

California EDUCATOR

California Teachers Association May 2009 Volume 13 Issue 8

**SUMMER INSTITUTE
2009 AT UCLA**
> Page 36


**PRESIDENT OBAMA
VISITS POMONA
SCHOOL**
> Page 28

**DOESN'T OUR
EDUCATION
MATTER?**
**STUDENTS AND MEMBERS
QUESTION THE BUDGET CUTS**
> Page 8

*"They say that time
changes things, but you
actually have to change
them yourself."*

Andy Warhol





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FEATURES

- 8 **Doesn't our education matter? Students and members question the budget cuts**
- 11 **Vista Verde students mourn loss of programs**
- 12 **Crowded classrooms make learning more of a challenge**
- 15 **Oakland culinary program lacks kitchen after four years**
- 17 **Students will pay more but get less at CSU Fresno**
- 18 **Middle school students in Lodi don't want the music to end**
- 20 **Counseling cutbacks raise Saddleback students' concerns**
- 21 **La Puente students feel 'picked on' because they are poor**
- 22 **ESP pink slips growing along with worry there's more to come**



On the cover: **Student Raymond Phillips enjoys a visual arts class with Val Verde Teachers Association member Billie Kerr-Mosher at Vista Verde Middle School in Moreno.**
Story on page 8.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE



- 24 A shorn thing for some San Lorenzo teachers
- 25 Members, community fight to prevent school closure
- 26 2009 César E. Chávez Awards recipients
- 26 2009 Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship recipients
- 27 2009 CTA Scholarships
- 28 President Obama visits Pomona Village Academy
- 30 Adult schools, ROP programs vulnerable due to cuts



ACTION

- 32 San Diego leaders ask for budget reform now
- 33 Single-payer health care bill clears first hurdle
- 33 CTA's second-grade testing ban gains reconsideration
- 34 Successful LAUSD dropout prevention program cut
- 36 Summertime and the learning is easy



¡Sí Se Puede! ¿Por Qué No?

BY CTA PRESIDENT DAVID A. SANCHEZ

In this issue of *California Educator*, we wanted to give members and students an opportunity to tell firsthand stories of the hardships they face due to the recent budget cuts. They talked from the heart about how football programs are being closed, about favorite art classes disappearing, about bloated classrooms with 40-plus students. One 13-year-old boy named Johnny spoke about the music class he loves and how his math grades have gotten better since he started playing the trumpet.

Going to primary school in El Paso, Texas, I recall having to bring in my own supplies because the school I attended was so poorly funded. We brought our own pencils, paper, crayons — everything except for textbooks. Still, in that underfunded school, we always had art and PE and music classes. They never took away those vital programs. Somehow they understood the importance of those classes and how they added to a well-rounded person, to a balanced education.

One of my most memorable school experiences during those years in El Paso was my sixth-grade class with Mr. Smith. He was an incredible teacher. He knew how to engage us by bringing the lesson to life. One week I remember well. We were in the midst of a science lesson studying the solar system, and Mr. Smith decided that we would create a song about all the planets. He said that if it went well, we would present the song at a performance that was scheduled later that month for our parents. So we all banded together and came up with this song about our solar system. In this typical elementary school science class — that was once a bit boring for me — Mr. Smith managed to combine art, drama, music and the solar system. It truly brought the wonders of our universe to life. What kid wouldn't swallow that hook? Everyone in class was engaged and invested in the project, and the performance was a success.

Today, when I look at the condition of Cali-

fornia's schools, I think about how hard our members work to give our students a well-rounded education and what little the state does to help. How can our students feel truly invested in school if we don't offer them a diverse education? We shortchange our students by not giving them a broad spectrum of experiences similar to what they will one day experience in the world outside of school. Classes like art and music encourage kids to do better in school. Our students rely on us to teach them the skills they'll need to be productive in their personal and professional lives. In many ways, their future success and happiness are in our hands.

It's why we need to vote YES on Propositions 1A-1F in the special election on May 19. It is clear that all these measures are inextricably tied together. Props. 1A and 1B work together to start restoring some of the cuts politicians have made to education. Prop. 1A creates the funding mechanism. Prop. 1B corrects the attempted unlawful manipulation of the state's minimum school funding law — Proposition 98 — and repays \$9.3 billion that is owed to education.

With just about a week to go, this election is about who gets out to vote. If we don't pass all of these initiatives, the budget agreement falls apart and politicians will have to start all over again. Failing to pass these measures will mean more layoffs across the state and will cost California \$23 billion over the next four years, resulting in even deeper cuts to children's health care, public safety and programs for seniors and the disabled — and another \$11.5 billion cut to education.

Continue to get the word out about how important this election is. Remember, there are more than 9 million students counting on us to vote YES on Props. 1A-1F. We need to help all of them to succeed.

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

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"When I started practicing trumpet, my grades went up. My math grade went from a B minus to an A minus."

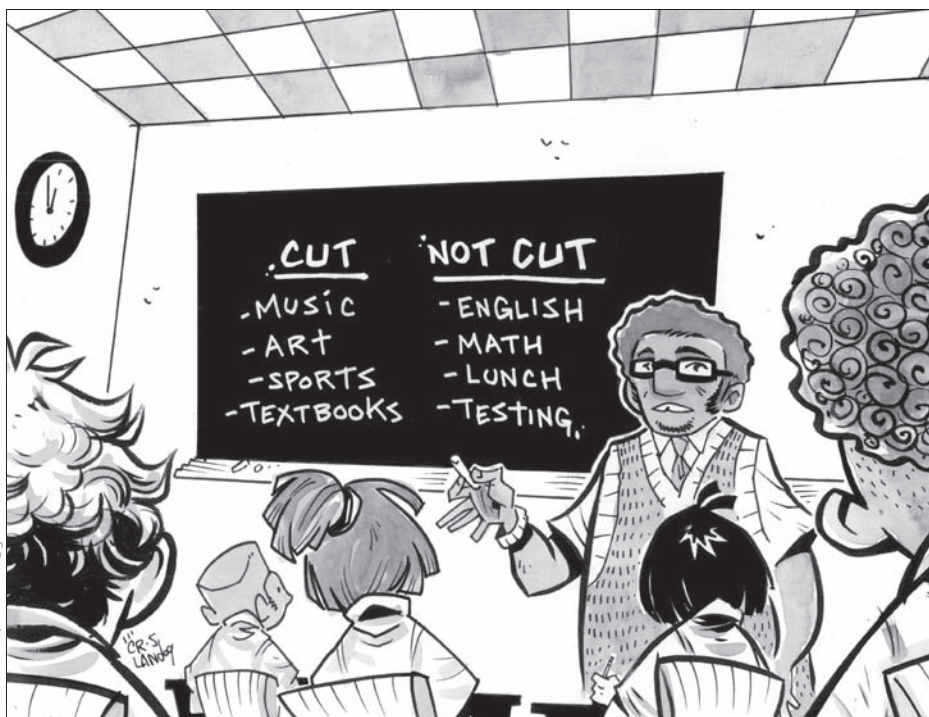
Johnny Morales, 13

calendar	may 09	<input type="checkbox"/> May 13 <input type="checkbox"/> May 15-17 <input type="checkbox"/> May 19 <input type="checkbox"/> May 19	Day of the Teacher CTA State Council of Education, Los Angeles CTA ESP Day Statewide special election
	jul 09	<input type="checkbox"/> July 1-6 <input type="checkbox"/> July 20-24	NEA Representative Assembly, San Diego Presidents Conference, Asilomar
	aug 09	<input type="checkbox"/> Aug. 2-7	Summer Institute, UCLA
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"We want you to be excited about learning, but we've had to make a few adjustments."

Send us your comments

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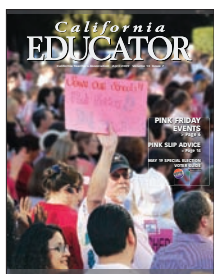
We invite members to send in cartoon concepts for future issues of the *Educator*. All we ask is that your ideas deal with current events in education and captions are no longer than one sentence long. Please use the information above to send your cartoon ideas through mail, fax or e-mail.

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

Having not yet received a hard copy of the April '09 *California Educator*, I chose to view the interactive version on the CTA website. I really enjoyed the Pink Friday article "I've Received a Pink Slip. Now What?" — especially given that it was our big event of the month. I thought the article contained some very good advice for laid-off teachers and staff, and answered questions that some teachers have recently asked me. I hope members will take advantage of this good information and pass it on to others.



Also, I was struck with how easy and fun it was to flip through and read the interactive version of the *Educator*.

George Melendez
CTA Board Member

Dear Editor:

I'm writing in response to an article written in the March issue of *California Educator* entitled "San Francisco Charter Creates Own Union, Enlists CTA for Help" [page 23]. I was vice principal at Edison Charter School during the academic year 2006-07.

The implication that I resigned from my position in the fall, after the entire board resigned, is false. I tendered my resignation in the spring of 2007. The principal followed shortly after, and the board members resigned piecemeal over several months.

The allegation that my resignation had any connection with the union's request for the school's financial records is also false. I was not aware of any communication between the union and the school administration regarding the disclosure of financial records, nor was I involved in the negotiation process with the union. In fact, the only responsibility that I had that related to the school's finances was procurement of school

materials and curriculum. And I would have welcomed any scrutiny into the details of those efforts.

Given the contentious nature of the school board while I was the vice principal, I was extremely sympathetic to the teachers' attempts to gain representation through unionizing. I would not expect the sources of this article to be aware of the various factors behind my resignation.



