

# california educator



MAY 2014 VOLUME 18 ISSUE 8

In California, we decided it was time for

## **COMMON CORE** *to meet* **COMMON SENSE.**

*It all begins on page 9.*

Hi! I'm Common Core.

Hi! I'm Common Sense.

**Are you struggling  
with Common Core?**

Need resources?

**Then this issue is for you.**

---

Best apps **22** | Common Core Café **30** | Lesson plans **44** | Talking to parents **48**

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**California Schools Employee Benefits Association**

\*New Kaiser Permanente plans will be available July 1, 2014. The plans offered through the Marketplace all meet or exceed the minimum essential benefit requirements under the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

3 *Feedback*  
4 *Ask Dean*  
7 *CTA Online*  
8 *Editor's Note*  
58 *Calendar*



### **Common Core meets Common Sense**

Is your district taking a commonsense approach to the Common Core State Standards? Read about educators' struggles, challenges and successes, and see if members' experiences featured here match yours.

# 50

## **Time to treat cheerleading like a *real* sport**

Two NFL cheerleaders recently filed a class-action lawsuit accusing the Oakland Raiders of unfair wages and treatment. Some cheerleading coaches think what's happening at the professional level can be traced to high school practices. They say it's time for schools to give cheerleaders the respect they deserve — and it's time to fight, fight, fight to treat cheerleading like a *real* sport.

FEATURES



**Special issue:** Bringing common sense to Common Core implementation.





DEPTS.

48



20



60



40

## Know&Tell 🗨️

19

- 20 **Technology:** Teachers offer advice
- 22 **Tech tips:** Must-know apps
- 23 **Research:** Computers and eyestrain
- 24 **Resources:** Top websites for all things Common Core
- 25 **For adults only:** Recommended summer reading

## Perspectives 👁️

27

- 28 **Point/Counterpoint:** Do you like the new standards?
- 29 **Guest column:** State Board President Mike Kirst
- 30 **Profile:** Assessment writer Gabriela Orozco Gonzalez
- 31 **What do you think?** Members share their challenges and solutions

## Advocacy 💚

33

- 34 **Bargaining:** Implementation agreements
- 36 **Profile:** Senator Carol Liu
- 37 **Legal:** Getting paid for summer work
- 38 **Legislation:** Teacher dismissal and mandatory kindergarten
- 40 **Tom Torlakson:** Answering members' questions
- 41 **Elections:** CTA's list of recommendations

## Learning ⚗️

43

- 44 **Lessons:** Learnings from early adopters statewide
- 48 **Sharing:** What parents need to know

## CTA&You 🎓

55

- 56 **Benefits:** Lower insurance rates for cars, homes, rentals
- 57 **Healthy meetings:** Tips for family and school get-togethers
- 59 **Summer Institute:** Common Core and more
- 60 **Contest:** Caption this cartoon



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

### Raise your hand for learning over testing

I hope our profession can make great changes when we are united behind great leaders who are teachers like us.

Thank you, CTA, for your invitation to get involved in the Raise Your Hand campaign. As one teacher who is still learning how to use social networks in a constructive way, I was inspired to take a photo (with the help of my tech-savvy son) and post it and ask friends to do the same. Please continue to invite us to do something like this that allows everyone to see how CTA is representing us and how we can participate throughout the transition to Common Core and as we move through using and giving feedback about assessments and actual curriculum frameworks.

**MONIQUE CLIFFORD**  
San Diego Education Association

### Last-resort offensive option

As one who has gone through the training and rigorous background check to become a holder of a concealed weapons permit, I hope that we, as a society, can drop the hyperbole and sensationalism that has become a hallmark of any discussion about guns and self-defense, and begin a real discussion about what can and should be done to protect our children in any circumstance.

We, as teachers individually and as schools and districts corporately, are charged with the enormous responsibility of keeping our precious children safe. What are we going to do to be vigilant and proactive to guard them and keep them out of harm's way? What are we prepared to do in the face of violence visited upon our campuses? I want the "last-resort offensive option" of actively defending my students and myself available, otherwise it is not a last resort. In the unlikely event of a shooter on campus, I would much rather have the advantage of "fighting fire with fire" than "taking a stapler to a gunfight"!

**RICH WARREN**  
Victor Elementary Teachers Association

### NRA propaganda?

"Run? Hide? Fight?" in the March issue was an astonishing article that reads like undiluted NRA propaganda. You never once give serious consideration to the grave U.S. social deficit that has made school shootings from Columbine to Sandy Hook possible: the nationwide absence of rational and enforceable gun-control laws.

Was this simply an oversight? Or was the article actually planned in collaboration with the NRA and representatives from the country's armaments industries?

No amount of SWAT team-style counter-insurgency tactics or arming of selected teachers will do anything but increase gun violence deaths in American schools. The carnage will not abate until the nation decides to make it much more difficult than it is at present to purchase an assault rifle and 1,000 rounds of ammunition and then walk into the public school of your choice and open fire.

**LEIGH CLARK**  
United Teachers Los Angeles

*Editor's note: The article states that educators should know the options available to defend their students if necessary. It does not call for educators to be armed. CTA is opposed to arming educators.*

### Honor speech-language pathologists

Kudos on the beautiful article featuring Celeste Roseberry-McKibbin and her work with literacy (March). Celeste is a cherished and valued member of my profession: speech-language pathology.

I encourage CTA members to explore the world of school-based speech-language pathologists. We are a hardworking, dedicated and knowledgeable group of individuals whose work is often overlooked. In addition to our CTA dues, we pay to maintain state licenses, professional certification, and our professional organization.

May is Better Hearing and Speech Month. I urge you to celebrate the innovative and loving work of a school-based speech-language pathologist!

**LISA CHATTLER**  
Los Alamitos Education Association



### What do you mean by Common Core resources?

Once again, while reading "What do you think of Common Core?" (Dean Vogel's column in March), I hear the word resources. How many zillions of times have we heard teachers need resources, but what does that mean? If resources are textbooks, workbooks and computers, please walk around schools at the end of the year and look inside the dumpsters and closets. You'll see endless "resources" from the beginning of time, including unwrapped packages of cassette tapes, videos and sets of books sitting unused and or in the dump.

In a rush to provide Common Core resources, it seems businesses are trying to reinvent the wheel for a profit. Hundreds of stale workbooks in boxes are in language arts classes at our school. They're filled with "graphic organizers." No one uses these workbooks. They will be thrown away.

Now the district wants us to hang thick, laminated, meaningless posters void of any artistic sense and filled with words no one will read. They're to go next to the posters we got in the fall explaining Common Core in a mass of small text and fonts which can't be read.

I have no interest in spending money on these types of "resources."

**SUSAN ANGST**  
United Teachers of Richmond

# Are our schools heading in the right direction?

California's high school graduation rate is at a record high, the first tax increase for education in 20 years is starting to provide new school funding, layoffs have been stemmed this year, and we have eliminated all high-stakes decisions based on standardized tests for three years while we're working to implement the Common Core State Standards. In addition, with the enactment of California's landmark Local Control Funding Formula, we have made a major change in the way schools are funded — the first such change in 40 years.

Yes, I believe that California schools are moving in the right direction.

As teachers, we are always out to improve what we do. Just look at the creative teaching practices of all your colleagues who are featured in this special issue on the Common Core. We are doing incredible stuff to enhance what we do. But our ideas for improving public education remain profoundly different from those of the wealthy corporate reformers who believe schools should be run like businesses.

Thankfully, due to CTA's hard work in electing public officials like Governor Jerry

Brown and state Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson, California has resisted these dangerous ideas and is instead implementing real reforms that include providing adequate resources, implementing commonsense state standards, and bringing back local control of funding to school districts. There are challenges, of course, but you can be sure that we will have a role in how it happens, in part because we have the support of both Governor Brown and Superintendent Torlakson. That's why it is so important that we turn out the vote for Tom Torlakson, who faces a tough race against a candidate backed by wealthy school privatizers. And with a low turnout expected, our votes could carry much more weight.

Please take the time to vote. Our votes are so important. As an organization, we've fought against all attempts to deprive under-represented communities and women of the right to vote. Just this month, we reaffirmed that belief. We are committed to voters' rights, civil rights, and social justice organizations. And that means we must exercise our right to vote. We can't just talk about it. We must do it. Vote!

As we celebrate California Day of the Teacher and Education Support Professionals Day this month, I want to thank you for your commitment to California's 9 million students in kindergarten through college. I want to thank our veteran teachers who believe teaching is important enough that they've stayed in the profession. Thank you to new teachers who are coming into the profession for the first time, despite the steep learning curve and financial insecurities ahead. Thank you to the education support professionals who, despite challenging pay and working conditions, are so important to the success of our schools.

This year's Day of the Teacher theme is "California Teachers: Inspiring our Students, Strengthening our Communities." Its purpose is to remind us all that teachers have a natural role in the welfare of our communities.



## DEAN ON THE ISSUES

"We believe every student deserves a fair shot at a quality education that should begin with kindergarten to ensure they are best prepared to learn and thrive as they progress to the next grade levels."

"Teachers, principals and parents all agree that giving educators more collaboration time, building community accountability, reducing class sizes and using student data to differentiate instruction are pathways to school improvement that many can follow."

I know many of you are already actively involved in your communities, but it is my hope that your chapters also reach out to engage parents, volunteers, older adults, business owners, houses of faith, and community organizations. Invite them into your classroom to read a book, provide them with volunteer opportunities, let them know how they can support their local schools. This makes sense in so many ways. It not only builds beneficial partnerships, it gives us recognition as part of our communities and helps us grow our constituencies. As educators, we don't just impact our students, we impact our communities.

Dean E. Vogel  
CTA PRESIDENT



Do you have an issue or topic you'd like Dean to address? Let us know. Email [editor@cta.org](mailto:editor@cta.org).





## ASSESS THE FIELD TEST

AT [CTA.ORG/FIELDTTEST](http://CTA.ORG/FIELDTTEST)

**INTRIGUING?** Impractical? Successful? Useful? That's how members have described their field test experience thus far. Here are some of their comments.

On the practice test: It took fifth-grade teachers 20 minutes to do three math problems. My third-grade student (my child) cried after taking the practice test for 10 minutes because the first question was the most difficult of all questions provided for the practice. He scored advanced on both sections of last year's STAR test (another test with little real-world value).

➤ **STEPHANIE BACON**

*Tahoe-Truckee Education Association*

A positive aspect of being in a newer school is all the new technology. Bandwidth is not a problem. Using technology in math was a priority, so we had professional development in this area that was developed by the TSA [teacher on special assignment]. Small groups were taught how to use the digital manipulatives. It went surprisingly well. Then we did the field test, where everyone was on the bandwidth, and the rollout was seamless.

➤ **NICK ZEFELDT**

*San Ramon Valley Education Association*

Our teachers took the practice test during a staff meeting (as did most of the other TSAs at the high school sites) for a few reasons: to illustrate the complexity of the exam in anticipation of these teachers needing the knowledge to proctor, and so that there would be a greater understanding and a deeper appreciation for the kind of literacy our students will need in order to be successful. Both goals seem to have been accomplished!

(Our parents and students are relatively informed about these new standards. Our TSA cohort created a PowerPoint to educate students about the field test. This is being used at multiple sites to educate the 11th-graders who will be testing during this March-May window.)

➤ **RACHAEL BYRON**

*San Ramon Valley Education Association*

➔ **WHAT'S YOUR EXPERIENCE** with the field test? Let us know at [cta.org/fieldtest](http://cta.org/fieldtest).

Share how the field tests are going this year and how your district is doing with implementation. We will share your responses with Superintendent Tom Torlakson and the State Board of Education.

Our voice has never been more important. Let's make sure we are heard.

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*What's on your summer reading list?*

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Up to \$18.40 of CTA annual dues is designated for CTA/ABC political activities

### MISSION STATEMENT

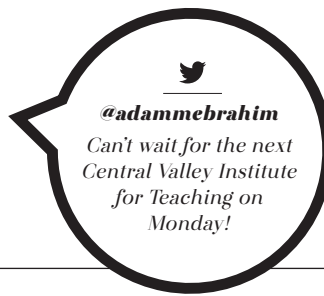
The California Teachers Association exists to protect and promote the well-being of its members; to improve the conditions of teaching and learning; to advance the cause of free, universal, and quality public education; to ensure that the human dignity and civil rights of all children and youth are protected;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





## #CTATopTweet

Use this hashtag in your tweets and we'll select our favorites for each issue of the *California Educator*.



### Viral video 🎥



**Ask a Teacher:** CTA recently launched a TV spot featuring members from around the state encouraging the public to “ask a teacher” about what works best to help students learn. It’s part of a campaign focusing on quality public schools and colleges. [www.cta.org/askateacher](http://www.cta.org/askateacher)

### Most popular post 📌



MAY 6 653 likes 309 shares

### Favorite comments 💬

**Linda Ortega** | APR 25

Students need to start their own personal library at a young age. Every time my second-graders leave our library with their selection of books they can't wait to read them!

**TyraWeis TatianaRose** | MAY 5

You know why we love teaching? It's the students we inspire. We may never hear what becomes of them beyond our classroom, but when we do, we are proud. Thanks to my students who are now doctors, nurses, architects, officers, accountants, and — closest to my heart — teachers!

### More top tweets 🐦

**@TLCNEA** | MAY 6

Thank you to all of the teachers who have crossed my path, past and present — you are why I am here today!

**@vudOolady** | MAY 1

**@CATeachersAssoc** you have really made the last week unbelievable with the constant flow of opportunities. Thanks so much!

**@LorenaSGonzalez** | APR 17

Attacking the motives of **@CATeachersAssoc** because they are a union is probably the worst tactic to choose to persuade me.

**@CohenD** | APR 12

Impressed by the dedication of my **@CATeachersAssoc** colleagues who go the extra miles — literally — for students and their families!

# What's new at cta.org

1

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

### May is Asian/Pacific Islander Awareness Month

In May, we honor and celebrate the contributions of Asians and Pacific Islanders. The 2014 theme is “I Am Beyond: Evoking the American Spirit.”

2

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

### Gearing up for the primary election

June 3 is just around the corner, and on the CTA Campaign page you can find useful information to assist at the ballot box.

3

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

### The history of Sabo Cat

A video produced by Student CTA tells the history of Sabo Cat, a symbol of organized labor and political activism. Don't make the Cat angry.

4

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

### Check the latest news from the Capitol

Read about what's happening in the Legislature — including key points on the CTA-co-sponsored mandatory kindergarten bill, AB 1444.

5

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

### How long could you go without a paycheck?

According to a national survey, not very long. Answer five questions to find out — and learn about CTA's Voluntary Disability Insurance plan.

## Dancing with the Common Core

Besides my sister, Nicole Robinson is the only teacher I've met who can talk so fast and cover so many topics with such enthusiasm all in one breath that I am winded by the time she finishes a sentence. I visited the visual and performing arts teachers about her CTA Institute for Teaching (IFT) grant funding her students' participation in the San Diego Trolley Dance project (see details at [cta.org/ift](http://cta.org/ift)).

The Fontana Teachers Association member talks like she's running a marathon, discussing student successes and the links between physical movement and critical thinking skills. Nicole, hands gesturing, talks about how dance is in the Common Core State Standards.

"Reading text is not just reading a book. You read a painting; you can read a dance. There are elements there that you need to look for, evidence to support your opinions. Look at this standard: Write informative and explanatory text. From a dance perspective, writing means choreography, introducing a topic and organizing ideas, developing a topic with well-chosen and sufficient facts, using varied transitions and sentence structures.



When we think about sentence structure, we think about phrase, which is basically a dance form. I'm reworking my choreography rubric template to identify these Common Core ideas."

All of this in one breath, I swear!

