the national election, Heins said, showed that racism, sexism, homophobia and other "isms" are alive and thriving. In a recent survey, more than 50 percent of CTA members said their students needed help coping with the results of the presidential election.

One member composed a letter telling students they are safe inside their school, and teachers are there to support them and their families. "Your teachers love you, and that's why we come to work every day. We could choose jobs that pay more money, or are easier, but we don't. We teach because we want to support you. Together we will keep working and fighting to make the world better."

Heins said he has faith in CTA members and in California for the future. "I believe in the power of public education," he said. "It is the cornerstone of our democracy and our economy. It is the great equalizer. Free public education is a basic civil right in this country — no matter where you were born."

Heins spoke about Betsy DeVos, the nominee for secretary of education. More than 1 million people used NEA's online form to email their senators to vote no on DeVos; more than 80,000 called their senators. CTA members and Californians accounted for about 10 percent of those totals, which is an amazing effort.

He said that the Resolution of Unity, Resolve and Resilience is grounded in CTA's strategic plan, which includes providing a well-rounded education to the whole child, ensuring smaller class sizes and access to quality preschools, fully funding schools and colleges, promoting equity and quality, and demanding that educators lead the profession.

Heins said the turmoil unleashed by the extreme change of course in our federal government gives us an unprecedented opportunity to organize and lead. With the anticipation of new attacks on union rights, we must continue to engage new CTA members in the work of the union.

"I believe in the power of public education. It is the cornerstone of our democracy and our economy. It is the great equalizer."

Continued on page 44



Examples of how CTA is doing that:

- The first-ever New Member Weekend in March offers training and preparation for educators with five years or less in the profession.
- CTA was instrumental in shepherding a new accountability system, approved by the State Board of Education, that starts to get beyond test scores to measure student and school success, and uses a dashboard of indicators including graduation rates, readiness for college and careers, progress of English learners and suspension rates.
- Work by local chapters and districts developing Local Control and Accountability Plans — a way for us to engage our communities in setting priorities for local funding and the education programs that we know are right for our students. (See related story on page 29.)
- Work by CTA's Instructional Leadership Corps, where we are partnering with the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education and the National Board Resource Center at Stanford University to deliver teacher-led professional development.
- Work by CTA's Institute for Teaching, which has awarded more than \$2 million in the past six years to educators throughout the state for their innovative ideas.
- CTA's "Kids Not Profits" campaign, calling for more accountability and transparency of California's corporate charter schools and exposing the coordinated agenda by a group of billionaires to divert money from neighborhood public schools to privately managed, for-profit charters.

Executive Director's Report

CTA Executive Director Joe Nuñez honored Deputy Executive Director Karen Kyhn for her years of service, noting that Kyhn, who was retiring at the end of January, had been "an articulate and passionate advocate for public education, educators and unions for 20 years."

He said that changes at the federal level could mean California will lose federal funding, \$20 billion in health care and \$8 billion in education, which would affect the state budget and schools; and with Sen. Jeff Sessions confirmed as U.S. attorney general, we can expect the office to scale back enforcement of human rights laws in schools and communities.

Nuñez spoke about the U.S. Supreme Court and the cases that could directly impact public education. They include the potential evisceration of IDEA's educational guarantees to students with disabilities; a challenge to the federal government's right to require school districts to permit transgender students to use bathroom facilities that align with their gender identity; and a breach in the separation of church and state by opening the doors to direct public funding of religious institutions.

First up could be Fair Share fees. Our victory in *Friedrichs v. CTA* last year was only a temporary reprieve. The fastest-moving case right now is *Janus v. AFSCME*, which the National Right to Work Foundation filed in Illinois. It could come to the Supreme Court as early as this fall. (Since Council met, the same group that brought forth *Friedrichs* filed a copycat lawsuit, *Yohn v. CTA*.) The CTA/NEA legal team is ready to fight back and demonstrate that the claims made by the corporate billionaires seeking to take away public employee rights are false. The simple truth is that no one is forced to join a union or pay fees that are used for political purposes or go to political candidates. Stay tuned for more.

Other attacks we can expect are hostile regulatory changes. The new administration could issue regulations about employee participation in public pension plans.

In other news, State Council...