Amy Fisher Probst, San Francisco

The Educator appreciates Amy Fisher Probst's support of teachers during this tumultuous period of Edison Charter Academy and thanks her for setting the record straight on the true reasons for her resignation.

Editor



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Doesn't our education matter?

Students and members question the budget cuts

The state budget's \$11.5 billion cut to schools and colleges is the largest single budget cut ever made to public education in California. More than 27,000 educators in the state have received pink slips so far this year.

Analysts may be able to put a dollar figure on cuts to education, but it's more difficult to figure out the cost to students and society when education is not fully funded. The things we cannot pay for now may be things that will cost us down the line.

The first disbursement of federal stimulus money for education was sent to states last month. But even federal funds will not be enough — and won't arrive in time — to stave off widespread teacher and education support professional layoffs and cuts to programs. And the next round of cuts is coming on top of a year when cuts ran deep.

There are more than 9 million reasons to vote yes on Propositions 1A-1F — California's students. If these propositions fail, it will mean another \$23 billion budget hole. And that means more layoffs and more cuts to schools.

The following stories look at the impact of both past and future budget cuts — describing firsthand how they are affecting students in public schools. The stories tell what it's like to be in an overcrowded classroom; to go without basic school supplies; to need counselors who aren't there; and to lose beneficial programs like music, art and sports. >>>

Val Verde Teachers Association member Steve Brockman with student Micah Hebert, who worries that freshman football will soon disappear.

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



C

“California public schools and community colleges have been cut by more than \$11 billion over the past two years,” says CTA President David A. Sanchez. “With approximately 27,000 teachers receiving layoff notices in March, this means more overcrowded classrooms and further elimination of critical programs. We must work together to save our schools. We can’t let things get worse.”

The students profiled in the following stories come from urban, rural and suburban areas and represent a wide variety of ages, grade levels and ethnic backgrounds. Many of them asked the same questions while being interviewed: “Doesn’t the government want us to get a good education?” “Why are they cutting things like art, sports and music that make students want to stay in school and graduate?”

There were no easy answers to their questions. But students were told that the results of the special election should provide some answers, and that CTA indeed cares about them and is pleased to share their stories and viewpoints.



Visual arts teacher Billie Kerr-Mosher at Vista Verde Middle School.

Vista Verde students mourn loss of programs

The district: Val Verde Unified School District, serving students in Moreno Valley, Perris and Mead Valley, has approved eliminating 126 teaching positions plus nine others in an attempt to balance its budget. The cuts are part of the district's plan to reduce spending by \$27 million through the 2010-11 school year. Last year the district lost its middle school sports program, and many after-school intervention programs were cut. Next year there are plans to eliminate elementary music, middle school choir, middle school art, some high school AP classes and the high school freshman sports league.



Student Micah Herbert, eighth grade, Vista Verde Middle School

In seventh grade I was the running back, cornerback and middle linebacker

on the football team. We were good. Actually, we were great. We were in first place. Our school was all about sports. Everyone at the school knows you when you play football.

I love football, so I felt disappointed when they canceled it this year. For a lot of my friends, it was all they had; football was how they kept their grades up. Now their grades are lower. Some of them say, "I've stopped being competitive anymore." The excitement level of our school went down once sports left.

Now I hear they may take freshman football away. That's really messing me up because I want to play next year. They've eliminated middle school sports, and now they may eliminate freshman sports. That could jeopardize my chance for scholarships. I don't think it's fair.

When I grow up I want to own my own business. I want to go to the University of Southern California. And I want to be on the NFL. But right now, I just want to play football.

Teacher Steve Brockman, science teacher and former "coach of everything," Val Verde Teachers Association

Sports gives kids a buy-in for coming to school. It can be what hooks a kid into education. When I'm teaching Newton's laws of physics, I'll talk about sports and the flow of



ABOVE: Vista Verde Middle School eighth grader Micah Herbert. **LEFT:** Val Verde Teachers Association member Steve Brockman is a science teacher and former "coach of everything."

motion and a light bulb goes on in their heads. Sports teach teamwork and discipline. And all of that is transferred into their classes. When kids are involved in sports they keep out of trouble. They aren't out on the streets. And the school is transformed into being a community.

Student Raymond Phillips, eighth grade, Vista Verde Middle School

I was upset when I found out they were canceling art classes here. I was able to take art, but other kids won't be able to next year. Art classes help you cool down after a stressful class and let you express yourself in a creative way. Some students release emotions like anger through art. I look forward to this class every day. It's sad to think it will be gone.



ABOVE: Raymond Phillips, an eighth grader at Vista Verde Middle School, is upset about art classes that are being cut. **RIGHT:** A Madera High School classroom filled to capacity.

Teacher Billie Kerr-Mosher, visual arts, Vista Verde Middle School

The district sees it as a cost-saving measure, but they don't understand what it will cost students in the long run. Art helps with cognitive skills that are essential for math, language arts and social studies. People who take art score higher on testing and do better in high school.

It's also a way for students to express themselves and have self-esteem. When people are sketching, they are on a level playing field here. They are all equals and nobody is smarter. Oftentimes I find that my best kids are those that are discipline problems in other classes. But in here, they shine. ✦

Crowded classrooms make learning more of a challenge

The district: Madera Unified School District will have to cut \$15.4 million next year after already cutting \$9 million last year, says Madera Unified Teachers Association (MUTA) President Sue Thornton. Because of last year's cuts, classes are much more crowded this year at the high school level. Next year is likely to be worse. The board has voted to eliminate class size reduction in grades K-3 next year if MUTA and other district employees don't accept a 2.5 percent salary rollback, which Thornton describes as "blackmail." There has also been a discussion of cutting athletics and a counselor at each middle school.

Student James Castellanos, 18, Madera High School

My economics class is pretty crowded. My teacher gets frustrated sometimes. It's harder because teachers have to talk over the kids and it's hard to handle 38 kids and get your point across. In a smaller class, teachers can get their point across to students faster.

When you have students in a larger class, it's kind of guaranteed that they are going to talk. In smaller classes students listen to the teacher more. But in a larger class, when someone is disrupting, other students start to think it's OK and they start talking too. Even me sometimes.

In a bigger class it's kind of hard to learn. You have to wait longer to understand things and then when you finally get help, you're behind the others who already understand.

I want to become an entrepreneur. I want to own my own business before I'm 25. I want to go to college and be successful. Lots of my friends have dropped out. ... The senior class is a

lot smaller than my freshman class. I have been working since the age of 16. I work at Office Max.

I think of education as an investment. Who's going to be the future



"In a bigger class

leaders and the CEOs? Isn't that us? Why don't they realize they have to invest in our education? It's not going to pay off right away; they have to think of us as being a long-term investment.

Student Kendrick Liu, 18, Madera High School

It's really loud in a crowded classroom. It's hard for the teacher to get everyone to quiet down. Discipline is

harder to maintain. It's harder to get the teacher's attention and it's harder to learn. But I manage.

I think they should give more money to schools so that the average size class-



it's hard to learn."

James Castellanos, 18



LEFT: Economics teacher and Madera Unified Teachers Association member Mary Larsen talks about the difficulty of supporting all of her students in a crowded classroom. **INSETS:** Kendrick Liu (top) and James Castellanos (bottom) at Madera High School.

room isn't overcrowded and hard to manage. That way students can learn and teachers don't have a hard time teaching.

Teacher Mary Larsen, economics, Madera High School, MUTA member



In a crowded classroom it's difficult to support all students — especially the quiet ones. All of the students deserve attention, but you can't make sure everyone is getting what they need. Being a special education teacher [in a mainstream classroom] helps me be aware that students have differences, but it doesn't mean I can get to everyone in such a large class.



I have seen a difference in the students coming into high school during the past decade, because they had only 20 students in kindergarten through third grade. It has made a big difference and it's so sad to think that now, after such progress, they may increase class size again in those grades.

Kids are not getting the support they need now. I think we are going to see the result of that in 10 years when we see kids out on the streets who can't get jobs. How are we — the community — going to pay for that? ↩

Oakland culinary program lacks kitchen after four years

The school: BEST High School, a small school on the campus of the former McClymonds High School in Oakland, has a culinary arts program taught by a teacher who is a professional chef. After four years, the program still lacks a kitchen due to insufficient funding. (Dur-

ing the first two years, there was no running water in the classroom.) Students cook on a portable gas range or use a tiny area of the cafeteria when it is free. The program was supposed to become affiliated with the American Culinary Federation and become certificated.

But without a kitchen, it doesn't qualify. Students cater events to buy supplies for the program. The district announced that BEST High School will be closed next year due to budget cuts, but administrators hope the culinary program can survive elsewhere.



Oakland Education Association member Harold Le Blanc prepares food with student Sareesha Sims at BEST High School.



LEFT: Harold Le Blanc displays the pitiful gas burner that students often are forced to use at BEST High School due to lack of kitchen resources.

Lots of the students that I went to middle school with joined gangs. But I am not in a gang because I have better things to do. I just ignore them. I have school.

I have a GPA of 3.71. I want to go to college — a big school. I have applied to San Francisco State, Fresno State and East Bay State University. I pray I will get into any one of them. It doesn't matter which one. I may study child development, or I may study nursing. I'm just a regular person who wants the best out of life.

My cooking class helped me do well in my other classes. In biology class I was able to do the measurement conversions because I learned how to do it in cooking. I was able to do all the experiments. Cooking helped me in math, too. I guess that I

like to learn things hands on.

Now they may get rid of the program, and I feel that it's not right. You have a program that motivates kids who

Cooking helped me in math, too. I guess that I like to learn things hands on.