California educators are finding their footing around the Common Core. In other states, implementation was rushed, and literally millions were spent on companies providing "Common Core" curriculum and assessments. For example, New York administered new assessments aligned with the Common Core standards last year, and scores plummeted because students were tested on topics they had not yet been taught. Lesson plans tied to the Common Core were often not available, nor were teachers adequately prepared to teach Common Core-aligned lessons.

That's not happening here. In an effort to see whether common sense prevails when it comes to the Common Core, we're doing something a little different in this month's *Educator*. While there's plenty of angst to go around, it seems debate has been healthy, and some districts are doing brilliant work implementing the standards, collaborating, and providing resources and time. Others not so much. Read about the struggles and successes of members to accept and understand the standards, find resources and implement change. Inside, you'll find stories about lesson planning, talking to parents, using technology, and bargaining implementation. We even questioned members who write the questions for the new assessment.



See this icon here? It indicates an article on a Common Core-related topic.

The rest of this issue features cheerleading in schools, suggesting perhaps it's time for cheerleading to be considered a real sport (page 50). And for your convenience, find your colleagues' recommendations for the June primary election (page 41). Feel free to rip the page out and take it to your polling place. I rather enjoyed the list of summer reads "for adults only" (page 25). I'm not sure how many of the books will make you breathless, but they're all a good read.

As you read through this month's magazine, I hope you learn a little, and perhaps have an "aha!" moment or two. Maybe discuss what you read with colleagues. Talking with Nicole, I learned a lot about the Common Core, and even more about dancing.

**Cynthia Menzel**  
EDITOR IN CHIEF  
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# MAKING SENSE OF THE COMMON CORE

Changes in California's state standards present opportunities and challenges

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin

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***Change is never easy. But it is ever constant*** — especially in education. That's because we are preparing our children to enter a world that is constantly changing and helping them prepare for what's new and what's next.

**SO WHAT'S NEXT?** It's the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). California is standing on the brink of one the biggest changes ever to happen in education. For the first time in our nation's history, national standards have become a reality for 46 states, including California, but they are not without controversy. We've been covering the CCSS in this magazine for more than a year now, and we've heard from members who have strong opinions for and against the standards, and some who just aren't sure yet. What we do know is the standards are rocking the world of everyone in public education. For implementation to be a success, it will take time, thoughtfulness, commitment, and a willingness to work together, which is exactly how California is approaching this big shift. Many states are looking to our commonsense approach to implementing the Common Core State Standards with envy.



The intent of the standards is to arm our students with the critical thinking skills they will need for a successful life. These standards recognize teachers as the classroom experts, but some districts have failed to embrace the spirit of collaboration and are creating implementation nightmares.

This series of articles reviews what's happening as educators grapple with the new Common Core State Standards — as well as the field testing of the new Smarter Balanced Assessment. Read about the struggles, challenges and successes educators are facing in communicating with parents about the new standards, finding resources and making sure their voices are reflected in local policies. Find out if these members' experiences featured here match yours.

We'll start with Felipe, who was not a fan of the Common Core.

Felipe Lemus worried implementing something so different would jeopardize the steady improvement he's been seeing in his students, who are below grade level. After three days of professional development, he began trying out some Common Core lessons on his third-graders at Calwa Elementary School. Some went well; others did not. The Fresno Teachers Association (FTA) member says he sometimes feels like he's "swimming in a big ocean with no raft or life jacket" in the transition, and frequently stays up until 2 a.m. looking for lesson plans and curriculum. He feels stressed.

Carrie Forrest felt panicky about the new education standards. "I thought, 'Yikes, something new! It's not going to be easy.'"

The second-grade Santa Rosa teacher took a deep breath, signed up for workshops, and began collaborating with colleagues and trying out



*Originally not a fan of the Common Core, Felipe Lemus finds mixed results with the CCSS lessons partly because his "students are so used to rote memorization, they are resistant to exploring concepts and problem-solving in math."*

lessons plans. It hasn't been a walk in the park, but she thinks the CCSS offer new opportunities to be creative in the classroom. That's exciting and a little bit scary, admits the Piner-Olivet Educators Association (POEA) member.

Math teacher Katja Jackson felt pretty positive about changing over to new standards. She grew up in Germany, where students routinely collaborate with each other and explain their work, just as the CCSS encourages. She thought her Fairfield High School students would enjoy a critical-thinking approach. Some do, but





**“THE COMMON CORE STANDARDS  
OFFER NEW OPPORTUNITIES  
TO BE CREATIVE IN THE  
CLASSROOM. THAT’S EXCITING  
AND A LITTLE BIT SCARY.”**

**CARRIE FORREST**



*Carrie Forrest engages her second-graders in a story at Olivet Elementary School in Santa Rosa.*

others are used to rote memorization and balk when asked to explain their answers. “Isn’t it enough to just know the right answers?” they ask the Fairfield-Suisun Unified Teachers Association member.

### **Ready or not...**

Teachers must implement the CCSS this fall. The new standards change not only what teachers teach, but how they teach it.

The English language arts standards have less emphasis on fiction and a greater focus on informational text. Students are to provide evidence from what they’ve read to support their answers, rather than provide their opinion or explain how an issue they’ve read about relates to their own life.

Math standards realign content to and across different grade levels. Topics are pared down, allowing teachers to go into greater depth on each topic. The biggest change was the elimination of the Algebra I requirement for eighth-graders, but schools may still offer it to students deemed ready.

With speaking and listening standards for each grade, students work more collaboratively, using technology in project-based learning to prepare for college and the workplace.

Teachers can incorporate more than one standard at a time into their lessons in creative ways.

For example, Kathy Harris recently modeled a math lesson on volume in an Olivet Elementary School classroom that incorporated a sixth-grade language arts standard of determining the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words, speaking and listening standards



in small-group and class collaboration, and math standards for finding the volume of a rectangular solid.

Students first shared what they knew about volume in groups, then reported out to the class, then used boxes and rubber balls as manipulatives. Finally, students came up with a collaborative definition of volume as a “measurement of space inside a three-dimensional object.”

It differs from the traditional approach of memorizing the definition from a book, says Harris, a POEA member and Common Core coach, who believes students will likely remember what volume means from such a discovery process.

“Lessons in the Common Core make you think more,” says sixth-grader Valentina Medina after the volume lesson. “When we can work out answers among ourselves, it makes things simpler.”

Adam Ebrahim, an eighth-grade history and technology design teacher at Cooper Academy in Fresno, says the CCSS are transforming his teaching.

“I’ve worked hard to encourage student autonomy. In my classroom you’ll see groups engaged in a task. There is a leadership structure at each table with captains reporting progress to me as I rotate among tables. The groups in my technology and design class are currently investigating the food production networks in the United States to understand why their school lunches look the way they do. In this unit, called ‘Forks over Sporks,’ I am one of the test subjects. They are holding me to a plant-based, whole foods diet, and will be measuring my weight loss and feelings of well-being.”

This type of instruction is liberating for teachers and powerful for students, says Ebrahim, an FTA member.

## It’s about learning, not testing

From the beginning, CTA supported the new standards because they emphasize critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed in today’s world. They give teachers more flexibility. And CTA led efforts that resulted in Gov. Jerry Brown adding an initial \$1.25 billion in the state budget to help fund implementation.

CTA believes there are many ways the new standards will benefit students.

With fewer standards, teachers can cover topics in depth and go slower. There were so many old standards that many teachers felt they had to rush through them. The new standards ask students to explain how they arrive at their answers, rather than rely on rote memorization.

The CCSS tell teachers what their students need to know, but not how to get them there, which allows creativity and flexibility in lesson planning and curriculum.



*Math teacher Katja Jackson grew up in Germany, where students routinely collaborate with each other and explain their work, just as the CCSS encourages.*



*Kathy Harris was a member of California’s Academic Content Standards Commission and of the Text Complexity Development Team, working on K-2 standards with researchers in the areas of comprehension, vocabulary and reading.*

# A LOOK BACK:

## *Teachers were involved from the beginning*

The Common Core is the biggest shift in education since 1999, when California adopted the highest standards in the nation. Previously, California had no standards and no uniformity. Long division, for example, could be taught in fourth, fifth or sixth grade, depending upon your district.

**THE CCSS** were developed through the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers with feedback from states, teachers, colleges and the public. All but four states adopted them.

Teachers were involved in California's adoption process. The state's 21-member Academic Content Standards Commission had 11 teachers in 2010, including Common Core coach Kathy Harris and Pat Sabo, a former Healdsburg Junior High School math teacher, now retired.

"When people say teachers weren't involved, I can say that is absolutely untrue," says Sabo, adding that the adoption of the English standards was much easier than the math standards. Eighth-grade algebra was the "elephant in the room" causing major concern.

"We asked ourselves, 'Is this developmentally appropriate?'" recalls Sabo. "As teachers, many of us felt that eighth-grade algebra was not. I taught middle school math for more than 30 years and saw that many of my students were just not ready."

The standards were adopted as a package, but the commission made additions. Cursive was not in the CCSS, but the commission added it in California's version because teachers felt it was an important life skill, useful for motor skills and developmentally appropriate for students in grades 2-4.

When researchers were creating the standards, Harris sat on a review panel composed of teachers throughout the U.S.

"I joined the National Council of Teachers of English review panel in November 2009, when I was teaching third grade," says Harris, Piner-Olivet Educators Association. "We poured over the proposed standards, wrote our comments, and had conference calls with teachers throughout the country. Teachers sent recommendations to the development team, which was receptive to our questions, concerns and changes. There was a lot of teacher involvement even before California adopted the standards."

Harris was part of the Text Complexity Development Team for the CCSS, working on

K-2 standards with researchers in the areas of comprehension, vocabulary and reading.

Teacher involvement has ramped up since the standards were adopted in 2010 by the State Board of Education, with CTA providing training and support to members in workshops and conferences. CTA's Instruction and Professional Development (IPD) Department created "spirals" or visuals of the English language arts standards in an easy-to-follow

format, beginning with kindergarten and continuing to 12th grade, which show what students should know at their current grade level, which specific skills should already be mastered, and where the skills they are learning in their class will lead in subsequent grades. To view the spirals, please visit [www.cta.org/ipdspirals](http://www.cta.org/ipdspirals).

At this year's Summer Institute, the IPD Strand will provide learning new experiences for school

employees to examine and gain in-depth knowledge of the CCSS and the accompanying new state assessments. (For story, see page 59.)

For more information on upcoming CCSS professional development opportunities from CTA, contact the IPD Department at 650-552-5350.



Pat Sabo

"The new standards validate what good, effective teachers have been doing under the radar for years," says CTA President Dean Vogel. "Under the old system, teachers had to do things they knew intuitively were not good for students. The new standards are a direct validation of teachers as professionals."

CTA research shows that an overwhelming majority of members — 81 percent — support the Common Core, mirroring studies by NEA. Of those who support it, 55 percent support it with reservations about implementation and the assessments.

Lawmakers approved AB 484, a CTA-supported bill eliminating STAR testing this year, replacing it with Smarter Balanced field testing instead. The law also

created a three-year moratorium on using state tests for accountability purposes, giving educators some breathing room. U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan fought against it, but the governor held firm, and common sense prevailed against testing students on outdated standards while transitioning to new ones.

"It's about learning, not testing," says Vogel. "Among the lessons we've learned from No Child Left Behind is that testing should not drive instruction. We must separate the standards from the testing and implement the standards the right way, before it even makes sense to count assessments. I am pleased to say that California is doing things differently — unlike what has happened in New York and other states where it's been a disaster, which prompted NEA President Dennis Van Roekel to call for a 'course correction' in how states implement the Common Core." (Read Van Roekel's statement at [www.cta.org/vanroekel](http://www.cta.org/vanroekel).)





“When things change, it demands serious introspection about how we go about improving our practice,” says Vogel, who has seen new education trends come and go. “But if we work together, we can shape implementation of the Common Core in our schools in a way that is right for students, teachers and public education.”

### Implementation issues

Holly Miller, a sixth-grade teacher at Olivet Elementary School, likes having Common Core coaches visit her classroom and model lessons, like the one Harris did on volume.

“I feel like I have lots of support,” says Miller, who has been given release time for trainings.

“It’s been a huge shift and a work in progress, but it feels safe this way.”

Unfortunately, such support is not universal. A majority of teachers polled by CTA said they have not been given enough time or training to create high-quality lessons for students, and their schools have not yet equipped classrooms with the textbooks and technology needed for the transition. More than half of members gave their schools “failing grades” on implementation. Respondents said they need more time to plan, practice good lessons, receive high-quality training, and observe and collaborate with other teachers to help them successfully transition to the Common Core.



Holly Miller

Standards and curriculum have not yet been aligned. The math frameworks, which provide curricula and instructional guidance, were approved in November, and math textbooks were released this year, but are only partially aligned to the new standards. The English language arts frameworks have not been approved, and textbooks are expected to be released in 2015. To fill the void, teachers are finding or creating supplemental materials themselves — and copy machines are working overtime. (For more on the challenges members face, see page 31.)

Collaboration among colleagues is invaluable when it comes to sharing resources, ideas and lesson plans, says Vogel. It also helps morale to be working toward a common goal, rather than struggling in isolation.

“We have a math workgroup of teachers in our high schools who



*Nathen Dooley and Yonathan Yohannes work together on a measuring assignment.*

collaborate,” notes Katja Jackson. “We were working on the scope and sequence of standards, which clusters them into units of instruction. We continue looking for resources. We have looked at what other states have, such as EngageNY and MARS [Mathematics Assessment Resource Service] Tasks. It’s definitely helping.”

Terri Jackson, a teacher at Stewart Elementary School in Pinole, says collaboration and discussions with colleagues have helped smooth the transition.

“We are pulling together, and it takes away some of the





fear,” says the United Teachers of Richmond member and CTA Board member. Even with collaboration, it’s tough not having core-aligned textbooks and materials.

“It’s scary and time-consuming for teachers to put aside our everyday curriculum in math and create our own materials from what we learned in our training and what’s on the Internet,” she adds.

Felipe Lemus finds mixed results with the CCSS lessons fashioned from online supplemental materials.

“One lesson went really well on reading comprehension,” he recalls.

*“We are pulling together,” says Terri Jackson. Even with collaboration, it’s tough not having core-aligned textbooks and materials.*

“I had students collaborating together in groups, helping each other with word recognition and blending. They explained their answers and couldn’t just copy from a book. The kids were energetic and successful.”

Another lesson did not go as well, and Lemus believes it’s partly because his students are so used to rote memorization, they are resistant to exploring concepts and problem-solving in math.

“Right now, they just want the answers. But with the new standards, we teach them to think.”

Lemus is doing plenty of thinking these days himself, wondering if his new lessons are really teaching to the new standards.

Vogel says teachers he visits are constantly expressing that same concern, since the Common Core is about standards, not curriculum. It’s like the “old days” before NCLB, when teachers came up with their own lessons, resources and assignments, and were allowed to use their professional judgment to decide how something should be taught.

For teachers overwhelmed from having so much freedom, the Common Core will get easier in time, says Vogel, but that means teachers must be part of the process.

## Change can’t be top-down

Some districts are trying to impose control on the new standards with pacing guides and top-down mandates just like they did under the old standards and accountability system, which defeats the purpose of CCSS.

“In Fresno, implementation has been a largely top-down affair,” says Ebrahim. “The same people who were true believers in explicit direct instruction and pacing charts are now in charge of implementing the Common Core. There has been confusion. I fear that if there is not a true shift in the core beliefs of our district leadership, the Common Core will live on clipboards, not in classrooms.”

He says teachers deserve a place at the table — and need to create one quickly if they haven’t done so.

“I think the transition has created an important window of time for teachers to organize and assert our voice in determining what the next decade of education is going to look like in California. If we don’t step up, we’ll be left out.”