- Voted to support and promote World Hijab Day on Feb. 1.
- Voted to support the Scientists' March on Washington with a letter of support from Eric Heins and promotion by CTA media platforms.
- Voted for CTA to lead a Statewide Day of Action to support safe schools for all students and stand against attacks on public education and immigrant rights.
- Elected Karen Ridley as NEA Director, District 9.
- Elected Ruth Luevand as NEA Alternate Director, Seat 2.
- Heard an American Indian/Alaska Native Caucus presentation on water protectors' fight against the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock.
- Approved the Treasurer's Report.



Marty Meeden, Kristy Orona-Ramirez, Robert Levi, Lisa Buckner, Christopher Pope and Mary Levi of the American Indian/Alaska Native Caucus spoke of the fight against the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock.

Secretary-Treasurer David Goldberg said CTA had a "clean" audit and was in a "healthy" position.

- Approved updating CTA policy on cultural diversity in educational settings and curriculum, including accurate portrayals of roles/contributions of all races, ethnic groups and cultures; and strategies to eliminate institutional racism and linguistic bias.



Far left, Keith Hancock with students; at left, cheered by the Grammy audience; below, with wife Carly at the Grammys.

We Are Family

Educator and Grammy winner Keith Hancock teaches music and much more

THE WALLS OF Keith Hancock's classroom are plastered with thousands of photos of current and former students, class trips to big cities and foreign countries, and choir performances in famous and exotic venues.

Block letters at the top of the back wall that spell out "We Are Family" say it all.

For Hancock, choral music teacher at Tesoro High School in Rancho Santa Margarita, teaching is about the music, of course. But it's also about family and life.

Hancock's ability to connect through music to a much broader level with each of his students is a big reason he won the 2017 Grammy Music Educator Award in February.

It starts with connecting socially and building family. His advanced choir of 65 kids attends a summer retreat each year. But he also has a kickoff bonfire for all 220 of his students at the beginning of the year,

followed by plenty of other activities. "We play broomball, we do movie nights once a month to get kids connected even more," says Hancock, Capistrano Unified Education Association. "We go out after every one of our concerts to share meals together. We hang out after class. It makes them into a more cohesive group."

Then there's the actual music. "I try to pick songs that are representative of a variety of styles, cultures, time periods and languages, so students are able to appreciate different things," he says. "I tell them the story of the different pieces — if they can relate to it, there is a lot more buy in."

For example, Hancock had his students learn and sing "Sfogava con le stelle" by 16th and 17th century Italian composer Claudio

Monteverdi. "It translates to a guy venting to the stars. He's love-sick and he's going through a range of emotions about a woman who doesn't want him back. Students loved singing the piece. It made it more meaningful for them to look at the poetry and understand what they're singing about."

Finally, there's life. Hancock hands out a list of "Hancock's Laws" to his students. These life lessons, he told CBS News, include "Live your life with passion" and "Don't put anything on your credit card that you can't pay off in a month." His students say they remember them well past their time in his classroom.

Hancock, in his 15th year of teaching, directs students in five curricular and four extracurricular ensembles, and runs Tesoro's music production and audio engineering program as well. The Grammy Award includes honoraria of \$10,000 each for him and Tesoro. He'll use some of his funds for a vacation with his wife Carly,

also a music teacher, and their children. Most of the money will go toward the school choir account for expenses such as "sheet music, technology and scholarships for students on choir tours."

He and Carly were thrilled to attend the Grammys. The best part? "It was amazing to meet some of the people who I count as major influences and I respect, such as Dave Matthews and Jason Mraz," he says. "And being recognized by all the people I look up to while putting a spotlight on music education — it was great to see the Grammys affiliated with the music education side of things. That I can be a spokesperson for and the face of music education, I'm honored." ■

"We go out after our concerts to share meals together. We hang out after class. It makes them into a more cohesive group."

Young writers, educators celebrate at the end of the workshop; below, Emoree Smith, whose parents saw a marked improvement in her work. Photos by Ed Sibby



Young Writers Academy

Lake Elsinore students gain new confidence in their skills By Ed Sibby

With help from the Lake Elsinore Teachers Association (LETA) and a CTA Community Engagement Grant, parents and Lake Elsinore Unified School District teamed up with UC Riverside’s Inland Area Writing Project (IAWP) to offer 22 fifth-grade students an eight-week writing workshop that strengthened their skills and connected them to the joy of self-expression through writing.

Students from Railroad Canyon and Elsinore Elementary schools participated.

IAWP co-director Amy Rose says the Young Writers Academy gave students a unique opportunity to have their opinions and ideas validated through writing and sharing work with peers.