Sareesha Sims, student, BEST High School

have problems with attendance, and they should be putting more money in-

to it — not less. They should be doing whatever it takes to motivate kids to come to school.

Honestly, this school doesn't have what it should have in many ways. In cooking class we share the cafeteria in this itty-bitty space. Our school doesn't have enough electives or enough teachers. We only have two honors classes. Our math books are torn. They say they can't afford new ones.

I don't understand how this program can stay open if they shut down our school. Where will the students go who are already here?

I don't understand why they put more money into jails than schools. They should put more money into schools, period. If children don't learn, they will end up in jail. But if students are learning and having fun at the same time, they probably won't.

People want a difference in the world. We have to push to make a difference or nothing will ever change.

Teacher Harold Le Blanc, Oakland Education Association

My goal has been to get students prepared for college and the food industry. My class offers transferable skills and prepares them for entry-level positions. This program develops career-minded students and gets them excited about school. We cover reading comprehension, science, nutrition and sanitation. But there is no budget for us to buy food. We have to earn the money. I start off every year investing out of pocket. We have no kitchen. They've made promises, but there has

been no funding for us. These kids are mostly low-income kids. They work so hard in my class, but due to lack of funding, they don't get the

real deal. And they don't know any different. It's sad. ❧

Student Sareesha Sims, 17

I don't know if I would have come to school on a regular basis without my cooking class or my teacher, Mr. Le Blanc. It was the best thing about 11th grade last year. I woke up every morning and said, "I get to go to cooking class." And I went to school — even if I didn't want to. I now enjoy school. But it used to be a drag.

Students will pay more but get less at CSU Fresno

The university: CSU Fresno may have to cut \$3 million from its operation next year, or perhaps more. That's on top of the \$10 million that CSU Fresno slashed this year. Last year's cuts resulted in layoffs of part-time instructors and lecturers as well as other positions, a reduction in course offerings, and overcrowded classes. In previous years, courses that were underenrolled still were held. But now they are being canceled, even though students still need them to graduate. Because of this, students face an additional semester or two of coursework and take longer to graduate. Instructors will be asked to take even more students into their classes next year. And students will be paying 10 percent more

next year — while receiving 20 percent less in terms of a quality education.

Student Jessica Sweeten, Associated Student Body vice president

There were fewer offerings this year for the classes that I needed. So many classes had been cut. It was very difficult trying to get the classes that I needed and also being able to work.

Campuswide, the cuts are having a big effect. The new library just opened, and it is the biggest library in the CSU system. But it has no real furniture. We had planned for it to be a world-class library, but the school couldn't afford furniture, so staff put in any unused furniture it could find. The library

got the leftovers.

I'm 20, a junior, and getting my degree in agricultural communications. Next year tuition will increase 10 percent, and that is going to be difficult. My mother is a teacher, and she has received a pink slip from the Hughson Unified School District near Fresno. She's been there five years. My brother and I are both in college.

I think that education should be one of the last things ever cut. As students, we are the future of this country and this state. And we are not getting the support we need to continue our education. We may be in the midst of extremely difficult times, but it's a grim outlook for the future that lies ahead. ♡



Associated Student Body Vice President Jessica Sweeten stands before the new library at CSU Fresno that is devoid of furniture because of the budget cuts.

Middle school students in Lodi don't want the music to end

The district: The Lodi Unified school board recommended cutting a significant number of teaching positions in the district to cope with a projected \$16 million budget shortfall. There has been a strong effort by the community to save the instrumental music program for middle school students, but nothing is definite yet. At press time, no budget had been adopted.

Student Johnny Morales, 13

When I was first put into band, I wasn't thrilled about it. I thought band was geeky and for nerds. But after I started playing, I really liked it. So if

people tell us we're geeks, well, we're geeks. We ignore them.

When I grow up, I want to be an architect, and I want to play the trumpet. When I retire, I'll probably play the trumpet. I like the trumpet!

Being in the band has taught me responsibility. You can't leave your instrument at home, and you have to take good care of it. It's very expensive. When I practice at home it's not just to get a good grade. I do it because I like it. I practice one or two hours a day.

When I started practicing, my grades went up. My math grade went from a B minus to an A minus. I think that play-

ing the trumpet is helping me with math.

What I like best is all the performances. We go places and perform. I get nervous at first, but after we're done playing we always hear applause.

When I heard they might cancel band, I was really upset. I am looking forward to taking it next year in eighth grade and in high school. I am going to buy my own trumpet. My family has been saving money to buy one.

I don't think they should cut money from music. I think there are other things they can cut. But not music. They shouldn't cut music.



Lodi Education Association member and band teacher Rosemary Baschal conducts class at Lodi Middle School.

Teacher Rosemary Baschal, band teacher, Lodi Middle School, Lodi Education Association

I have seen students totally changed when they find they can play an instrument. It changes how they view academics. They do better.

You have to provide a lot of opportunities for students to experiment in middle school. How else will they know what they are good at? Half the kids who never thought they'd be good at band are now enjoying it. What makes a person smart is the ability to make choices. And if kids have no choices, it's sad. ♦



RIGHT: Lodi Middle School student Johnny Morales practices the trumpet. **INSETS:** Christopher Constantinos and Miranda Dorado (top) both on alto sax; Fayki Rashidi (bottom) on tenor sax.



Counseling cutbacks raise Saddleback students' concern

The district: Saddleback Valley Unified School District issued hundreds of layoff notices and put popular programs and services on the chopping block in the face of a potential \$19 million deficit next year. About 145 positions across the district — including classroom teachers, counselors and school librarians — may be cut, as well as vocal music in elementary schools, sports, bus transportation, K-3 class size reduction, the elementary-level Language Arts Assistance Program, and the high school International Baccalaureate program. The district also plans to cut 11 counselors. Laguna Hills High School's funding for sophomore counseling has been frozen in response to budget cuts, so it can no longer offer sophomores an opportunity to meet individually with a counselor to plan academic schedules and for college. Instead, counselors meet with sophomores as a group in their history classes. California ranked 50th in the country in 2005 for counselors, with a ratio of 970 to 1.



Student Ginny Sklar, 17, a senior

Helpful isn't a big enough word when it comes to my counselors. I'm probably in here every day with a question about college applications, scholarships, or asking for a letter of recommendation. Because of my counselors, I heard about Girls State, a weeklong program where they re-create the political system of California. Because of

that experience I was able to get internship opportunities and experience for my future career. I want to study politics and international relations. I have been accepted by four colleges — Sacramento State, Cal Poly, New York University and Drew University in New Jersey — and I am hoping to hear soon from Columbia and Brown.

I was able to meet with my counselor one-on-one as a sophomore before the cutbacks. My mom came and asked a million questions. A lot of people use private college counselors and spend \$1,200 to \$4,000. It's very expensive. I probably had something comparable to that for free from counselors at this school.

I don't think I would have gotten through school without my counselors. And because college is so competitive, I don't think I would have known that I had so many options available to me without them.

Counselor Julie Minekime, Saddleback Valley Education Association

Because of budget cuts, we've gone from sitting down individually with a kid and their parents to going into a classroom with 38 kids and no parents. We worry about the information getting home. Now they've proposed cutting even more counselors. If that happens, our school would have 1.5 counselors next year with 1,800 kids. It's ridiculous!

Counselor Monique Yessian, Saddleback Valley Education Association

With our economy the way it is, many families are falling apart. There are financial issues. Parents are splitting up, and students need to work to contribute to the household. Who's working to help kids with all their emotional issues? It's us — the school counselors. The number of students needing us has increased because kids have so many personal issues to deal with. But who will help them when counselor positions are cut? ❧





OPPOSITE PAGE: Monique Yessian (top), counselor and Saddleback Valley Education Association member; counselor Julie Minekime and student Ginny Sklar (bottom) discuss college plans.

LEFT: Fifth grader Lia Torres at California Elementary School in La Puente. **INSET:** Hacienda La Puente Teachers Association member Nancy Gomez.

Sometimes I think we're getting picked on. We are just kind of poor. Maybe it's because we are a poor school that they're picking on us and taking things away.



Teacher Nancy Gomez, fifth grade, Hacienda La Puente Teachers Association

The worry in these poor children's eyes is devastating and heartbreaking. Students fear losing their teachers, since they have seen the reduction in aides and made the connection that teachers will go next. I'm a first-year teacher and may be let go.

Our school has completely stopped providing supplies for students and teachers. This includes paper, pencils, crayons, dry erase markers for boards, chart paper, construction paper, erasers, scissors, glue, and even filing supplies such as manila folders. This impacts education severely in a low-economic area such as La Puente. We find ourselves scavenging for supplies constantly. This affects school morale for both teachers and students. Students feel that they are being targeted for being "poor" and that the more affluent schools are receiving all the assistance. It's hard to explain the situation to them and why it is that we cannot provide them with the basics.

How does the state of California expect API scores to increase in communities such as this when we are sending the message that these children don't matter? ❧

La Puente students feel 'picked on' because they are poor

The school: Last year the Hacienda La Puente Unified School District slashed \$5.7 million from its budget. More cuts will be made next year. California Elementary School in La Puente has stopped providing supplies for students and teachers. The principal has been told to cut two teaching positions for next year.

Student Lia Torres, fifth grade

I love school. My favorite is language arts. I love to read. I'm always reading. Sometimes in my class we don't have

enough paper and pencils. We look for pencils on the floor. My teacher, Mrs. Gomez, always brings us some. She buys them herself. We try very hard not to waste paper.