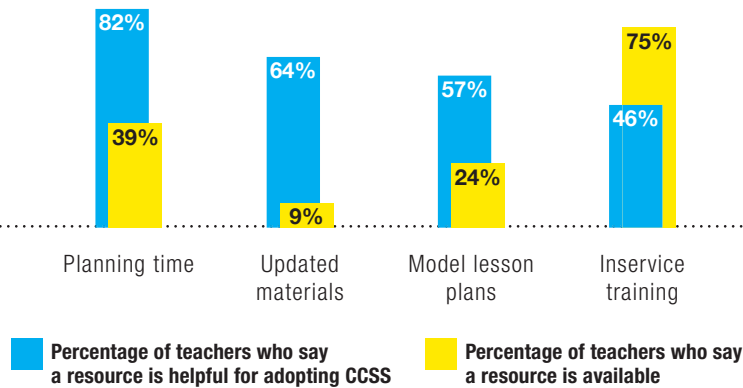
Research shows that teachers want to be consulted and involved in their schools’ implementation plans. However, just 46 percent of CTA members in California say they have been given the opportunity to give feedback on



*Carrie Forrest felt panicky about the new education standards. It hasn’t been a walk in the park, but she thinks the CCSS offer new opportunities to be creative in the classroom.*

Survey by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research

***CTA members say they don't always get the resources they need from their districts***



Common Core in their district, and of these, just 24 percent feel they have been heard. A poll of CTA members shows there's a disconnect between what teachers need most, time to prepare and learn new technology, and what is made available to them (*see graphic above*).

Teachers, says Vogel, must make their voices heard loud and clear, especially when it comes to demanding collaboration time, professional development and resources necessary to make implementation successful. CTA has helped several chapters bargain teacher participation in CCSS implementation and also in bargaining for collaboration time. (For more information on CCSS bargaining issues, see page 34.)

"Don't underestimate your authority," says Vogel. "Teachers are still some of the most respected people in the communities where they teach. If you feel the Common Core is unfolding differently than it should be, you have a right and responsibility to communicate that to your district and management teams — and to parents whose kids you serve."

**Looking to the future**

Forrest describes herself as an optimist: The second-grade teacher believes she will be ready by fall. To prepare, her students are doing more partner work or "pair share" activities. In math, she's learning what to leave out (fractions) and what to add to her curriculum (the study of money).

"The Common Core is somewhat like changing grade levels," she muses. "It's so hard at first because you have to learn a new curriculum as you go along. Then it gets easier. I'm thinking that is how it's going to be with changing over to Common Core. I believe change is good. Change makes you ask questions such as 'What's the point of what I am teaching?' and 'What can I do to help my students thrive?' So far I'm happy with changes I've seen."

Lemus is also hopeful about the future.

"I am a teacher, and I will find a way to be successful," he says.

Harris, the Common Core coach, believes that the new standards will be an easier adjustment for students than teachers anticipate. "They are more technology-savvy than we are. They are ready to let go of the bubbles and worksheets. They are ready to start talking about things in a meaningful way. I can hardly wait." ■

**WE REPEAT, THIS IS ONLY A TEST**

A student moves trees all over his computer screen with abandon, and soon the entire screen is covered in trees. Is the student creating an art project — or perhaps playing his own version of a video game to see who can move trees into squares the fastest?

**IT'S NEITHER, ACTUALLY.** The student in Terri Jackson's sixth-grade math class is supposed to be practicing for the new, computer-based Smarter Balanced Assessment Field Test, solving a ratio problem of having three elm trees to every two pine trees inside a square.

"That was a funny example of students practicing for the test," says Jackson, a teacher at Stewart Elementary School in Pinole and CTA Board member. "I told him he needed to take it seriously, but it's hard when students are used to playing games on computers instead of taking tests on them."

In a "debrief" after the practice test, students say they enjoy being tested on the computer because it's fun. Others say they miss the old California Standards Tests and being able to answer questions without explaining their work.

The practice test is in preparation for the field test being administered to all students statewide in grades 3-8 and 11 between March 18 and June 6, in what some call a "dress rehearsal." The field test of more than 3 million students will evaluate the quality of test questions to ensure they are valid and fair, and serves as a barometer to assess schools' computer and server capacity, as well as the computer skills of students.

Gov. Brown and lawmakers approved AB 484, a CTA-supported bill, which eliminated outdated standardized testing this year and provided a year of field testing only on the new standards. The law also created a three-year moratorium on using state testing results for accountability purposes.

Going from a multiple-choice, fill-in-the-bubble paper test to an open-ended computer test is a huge leap. While there are still some multiple-choice questions, multimedia technology allows students to respond in new ways, such as editing text or drawing an object. Students are asked in some cases to demonstrate and explain how they arrived at their responses. The test is "adaptive," which





means that the complexity of the questions increases or decreases based on student responses. There is also a performance task component, which asks students to complete a series of steps, culminating in a final product.

The group behind the new assessments is the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), one of two multistate member groups funded by the U.S. Department of Education to develop assessment systems aligned to the CCSS. California is one of 27 states taking part in Smarter Balanced, which allows teachers to get results from computerized assessments within weeks instead of months.

It's actually three tests, because California purchased the "premium package" that includes two interim assessments and a summative assessment, so test results throughout the year can inform teachers of where they should adjust instruction.

Gov. Jerry Brown added \$1.25 billion to the budget to help school districts implement the Common Core, and much of that is going toward technology. Jackson says her school purchased new computers that are Wi-Fi accessible, unlike the old computers that were slow and cumbersome.

While 83 percent of all California schools are connected to the California Department of Education's K-12 High Speed Network, they may not have high-speed Internet, and some lack sufficient computers, keyboards or bandwidth to run the test that uses videos and animated graphics and interactive features in test questions. Some students have been bused to other schools or are taking tests on leased mobile computer labs. In some schools, students are being tested a few at a time to avoid crashing the system, reports Deb Sigman, deputy superintendent of the CDE.

Students in Jackson's class like the computers, but the questions — not so much.

"I enjoyed testing on the computer as well as disliked it," says one. "It was fun testing on something new. But it was difficult with the mouse."

In a practice test in Felipe Lemus' class at Calwa Elementary in Fresno, it took a half hour for third-graders to log in. The com-



*Adam Ebrahim, here with Karris Adams and Rachel Salinas, likes the new assessment, but worries that Smarter Balanced could someday be misused in a punitive way, becoming STAR Test, The Sequel.*

puters didn't have headsets, and noise from videos playing on the tablets was distracting. Students shouted for help over the noise level, and heard from their teacher, "I can't help you, this is a test."

Things can only improve, says Lemus, looking frazzled, explaining that his students haven't had much practice with computers, except for machines in the school's computer lab that are much different from the tablets his school uses for testing.

How can educators become more knowledgeable about the test?

One of the best ways is visiting the Smarter Balanced website ([smarterbalanced.org](http://smarterbalanced.org)) and looking at "item specifications and blueprints," which show the standards, how they are clustered and how they are assessed at different DOK (depth of knowledge) levels, suggests Adam Ebrahim, an eighth-grade history and design technology teacher at Cooper Academy in Fresno.

He was selected by NEA to participate in the Teachers Ambassadors Project, which is a partnership among the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, NEA, the American Federation of Teachers, and WestEd.

Ebrahim likes the new assessment, but the Fresno Teachers Association member worries that Smarter Balanced could someday be misused in a punitive way, becoming STAR Test, The Sequel.

"I worry that districts will plug in the new

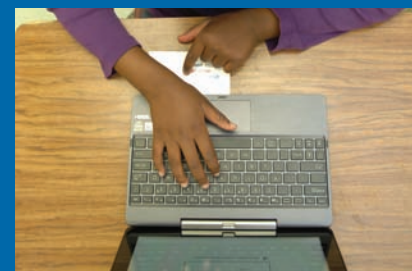
assessments into existing, high-stakes, curriculum-narrowing mechanisms that are bad for teachers and terrible for students," he explains.

He hopes the new test will eliminate teaching to the test.

"The best way to prepare students for this test is not to teach to this test. The best way to prepare yourself and your kids is by being knowledgeable about how the test functions, and then creating rich learning experiences for students that engage the standards in different contexts and across different content areas that will make learning more engaging for the student. It gives them the ability to transfer and apply knowledge. It will also provide teachers with the best kind of feedback

on what students are learning."

## WHAT'S YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH THE FIELD TEST?



Let us know at [cta.org/fieldtest](http://cta.org/fieldtest).

Share how the field tests are going this year and how your district is doing with implementation. We will share your responses with Superintendent Tom Torlakson and the State Board of Education.

Our voice has never been more important. Let's make sure we are heard.

**Next issue in the Educator:**  
How field testing went in California's classrooms.





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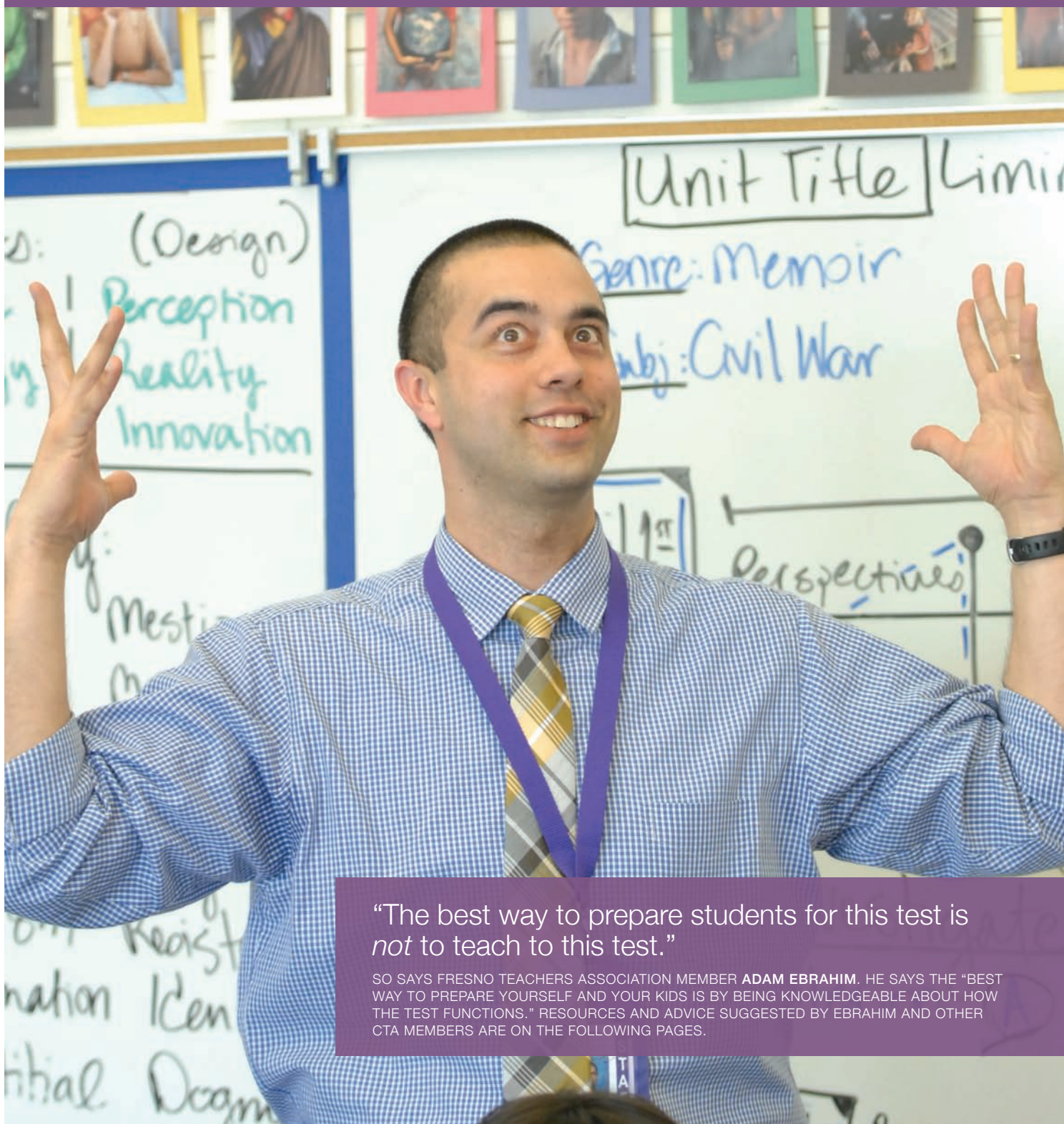
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# Know&Tell

Grants, awards, contests, resources and tips to share



“The best way to prepare students for this test is *not* to teach to this test.”

SO SAYS FRESNO TEACHERS ASSOCIATION MEMBER **ADAM EBRAHIM**. HE SAYS THE “BEST WAY TO PREPARE YOURSELF AND YOUR KIDS IS BY BEING KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT HOW THE TEST FUNCTIONS.” RESOURCES AND ADVICE SUGGESTED BY EBRAHIM AND OTHER CTA MEMBERS ARE ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES.





# CTA member trainers talk technology

## Lesson #1: Together is better

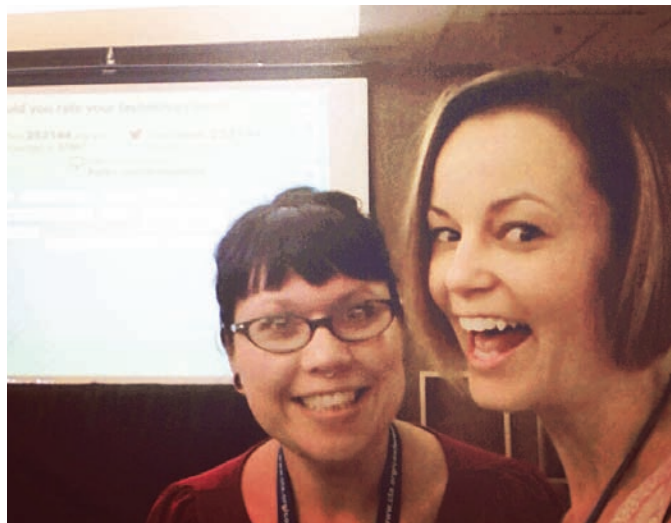
**KAREN TAYLOR AND DANESA MENGE** teach about technology at CTA workshops and conferences. They started the Tech Learning Community project through the CTA Teacher Leadership Cohort. Their website and the professional development offered there are a collaborative effort between CTA, Tracy Educators Association, and Oakdale Teachers Association. We asked them to discuss this question: What should educators know about technology and implementing Common Core standards into their teaching?

**Danesa:** I have been teaching since 2002, and the one thing I can say about implementing anything is that you don't have to do it all. Choose one technology piece that interests you. Whether it's Google Docs, TodaysMeet, SMART Notebook, Padlet, Nearpod, whatever, choose one and go for it. You and your students may love it, or you may fall flat on your face. But that is OK!

We as teachers need to take our successes and failures and model each to our students. F.A.I.L. = First Attempt In Learning. We can't learn without mistakes. So if something didn't work, try another and build your tech repertoire as you learn. Your students will learn the value of mistakes and perseverance in this process as well. Karen and I built technology into our classrooms a piece at a time, not overnight.

**Karen:** Right. Teachers do not have to become masters of technology overnight, or even within a year's time. Today we are breaking away from teachers knowing absolutely everything. Our role is changing as we become facilitators in our classrooms. With that in mind, we can provide parameters and guidelines for assignments and let our students create with less direct instruction and more constructivist learning models, especially in regard to technology.

So let your students play with the technology before you use it. Students need time to explore at any age, and this will alleviate frustration later with distractions and classroom management.