The students’ confidence in their newfound skills was apparent at the IAWP awards assembly Nov. 28 as they shared original stories with a crowded auditorium of proud parents, teachers and district officials.

Fifth-grader Emoree Smith explained that students were given different writing assignments at each meeting. Her parents Kevin and Tosh Smith said they have seen a vast improvement in her writing ability as a result of the

program, and also significant improvement in sequencing her ideas into clearer messages.

Another participant, Angelina Herrera, designed the cover of the anthology published by the workshop. She enjoyed the three-word essay assignment the most — and chose the words “bicycle, tomato, fish” to write about in her short essay.

Elsinore Elementary teachers Alyssa Modyman and Adrienne Bohanan, teacher volunteers with the program, have seen positive results and hope to incorporate more class time for writing.

LETA President Bill Cavanaugh says the association was happy to work with Lake Elsinore parents to make the workshop happen. Funds from the CTA Community Engagement Grant helped finance the endeavor, and LETA provided the training facility for students and educators to meet during the eight weeks.

IAWP managing director Ninetta Papadomichelaki is pleased that LEUSD officials, board members and administrators collaborated in the interests of the community and its children. “We can accomplish so much when we are all working together,” she says.

New Member Retirement Benefits

The California Public Employees' Pension Reform Act (PEPRA) of 2013 sets a cap on the amount of compensation used to calculate a retirement benefit for those first hired on or after Jan. 1, 2013, and applies to almost every public retirement system in California, including CalSTRS.

These "new members" (who have never belonged to public retirement systems before) are required to pay at least 50 percent of the "normal cost" of their retirement benefits, or the current contribution rate of similarly situated employees, whichever is greater. Normal cost means the amount that it will cost to pay for future benefits. It is measured as a percentage of an employee's salary.

The formula for calculating the retirement benefit is: Age Factor × Service Credit × Final Compensation = Member-Only Retirement Benefit.

New members' age factor is 2 percent at 62 (versus 2 percent at 60 for other members). This means that at age 62 new members would receive 2 percent of their final compensation as a retirement benefit for every year of service credit. The age factor of 2 percent decreases to 1.16 percent at age 55 if they retire before age 62, and increases to a maximum 2.4 percent at age 65 if they retire after age 62.

Other differences for new members:

- No career factor is considered in calculating the benefit.
- Final compensation is based on the highest average annual compensation earnable for 36 consecutive months, regardless of years of service credit.
- Retirement is at age 55 with at least five years of service credit.

CalSTRS estimates that the median benefit paid to new members when they retire will be about 47 percent of their final compensation, assuming their age and years of service at retirement are the same as for recently retired members, whose median benefit is 54 percent of final compensation.

CTA's website has more information about CalSTRS and members' retirement. See ctainvest.org; for specific new member details, bit.ly/2kHqyVV.



Changes to Educators' Pension System

Newer members may face higher contributions

By Dina Martin

A move by CalSTRS to reduce its assumed rate of return on long-term investments is likely to result in an increased contribution by the state to the retirement fund.

The February vote by the CalSTRS Board to decrease the investment return assumption from 7.5 to 7.0 percent by 2018 was reached after discussion of interest rates and projected inflation, and after review of the CalSTRS Experience Analysis, a five-year study of actuarial data.

"The decision to reduce the assumed rate of return will result in the state increasing its contributions to CalSTRS, and educators who were hired after 2013 increasing their contribution by \$20 to \$40 per month," says CalSTRS Board member Harry Keiley, chair of the investment committee and president of the Santa Monica-Malibu Classroom Teachers Association.

Educators first hired on or after Jan. 1, 2013, are impacted by the California Public Employees' Pension Reform Act (PEPRA), which sets a cap on the amount of compensation that is used to calculate a retirement benefit. (See sidebar at right.)

With the decrease in the assumed rate of return on investments, the state would be required to increase its contribution by 0.5 percent for the next 10 to 12 years.

Continued on page 48

Changes to Educators' Pension System

Fortunately, the governor's 2017-18 budget designates \$2.8 billion in General Fund contributions to CalSTRS and includes an additional \$153 million in anticipation of that 0.5 percent rate increase. The increased contribution rate from the state could be implemented in July 2017.

"Having these factors in place further reinforces that CalSTRS will continue to meet the financial needs of our more than 914,000 members and their beneficiaries," says CalSTRS Executive Officer Jack Ehnes of the board vote.

The CalSTRS Board is set to decide on the increased state contribution at its April meeting.