I heard that they will take teachers away. I'm worried because I have a very good teacher, Mrs. Gomez. She said she might be going away next year. I think that it's not fair. I am worried because I heard they were going to take away our school lunches. I'm always hungry. I think it's because I play a lot.

ESP pink slips growing along with worry there's more to come

Statewide: Across California education support professionals (ESP) — who contribute greatly to school environments — are feeling the budget cuts as districts eliminate many vital classified positions. ESP do not have a March deadline, so many layoff notices for next year may not have been issued yet and the numbers are hard to estimate. A rundown from across the state shows that ESP associations are reporting a large number of members receiving pink slips or hearing that pink slips are on the way.

Redlands Unified School District

RUSD voted to eliminate 26 classified positions, reports Mike Shanteler, president of the Redlands Education Support Professionals Association (RESPA). The employees will be notified of their status in the district during the coming weeks. It is possible that more classified positions may be

cut at the May board meeting.

"We are changing the lives of many classified employees who have dedicated themselves to the children, the teachers and the staff of Redlands Unified School District," says Shanteler. "Who will be doing the work left behind because of these cuts? How will we maintain the high standards that our members are proud of and the community has come to expect from us?"



Mike Shanteler
Redlands Unified
School District

Association of Classified Employees—Culver City

Culver City ESP are expecting to receive about 60 notifications, says Penny Upton, CTA primary contact staff for that chapter. (President Debra Hamme

was unavailable for comment.) "In all, we expect that one-fourth the total of bargaining unit members could be handed a pink slip in the near future." Clerks, typists, a custodian, a library

clerk and a driver are expected to be among the job cuts. Teaching positions in the district were also cut.

Association of Education, Office and Technical Employees in Hayward

"Nobody has been pink-slipped yet," reports Kathleen Telles of the Association of Education, Office and Technical Employees in Hayward. "But they are going to be abolishing positions. They are going to cut 15 positions in the district office and five at the adult education center. That's 10 percent of our people."

Telles says classified employees are worried about whether the district can continue to function without them, especially when it comes to meeting payroll, accounting, ordering supplies and processing paperwork for free and reduced student lunches. Telles is

BELOW: Paraprofessionals from United Educators of San Francisco at a protest

OPPOSITE PAGE: Mary Lavalais, a UESF paraprofessional, rallies against the layoffs.

CTA photos by Matthew Hardy



worried that this is only the beginning.

“On top of this, there is an additional \$300,000 more in cuts that will have to come out of our bargaining unit. So there will be more.”

Hermosa Beach Education Association

A large number of HBEA ESP members are expecting to receive layoff notices in the near future.

Lakeport Unified School District

LUSD voted to cut 12 classified positions, including classroom aides, library clerks, custodians, maintenance workers and transportation workers. Doreen McGuire-Griggs, president of the Lakeport Unified Classified

Employees Association, says she has never seen it this bad.

“We are going higher and higher on the seniority list,” she reports. “One library clerk whose position was cut has been in the district for 25 years. There is going to be a lot of ‘bumping’ taking place.”

United Educators of San Francisco

There was also some good news: following a boisterous rally by UESF members on April 14, the San Francisco Unified school board decided not to lay off paraprofessionals or classroom aides. After a generous donation from the city’s Rainy Day Fund and Mayor Gavin Newsom, the jobs of paraprofessionals



will be preserved.

“The proposed layoffs would have done little to save the district money, but would have had a tremendous impact on the students, as well as on paras and their families,” says UESF President Dennis Kelly. “The board rightly decided to protect the classroom. With over \$20 million expected from the federal stimulus bill, the para layoffs made little sense. In fact, some of that money should be spent to expand the ranks of paras, not reduce them.”



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A shorn thing for some San Lorenzo teachers

Teachers at Bohannon Middle School in San Lorenzo have baldly gone where few have dared to go. They shaved their heads and lopped off their locks, honoring a promise to students who raised a record amount of money for the annual Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's Pennies for Patients fundraiser.

Six San Lorenzo Education Association members took the pledge. By the time it was all over there were four shaved heads (including one in the shape of a target), one Mohawk, long tresses lopped su-

per short, and a male teacher's pony tail cut off. One teacher even shaved his arms.

It began with two teachers, John Nagel and Alain Valois, promising to shave their heads if students could come up with \$1,000. Then other staffers got into the act, promising to go bald or near bald if students raised additional money — at the rate of an extra shorn teacher per every \$1,000 raised. Pupils at the Title I school rose to the challenge, enthusiastically stuffing money into boxes inside their classrooms. In all, the school's 972 students collected more than \$6,000, more than tripling last year's donation.

The school has been a longtime participant in the fundraiser, but the event took on a special meaning after one of the

school's students was diagnosed with lymphoma. The student came in and talked to fellow students about what it's like to have the disease, and teachers decided it was time to up the ante in the battle against cancer.

California schools raise an average of about \$1,000 each for Pennies for Patients. Since the program was founded 15 years ago, students have raised nearly \$150 million nationwide, with 24,000 schools participating. Pennies for Patients funds research to cure leukemia, lymphoma and myeloma, and helps improve the lives of those fighting blood-borne cancers.

"I have to give it up to the kids," says Leah Rodriguez, who cut 14 inches of her hair and donated it to a cancer charity that makes wigs for

those undergoing chemotherapy. "The students really did a great job."

Rodriguez said she decided to participate after her father was recently diagnosed with cancer. He underwent surgery and has begun chemotherapy. Hair, she says, is not really such a big deal after all.

"Whatever we did is small compared to what those kids did," adds Salvador Huitzilopochtli, whose braid was chopped off by wife Ari, a hairdresser who came to the school for the purpose of shaving and clipping staff.

"I feel very hip," says Alexis Davis of her new do — a Mohawk. "It's much more reflective of my personality. And my grandmother likes it, too."

In addition to being front-runner for the prize of Most Spirited School in the district, the group was treated to dinner and a live performance of *Grease* in San Francisco by local radio station K101. They have also been written up in the local newspaper.

"We've had our 15 minutes of fame and are having so much fun," says Davis of the experience.

The students are savoring the moment, too. Valois says his class decided at the last minute to have the back of his head shaved into the shape of a target. Then, also at students' request, his arms were shaved.

"Next year we'll have to take it to a new level," he says. "Maybe we can try waxing."

SHERRY POSNICK-GOODWIN

BELOW: Looking like an '80s rock band are (clockwise from left) Mohawked Alexis Davis, Jeff Gentile, Ricardo Arrizon, Leah Rodriguez, Salvador Huitzilopochtli and Alain Valois. Missing from the photo is John Nagel.



Photo by Scott Buschman

Members, community fight to prevent school closure

Buy a pizza, save a school. As some school boards vote to close public schools across California due to dire state budget cuts and other factors, teachers and parents at one San Francisco Bay Area school are holding fundraisers and enlisting a pizza parlor and juice shop to donate sales proceeds to keep their beloved campus open. They're desperately trying to meet their district's unusual May 20 deadline for the community to raise at least \$50,000 of the \$75,000 needed to keep their small Contra Costa County school open — a brand-new campus that opened last July.

"It would be devastating if our school closed, and we are doing everything we can to keep it open," says Ann Ajimura, president of the 26-member Knightsen Teachers Association and a fifth-grade teacher at the popular Old River Elementary School in Brentwood in the tiny, two-school Knightsen School District.

She says teachers are pitching in. "Teachers have donated their

own money, and we are providing materials for some of the fundraisers, like the pancake mixes for our fundraiser breakfasts. The local merchants are helping out and there aren't really many more merchants we can ask."

The merchants agreeing to donate a percentage of sales proceeds on certain days include Chuck E. Cheese Pizza, a Jamba Juice outlet, a Togo's sandwich shop, and Loard's ice cream parlor. A local bowling alley and skating rink are pitching in as well.

Old River parents mobilized to hold a family bowling fundraiser, a dinner and a silent auction. Parent Rochelle Henson started a "Save Old River School" blog at www.saveoldriver.blogspot.com. Before the school board makes its final decisions on May 27, the blog asks the public to make tax-deductible donations.

"We need your help," Henson wrote in the blog. "Unfortunately, due to state budget cuts and the depressed economy, our new school may be forced to close. With your support we know that we can continue to provide wonderful opportunities to our students on our beautiful campus."

The area has been hard hit by mortgage foreclosures and aborted housing developments, leading to declining enrollment. The new K-5 school is down to 124 students, but can hold 400. Eight of the district's 26 educators were issued pink slips. Superintendent Vickey Rinehart credits the Old River teaching staff for coming to the district and proposing the fundraising approach, which the school board then supported.

"This was all driven by the teachers at Old River," Rinehart

Other school closures around the state due to budget shortfalls

- The school board for the **West Contra Costa Unified School District** voted in February to close three schools, despite protests and pleas from teachers and parents: El Sobrante Elementary in El Sobrante, Castro Elementary in El Cerrito, and Adams Middle School in Richmond. Pink slips were issued to 215 educators in the financially strapped district in March.
- In the 50,000-student **Sacramento City Unified School District**, the school board voted April 16 to close four schools at the end of this school year to save \$1.6 million: Genesis High School, and three elementary schools, Thomas Jefferson, Alice Birney and Lisbon. The district may have to close up to a dozen schools in the next three years because of declining enrollment and budget deficits. It issued 380 pink slips and expects a deficit of \$15.4 million in the next fiscal year that starts July 1, the Sacramento Bee reported. The Sacramento City Teachers Association recognizes the need for consolidation for budget reasons, but is fighting the layoff notices, which are unrelated to the school closures.
- The **Chino Valley Unified School District** announced in March that three elementary schools would be shuttered due to financial constraints and fewer students. The schools are Richard Gird, El Rancho and Los Serranos.
- The **Covina-Valley Unified School District** school board voted to close two elementary schools in June because of budget cuts and an urgent need to reduce the 14,000-student district's budget by \$2.5 million. Despite strong opposition from the public, Covina and Valencia schools will shut down. The district issued 88 pink slips to educators in March.