*Danesa Menge and Karen Taylor are tech trainers at CTA workshops and conferences.*

**Danesa:** Our students are not necessarily good at technology; our students are simply fearless. So why do so many teachers try to figure out Common Core and/or technology on their own? We educators are better together. The more we collaborate, share, and open our doors to one another, the more we will learn and grow. I've been on Twitter for professional development for about two years now. In an instant I meet teachers who want to share, answer questions, ease fears. We feel a sense of true togetherness.

We need this open collaboration at our sites, in our districts, and regions. Start a professional learning community at your site or district. Reach out to one another, share what you know, and tackle what you don't know together! I wouldn't be where I am today without the amazing teachers I connect with on a daily basis, in person and online.

**Karen:** The new CCSS cannot be taught separately; they must be taught collectively. You will find this takes the strain off you for time. And the standards integrate so well that you can teach a weeklong unit with grades 5-7 standards in a way that makes sense. They also work better in regard to spiraling. If you attempt to teach the new standards one at a time, you will never get through them all. Apps like Subtext allow you to do this seamlessly in the language arts classroom.



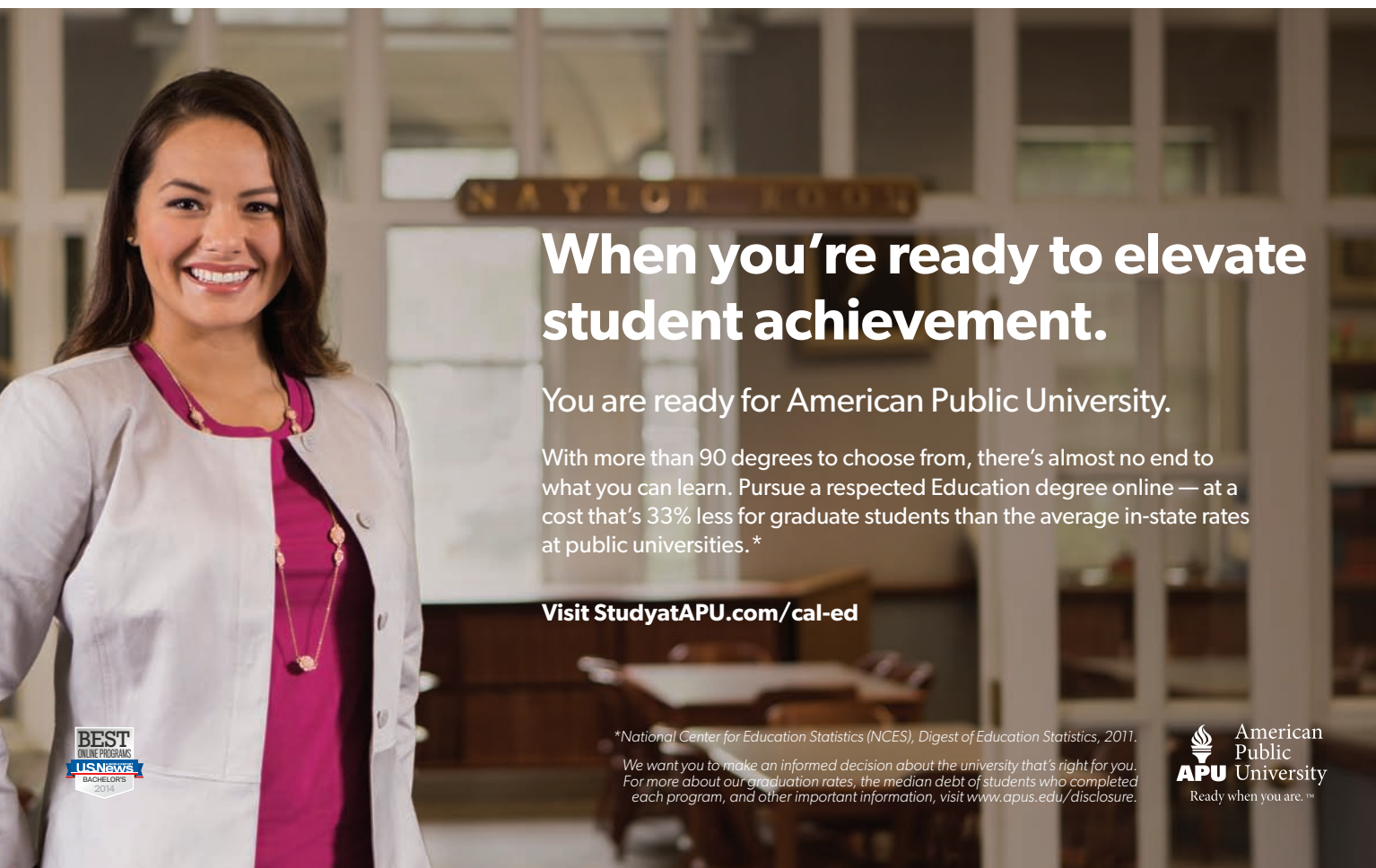
**Danesa:** Technology simply enhances learning and curriculum, not overshadows it. When the opportunity arises, allow your students multiple options, or a menu, for the use of technology. Ones you know well and ones you may not. Your students will let you know what works. Give them opportunities to help you select or suggest tech ideas for lessons. Have your students become experts in areas and teach their peers. Your students are one of your best tech resources! And they want to be!

**Karen:** Keep an open mind! You don't have to be a tech wizard to integrate technology into your classroom, especially when you are trying to learn new standards at the same time. Seek out a teacher who is already trying this out and collaborate or ask for ideas. We are all peers, and we need to support each other through this exciting change that is happening in the educational system.

**Danesa:** Remember, you're not the first or the only one attempting the integration of Common Core and technology. We are all in this together, and together is always better. ■

## DANESA AND KAREN'S RESOURCES

- ▶ **Their website:** [techlearningcommunity.pbworks.com](http://techlearningcommunity.pbworks.com)
- ▶ **iPad/Tablet app recommendations:** (see page 22)
- ▶ **Technology Resources Handout:** [goo.gl/ksjyZF](http://goo.gl/ksjyZF)
- ▶ **Webcast of presentation:** [goo.gl/t3G7nT](http://goo.gl/t3G7nT)
- ▶ **Tech tools and apps presentation:** [prezi.com/gvcsupti\\_njc](http://prezi.com/gvcsupti_njc) (There is a lot of information in the prezi that is not shown; just scroll around and look.)
- ▶ **Explanation of Tech Learning Community:** [prezi.com/rjlc0flr8dvi](http://prezi.com/rjlc0flr8dvi)



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\*National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Digest of Education Statistics, 2011.

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**EDUCREATIONS** Flip lessons in your classroom to enjoy more time on project-based learning. Students or teachers can create easy-to-understand instructional videos to review, remember, analyze, etc. We found this to be exceptional for students with learning disabilities. [www.educrations.com](http://www.educrations.com)

**COMICLIFE** We love this app! Students can create comic strips on any topic. Talk about injecting literacy into science, social studies, etc. This app has especially worked well for special education students. [plasq.com](http://plasq.com) (\$4.99 Apple Store)

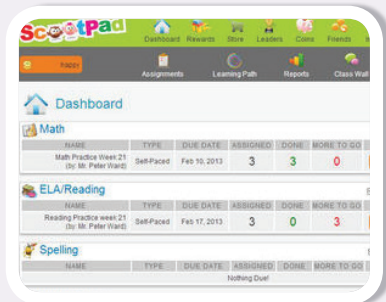
**CS CORE** A quick and easy-to-access guide for the California Common Core State Standards. It's organized by content area, grade level, domain/strand, cluster, standard. [bit.ly/1nBxzkp](http://bit.ly/1nBxzkp)



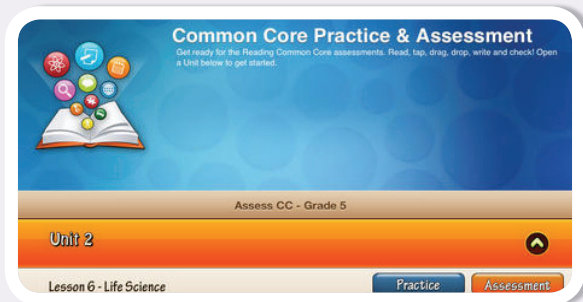
# 6 *must-know apps* for Common Core skills

Recommended by CTA members and trainers Danesa Menge, Oakdale Teachers Association, and Karen Taylor, Tracy Educators Association.

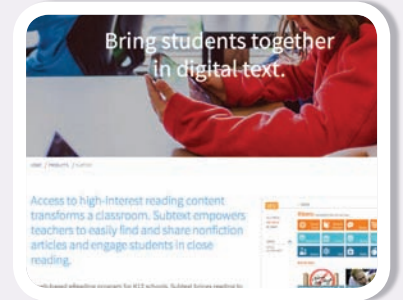
Danesa and Karen teach their colleagues how to integrate technology to teach lessons based on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). See their advice on page 20. Here they suggest apps and websites. Do you have more to share? Send them to [editor@cta.org](mailto:editor@cta.org) — we'll share them in the next magazine and online. ■



**SCOOTPAD** Scootpad provides a great selection of standards-based practice for grades K-5 in math, reading, spelling, vocabulary, writing and more. Great for assigning homework projects. [bit.ly/1gwVizX](http://bit.ly/1gwVizX)



**COMMON CORE READING PRACTICE AND ASSESSMENT** Find a collection of grade-specific tablet apps for grades K-6. Exercises are designed to reinforce key skills such as phonics, reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition, while corrective feedback strengthens test-taking strategies. [bit.ly/SVOKrf](http://bit.ly/SVOKrf)



**SUBTEXT** Use this in conjunction with Edmodo or a Google account. Students can analyze and discuss text, look up words, highlight text, and the list goes on. Import articles and e-books from any source and share them with your students. There is even an article of the day to make searching easy. The paid version includes CCSS standards-based lessons. This app is a gem! [www.renaissance.com/products/subtext](http://www.renaissance.com/products/subtext)





## BECOMING “EYEGERNOMIC” — FOR YOU AND YOUR STUDENTS

Eye fatigue can be prevented or reduced by making simple changes. Here are eyestrain prevention tips from organizations such as Prevent Blindness, the National Eye Institute, and Get Eye Smart:

- Place the screen 20-26 inches away from your eyes and a little below eye level.
- Create an eye-friendly schedule. Break up the time spent on the computer during the school day by fitting in activities such as reading, exercising or eating lunch.
- Follow the 20-20-20 rule. Every 20 minutes, look away from the screen for 20 seconds at something 20 feet away. If you have trouble remembering to take a break, try an app such as ProtectYourVision or Workrave that will remind you with automatic alerts.
- Consider using a glare filter over your screen.
- Keep the room's lighting dimmer than the computer screen to reduce glare and make it easier for your eyes to see the screen.
- Turn down the brightness and turn up the contrast of the screen settings.

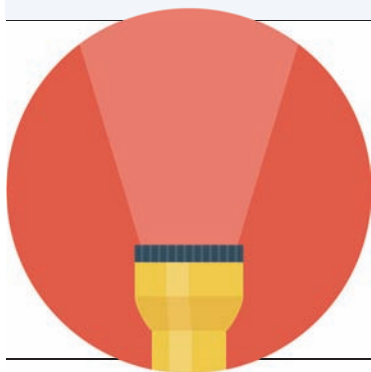
For the fourth year in a row, **California's graduation rate climbed as the dropout rate fell**, particularly for students of color. Eight out of 10 students statewide (80.2 percent) who started high school in 2009-10 graduated with their class in 2013. Graduation rates among African American and Hispanic students climbed faster than the statewide average, although the rates remained lower overall.

Along with the rise in the graduation rate, there was a dip in the dropout rate. Of the students who started high school in 2009-10, 11.6 percent dropped out. That is down 1.5 percentage points from the 2011-12 dropout rate. Again, the decline in dropout rates among African American and Hispanic students compared favorably to the statewide rates. Among African American students, 19.9 percent dropped out, down 2.2 percentage points from the year before. Among Hispanic students, 14.1 percent dropped out, down 2 percentage points from the year before.

**The number of California school districts in financial jeopardy has dropped sharply for the second year in a row.** This year's First Interim Status Report for fiscal year 2013-14 shows only 49 local educational agencies (LEAs) are either in negative or qualified financial status. In last year's First Interim Status Report, there were 124 LEAs in financial jeopardy. Twice a year, the California Department of Education receives Notice of Interim Certifications on the financial status of the state's 1,038 LEAs, comprising school districts, county offices of education, and joint powers agencies. The certifications are classified as positive, qualified or negative.



A 2014 Consumer Electronics report shows that 70 percent of U.S. adults experience eyestrain while on digital devices, including computers, tablets and smartphones, yet about half don't know how or have never tried to reduce their visual discomfort, called computer vision syndrome. Research shows that people hold digital devices closer to their eyes than they hold books and newspapers. That forces their eyes to work harder as they strain to focus on tiny font sizes. **Digital devices may also be linked to eye fatigue because of a tendency to blink less often when staring at a computer screen.** People usually blink about 18 times a minute. This naturally refreshes the eyes. But studies suggest that people only blink about half as often while using a computer. This results in dry, tired, itching and burning eyes.



# DID YOU KNOW?

Interesting facts about everything in the education world

*By Cynthia Menzel*

IF YOU DISCOVER research you think we should shine a light on, send it along with your name and local chapter to [editor@cta.org](mailto:editor@cta.org). ■



# Common Core resources and websites

We compiled the Common Core resources most often recommended at workshops across the state. Your first stop is always the CTA website ([cta.org](http://cta.org)). ■

## ► Here's what you'll find on the CTA website:



### Instruction and Professional Development — [cta.org/ipd](http://cta.org/ipd)

Includes resources, networking opportunities, discussion groups, podcasts, forums and CTA workshop materials for Common Core and other professional development topics.

### Issues and Action — [cta.org/commoncore](http://cta.org/commoncore)

Includes tips for getting started, background information, implementation guides, teacher-developed lesson plans, Leadership Planning Guide, learning labs, and more.

## ► NEA has great resources, too

### NEA Common Core State Standards Toolkit — [nea.org/commoncore](http://nea.org/commoncore)

This toolkit is a downloadable document that contains six areas for understanding, including English language learners, students with disabilities, and professional development.

### Lesson plans — [cc.betterlesson.com](http://cc.betterlesson.com)

Browse more than 3,000 lesson plans for grades 9-11 created by 130 creative math and English language arts teachers (including CTA members) aligned to the Common Core State Standards.

### GPS Network — [www.gpsnetwork.org](http://www.gpsnetwork.org)

Via the Great Public Schools (GPS) Network connect with teachers nationwide, collaborate and find resources on the new standards.



California Department of  
**EDUCATION**

## ► What you'll get from the CDE ([www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc](http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc))

Members tell us they visit the California Department of Education website for the following:

- **Common Core Search** has perhaps the best search engine using keywords and filters on all things CCSS. Find the link under the "Resources" heading.
- **Lists of approved mathematics and English language arts supplemental instructional materials** that bridge the gap between instructional materials based on the 1997 standards and the CCSS.
- **CCSS communications toolkit** including various parent documents translated into 17 languages.
- **Special Education Resources** including guidelines and educational standards describing what students should know and be able to do in each subject in each grade.
- **Professional Learning Modules** for various grades and in all subject areas. Located at [www.myboe.org](http://www.myboe.org).

## ► More resources and why we like them



### California State PTA Parent Guide — [www.capta.org](http://www.capta.org)

Great guide for talking to parents about Common Core and assessments.

[achievethecore.org](http://achievethecore.org) — Good general information, specifically on the Basal Alignment and Anthology Alignment.

[teachingchannel.org](http://teachingchannel.org) — A wide variety of lesson plans and videos. Members really liked the Q&A section.

[engageny.org](http://engageny.org) — Check out the professional development kits for teachers and administrators.