"CalSTRS regularly evaluates their rate of return and will make changes when necessary," says CTA legislative advocate Jennifer Baker. "What is different this year

is that it prompts a component of AB 1469 that requires a shift in contribution rates to ensure that a gap in full funding will not be created."

AB 1469, enacted in 2014, is the landmark pension reform legislation that stabilizes the retirement system's funding. Under it, CalSTRS has the ability to make limited adjustments to ensure the fund's health into the future.

There will be no increase on employer (school district) contributions in 2017-18, though the CalSTRS Board could raise the contribution rate in 2021 on a limited scale based upon future actuarial valuations.

The CalSTRS action comes on the heels of a December vote by the board of the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) to reduce the expected return rate to 7 percent by 2019-20. While

most CTA members are members of CalSTRS, faculty in the CSU system and many education support professionals are CalPERS members.

The CalSTRS Board also voted to change its assumptions about members' mortality rates, following a recommendation in the CalSTRS Experience Analysis, which found that the life expectancy for members early in their career is two to three years longer than was projected by previous assumptions. This means that those younger members are likely to draw pensions for a longer period.

The California State Teachers' Retirement System is the largest educator-only pension fund in the world, and is funded by contributions from the state, employers and individual employees. ■

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SEE ME AFTER SCHOOL

What educators do after the last bell rings

FOR OUR SECOND See Me After School contest, we asked you to tell us how you spend your time once the school day ends (and yes, we know educators' work goes well beyond that). Thanks to all who responded — so many of you have rich second and third lives as artists, athletes, coaches and guides. You broaden your mind, expand others' horizons, and better the world. Our three winners receive \$50 gift cards for school supplies. Congratulations to all!



WINNER:

FOR THE KICKS

The note that accompanies Samantha Ford's photos reads: "I recently started collecting shoes for students in need."

That's a bit of an understatement. In just a few months, Ford has gathered up more than 1,200 new pairs of athletic shoes for all the students in three Title I elementary schools in her district.

In December, Ford, who teaches physical education at 15 schools in Saugus Union School District, noticed several students wearing worn-out, incorrectly sized shoes during one of her classes.

The Saugus Teachers Association member told them to make sure to wear athletic shoes the next time. She asked one boy wearing boots if he had running shoes. "He said, 'These are the only shoes I have,'" Ford wrote in a Facebook post later that day.

"The boots were old and ratty and worn-out," Ford told CBS. "It just hit me really hard."

One of her friends saw her post and the next day brought in two pairs of shoes and socks for the boy to choose from. Soon friends, fellow educators, district staff, community members, former students and even pro athletes heard of Ford's efforts and responded.

She was able to distribute new athletic shoes to kids who were running "in little flimsy sandals, or shoes that had holes — we have a couple of kids who hot-glue the sole on every day."

Word of mouth and Facebook continue to spread the need, and tap into people's desire to help. "Recently a lady I used to work with talked to her church — and the people at the church collected 100 pairs of shoes," Ford said. "And now there's also a men's lacrosse team in Ohio collecting shoes as their service project."

She is most amazed by her colleagues. "I know teachers are giving people — teachers give and give, and spend thousands of their own dollars on their classrooms. They have their own needs, their own students. What has surprised and overwhelmed me is the generosity of teachers who have given shoes."

Now that she's outfitted three schools' worth of kids with shoes, Ford sees the work continuing, but in a different way. "I get requests from teachers in my district — they'll say 'I've got two foster kids' or 'I've got two homeless kids and the mom just got divorced.' They need shoes."



"I know teachers are giving people. What has surprised and overwhelmed me is the generosity of teachers who have given shoes."





WINNER:

WINNER: STAGE COACH

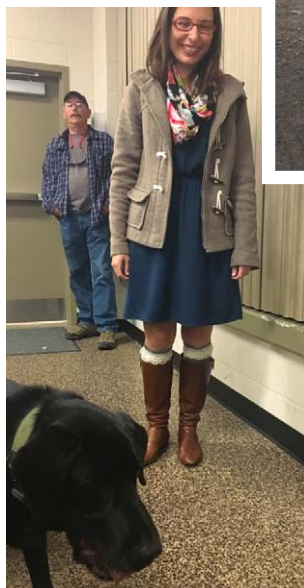
Jose Ruiz, Fresno Teachers Association: "Here I have a headset during the show *Annie Jr.* at a children's theater company. The other photo [far left] is of my drama club at school, which I host every Monday and Thursday after school. The kids learn how to perform and create costumes and set pieces."