Several other district schools were saved when the cities of Richmond and Pinole suddenly agreed to provide a total of \$1.5 million in funding to keep them open in the fall. The sprawling district serves 30,000 students.

BELOW: Members of the Knightsen Teachers Association who are fighting to keep Old River Elementary open.



Photo courtesy of Knightsen Teachers Association

says. "They deserve the credit. But I think it's going to be very difficult to raise the money in so short a time. The school year ends on June 4, and we need to make decisions. The school board does not want to close the school. We are hoping the federal stimulus funding for California's schools might provide enough money, but we don't know yet."

Communities can make a difference in keeping schools open, says parent Rochelle Henson about her determination to work

with teachers to save Old River Elementary in Contra Costa County. Her daughter is in the first grade there and is benefiting from the dedicated staff.

"The teachers are absolutely fabulous," Henson says. "It's a small school, and it's like a family there. We know we have to raise a large amount of money in a very short amount of time to keep Old River open. But it's worth fighting for, and we are going to keep trying to raise the money."

MIKE MYSLINSKI

2009 César E. Chávez Awards recipients

CTA's César E. Chávez Memorial Education Awards Program provides recognition for students and their teachers who demonstrate an understanding of the vision and guiding principles by which César E. Chávez lived his life.

This year, 35 winners — 19 visual arts projects and 16 written essays — have been selected to receive recognition plus \$1,000 for both students and CTA members. Group entries will share the award.

In the visual arts category, the winners are: Grades Pre-K-K: **Ange-la Arroyo**, **Kate Carrasco**, **Eidi Loaiza**, **Evelyn Marquez**, and **Hanna Vasquez**, students of *Miriam Aguilar Escobar*, National City Elementary Teachers Association, Region 4.

Grades 1-2: **Oscar Rivera**, student of *Blanca Cortes*, Tracy Educators Association, Region 2.

Grades 3-4: **Marika Gregory**, student of *Jennifer Rhinehart*, Washington Teachers Association, Region 1; and **Alexander Lopez**, student of *Diane Doris Kissas*, Montebello Teachers Association, Region 3.

Grades 5-6: **Laura Becerra**, student of *Isabel Gonzalez*, Vineland

Teachers Association, Region 2; **Robee Jane Arevalo**, **Justin Garrido**, **DeShawn Jones**, and **Tenbite Tesema**, students of *Maria Tamargo*, Lawndale Teachers Association, Region 3; and **Itzayana Quintero**, student of *Linda Anderson*, Moorpark Educators Association, Region 3.

Grades 7-8: **Ariana Montaña** and **Kalii Rodenbaugh**, students of *Mary Bracken*, Guernville School Teachers Association, Region 1.

Grades 9-12: **Arielle Ogas**, student of *John Robrock*, San Benito JUHS Teachers Association, Region 1; **Daniela Fregoso**, student of *Blanca Wellington*, Napa Valley Educators

Association, Region 1; **Whitney King**, student of *Elizabeth Jara*, San Joaquin County Educators Association, Region 2; **Nicole Tellier** and **Shannon French**, students of *Joy Cornish-Bowden*, Tracy Educators Association, Region 2; **Javier Casillas**, student of *Lynn Popovich*, Baldwin Park Education Association, Region 3; **April Hernandez**, student of *Aimee Hultman*, Teachers Association of South Pasadena, Region 3; **Oscar Gallegos**, student of *Michelle Glanville*, Moreno Valley Educators Association, Region 4; and

Rodrigo Vizcaya, student of *Staci Hanks-Reinalda*, Moreno Valley Educators Association, Region 4.

Higher education: **Gustavo Cruz**, student of *Douglas R. Todd*, Mt. San Antonio College Faculty Association, Region 3; and **Phinit Cheamak**, student of *William Carrick*, Chaffey College Teachers Association, Region 4.

In the written essay category, the winners are: Grades 1-2: **Ariana Arias**, student of *Carmen Donez*, Fallbrook Elementary Teachers Association, Region 4.

Grades 3-4: **Brandon Soto**, student of *Denise Blue*, Montebello Teachers Association, Region 3; and **Tiffany Gridley**, student of *Judy Hamlin*, Alvord Educators Association, Region 4.

Grades 5-6: **Dominik Pantaleoni**, student of *Beth Boyer*, Manzanita UNCH, Region 2; **Emma Hoelker**, student of *Linda Anderson*, Moorpark Educators Association, Region 3; and **Terence Douglas**, student of *Cynthia Molt*, United Teachers of Pasa-

dena, Region 3.

Grades 7-8: **Zyron Turner**, student of *Susan E. Ze*, Livermore Education Association, Region 1; **Samantha Forrest**, student of *Kristin Dell' Imagine*, Manzanita UNCH, Region 2; and **Ramakrishnan Kumaran**, student of *Carmen Veronica Lewen*, Hemet Teachers Association, Region 4.

Grades 9-12: **Jessica Greenstreet**, student of *Jerry Eaton*, Travis Unified Teachers Association, Region 1; **Gavin Moler**, **John Butterfield** and **Alexandra Reinnoldt**, students of *Michael Carroll*, San Juan Teachers Association, Region 2; **Joel Samuels** and **Lily Berrin**,

students of *Antonio Losada*, San Juan Teachers Association, Region 2; **Gabrielle Sharaga**, student of *Jaime Thomas*, Ventura Unified Education Association, Region 3; **Amy Soto** and **Ileana Bar-**

riga, students of *Marilyn Edmonds*, Alvord Educators Association, Region 4; and **Mayra Segoria**, student of *John Mesicek*, Palm Springs Teachers Association, Region 4.



Painting by Shannon French



Painting by Angela Arroyo, Kate Carrasco, Eidi Loaiza, Evelyn Marquez, Hanna Vasquez

2009 Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship recipients

Eleven dependent children of CTA members, three Student CTA members, and three CTA members have been selected for awards of \$2,500 to \$5,000 under CTA's Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Scholarship program for ethnic minority members, funded by voluntary contributions from the CTA membership and the CTA Foundation for Teaching and Learning.

Dependent children receiving scholarships are: **Bernyia Askew**,

daughter of *Esther E. Askew*, NEA Jurupa; **Stacey Ochoa**, daughter of *Susan L. Ochoa*, Association of Cypress Teachers; **Riley Takano**, son of *Derrick Takano*, Riverside City Teachers Association; **Julia Coleman**, daughter of *Janet Coleman*, NEA Jurupa; **Christopher Perez**, son of *Colleen M. Perez*, John Swett Education Association; **Brandon Sanchez**, son of *Tim Sanchez*, Atwater Elementary Teachers Association; **Travis Tay-**

lor, son of *Larry D. Taylor*, Montebello Teachers Association; **Maria Vega**, daughter of *Maria E. Vega*, Napa Valley Educators Association; **Malosi Taeleifi**, son of *Kathy W. Taeleifi*, Associated Pomona Teachers; **Annalisa Willis**, daughter of *Tyra J. Willis*, Association of Cypress Teachers; and **Camala Cortez**, daughter of *Cecilia Cortez*, Bakersfield Elementary Teachers Association.

Student CTA members receiv-

ing scholarships are: **Rachel Jarvis**, California State University, Monterey Bay; **Uma Bhandaram**, University of California, Los Angeles; and **Angela Giberti**, University of California, Santa Barbara.

CTA members receiving scholarships are: **Keith Brown**, Oakland Education Association; **Lewis Lester**, Orange County Schools Education Association; and **Ben Quiñones Jr.**, Association of Colton Educators.

2009 CTA Scholarships

CTA's Board of Directors has awarded scholarships to 35 dependent children of CTA members, five CTA members, and three Student CTA members under the CTA Scholarship Program.

Michael Diaz, son of Teachers Association of Long Beach member Tony P. Diaz, won the Ralph J. Flynn Memorial Scholarship for the highest-scoring applicant (\$5,000). **John Beck**, son of Morongo Teachers Association member Eric Beck, won the D.A. Weber Scholarship for a student attending continuation high school (\$5,000).

Recipients of the 2009 CTA Scholarship for Dependent Children (\$5,000) are: **Raeye Daniel**, daughter of Yewieneshet Zewde, Compton Education Association; **Kristine Delgado**, daughter of Irene Delgado, San Diego Education Association; **Claire Dodson**, daughter of Mary P. Dodson, Nevada Union High School Teachers Association; **Kristin Haitz**, daughter of

Robbin R. Haitz, San Juan Teachers Association; **Amber McBenttez**, daughter of Kathleen McBenttez, Anaheim Elementary Education Association; **Abby Mulvihill**, daughter of James P. Mulvihill, Ukiah Teachers Association; **Laura Pena**, daughter of Minerva Pena, Association of Placentia-Linda Educators; **Anna Polley**, daughter of Marcy Polley, Richland Teachers Association; **Dominic Rios**, son of Georgia C. Rios, Central Unified Teachers Association; **Marie Sanguinetti**, daughter of Michele A. Sanguinetti, Scotts Valley Education Association; and **Daniel Markham**, son of Tracy A. Markham, Fallbrook High School Teachers Association.