[www.illustrativemathematics.org](http://www.illustrativemathematics.org) — Find K-8 practice problems for numbers and quantity, algebra, functions, geometry, and statistics and probability.

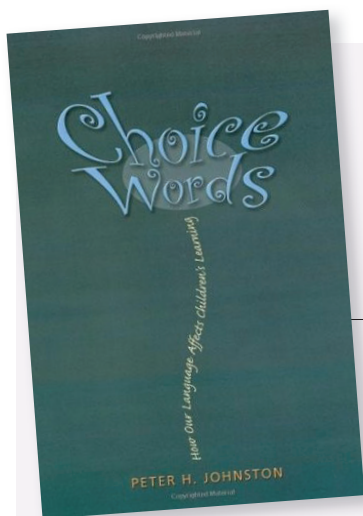
[www.colorincolorado.org/common-core](http://www.colorincolorado.org/common-core) — Find classroom videos, teacher interviews and bilingual parent tips for English language development.



# Recommended summer reading

For adults only *By Tiffany Hasker*

USUALLY, WE PROVIDE a list of suggested books for your students. Well, summer is almost here, so we're making our book recommendations for you this time around. These recommendations come from staff picks and leader suggestions. Some you may have already read, others you may not have heard of. Whichever you decide to dive into, let us know what you think. Also, let us know if you have any good books you'd like to recommend — we're always looking for a good read! ■



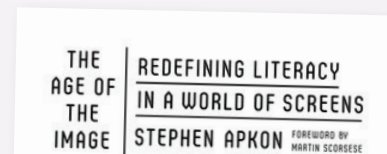
## ***Choice Words: How Our Language Affects Children's Learning*** by Peter Johnston

At just 120 pages, this small book is packed with big ideas about teacher language, suggesting that how teachers talk to children is critical to how they develop as learners. Creating a healthy environment in the classroom through appropriate language is as important as selecting content, just harder to measure.



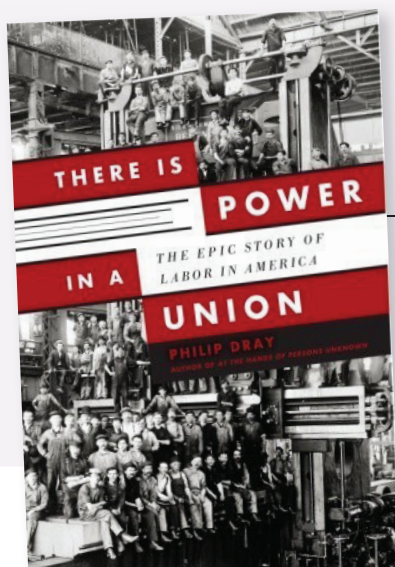
## ***Fires in the Bathroom: Advice for Teachers From High School Students*** by Kathleen Cushman

This is a collection of opinions of a diverse group of high school students from around the country on everything related to school, from pop quizzes to classroom behavior expectations. Their voices are real, honest and down-to-earth. Obviously, this is most relevant to secondary teachers, but there is quite a lot of helpful information for primary teachers, too.



## ***The Age of the Image: Redefining Literacy in a World of Screens*** by Stephen Apkon

*The Age of the Image* draws on the history of literacy — from scrolls to printing presses, text messages, YouTube and social media memes — to argue that now is the time to transform the way we teach, create and communicate.



## ***There is Power in the Union: The Epic Story of Labor in America*** by Philip Dray

A character-driven narrative, this book looks at the struggle for security and dignity in all its various settings: on picket lines and in union halls, assembly lines, corporate boardrooms, the courts, and the halls of Congress. The author demonstrates the urgency of the fight for fairness and economic democracy — a struggle that remains especially urgent today, when ordinary Americans are so anxious and suffering economic insecurity.



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# Perspectives

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



You're invited to visit the Common Core Café.

MEET MONTEBELLO'S **GABRIELA OROZCO GONZALEZ**, AN NEA AMBASSADOR TO THE SMARTER BALANCED ASSESSMENT CONSORTIUM. SHE'S AN "ASSESSMENT WRITER," MEANING THAT SHE WROTE SOME OF THE QUESTIONS AND PERFORMANCE TASKS FOR THE SMARTER BALANCED FIELD TEST. SHE OFFERS INSIGHT INTO CREATING TEST QUESTIONS AND HOW STUDENTS CAN BE SUCCESSFUL ON THE TEST. READ MORE ON PAGE 30.

# Are the Common Core standards good for teaching and learning?

## YES

At State Line Elementary School, students often transfer in from Oregon schools, so I appreciate that the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are consistent between states. If a student enters fourth grade as a transfer student from another state, then I know what standards they have mastered in math and English language arts (ELA) at their previous school. Before CCSS, students would transfer with very different math standards that were not as rigorous as California's. So, by no fault of the student, they needed remediation and tutoring to fill in the gaps in their math knowledge. Hopefully, the CCSS will remedy this situation.

I teach kindergarten through fifth grade, and the CCSS are a great assistance to me in planning instruction for those grade levels because of how the standards are organized and structured. Each ELA and math standard spirals up from the previous grade level, with progressive, incremental changes in what needs to be mastered at each grade level.

There is a huge shift in the CCSS as it relates to the type of text students read. The majority of the reading instruction focuses on nonfiction informational text instead of fiction selections. I want my students to be successful in college level and job-related reading assignments, and being able to comprehend informational text is crucial to their success. So as a teacher of beginning readers, I want to start with the beginning steps of how to read and understand written instructions, scientific information, historical accounts, current events in newspapers or on the Internet, and other nonfiction reading material.

The CCSS requires all teachers to rethink what students need to be successful in the 21st century to be competitive in the world marketplace. I am especially excited about the emphasis placed on students applying mathematical thinking, writing skills and reading skills to real-life problem solving and collaborating with peers to explain, defend and support their thinking.

Collaborative thinking and creative problem solving is what makes many of our industries thrive. I want my students to have a wide range of opportunities to be successful in a changing world, so I am willing to change my teaching to help this happen.

**PATTI CARPENTER**, *Modoc Teachers Association, teaches grades K-5 at State Line Elementary School.*



With the sweeping changes brought by the Common Core State Standards, it's not surprising that CTA members have a variety of viewpoints on this issue. Here, two members share their perspectives.

## NO

Would you allow your child to take a prescribed medication that had never been tested, had never been researched, and was created by politicians instead of physicians?

Of course not.

So then why should educators prescribe the Common Core standards as the cure to improving student achievement when the standards have not been researched, are not age-appropriate, and were not created or vetted by educators?

We shouldn't.

I believe the Common Core standards were not created by educators. The standards were developed by an organization called Achieve, along with the National Governors Association, both generously funded by the Gates Foundation, with almost no contribution from teachers. The majority of the standards were written by David Coleman, who used to work for a test publisher, with input mostly from politicians and business people who did not have a background in education or child development.

Common Core standards supposedly teach critical thinking. But their insistence on students reading historical and other texts in isolation, with no historical background, does not encourage students to develop a lifelong love of reading, which is critical for developing higher-level thinking and analytical skills.

I don't think the standards are age-appropriate. No money was spent on the validation of age appropriateness of Common Core standards before they were approved or introduced to our students. Early childhood educators are nearly unanimous in saying that no one who wrote the standards had any expertise in the education of very young children.

The Common Core standards have not been researched or tested. The Common Core standards are hailed as the answer to creating students who are "career and college ready" by the time they graduate high school. Yet the standards have never been subjected to any research studies linking them to readiness of any kind.

If we've learned anything at all from the 12 years of No Child Left Behind, it's that standards and high-stakes testing do not lead to a magical improvement in student achievement. A reasonable person might want to know if the imposition of another set of standards would be able to produce different results.

**KIM COSMAS**, *Mt. Pleasant Education Association, teaches grades 4-5 at Robert Sanders Elementary School in San Jose.*







# A look at California's progress with Common Core implementation



RECENTLY, Californians have seen a noticeable spike in media coverage about Common Core standards and assessments. With 3 million students participating in the Smarter Balanced field test, the increase is not surprising. Missing from most of the coverage, though, is an update on our state's progress with Common Core implementation and an honest evaluation of the work ahead.

We have come a long way since the State Board of Education adopted the Common Core standards in 2010. The transition requires comprehensive policy changes. Policy changes thus far have helped streamline systems that were outdated or out of sync with how 21st century school systems should operate.

In addition to Common Core standards in English language arts and math, we have adopted new English language development standards and an implementation plan. We have also adopted the Next Generation Science Standards to improve science education and to better prepare and engage students in more in-depth science, computing and engineering courses. Our goal is to ensure that all students graduate prepared for college and careers.

An Instructional Quality Commission is facilitating the transition to new Common Core-aligned curricular frameworks and instructional materials. The Math Framework and instructional materials have been adopted, and the State Board will act on the English Language Arts and English Language Development Framework in July. The state has also eliminated unnecessary and costly state regulations about instructional material purchases so school districts can choose any instructional materials they want to use that are aligned to Common Core.

California has empowered local communities to make decisions about how school funds are spent. The new Local Control Funding Formula requires parent and community engagement in decision-making, and increases funding specifically to improve academic achievement of English learners, low-income students and foster youth. This historic change reduced the number of state categorical programs from 62 to 18. Moreover, we made more than a quarter of the 12-volume Education Code

redundant through the elimination of categorical program restrictions and state micromanagement.

Increased funding has helped support local priorities, new programs and innovative strategies to better prepare and engage students under Common Core. The governor and lawmakers provided \$1.25 billion for instructional materials, teacher professional development and technology upgrades for Common Core implementation. Linked Learning and California Partnership Academies combine academics with an engaging real-world learning environment. The \$250 million California Career Pathways Trust strengthens job training programs in industries in need of skilled workers.

We have considerable work to do to streamline our assessment system and ensure we are measuring the right things in educationally useful ways. We've taken a first step by eliminating unnecessary tests, abolishing the California Modified Assessment for students with disabilities, and including all students in a more integrated system. We've reduced testing time by more than half. As we move forward, technology will help enhance assessments, provide more rapid feedback to teachers, students and families, and improve opportunities to integrate it into classroom instruction.

Across the board, initiatives have been set in motion to further Common Core implementation. We established a statewide task force to rethink how we serve students with disabilities, guide transformation of programs, and improve outcomes. A statewide plan is under way to steer higher education's participation in the Common Core transition, addressing assessment, teacher development and undergraduate education.

The course we've set in California is to carefully phase in change according to growth in state and local capacity. Common Core implementation is a multiyear effort that changes almost all state and local policies as well as curriculum and instruction. Policy changes are relatively straightforward compared with the monumental shifts that teachers and students face in the classroom.

Ongoing concerns about time to prepare and collaborate and the need for aligned instructional materials, technology training and resources are justified and must be addressed. We need to ensure that teachers have a leading role in Common Core implementation plans at the local level, so together we can identify emerging issues and strengthen existing initiatives. The future success of Common Core will require continued support that enables teachers to instruct students successfully in each classroom. ■

Our goal is to ensure that all students graduate prepared for college and careers.

*Mike Kirst is president of California's State Board of Education. He is professor emeritus of education and business administration at Stanford University. He has been on the Stanford faculty since 1969.*



## Answers from question-writer Gabriela Orozco Gonzalez

Plus an invitation to the Common Core Café. *By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin*

MEET GABRIELA OROZCO GONZALEZ, who teaches a first- and second-grade combination class at Montebello Gardens Elementary School. She's also an NEA ambassador to the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and an "assessment writer," meaning that she wrote some of the questions and performance tasks for the Smarter Balanced field test, which schools are piloting throughout California. The Montebello Teachers Association member and CTA Teacher Leadership Cohort member shared her opinions with the *California Educator*. ■

### ***How did you become involved in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC)?***

Three years ago, during research of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), I found that the standards were aligned to what I was doing in the classroom: project-based instruction with a high focus in writing. In 2012 I was selected as an assessment writer, and I developed performance tasks in language arts for the primary grades. In 2013, Smarter Balanced contracted me to work on "item review" for grades 4-6 mathematics, specifically in accessibility, bias and sensitivity. I continue to work as an item reviewer, and I see this experience invaluable to the work I do with development and differentiation of my classroom curriculum.

### ***How were you trained in writing for the test?***

I received all my training through webinars and literature provided by Smarter Balanced. It was insightful to be with a room of teachers across the nation and listen to their questions, concerns, and perception of what is occurring in their state thus far in implementation of the Common Core standards. This component of the training was invaluable. It expanded my knowledge, especially the Q&A with Joe Willhoft, the SBAC executive director of the assessment system components.

### ***What are you looking for in terms of accessibility, bias and sensitivity on the test?***

I make sure the language is at grade level and free of ambiguous words, idioms and jargon, in an effort to avoid any kind of language that could be confusing to students. I want the questions to be free of unnecessary contextual information and free of the passive voice, and to ensure that directions in sentences are short statements without extraneous clauses. I don't want the language to be so complex that students in third grade are exposed to words they should be exposed to in fifth grade.

### ***How do teachers help students to be successful on the test when they find it difficult?***

Because the test is completely computer-driven, I think it will force teachers to relook at their current practices and integrate technology in the classroom. Sometimes adults don't use technology with ease, but for students it's like fish to water. As teachers become savvier with technology, they will begin to feel more comfortable.

### ***You've invited educators to the Common Core Café. What's on the menu?***

Resources, ways to collaborate and share. As one of 24 teachers in California accepted into the CTA's Teacher Leadership Cohort, I was asked to develop a project that would impact my district and fulfill an identified need to advance the teaching profession. What better forum than a professional learning community (PLC) to give teachers an opportunity to discuss the strategies they use in their classroom with other educators in the district? The idea behind the Common Core Café is to have a core set of master teachers working together to develop expertise of the CCSS and utilize technological resources to enhance instruction. Drop by and visit [commoncorecafe.blogspot.com](http://commoncorecafe.blogspot.com).

### ***What's next for you?***

Last month I was selected, through a national search, to be an NEA Great Public Schools Network online community facilitator. I will assist in the area of third-grade CCSS English language arts. The NEA GPS Network is a place to share ideas and to find resources to improve student success (see page 24).





# What are your challenges with Common Core?

## Members share their concerns and solutions

**THE LAST MEMBERS** to ask questions at the Common Core Forum at April's State Council meeting didn't exactly ask questions. Sure, there were questions about separating the standards from the test, the timeline for the implementation (which was inherited), and how the standards came to be in the first place.

They shared about the work they were doing with their district. They shared that the district was finally collaborating, and they felt empowered. Common Core changed the conversation and the climate. "This is what professional development really looks like," said one member. "For the first time in a long time, we feel like we're moving into a leadership role," said another. "I feel like teachers are *finally* taking back the profession."

Members frustrated with what's happening in their local district were given advice on how to make it work. Some shared that professional development included teams of teachers visiting one another's classrooms to observe colleagues observing students through the CCSS lens.

These shares prompted us to ask members how implementation is going. We're posting their comments, some of which are featured below, on CTA's blog page ([cta.org/blog](http://cta.org/blog)). Visit the blog, read more of your colleagues' comments, and leave a few of your own. ■

### ESPs and professional development

Obtaining professional development has been challenging for education support professionals. **Carol Courneya**, Beverly Hills Education Association, is the president of the Instructional Assistants unit. She requested CTA training for the single training paras receive during the year. She was turned down, and instead received "something that had little to do with our jobs." Teachers get training up to four times per year, says Courneya, and paras are not included in CCSS training. "We were thrown into the class and told to do the best we can," she says. "I wish they could understand we're part of the educational process — we are important to instruction and delivery. I work with a wide range of the high school curriculum, biology and earth sciences. I co-teach a modified Spanish class. Collaborating with teachers, we modify everything to meet the needs of kids."