WINNER:

TRAIL MASTER

Christa Lamb, Unified Association of Conejo Teachers: "After school, I am a volunteer mountain bike coach with a public high school's club! I spend five days a week hitting the local trails with middle and high school kids."



◀ LAW AND ORDER

Kristin M. Barter, Paso Robles Public Educators (with K-9 "Jack," trained to locate drugs): "The San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Citizen Academy is an 11-week class held one evening per week from September through November. I was one of 30 citizens chosen this year. I got an inside look at the operations and facilities and all facets of law enforcement."



▶ HE'S IN THE BAND

Steven Vincent Brown (aka Dandy Brown), Morongo Teachers Association: "I have been a touring musician for decades. This is a shot from a festival one of my bands did in Clisson, France, last summer."



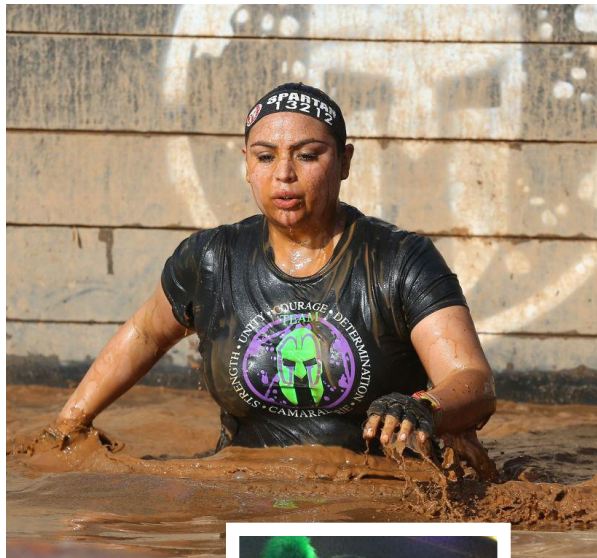
◀ BEHIND THE SCENES

Rhonda Martin, Rosedale Teachers Association (at White Pocket in Arizona): "When I'm not playing music, I love to be outdoors with my camera enjoying landscape photography. To me, photography is an extension of my music training."



▲ **PARTY-MAKER!**

Alyson Swain, Teachers Association of Long Beach: "After school I tend to my online business. I sell custom party decor all over the world. I make banners, cake toppers, greeting cards, gift tags, swizzle sticks and more! I make every detail by hand."



▶ **UP FOR THE CHALLENGE**

Jacqueline Serrano, Cajon Valley Education Association (doing an OCR Gladiator Run in 2016): "I am an Obstacle Course Races (OCR) enthusiast, and I'm excited to do more in 2017!"



▶ **MUSIC MAN**

David Gwilym Huw Howells, United Teachers Los Angeles: "I am an elementary school traveling instrumental music teacher. After school and during summers I play trombone, trumpet, baritone schalmei and alphorn for various events, including in a toy soldier band."



▲ **COOKIN' IN THE KITCHEN**

Alisa Kopp, Tustin Educators Association (at left): "I refine my culinary skills with my fellow home economics teachers!"



▶ **DRAMA QUEEN**

Autumn Browne, Anaheim Secondary Teachers Association (above as the southern belle in *Women Behind Bars*): "I am in my 20th year teaching theater full time. My students do eight to 10 productions each year. I also act or direct myself outside of school. I believe in practicing what I'm teaching!"





Photo: Kevin Bonny

▲ OFF-ROAD ADVENTURER

Jeff McPherson, Garden Grove Education Association: "In my spare time, I like to head to Glamis (Imperial Sand Dunes) in So Cal near Arizona. I ride quads and drive my RZR. I even have several former students and their families join us in the fun out there!"



ON THE BEAT

Keith Miles, United Teachers Los Angeles: "I play drums in jazz, blues and rock bands."

PEDAL PUSHER

Josie Malik, San Joaquin Delta College Teachers Association (at left): "I am retired but work part time at San Joaquin Delta. I've always loved to ride and took it up seriously when my last child left the nest 20 years ago."



▲ IN THE SADDLE

Angie Markle, Napa Valley Educators Association: "This is a photo of me and my quarter horse Leggies after a training session. Legs is on loan to the Sacramento Police Department. Horses are my life."

Teachers See the Possibilities

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Arroyo High School, Expository English Class, Teacher: Jennifer Swanson '96, M.A.Ed. '99

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