Also, **Elena Light** and **Katherine Light**, daughters of Angela Light, Pleasant Valley SD Education Association; **Anna Scudder**, daughter of Ronald Scudder, Durham Unified Teachers Association; **Erin Searfus**, daughter of Michael J. Searfus, Mt. Diablo Educa-

tion Association; **Christina Simpson**, daughter of Lisa M. Simpson, Sequoia District Teachers Association; **Kathryn Updyke**, daughter of Allen L. Updyke, Palmdale Elementary Teachers Association; **Maggie Maratsos**, daughter of G. Putnam Cook III, Fallbrook Elementary Teachers Association; **Logan Schreiner**, son of Paul J. Schreiner, Lodi Education Association; **Marley Schroepfer**, daughter of Mary Schroepfer, Fillmore Unified Teachers Association; **Haley Schorr**, daughter of Andrew J. Schorr, Evergreen Teachers Association; and **Lindsay Clayton**, daughter of Nadia Clayton, Valley Center-Pauma Teachers Association.

Also, **Cathleen Cardoza**, daughter of Michael J. Cardoza, Empire Teachers Association; **Douglas Bell**, son of Stephen Bell, United Educators of San Francisco; **Kevin O'Reilly**, son of Susan O'Reilly, San Ramon Valley Education Association; **Joel Ontiveros**, son of Carole Ontiveros, Snowline Teachers Association; **Baylee Martz**, daughter of Brad Martz, Muroc Education Association; **Andrea Nelson**, daughter of Tom

Nelson, Modesto Teachers Association; **Danielle Strother**, daughter of Catherine Frances Strother, Charter Oak Educators Association; **Jessie Saunders**, daughter of James Saunders, Alameda Education Association; **Iris Yellum**, daughter of Don Yellum, East Side Teachers Association; **Ellen Nulph**, daughter of Denise Nulph, Turlock Teachers Association; and **Laurel Mattos**, daughter of Anita Y. Mattos, Saddleback Valley Education Association.

The recipients of the 2009 CTA Scholarship for Members (\$3,000) are: **Michelle Allison-Kafka**, Columbia Union Teachers Association; **Emily Dixon**, San Diego Education Association; **Natasha Lowrie**, Washington Teachers Association; **Cynthia Murphy**, UTLA; and **Lisa Rasler**, Oakland Education Association.

The recipients of the 2009 L. Gordon Bittle Memorial Scholarship for Student CTA (\$3,000) are: **Brandi Lennertz**, California State University, Long Beach; **Morgan Livingston**, Los Medanos Community College; and **Melissa Mayes**, San Jose State University.



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President Obama visits Pomona Village Academy



Photo by Chester Tadeja

LEFT: President Obama greets students from Village Academy High School as teacher Michael Steinman (left) and 12th-grader Jorge Bravo (right) look on. **BELOW:** The entire AP Literature class at Village Academy that created the video "Is Anybody Listening?"

something powerful to say. The discussion was so moving that Steinman had them and his other classes write journal entries on the topic, with some students becoming so emotional that they were unable to read their own words aloud.

With encouragement from their teacher, the class of juniors and seniors worked after school to film and edit the video. In addition to Bojorquez's concerns, student Evelyn Aguilar speaks of the heartbreak of her parents losing their home to rising interest rates, forcing the family to move in with an aunt and putting 12 people under one roof. Before waving the camera away in tears, Carlos Martinez expresses his worries about having to leave the country. Sonya Steward asks bluntly, "You just wonder, do people even care anymore?"

Steinman's class released the nine-minute video in January, in which 14 other students also spoke candidly, unscripted, and often

very emotionally about the impact of the economic crisis on their lives and on their dreams for the future. In addition to posting the video on YouTube (where it has since been viewed over 50,000 times), Steinman sent the project to local and national news agencies. The response was overwhelming, with local network and PBS stations broadcasting segments about the class, leading to a major segment on ABC's "20/20."

"The timing of the '20/20' crew being here couldn't have been better," said Steinman. "because it was during that same period that I got the call from the White House."

The class was stunned and then elated when Steinman held up a faxed copy of the speech which had just been given and Bojorquez told the class the news. "He saw it," she said of the president and their video, to an eruption of applause and boisterous high fives. Then "20/20" correspondent David Muir pointed out where her name was mentioned in the text and had her read the words aloud for the class. While ABC cameras rolled, students in turn thanked Steinman for taking them this far.

A week after he had thrust them into the national spotlight, President Obama invited the class to meet with him and hear his speech on energy at the Edison

Imagine your class produced a video called "Is Anybody Listening?" and it turned out the president of the United States was doing just that.

That's what happened to Associated Pomona Teachers member Michael Steinman and his Village Academy High School AP Literature students on March 10 when President Obama spoke at length about their class project in a major speech on education policy before the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

As the president began to close his remarks, he spoke of the chance for success his own teachers, parents and America had given him. Then he said: "I want children like Yvonne Bojorquez to have that chance. Yvonne is a student at Village Academy High School in California. ...

"A couple of months ago, Yvonne and her class made a video talking about the impact that our struggling economy was having on

their lives. Some of them spoke about their parents being laid off, or their homes facing foreclosure, or their inability to focus on school with everything that was happening at home. When it was her turn to speak, Yvonne said: 'We've all been affected by this economic crisis. [We] are all college-bound students. ... We're all businessmen and doctors and lawyers and all this great stuff. And we have all this potential, but the way things are going, we're not going to be able to [fulfill it].' It was heartbreaking that a girl so full of promise was so full of worry that she and her class titled their video 'Is anybody listening?'"

The video the president spoke of originally started as a discussion and then a writing assignment. Steinman was leading a discussion on the American Dream and today's economy, when he asked how the economic downturn was affecting students' lives. He was shocked when nearly every class member raised a hand and had



Photo by Kim Washburn

International Vehicle Electrics Plant, which just happens to be across the street from the Village Academy.

"It was surreal," said Steinman. "We took a short walk from school to sit in the front row of a speech given by the president of the United States." After the speech Steinman and the class were given a Secret Service escort to the area where the president would be exiting the facility. There they privately met face to face with the man whose attention they had dreamed of getting when he was a candidate just five months earlier. Steinman was impressed with both the president and with his students. "He shook everyone's hand and actually answered some pretty substantial policy questions from the kids."



ABOVE: Student Yvonne Bojorquez tells her story of hardship in the video. **BELOW:** Teacher Michael Steinman, who motivated the class to create the video.

added Steinman. "And this experience has taught them that at least that version of the American Dream is still alive. They have the ability to dream, to make something of themselves, whatever that is. You can talk to the president, you can even *be* the president, but you have to have a dream."

Student Chris Schultz concurs: "This made me believe that when one person puts their mind to it, they can do anything."

Steinman, an eight-year veteran who fortunately didn't get a pink slip this year, hopes society will change so that more students like his will have the opportunity to live out their dreams. And maybe it is changing. In his March 10 speech as he ended his remarks about their project, President Obama said, "There's something I want to say to Yvonne and her class at Village Academy. I am listening. We are listening. America is listening."

FRANK WELLS

To view the Village Academy video, go to www.youtube.com and enter into the search "Is Anybody Listening?"



Photo by Chester Tadeja

Steinman saw the entire experience as the ultimate learning opportunity. "I teach my kids about democracy and freedom of speech, and I wanted to show them if they have the courage to do something outside the box, they could be heroes themselves. I knew what they had to say was powerful. I wanted the people on Wall Street and the people in government who had caused all this damage to see that tape."

"These kids just want a chance, an opportunity to work hard and make something special happen,"



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Adult schools, ROP programs vulnerable due to cuts

Beverly Ewoldsen retired from her job in 2000. Then she was swindled out of her investments, and her retirement money vanished. She needed to go back to work, but first she needed to update her computer skills. So she enrolled at the Lewis Adult Education Center in Santa Rosa.

"I'm just taking Microsoft Word for starters," she says. "Then I'll take more classes in other programs."

Her plans could change, however, under a proposal to completely eliminate the program. And Ewoldsen isn't happy about that possibility one bit.

"I need to take computer courses. The job market isn't good right now, so this way I can

improve my skills while waiting for things to improve. I haven't used a computer in my workplace since 1990, and there's a whole new world out there."

The Santa Rosa City School District voted to eliminate the entire adult education program for budgetary reasons at a March 4 meeting, but will make a final decision regarding the fate of the program in May, says Dan Evans, president of the Santa Rosa Teachers Association (SRTA). Meanwhile, students and SRTA members at the site are worried about the future. All 12 teachers at the program have received RIF notices.

"We are currently serving about 3,000 students," says Carole Smith, who teaches English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. "We teach people who can't speak English, people re-entering the job market, or those who lost their jobs and need to be retrained. We help people who dropped out of school get their diploma or their GED. Our classes are free

or reasonably priced and offer a flexibility that people can't get at a junior college or other schools. This is an important program; we are helping people to become productive members of society."

Administrators propose to use the savings from closing the adult school to benefit the district's K-12 schools. But Smith believes it will have a negative impact.

"We offer a free program for ESL adults to learn English," she says. "Many of the adults in the ESL program are also the parents of elementary school students in the district. It helps their children when they are able to attend parent conferences and understand what teachers are talking about without translators."

"We provide services to the community that need to exist," says Irena Dewey, another teacher at the site. "We believe we are a viable program. We have served the community for a long time. As usual, this will hit the poor segment of the population hardest. My students are very upset because if this closes down, they will be out of luck. We are willing to adjust to the demands of reducing the budget, but closing down is not an option."