### Library databases

Three librarians host a series of library database professional development opportunities so that teachers can get familiar with the resources, and with the papers and projects that teachers can assign in tandem with the PD. **Rachael Byron**, San Ramon Valley Education Association, a Common Core instructional coach at Dougherty Valley High School, says she sends a weekly email that corresponds with the current topic. For example, "we rolled out the school year with

Speaking and Listening, and so all my emails included teaching strategies and resources that work under this category. In November we shifted to Reading, so my emails involved teaching strategies and resources for reading." Teachers continue working with their current textbooks and are supplementing with the database articles and other online resources. "Our students are in the library constantly, using the desktop computers and the myriad laptops we have in our COWs (Computers on Wheels)."

### What parents know

One challenge is a shortage of computers, says **Behnaaz Ferozepurwalla**, Vacaville Teachers Association, a first-year English teacher at Vacaville High. "Our parents and students are aware of the new standards. However, they might not know the details of Common Core, what it stands for and what its criteria are."

### Outdated technology

"Teachers are photocopying like mad and using money from fundraisers to buy units from other teachers so they are not reinventing the wheel. Technology is outdated, and we will have to close the lab for certain grade levels so that we can schedule testing," says librarian **Stephanie Bacon**, Tahoe-Truckee Education Association. Overall, the standards are better, though. "They mandate

the development of critical thinking, clarity and elaboration of thought." The test is the biggest frustration. "The SBAC test requires third-graders to type their answers, but that has not been part of the curriculum before fourth grade. Now second-graders will be learning to type."

### Time to collaborate and plan

"Having to implement new standards without the guidance and resource of a written curriculum has been very frustrating. Time is limited, and having to find resources to help guide me to teach those standards can be overwhelming. I didn't get my credential in curriculum writing, and to be expected to do that can be exasperating," says **Lorie Garcia**, Southwest Teachers Association president. On the other hand, in the South Bay Union School District, "we were able to negotiate the return of our furlough days. Those days have been without students and are dedicated to Common Core professional development. Being able to sit with my colleagues to go over the unpacking of the standards has been helpful. We have also used that time to go over best practices and are moving our students in the depth of knowledge."

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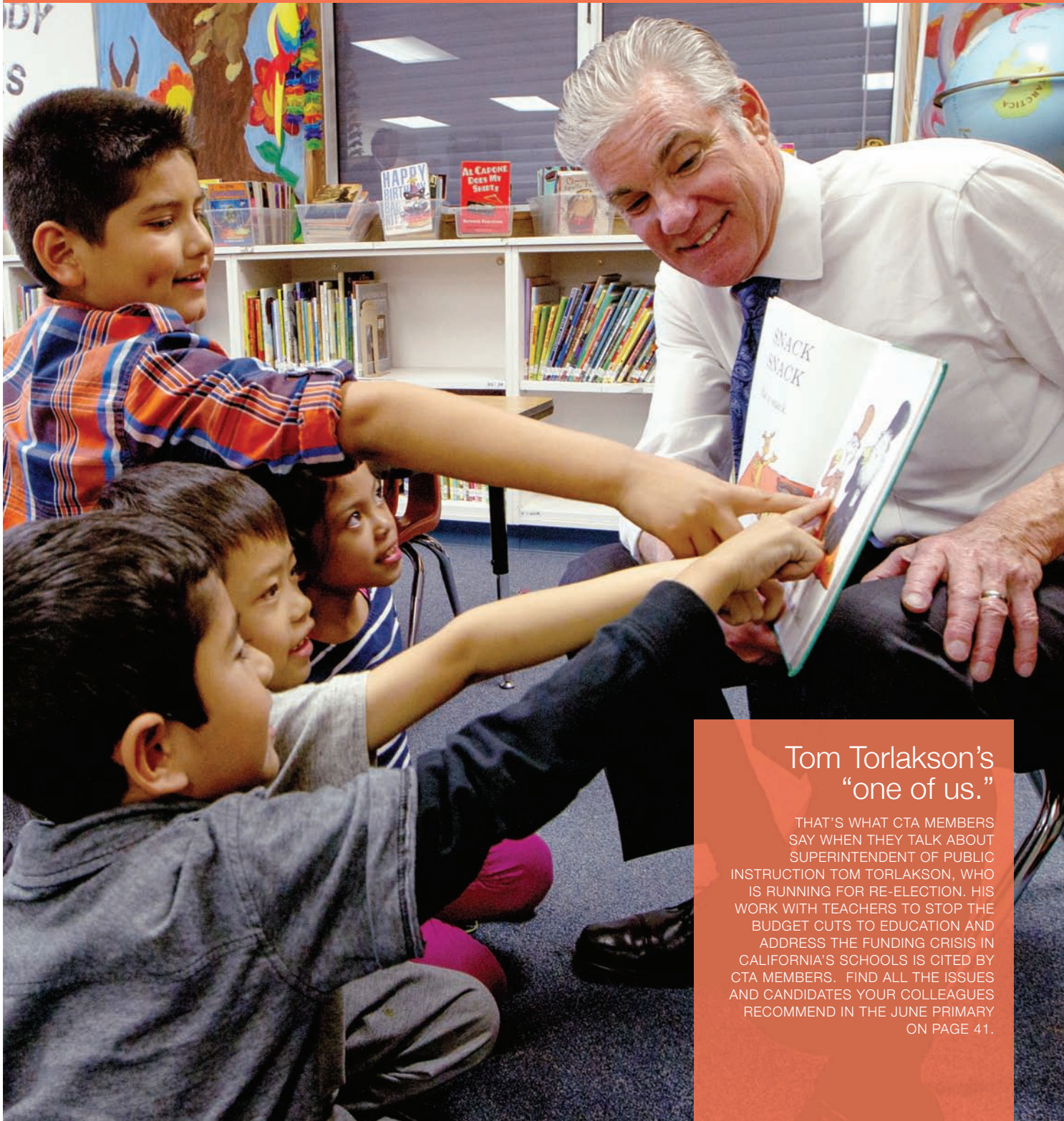
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# Bargaining school improvement, professional development

## Implementing Common Core State Standards

Compiled by Dina Martin, Mike Myslinski and Frank Wells

IT'S ABOUT THE LANGUAGE, not usually the money. That's the consensus of leaders and staff around the state who have negotiated consultation processes and agreements, or memorandums of understanding (MOUs), for Common Core State Standards (CCSS) implementation. The better MOUs lay out a well-defined process to deal with issues that may arise and include teachers from the beginning.

Some issues are not mandatorily negotiable. "If it's good for kids and improves learning, good school districts are talking about those issues at the bargaining table anyway," says CTA President Dean E. Vogel.

To be fair, there are "bad actors" and districts that are not collaborating and not including teachers when planning and implementing the Common Core State Standards.

Here, though, are three that are doing it right.

### Lennox

In October the Lennox Teachers Association and the Lennox School District agreed to a memorandum of understanding creating a Common Core State Standards Committee to oversee Common Core implementation and determine the expenditure of CCSS funds available to the district in the 2013-14 state budget. The MOU ensures that the nine-member committee has a majority of five LTA members, with the LTA president and the district's director of instructional services serving as co-chairs.

LTA looked to factors leading to success at the district's four QEIA schools, and engaged its membership throughout the process.

"After intense organizing by our members around the concept of shared decision making, the district was pretty cooperative in getting this going," says LTA President Brian Guerrero. "We bargained hard on some minor changes to our initial proposal, but they ultimately embraced a committee structure that shares power in a tangible way." Guerrero sees the agreement as a chance for teacher-led curriculum development and significant change from the top-down, prescriptive approach to curriculum creation that had often overwhelmed teachers in a school

district struggling to meet state standards without the modern textbooks necessary to do so. To help with the process, LTA has also looked to factors leading to success at the district's four QEIA schools, including

teacher-driven professional development, frequent teacher collaboration, smaller class sizes, and principals who are also curricular leaders.

LTA has actively engaged its membership throughout this process, conducting site visits, small group meetings, and one-on-ones to gather opinions and concerns about Common Core, bridging materials, staff development, and the technology needed to successfully implement the new standards. While some feel the process is slow, LTA's early efforts have put its members and the school district ahead of many others when it comes to successful CCSS implementation. LTA is using the CCSS implementation process as a model for Lennox's Local Control and Accountability Plan development to allocate new state funding.

### Madera

How did the Madera Unified Teachers Association establish a Common Core Steering Committee in their district?

"It wasn't easy," says MUTA President David Holder. "We've been pushing since November. It took perseverance to get it done."

Fresh from coming off of contentious bargaining that brought the chapter to the brink of a strike, Holder and MUTA First Vice President Amanda Wade began pushing for more involvement in Common Core implementation in their district. They talked to administrators and went regularly to board meetings to let them know they weren't going to back away from that mission.

The result is a memorandum of understanding between the chapter and the Madera Unified School District that was signed in early April. The MOU establishes a committee of 10 elementary and 10 secondary teachers who will work with a team of administrators in identifying priorities, making recommendations regarding expenditures, and communicating with the classroom teacher.

"That's what it gets back to, the classroom teacher," Holder says. "We're not going to sit on the sidelines and



have district administrators tell teachers how to do their jobs. The teachers will tell the administrators what they need to do their job.”

For MUTA, the language that ensures this principle reads: “A full partnership means that the parties will take joint responsibility and accountability to create a collaborative process that is driven from the school level upward, engaging site administrators and MUTA members with the opportunity to fully own the implementation of Common Core.”

Regarding decision making: “All decisions and directives made by the CCSC (Common Core Steering Committee) shall be a result of engaging in collaborative discussions.”

The committee will begin its collaborative meetings this month.

## Richmond

The United Teachers of Richmond MOU reached in November is teacher-driven and pays teachers stipends for their involvement, while creating a school site structure that ensures wide empowerment of members in the West Contra Costa Unified School District. “It’s seen as a model because the teachers’ vision and design for Common Core implementation and transition was respected,” says UTR President Diane Brown. “We can create

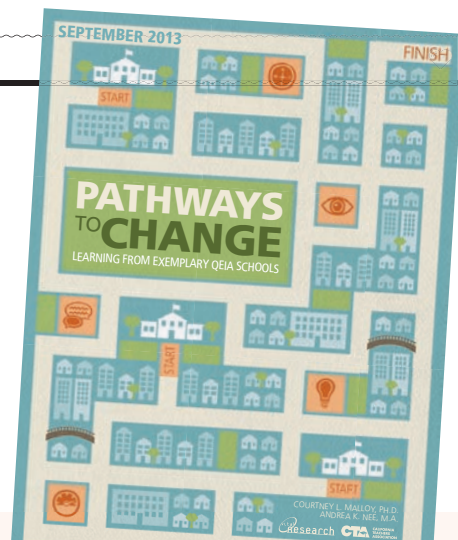
a vision that comes directly from teachers now. It’s all transparent. All responsibilities are outlined clearly.”

Brown says the early UTR agreement model influenced many Bay Area CTA chapters on CCSS — including those in Pittsburg, Oakland, Alameda, Brentwood and San Leandro. Read the agreement at [www.unitedteachersofrichmond.com](http://www.unitedteachersofrichmond.com). Click on the “Common Core” tab.

The thing Richmond does differently is utilize NEA’s Keys to Excellence for Your School (KEYS) continuous school improvement program. KEYS is a researched-based, field-tested, data-driven approach that starts with a survey that reveals the strengths and opportunities for improvement in a participating school. Data from the survey indicate where a school stands on some 42 indicators that research has shown correlate with a high-performing school. ■

MUTA’s agreement is a “full partnership” that has teachers telling administrators what they need to do their job.

All responsibilities are outlined clearly in UTR’s agreement, which is a model for other locals.



## UTILIZING CTA RESOURCES

SEVERAL PARTNERSHIPS between districts and teachers unions are using CTA resources, such as sending teams to CTA’s Common Core workshops (see page 59 for upcoming sessions).

Many districts are using the research findings of the acclaimed, CTA-backed Quality Education Investment Act of 2006 (QEIA) as the basis to implement school improvement efforts. The largest school turnaround program of its kind in the nation, QEIA is investing nearly \$3 billion over eight years at 400 mostly high-poverty schools for proven reforms like smaller class sizes, more high school counselors, and better teacher training.

The result is one of the most comprehensive studies of low-performing schools, and the findings show class size matters. “Giving educators more collaboration time, building community accountability, and using student data to differentiate instruction are pathways to school improvement,” CTA President Dean Vogel says, adding that the findings offer ideas for Local Control Funding Formula spending by school districts and effective professional development, too.



## GO ONLINE

### CTA RESOURCES

[cta.org/qeia](http://cta.org/qeia)  
[cta.org/bargainingupdates](http://cta.org/bargainingupdates)





## Meet SENATOR CAROL LIU

**SEN. CAROL LIU** chairs the Senate Education Committee. A member of the large “teacher caucus” — former educators who serve in the Legislature — she completed a six-year term in the Assembly before becoming the first Asian American woman elected state senator in 2008. She taught history to junior and senior high school students in Richmond, in what is now the West Contra Costa Unified School District, and later served there as a district administrator. Liu taught in the Education Department at UC Berkeley before rejoining the Legislature in her current capacity representing Senate District 25, which includes Glendale and Pasadena in Southern California. ■

### **What are your goals for public education?**

As a mother, an educator and a legislator, I am particularly passionate about ensuring all children have access to early education. The state budget has not been kind to early education for many years. The good news is that the tide is changing. Policymakers recognize that early childhood education is critical to revitalizing California’s economy. This year, proposals are moving forward to support parents and provide quality care and learning environments for children. At the federal level we saw the introduction of the Strong Start for America’s Children Act of 2013 and the proposed reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant.

Here in Sacramento we have a few proposals on the horizon as well, including SB 1123, the Strong Families, Strong Children Act. This bill expands access for low-income infants, toddlers and their parents to quality early learning and parental support services.

### **We need to make California public schools the best in the nation. What can lawmakers do to help educators make that happen?**

Stable and predictable funding, extensive support for local school districts, and better resources for all teachers and students. We also need sufficient resources, teacher training and oversight to successfully implement Common Core standards.

Teaching is a great profession, but the difficult years of budget cuts and layoffs have turned off many potential new educators. As we move out of the recession and begin to restore funding, we need to attract people into teaching. That means we need to fulfill the promise of a stable, rewarding career with opportunities to succeed, advance and improve. I am a proponent of the community schools strategy, which brings government, communities, nonprofits and businesses together with school districts to deliver wraparound services for struggling

students and their families. Effectively implemented, this strategy can relieve the expectation on teachers to be all things to all students.

### **What are the best ways educators can tell lawmakers what is happening in their schools?**

Please write, email through our Senate website, and attend events hosted in your district. For example, I regularly host roundtable discussions with educators in the 25th Senate District.

### **As a former teacher, who was the teacher who had the greatest impact on you?**

Several people showed me how a caring, dedicated and enthusiastic teacher can motivate kids to learn. The person I remember most is Bob Smith, who taught American government in the late 1950s at Oakland High School. He was so supportive of the students, with that “rah rah” attitude and willingness to help all the time.

### **What led you to run for office?**

After I got married and relocated to Southern California, I became an active community volunteer and civic leader. I first focused on education and other issues affecting children, serving as president of the PTA and the Pasadena City College Foundation Board. The more involved I became, the more I wanted to help. Back then I assisted in a whole range of issues — from environmental protection to child care services — that affect local quality of life. I was elected in 1992 to the La Cañada Flintridge City Council, where I served for eight years, including two terms as mayor. When the opportunity opened to run for state Assembly, I wanted to take all that public service experience to Sacramento and help make things better for the people of California with a particular focus on improving the public education system.

# Legal victory: Santa Ana teachers paid for summer work

And you should be, too. Here's why.