Unfortunately, adult education programs are now more vulnerable than ever due to recent changes in school financing. In the past, programs like adult education have received money from categorical funding. But in the new budget deal, legislators put categorical programs into three tiers. Adult education is among more than 40 programs in the third or bottom tier. Tier III programs are subject to having their funds raided for other

programs or eliminated entirely. The reasoning behind this change was to allow school boards and administrators "flexibility" in balancing budget shortfalls.

So far, Santa Rosa is the only community to propose completely eliminating its adult education

program under the new tier system. However, the Bellflower Unified School District has announced plans to greatly reduce class offerings. Other Tier III programs now jeopardized include Regional Occupational Program (ROP) centers offering career and technical education and programs for Gifted and Talented Education (GATE); community day schools; high school counseling, art and music block grants; and class size reduction in ninth grade.

CTA is lobbying to remove adult education and ROP programs from Tier III and have them placed into Tier II so they will be protected. (Under Tier III, programs receive a 15 percent reduction in the current year and for four additional



Cris Johnson
Alternative, Career
and Technical
Education Committee

BELOW: Teachers turned out en masse to protest cuts at the Santa Rosa board meeting on April 22.
OPPOSITE: Santa Rosa Teachers Association members (left to right) Lynne Black, Patricia Rogers and Irena Dewey.



CTA photos by Andrew Brennan



years, and schools have maximum flexibility to use the funding as they wish for other purposes.)

Cris Johnson — who serves as chair of CTA's Alternative, Career and Technical Education Committee and vice chair of CTA's Adult Education Caucus — says he is disturbed by the trend for administrators to downsize or eliminate adult education and ROP programs.

"At Sacramento City Unified, where I'm at, they are closing all the adult school evening programs and weekend programs," he says. "This includes a lot of career and technical education programs, such as those that teach students to be bus drivers and organize medical records."

Johnson, who teaches adult basic education classes for those seeking a high school diploma or GED, believes such decisions are shortsighted and will ultimately backfire.

"These programs are being cut when they are needed the most," he explains. "Because of the economy, waiting lists are growing to get into these classes, which serve a population of adults trying to get back into the workforce. Traditionally, these programs also serve as an alternative for people who did not get through high school. Instead of cutting them, they should be giving them all the support they can."

SHERRY POSNICK-GOODWIN

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San Diego leaders ask for budget reform now

Prominent San Diego leaders, including Carlsbad Firefighters Association President Rick Fisher, San Diego Sheriff Bill Kolender, City of San Diego Fire Chief Tracy Jarman, and San Diego District Attorney Bonnie Dumanis, joined Chula Vista Educators President Peg Myers at a Budget Reform Now rally in April.

“We ask all Californians to join us in support of these propositions as a long-term investment toward a brighter future for our children,” said Myers.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is slated to release an updated

state budget around May 25, and what kind of news that proposal holds for vital services — including public education — depends on whether voters approve CTA-backed Propositions 1A-1F on May 19.

CTA’s State Council of Education at its March meeting voted to support each of those pending ballot measures.

CTA fiscal experts note that the national recession has continued to wreak havoc on state revenues, with at least one projection from the state Department of Finance suggesting the weakening economy could open a new budget deficit of up



CTA Photo by Bill Guy

ABOVE: Chula Vista Educators President Peg Myers at a Budget Reform Now rally joined by (left to right) Carlsbad Firefighters Association President Rick Fisher, San Diego Sheriff Bill Kolender, City of San Diego Fire Chief Tracy Jarman, and San Diego District Attorney Bonnie Dumanis.

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Prop. 1B – Education Repayment

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Prop. 1C – Lottery Modernization

Provides \$5 billion in new revenues - without raising taxes - to help close the budget deficit. Guarantees that public schools will continue to receive the same amount of funding from the lottery they get now.

Prop. 1D – Children Services

Temporarily redirects unspent money from tobacco taxes to pay for children’s health and social services.

Prop. 1E – Mental Health Funding

Temporarily redirects unspent funds to help pay for children’s health programs including health care screenings, diagnosis and treatment.

Prop. 1F – Legislative Salary Freeze

Prohibits state legislators, the governor and other state elected officials from getting pay raises whenever the state budget is running a deficit.



to \$15 billion for California.

If voters reject the ballot measures — including Proposition 1B, the repayment of

\$9.3 billion to public education — the governor's budget plan could include another significant round of budget

cuts. Cuts necessary to close a new \$15 billion or more budget gap would do untold devastation to public schools,

which are already reeling from the impact of cuts suffered earlier this year.

LEN FELDMAN

Single-payer health care bill clears first hurdle

CTA and its allies have won a major battle in the state Capitol that is moving vital co-sponsored legislation one step closer to enactment.

With the help of its allies in education, labor, and the business community, CTA has secured the approval of the Senate Health Committee for SB 810, by Sen. Mark Leno (D-San Francisco). The measure would implement a comprehensive health care reform plan aimed at ensuring affordable coverage to all Californians.

The bill would help reduce the number of children whose family have no health care protections, and it would help drive down the skyrocketing costs of

health care benefits that have hit working Californians very hard.

With many provisions identical to those in an earlier universal health care measure — SB 840 by former Sen. Sheila Kuehl — SB 810 would create a California Healthcare System relying largely on the \$200 billion spent within the state annually on public and private health care programs.

SB 810 would provide a complete range of services — including medical, dental, and vision. Under terms of the bill, the state would act as the “single-payer” authority, negotiating for bulk purchases at reduced costs for medications and services.

The measure would create a

new commissioner, whose job would include securing all needed regulatory or legislative changes necessary to redirect current federal, state, and local health care payments to the California Healthcare System. The new system would become responsible for underwriting all benefits and services.

The bill also creates a special commission responsible for developing a financing mechanism.

Despite a long list of supporters, the bill's author faced withering cross-examination from several Republican members of the committee, who charged that the costs for the health care system would out-

strip the available revenue.

Sen. Leno and witnesses effectively rebutted the assertions, noting that the system would, among other things, garner savings by allowing all residents to secure needed care at rates much lower than those of emergency and trauma centers. These expensive emergency facilities are now treating the uninsured.

SB 810 is expected to reach the Senate floor soon. The Senate's approval would send the bill to the Assembly for action.

LEN FELDMAN

To help pass this bill, get in touch with your state senator and Assembly member.

CTA's second-grade testing ban gains reconsideration

CTA and opponents of developmentally inappropriate testing that harms young children and jeopardizes their instructional time suffered a temporary setback in the Senate Education Committee last month following a lengthy and acrimonious debate on the bill. CTA-sponsored SB 800, by Sen. Loni Hancock, fell one vote short of the five needed for passage, but the bill's author immediately gained the right to have the measure reconsidered following negotiations with opponents. SB 800 was expected to come up again for another vote as the Educator went to press.

The CTA-sponsored bill would eliminate the second-

grade California Standards Test requirement in the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program, effective July 10, 2010. The elimination of second-grade testing would save the state approximately \$2 million annually and free up time that could be devoted to instruction.

The measure would also bring the state into conformity with the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which requires testing of students in third grade and above.

During the April 15 hearing in the Senate Education Committee, CTA representatives and other bill supporters — including the California State PTA,

United Teachers Los Angeles, Californians Together, and the San Diego Unified School District — drove home the point that the current exam unnecessarily stresses youngsters of that age and does not provide valid and reliable information quickly or in a manner that teachers can use to help their second-grade students. Objections to the bill came from lawmakers who insisted that other assessment alternatives be substituted including a new statewide diagnostic test for second-graders before eliminating the grade 2 CST. Their rationale is that the state needs to have data on the reading proficiency levels of second-graders in order to

guide policy-making decisions.

A telling moment came when Sen. Abel Maldonado recounted how his own son, Dino, was forced to take the lengthy multiple choice exam, which ultimately yielded little or no information to help his instruction. The senator talked about his son's stress and the clear fact that the exam — including its length and nature — was not appropriate for young children.

LEN FELDMAN

Write or call your state senator in support of CTA-sponsored SB 800 (Hancock). Tell lawmakers your stories about how the exam has impacted your classroom and your students.

Successful LAUSD dropout prevention program cut

Lamont Millender believes he has made a difference at Jordan High School. Over the past two years, this “diploma project advisor” — or DPA — has worked with inner-city youths who are at the highest risk of dropping out and has motivated many of them to stay in school. He even convinced some high school students who were already considered dropouts to come back.

Millender, a counselor and member of United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA), is one of 85 DPAs whose job may be eliminated due to budget cuts within the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD).

“I honestly feel that without us, the dropout rate will soar even higher,” says Millender. “I’m very worried about the implications. Until there were DPAs, nobody went after students who didn’t meet their targeted graduation year. But now they know if they come back, there’s still a diploma waiting for them. At Jordan High School, most students don’t see dropping out as an option anymore.”

In March, the school board

voted to cut thousands of teaching positions. The board also voted to decentralize the dropout prevention program — which could end the program at many school sites. For the past two years, schools with the most challenging populations have been assigned DPAs out of the district’s Title I funds. But under the new rules, administrators at individual school sites can opt to “buy back” the counselors. Funding will come from a pot of categorical money that can also be used to buy back other positions that have been cut, including teachers, classified employees, administrators and other counselors.

DPAs are concerned that with competing priorities for limited funding, schools may choose not to buy them back — and that this could result in jeopardizing the progress that has been made in improving LAUSD’s graduation rate.

The district has invested \$10 million per year in the Dropout Prevention and Recovery Program since it began in 2007, and has assigned DPAs to 49 high schools and 31 middle schools. Debra Duardo, director of the program, says the program has had “great success” in recovering thousands of students who were considered dropouts or potential dropouts.

Duardo, who dropped out herself in the ninth grade and eventually earned a master’s degree in social work from UCLA, says, “Forty-two percent of those on the dropout list for the district were re-

covered because of DPAs. That’s huge.”

“It isn’t easy,” says Duardo. “We go out and find these students. We go to their homes. We get them back into their schools or enrolled into alternative programs.

And if we find they are already enrolled in an education program, such as a community college, they are removed from the dropout list.”

It is difficult to estimate how many dropouts have been saved or recovered this year, with a change in the formula for calculating dropouts that went into effect nationwide. But the district’s official graduation rate has increased overall, and DPAs have been given much of the credit.

During 2007-08, Jordan High School’s graduation rate increased by 12 percent. By the end of this school year, Millender anticipates, there will be another jump of about 20 percent, resulting in a 67 percent graduation rate. Last year, 55 students on the school’s dropout list returned, and of these, 48 received a diploma.

Emily Hernandez, a DPA at Berendo Middle School in the South Central neighborhood of Los Angeles, has also seen incredible progress.

“We’ve seen a lot of success,” says the UTLA member who works with seventh- and eighth-graders who are failing more than 50 percent of their classes or have received multiple suspensions. “What we’ve done at the school is entirely change the climate by collaborating and creating connections for kids. When kids feel connected to school, they stay in school.”

BELOW: Lamont Millender, a counselor and member of United Teachers Los Angeles, is one of 85 diploma project advisors whose job may be eliminated due to budget cuts.



Photos by Scott Buschman

Since the program began, suspensions have gone from more than 1,700 a year to less than 20 per year, which she partly credits to the positive behavior support system of the program. Standardized test scores have gone up and the school’s graduation rate has climbed from 68 percent to 75 percent.

The turnabout has been so successful that the school no longer qualifies for the program. However, the administration plans to buy back Hernandez with Quality Education Investment Act funding made possible through CTA.

Because the system does not include middle school students in the dropout rate, Hernandez worries that middle schools may be less likely to purchase DPAs. “But by the time they get to high school, it may be too late,” she says. “We may see them dropout in high school, but it didn’t happen overnight.”

She also worries that without adequate resources, schools may “push out” students who are behavior and academic problems, which will increase the number of dropouts.

BELOW: Emily Hernandez, a diploma project advisor at Berendo Middle School in the South Central neighborhood of Los Angeles.



California is under intense pressure under No Child Left Behind to reduce the dropout rate and increase the percentage of students receiving high school diplomas. A total of 12,367 students dropped out of middle schools and high school within the city of Los Angeles in 2006-07, according to the California Dropout Research Project, a project of UC Santa Barbara's Graduate School of Education.

Dropouts have higher unemployment, lower earnings, poorer health, higher rates of mortality, higher rates of criminal behavior and incarceration, and increased dependence on public assistance, states the report. The report also concludes that reducing the number of dropouts by half would generate \$1 billion in economic benefits to the community and result in 3,659 fewer murders and aggravated assaults each year.

This year, LAUSD high school academic counselors had to handle as many as 500 students. Next year, reports the *Los Angeles Times*, that number could increase to 650 students per counselor.

SHERRY POSNICK-GOODWIN

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Summertime and the learning is easy

CTA photos by Dave Earl Carpenter



LEFT: CTA President David A. Sanchez leads the crowd at last year's Summer Institute in mass calls to California legislators over the state budget cuts. **INSET:** Board member Mary Rose Ortega, also the board liaison for the Summer Institute Planning Committee, at the AFSCME rally that took place on the UCLA campus at the 2008 Summer Institute.



When students ask, "How did you spend your summer vacation?" tell them you went back to college by participating in CTA's Summer Institute 2009, scheduled for Aug. 2-7 at UCLA's Conference Center. This exciting event offers a variety of sessions designed to assist chapters in day-to-day representation, help teachers build leadership skills, and improve teaching and learning. This year's offerings include:

Building a Culture for School Success — The week-long Instruction and Professional Development strand will focus on examining adult and student culture; analyzing your school's culture and learning climate; and building a positive school culture for student success. Featured speakers include Kent Peterson, Pam Robbins, Glenn Singleton, and Anthony Muhammad. The strand is designed for collaborative school teams of classroom teachers, classified employees, parents, school site

council members, QEIA school site contacts, and site and district administrators.

Health Benefits and Issues Strand — This 2½-day strand focuses on understanding the complexities of the current health benefits crisis, identifying coalitions in which CTA participates to contain health care costs, Medicare benefits for retirees, and review of the AB 256 School Employee Pool Study for medical benefits and the 2007 Post Employment Benefits Commission Report. Emphasis will be on moving participants toward organizing chapter members around health care issues. Participants are expected to bring contract or plan descriptions of their locally bargained medical benefits program.

Member Benefits Strand — CTA Member Benefits and NEA Member Benefits will teach participants how members can save money, utilize their benefits, and better connect to the local, state, and national associations. The

strand is designed for chapter presidents, local site reps, membership chairpersons and membership recruiters.

Community Outreach Strand — Recognizing that organizing is the basis of community outreach, this strand (Wednesday-Friday) will explore a variety of strategies and tools for tapping into the "power of community." It's geared for all educator, ESP, higher ed and Student CTA chapter members. Activities will include: a community panel; team building activities; World Café — a group approach to problem solving; Community Outreach toolkit; and Making Connections — external and internal.

Communications Strand — This strand includes three separate 2-day tracks. Participants can choose two:

Chapter Newsletters from A to Z — Participants learn to create and produce local association newsletters, from writing articles and selecting stories to laying out pages with digital photos. The session includes a tuto-

rial in desktop publishing. Participants will get practical experience producing the official Summer Institute newsletter. Please bring your own digital camera.

Creating a Chapter Website with Blogging Technology — Websites can provide information on everything from the latest in local contract negotiations to answers to questions about the Highly Qualified Teacher requirement — and everything in between. Beginning with presentations on the nuts and bolts of websites, as well as writing for the Web, the session will then move into using a blogging software program to design and construct a website. At the end of the session, participants will have the knowledge to launch their own website. Participants should be familiar with the Microsoft operating system and Internet Explorer.

It's News to Me: Effective Communications — This session covers the essential elements of communicating with members, the media and the general public. Participants will learn the basics of speech writing and the skills necessary to be a confident spokesperson for the chapter. Also covered are message discipline, speaking to outside groups, handling media interviews, working in crisis situations, writing media advisories, and creating media relations programs.

Legal Track — The Legal Department is expanding its offerings at Summer Institute this year to two separate half-week tracks.

Track 1 (Sunday-Tuesday) — The first track will focus on

“group” labor and employment issues, including basic union and employee rights under the Educational Employment Relations Act, the legal framework around bargaining, unfair practice issues, duty of fair representation issues, and Brown Act open meeting issues. Topics will include: The Rights of Members to Union Representation; Duty of Fair Representation: Best Practices to Protect Your Chapter From DFR Liability; What Union Activities are Protected by Labor Laws and Other Statutes; The Legal Framework for Bargaining; Filing an Unfair Practice Charge; and How to Use the Open Meetings Law Effectively.

Track 2 (Wednesday-Friday) — The second track will focus on “individual” labor and employment issues, including the rights of individual union members under the antidiscrimination statutes, the rights of educational employees to a safe and healthy workplace, the discipline and dismissal procedure under the Education Code, and cyberlaw issues. Topics will include: Employment Discrimination and Sexual Harassment; Disability Discrimination and Reasonable Accommodation; Discipline and Dismissal; Leave of Absence Issues; School Health and Safety Issues; and Cyberlaw, Texting and MySpace: Best Practices in a Hyperconnected World.

Emerging Leaders — Designed to arm members with the information, resources and skills needed to become effective organizers and future leaders in their local chapter, this training includes the basic concepts of unionism and advocacy, association history and structure, and effective organizing techniques. The session is intended for all association members who are beginning their activism in their local union.

Essential Bargaining Skills — In this highly interactive session, designed to guide participants in the use of a 10-step process to ensure a successful bargaining experience, participants will form bargaining teams, bargain an agreement, and work through extensive coaching and debriefing sessions to determine which strategies were successful.

Advanced Bargaining Skills — This track is designed for those who have com-

pleted the Essential Bargaining Skills track or have at least three years of experience on a local bargaining team, or those who have previously completed the Essential Bargaining Skills track and have at least one year of experience on a local bargaining team. Those who don't meet the prerequisites of this track will not be admitted. This track provides skills and knowledge that will improve the association's final contract settlement. Participants will learn about developing effective bargaining strategies and tactics, writing effective contract language, identifying key elements of the district budget, defining and negotiating issues, composing effective bargaining communiqués, balancing the bargaining goals of complex constituencies, and utilizing CTA's research database in an effective manner.

School Finance — Designed for leaders and bargaining team members who want to become more knowledgeable about school finance and school district budgets, this session includes tracking the

trends of budget priorities, calculating the cost of a bargaining proposal, determining a district's ability to pay, and developing comparability data to support bargaining objectives.

School Finance II (Using Data to Organize) — Two 2½-day sessions are offered. Participants will use district budget and other financial information to assess a district's fiscal health and priorities including a rational settlement. This track will make extensive use of computers and CTA budget analysis software. All participants must have attended the basic School Finance Track within the last three years; experience using Microsoft Excel is necessary. Limited to 20 participants per session.

Register now for the track of your choice at www.cta.org/conferences. Enrollment is on a first-come, first-served basis, and many strands fill up quickly. For more information contact the CTA Conference Coordination Center at (650) 552-5355.

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