IF YOU WORK for a school district and then retire or leave the district, you'd expect to get paid for the work you have already completed, wouldn't you? Well, thanks to CTA, you will be.

In a long-awaited victory for Santa Ana teachers, a district court ordered the Santa Ana Unified School District to pay teachers who worked summer school and then left the district's employ prior to being paid. It all started during arbitration over summer wages. The original award covered all teachers who worked summer 2007. Both sides agreed the district would honor the award for those teachers who worked the summers from 2007 through 2010.

After almost weekly discussions with CTA and Santa Ana Educators Association leadership regarding payment, the district paid the majority of the bargaining unit, but refused to pay those who left the district, citing a vague, undefined and unknown rule barring the payment of teachers who were no longer employed by the district. This included 88 bargaining unit members who had retired or resigned from the district.

The district court agreed with SAEA that the school district was obligated to pay all of the bargaining unit members. Only after litigation and constant pressure from CTA staff member Norma Ortiz and SAEA President Susan Mercer did the district pay \$88,000 to the remaining teachers in January 2014. ■

“La Verne provided the tools to make me an effective educator.”

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- School Psychology/PPS
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- Reading and Language Arts
- Child Life Specialist
- New Learning Technology

#### Bachelors

- Liberal Studies
- Child Development

#### Masters

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- School Psychology
- Special Education
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- Special Emphasis
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## Educators support legislation to streamline teacher dismissal process and keep students safe

Check [cta.org/legislation](http://cta.org/legislation) for updates on this and other legislative issues. *By Claudia Briggs*

“AS A CHILD, I was a victim of physical abuse,” shared Shawna Adam, who teaches transitional kindergarten in Hacienda Heights. “Although it pains me, I am sharing my story with lawmakers because I need them to understand the urgency of creating a process that more rapidly handles cases that involve sexual and child abuse.”

More than a dozen educators met with members of the state Senate Education Committee before testifying during the committee’s hearing, urging passage of AB 215 by Assembly Member Joan Buchanan and her principal co-authors, Sens. Lou Correa and Alex Padilla. The bill passed unanimously out of the committee April 30.

AB 215 updates and prioritizes the teacher discipline and dismissal appeal process with the goals of keeping students safe, saving time and money, and ensuring due process rights for educators.

“CTA always supported changes to the dismissal process that protect students and are fair to educators,” said CTA President Dean E. Vogel,

noting CTA’s work with a “diverse group of folks who came together for thoughtful changes to the dismissal process that truly make a difference in ensuring student safety without stripping away the professional due process rights our teachers have earned.”

The bill creates a separate hearing process for education employees charged with egregious misconduct, including child abuse, sexual abuse and certain drug offenses.

“As educators, keeping children safe in our classrooms is always a top priority. We want to teach in a safe learning environment for our students, alongside educators who are committed and qualified,” said Linda Ortega, a second-grade teacher at Mount Diablo Elementary School in Clayton. “This bill clarifies current law to ensure



(Photo left) San Ramon Valley Education Association President **Ann Katzburg** (left foreground) and a team of educators discuss AB 215 with its author, Assembly Education Chair Joan Buchanan. This team and other teams met with more than a dozen lawmakers with a focus on two important CTA-backed bills, AB 215 and AB 1444.



## PROTECTING STUDENTS, ENSURING DUE PROCESS

### > **About AB 215:**

Under existing law, districts can immediately remove from the classroom any educator accused of immoral conduct or a serious crime, and can keep the accused employee away from students until the facts of the case have been determined. Unfortunately, as seen in recent cases, many districts fail to act. For three years, CTA has supported legislation to streamline the dismissal process while protecting students and educators. Similar legislation was approved last year, but vetoed by the governor.

### > **AB 215 highlights:**

AB 215 updates and prioritizes the teacher discipline and dismissal appeal process with the goals of keeping students safe, saving time and money, and ensuring due process rights for educators.

AB 215 creates a separate hearing process for education employees charged with egregious misconduct, including child abuse, sexual abuse and certain drug offenses. Districts are required to start these cases within 60 days of a complaint being filed. The case will be heard by an administrative law judge, whose decision will be binding.

AB 215 streamlines the hearing process for all other dismissal appeals. It requires districts to hold the hearing within six months of an educator making a request, and requires the hearing to be concluded within seven months. These hearings will be heard by the Commission on Professional Competence, which includes an administrative law judge and two educators. Decisions will be binding.

educators who engage in egregious misconduct are immediately removed from the classroom, criminally charged, and go through an expedited dismissal process.”

Districts would be required to start egregious misconduct cases within 60 days of a complaint being filed. The case would be heard by an administrative law judge, whose decision would be binding.

“This bill is about priorities and making sure the students we are entrusted to teach come first, while protecting the professional rights of teachers. School districts must handle these cases quickly while following the law,” said Kimberley Gilles, a veteran teacher at Monte Vista High School in Danville, who was recently awarded the NEA Award for Teaching Excellence, a top honor in education. “Providing a safe learning environment is a civil rights issue and why I support streamlining the dismissal process for the sake of our kids.”

You can learn more about the bill at [cta.org/ab215](http://cta.org/ab215). ■

## CTA BACKS MANDATORY KINDERGARTEN

Members of CTA State Council of Education’s Early Education Committee lobbied 17 members of the Assembly Appropriations Committee at the state Capitol May 13, for a very important purpose: to gain further legislative support for a measure to ensure that all California youngsters benefit from kindergarten.

CTA is joining Assembly Education Chair Joan Buchanan (D-Alamo) and Assembly Member Shirley Weber (D-San Diego) in sponsoring AB 1444, requiring mandatory kindergarten in California schools.

“Our youngest students come to us in various stages of preparedness, yet they are expected to learn the same curriculum taught to the entire class, regardless of where each student may be developmentally and academically,” says CTA President Dean E. Vogel. “We believe every student deserves a fair shot at a quality education that should begin with kindergarten to ensure they are best prepared to learn and thrive as they progress to the next grade levels.”

AB 1444 requires all students to attend kindergarten prior to the first grade.

“With the current standards, and especially as the Common Core State Standards are being implemented, students who do not attend kindergarten are at a distinct disadvantage when they get to first grade,” said Ruthie Fagerstrom, a third-grade teacher in the Glendora Unified School District and chair of CTA’s Early Childhood Education Committee. “AB 1444 provides students with that much-needed early learning that will prepare them for success throughout their school years.”

By making kindergarten mandatory, AB 1444 will help parents understand the importance of regular, ongoing attendance.

“Many Californians are not aware that kindergarten enrollment is voluntary, and that children who are not enrolled are at a distinct disadvantage when they enter first grade,” says Kei Swensen, a kindergarten teacher in Oakland and chair of CTA’s Early Childhood Education Legislative Subcommittee. “We see the effects in our classrooms every day. These students often lag in terms of achievement levels, oral language development, and fine and gross motor skill development, as well as socially and emotionally. Our students deserve better.”

You can learn more about the bill at [cta.org/mandatorykindergarten](http://cta.org/mandatorykindergarten).

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# CTA's recommendations for the June 3 primary



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Remember — your vote makes a difference. In California's open primary system, the top two vote-getters, regardless of political party, will move on to the November general election. Help elect lawmakers who will fund public schools and support all students and educators. Know that when you cast your vote for CTA-recommended candidates, you vote for those who will support teaching and learning issues. Learn more at [www.cta.org/campaign](http://www.cta.org/campaign).

## Q&A: Tom Torlakson



Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson has been hailed by educators as someone who “gets it” — who understands public education and how schools and colleges actually work. He is running for re-election, so we sat down and asked him a few questions.

### You're a teacher yourself. How does your time in the classroom influence your work as superintendent?

It's true — I spent years teaching science in low-income communities, coached high school track and cross-country teams for 25 years, and continued to teach community college classes even after I took office. I try to bring my training and experience as a classroom teacher to every part of the job, whether it's managing a large, complex agency like the California Department of Education or shepherding major legislation through the Capitol. And because I am a teacher and a coach, I'm focused on an agenda that brings people together to build our schools up, not tear them down to make way for private interests.

### As California's schools start to recover from years of cuts, do you expect to see a renewed emphasis on providing a well-rounded education for students?

Absolutely. We have to rebuild programs that we know help keep children involved and engaged, such as music, drama and sports, and

refocus career technical education, which is a high priority for me. I'm thrilled that California has established a new Career Pathways Trust, with \$250 million for schools to develop partnerships and career internship programs. I believe strongly that our students need a taste of the working world before they graduate, and need to leave school with real-world skills that will help them succeed in college and a career.

### What are your goals for the next four years?

We need to keep fighting for the resources our students and schools deserve, especially as we tackle the challenges that go with the transition to new standards and assessments (no more bubble tests!). At the same time, I believe we must make a commitment as a state to invest in early learning, so that every child gets off to a great start. Another priority is to continue our efforts to expand career technical education, so that all students get a taste of the working world before they graduate.





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# Learning

Members' best practices, teaching ideas and education trends



## What do parents need to know about the Common Core State Standards?

THAT SCHOOL STAFF BELIEVE IN THE NEW STANDARDS BECAUSE THEY ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO BE CRITICAL THINKERS, WRITE WELL AND PROVE THEIR WORK INSTEAD OF JUST SHOWING RIGHT ANSWERS, FOR STARTERS. FIND OUT HOW FIFTH-GRADE TEACHER **MOLLY JO ALAIMO** AND HER COLLEAGUES ARE HELPING PARENTS LEARN ABOUT THE COMMON CORE AND MORE ON PAGE 48.





# Lessons learned from early adopters

So how *is* teaching different under the Common Core? Four of your colleagues provide examples in science, reading and writing, Social studies and math.

## *Science in Thousand Oaks*

By Frank Wells

Ashley Cooper's ninth-grade science class students at Thousand Oaks High School are recapping some of the evidence for evolution they studied before their vacation. Today's classwork will culminate with homework in which students will write an essay following the Common Core State Standards writing rubric on informative writing, and demonstrate proficiency in core English language arts standards specific to science and technical subjects.

Cooper, an enthusiastic 14-year veteran, begins by choosing students to read aloud from a short illustrated piece, "A Close Look at Darwin's Finches." The text contains complex terms like "phylogenetic" and "adaptive radiation," but the students don't seem to struggle. They show they grasp the material when asked to identify which diagrammed bird would be able to eat the largest nuts, and to infer something about the variety of insects on which the finches may have dined.

The class then helps Cooper develop a graphic organizer of evidence for evolution on the front board. Students use their own layered construction paper "foldables" they have previously created on this subject, as well as the Prentice Hall biology textbook, to recall evidence categories they will later use in their essays: fossil records, homologous body structures, vestigial organs, natural selection, geographic distribution, and embryology. After a brief discussion about each category and its connection to evolution, Cooper has the students break into groups of three or four to come up with supporting points for each area.



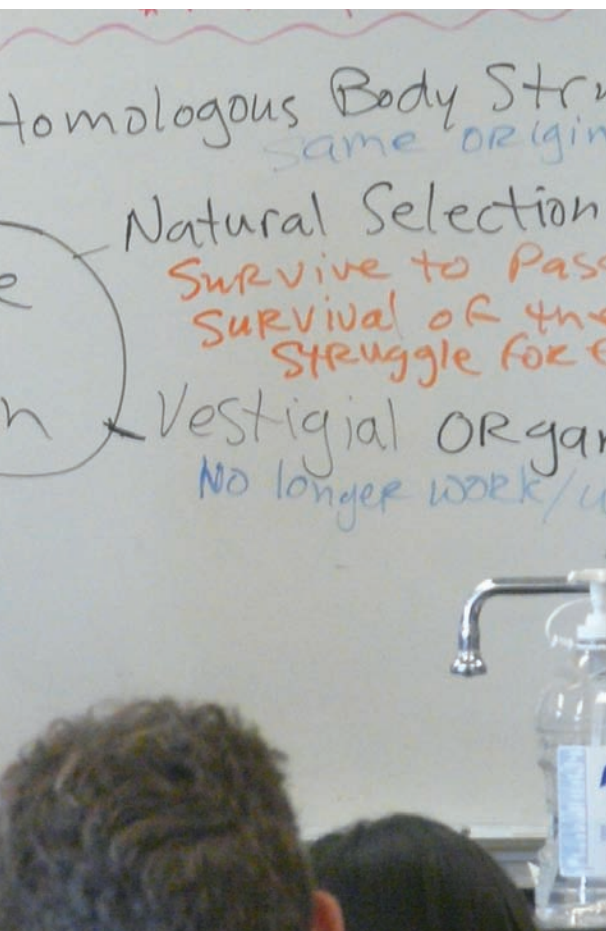
Cooper tries to limit her lecturing to once a week. "I try to be more the guide on the side and less the sage on the stage," she says. She prefers having students work in smaller groups because it's more likely everyone will pull their own weight, especially when a project outcome is involved.

After the group discussion, Cooper asks students to report out. She adds some of their observations to the graphic organizer on the board. The class period has gone by quickly; lunch is just seven minutes away, and she wants to give students some brief time to start their homework assignment. She tells them she wants their five or six paragraph essays to explain some of the evidence for evolution. She goes over structure by drawing out the constructs of an essay from the students.

"What's your first paragraph going to tell the reader? That's right, it's your hook or thesis."

"Who's your audience? What kind of voice, tone and vocabulary are you going to use?"





“Your conclusion should wrap things up. So what? Now what?”

The students start writing, and Cooper tells them her class will be open during lunch for them to continue working or get help.

Cooper says incorporating language arts across the science curriculum does take more time, but the payoff is worth it. This isn’t the first time students have been asked to write or integrate what they’ve learned. She’s had students write taking different sides of various bioethics issues like embryo stem cell research, animal testing, physician-assisted suicide, and the use of genetically modified organisms in the food supply. She’s also had them debate each other in front of the class.

Students feel such projects, including today’s essay, help them learn the material better.

“It really brings it all together for us and gets us to really process what we’re learning,” says Gianna Lucareli.

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*Ashley Cooper says teacher leadership is key to Common Core implementation. “Teachers are the real experts.”*

Her classmate Justin Debeikes agrees. “It’s better than just doing worksheets and quizzes.”

The past year, Cooper has been part of CTA’s first Teacher Leadership Cohort, a program that identifies strong, passionate teachers and develops their advocacy skills around improving professional practice. The Unified Association of Conejo Teachers member is a strong believer in Common Core, and despite the fact that textbooks are not yet aligned to the new standards, she’s making it a point to adjust her teaching and curriculum.

“I’m trying to develop at least one lesson per unit per year that incorporates the new standards,” she says. She believes her district is on the right track with Common Core implementation, and the key is to have the change teacher-led rather than a top-down effort that brings in a lot of outside consultants. “Teachers are the real experts. We know our students, our districts, our subject matter, our resources, and any constraints we’re under. We’re the ones who will make this work,” she says.

The bell rings, and students pack up and begin leaving. Cooper again reminds them to take advantage of her class being open at lunch. Many of them have sports meets and band competition after school, which will eat into the time they have to complete the assignment. As the students leave, a tall boy named Derrick makes his way to the front. He politely thanks Cooper for today’s class. “He does that every day,” she says. “It’s really kind of nice.”

## Reading and writing in Danville

by Mike Myslinski

For reading and writing, Bay Area elementary school teacher Donna Kenyon has embraced the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project method ([readingandwritingproject.com](http://readingandwritingproject.com)). Like Common Core mandates, this creative curriculum emphasizes deep reading and analysis, and writing about real-life experiences.

“It’s important not to simply add this initiative to a host of others, but instead to harness the parts of the Common Core that will help you raise student achievement, so regardless of what happens at the state level, your school and district glean the best out of these standards.”

Sure, she admits, the new standards challenge her fifth-grade students at John Baldwin Elementary in the San Ramon Valley Unified School District, where she has taught for a dozen years. The amount of informational text kids are expected to read throughout their day increased from 30 to 50 percent.

“That’s a big change for everybody,” she says. But responsibility for students’ literacy development is expected to be shared across all content areas, not just English language arts.

“Yes, we could study and learn about specific characters in particular books, such as Karana in *Island of the Blue Dolphins*. Instead, we teach strategies to learn about characters in general, so that our students can apply those strategies to all books.”

On any given day during a reader’s workshop on campus, you will see students sitting in beanbag chairs, at their desks or on the carpet, all reading different books at their just-right level and working to apply newly learned reading strategies.

In Danville, Kenyon sees the Common Core, and her reading and writing curriculum, as preparing kids to think critically, for a better future.

“We teach independence,” she says. “We don’t teach books.”

## Literacy in Moreno Valley

By Bill Guy

The shifts in literacy in Common Core across all curricula can prepare students to build knowledge and literacy in the disciplines, closely read complex text, provide text-based answers and evidence, write from sources and with evidence, and use academic vocabulary and digital literacy.



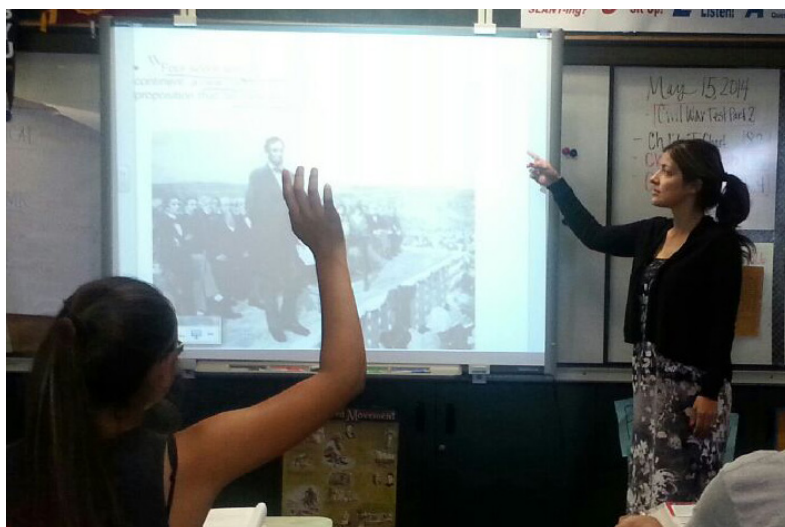
*“We don’t teach books,” says Donna Kenyon in Danville. “We teach independence.”*

Social studies/AVID teacher Ana Pantoja at Badger Springs Middle School says she uses the following four Common Core strategies in her classroom: marking and citing the text, primary source and secondary source analysis, writing informative/explanatory texts (summaries), and analysis of visual information.

Marking the text is an excellent strategy for close reading of a complex text. A nonfiction article, primary or secondary source may be used. Some of the primary sources she uses are excerpts of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, speeches and diaries. Students follow

as the teacher models the expectations: Number the paragraphs; circle key terms, names of people, places and dates; underline an author’s claims; and underline relevant information.

Pantoja says it’s imperative for the close reading of any text that a critical reading process is employed: pre-reading, interacting with the text, and extending beyond the text, with students given an objective and essential question for focused note-taking during the close reading. Students may be given a specific writing prompt to respond to using the text, or write summaries that state what



*Social studies teacher Ana Pantoja uses Common Core strategies to teach literacy.*



the reading is about, describe what the author is doing, and account for key terms and ideas. Students cite the text by including the paragraph and page numbers to support their responses.

When analyzing primary sources like the Declaration of Independence, Lincoln's first and second inaugural addresses, and the Gettysburg Address, students critically read as a class first, then with a partner, and finally independently. Next, students interact with the text by answering a series of questions: For what purpose was the source created? What question is left unanswered by the primary source? Type of source? What can be learned from this source? For what audience is it intended?

When analyzing visual information such as pictures, photos, charts, graphs and videos (with other information in print), students are asked to distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment. For example, when analyzing photographs related to the Bill of Rights, students must identify which amendment and what right is being represented in the photo, and justify their response with an explanation that uses textual evidence.

"Overall, my students have adapted rather well to the Common Core shift, as we move toward the ultimate goal: college and career readiness for all," Pantoja says.

## **Math in Roseville**

By *Dina Martin*

The new Common Core curriculum is a challenge, to be sure, but as a veteran 14-year teacher in Roseville, Rhonda White is always up for new challenges.

Not only did she participate in a three-year Common Core math training program offered through the Placer County Office of Education, she is involved in CTA's Teacher Leadership Cohort. Funded through a \$40,000 NEA grant and facilitated by CTA's Instruction and Professional Development Department, the program helps members become advocates in improving instruction and professional practices. And if that isn't enough, she is president of the Dry Creek Teachers Association.

White's specialized training culminated last year, and she is now piloting the curriculum in her fifth-grade class. She recently field-tested her students in the Smarter Balanced assessments, although she already had a pretty good idea of how they are doing.

"I'm sure everyone's scores will go down. I think that's expected," she says. "I think the greatest challenge in the curriculum is that everything is a word problem. For kids who aren't readers, this is going to be an issue."

Nevertheless, White is hopeful that the students will benefit from the new approach. For one thing, she thinks the math concepts are more practical under Common Core.

"These are real-world applications, and this is material they will use in real life," she says.

Math lessons were much more prescriptive in the years prior to Common Core. For example, White says, she might formerly only teach conversion and expect students to answer with specific responses. Under the Common Core State Standards, she might ask her students to write comparisons of the metric and customary systems of measurement or look for repeated patterns in each system. She creates the lesson with an end goal, and works backward from there.

Many of her students are rising to the challenge of a new curriculum.

"We do a lot more explaining why we got our answers and how we got our answers in the new math," says one student.

So far, White says, the students seem to be enjoying the discussion that ensues in class around problem solving. While that's been positive, White is concerned about the students' ability to stay with it.

"It takes endurance. Some students are not used to having a sustained interest in something, so we must constantly remind them not to give up."

Still, the new curriculum is a welcome change from some of the "drill-and-kill worksheets" of a few years ago. White says this a major shift in the way educators are teaching and assessing mathematical knowledge and application. During the three-year training period, White and her colleagues were themselves given "horrible problems" to work out as an exercise. She says the teachers were urged to keep trying, to try something else, and were then asked, "What helped you get through this?"

In the end, she says, it helped the participating teachers understand what their students might go through.

The new approach might be considered philosophical as well as mathematical. White believes there may be less material for teachers to get through during the year. The overarching goal is that students discover math for themselves. ■



*"These are real-world applications, and this is material they will use in real life," says Rhonda White.*

*At a PTA meeting, **Cristina Fiori** explains to parents that students learn to solve math problems in multiple ways under Common Core.*



# Talking to parents

about Common Core and more

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin

**LIKE MOST PARENTS**, Johanna Haag had lots of questions about how the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) would affect her daughter, a fifth-grader at New Traditions Elementary School in San Francisco.

“I had a lot of concerns. I had read some negative press. I wanted to know what was really going on. My biggest question was what the Common Core would look like in my daughter’s classroom.”

She went to a PTA meeting packed with parents, where United Educators of San Francisco members provided some answers. But first, parents filled out a survey, so teachers could address specific concerns.

Fifth-grade teacher Molly Jo Alaimo and third-grade teacher Cristina Fiori explained that many teachers have already implemented CCSS into instruction. They told parents that school staff believe in the new standards because they encourage children to be critical thinkers, write well and prove their work instead of just showing right answers.

They also gave some examples of how they would teach certain lessons. For example, Alaimo explained how her students recently read a fact-filled piece of nonfiction, came up with questions based on the facts, and then answered their own questions, which led to students defending their personal opinions on whether the government should raise the debt ceiling. Parents in the audience were amazed to think their youngsters could be thinking about such a weighty subject.

*Molly Jo Alaimo tells parents the Common Core standards encourage critical thinking.*



Fiori explained that instead of just teaching her students one math equation, students learned how to solve problems in multiple ways, using manipulatives, drawing pictures, and sometimes coming up with formulas on their own, deepening their understanding of math concepts.

The presentation allayed Haag’s concern that cursive would be eliminated and students would only be working

on computers. Teachers explained that California's version of the Common Core includes cursive.

"Most parents walked away from that meeting feeling pretty good about the standards," Haag says.

When it comes to informing parents about the Common Core, Alaimo and Fiori say it helps to be as transparent as possible, offer real-life examples and compare how something would be taught under the old standards and under the new ones.

And it might be helpful to tell parents about the resources offered by the California State PTA.



"I had read some negative press. I wanted to know what was really going on. My biggest question was what the Common Core would look like in my daughter's classroom."

— Parent Johanna Haag

"The PTA supports the new standards because we believe they provide a road map for student learning and help ensure that our students have the knowledge and skills they need to engage in complex work and learning environments," says President Colleen A.R. You. "We believe the new standards help define not just for our kids, but for our parents, what students should take away from schooling so they can be prepared for college and careers. The Common Core State Standards set high expectations for students, and we believe they represent powerful and positive reform in our educational system."

She encourages teachers to have meaningful conversations with parents about CCSS at back to school nights, parent conferences and open houses, and to steer parents to the California PTA website, [www.capta.org](http://www.capta.org), which has broken down standards in easy-to-understand language according to grade level. ■

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MB1013-SEV-AD-CTA



*They train hard, they bring pride to their schools, they win competitions. Cheerleaders are athletes and cheerleading is a sport, say CTA members.*

*Time to treat cheerleading like a real sport?*

# Bring it on!

*By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin*



NFL cheerleaders recently accused the Oakland Raiders of paying them less than minimum wage and not paying for their expenses. The two cheerleaders who filed the class-action lawsuit complained to the media that cheerleaders are shown little respect.

Some cheerleading coaches think that what's happening at the professional level can be traced to high school practices. They say it's time for schools to give cheerleaders the respect they deserve — and time to treat cheerleading like a *real* sport.

So has the time come to fight, *fight*, FIGHT?

Some CTA members, in the words of the popular cheer movie, say yes, *bring it on!*



## Sparkles team allows everyone chance to shine

**WHEN IT COMES** to boosting the confidence of students with special needs, the Sparkles program at Westlake High School gives everyone something to cheer about.

Twice weekly, the school's varsity cheerleaders help students with disabilities practice cheers, under the supervision of special education teachers Lauren Iezza and Kacey Kalsman, Unified Association of Conejo Teachers. Students with special

needs on the Sparkles team have their own uniforms and recently performed at their first school rally to enthusiastic applause.

The Sparkles program brings joy and a sense of community to her students, says Iezza.

"The kids walk by other students in the hallways high-fiving now. My students and the cheerleaders are



Lauren Iezza

learning and growing from each other."

"Our kids feel like celebrities now," adds Kalsman.

The varsity cheerleaders say they benefit just as much as the students they coach.

"It has taught me patience," says Hannah Klinedinst. "Nothing comes easy for these students."

"You can be having the worst day, but when you come to Sparkles practice, it changes you to having a 100 percent positive attitude," says Jessica Moss.

Shema Deihimi, a Sparkles cheerleader and a student with special needs, says the best part has been making so many new friends.

"It makes me feel happy," she says. "It makes me feel like I'm part of the school and that I'm involved in everything. And I love the uniform. I've wanted to be a cheerleader since kindergarten. I never thought I would be. And now I am."



*People don't realize how much hard work is required or how strong cheerleaders have to be, says Kristine Durfee in Red Bluff, shown below with Megan DiDio, Ashley Samson, Kacy Samson, Chase Feusi and Kierstin Exum.*

## Cheer has changed

For decades, cheerleaders were mostly pretty, popular pep leaders. But over the years, cheerleading has become physically demanding, requiring strength, skill, and the ability to perform aerial and tumbling feats.

Does cheerleading get the respect it deserves?

*Noooo*, fumes Kristine Durfee, Red Bluff High School cheer coach.

"People don't realize how much hard work is required or how strong you have to be. It's not just about being coordinated and looking nice. You have to lift people up in the air, throw them and catch them. There's no other sport that requires that. You throw and catch them while in transition to your next formation, so it's not just catch and drop. You have to be skilled and talented to do that."

Like most teams, Durfee's cheerleaders are constantly fundraising to pay for uniforms, tumbling mats, travel and other expenses. They start practicing in summer and drill after school and on weekends. They can't afford to enter competitions, although Durfee thinks they are certainly good enough to compete.

As cheerleading has become more competitive and focused on "stunts," safety has become more of an issue, she says. Coaches, once merely "advisers," are now certified through the American Association of Cheerleading Coaches and Administrators (AACCA), an organization dedicated to cheerleading safety and education of coaches through certification programs, offered online and at coaching conventions. Previous experience as a cheerleader is helpful for coaching, but not a requirement.



## Sport vs. activity?

Cheerleading is not considered a sport, but many think it should be, including the Women's Sports Foundation and the American Association of University Women.

"I think it should be a sport," says Durfee, Red Bluff Union High School Teachers Association. "They take tumbling classes and are gymnasts. They are athletes and are required to perform like athletes. But they are not treated the same as athletes."

Desiree Turner, cheer coach at Oakland High School, agrees.

"Yes, it should definitely be a sport," says Turner, Oakland Education Association. "They practice year-round and put in as much work as a football player or basketball player. They do stunts. I require them to go to cheerleading camp so they can learn how to do it safely. We do lots of fundraising so they can go to camp."

"To me, it already is a sport," says Lily Saephan, a junior on the cheer team at Oakland High. "Anybody who says it's not — well, they need to think again."

Because cheerleading is not considered a sport, it's usually unfunded. That means bake sales, car washes and students paying out of pocket, with those in wealthier schools having parents paying for professional choreographers and consultants.

"It's tough to come up with the money at an inner-city school," says Turner.

The AACCA's position is that cheerleading does not meet the requirement of being a sport because the primary purpose is not competition, it's raising school unity at athletic functions. They opted to put cheerleading into a new, developing category known as "athletic activity."

Title IX consideration of cheerleading as a sport was nixed when the Office for Civil Rights ruled that cheerleading would not be considered as a factor when it comes to gender equity in sports.

But arguments like this don't sway Jesse Cerda, coach for the Skyhawks at Summit High School in Fontana, winners of the 2012, 2013 and 2014 USA Nationals in Anaheim.

"It should be considered a sport because of the safety factor," says Cerda, Fontana Teachers Association. "We're lucky to have support from our athletic department to provide trainers to make sure kids are safe. Due to our socioeconomic level, our kids don't have money to take private lessons. We can't afford to go to camp, so I host a camp on campus, bringing in people who are qualified to teach choreography and help with stunts."

Eileen McGrew, whose teams have won regional, state and national championships during her 22 years at Agoura High School, isn't sure whether cheerleading should be designated as a sport, noting that it is not sanctioned as such by the California Interscholastic Federation.



*Cheerleaders practice year-round and perform like athletes, but they are not treated the same as athletes, says coach Desiree Turner in Oakland.*

## Famous people who were cheerleaders



ALICIA SILVERSTONE



SALLY FIELD



MERYL STREEP



GEORGE W. BUSH



HALLE BERRY



SANDRA BULLOCK





The sport of cheerleading is supporting the athletic teams at the high school, says **Eileen McGrew** in Agoura Hills (center), whose teams have won regional, state and national championships.

“It’s progressing like any other sport,” she says. “Cheerleading is an activity, and our main purpose is supporting the athletic teams at the high school. Above and beyond that it’s also a sport. It’s a tricky situation.”

She coaches several teams, including the Crowd-leader Division first-place team at last year’s Nationals in Anaheim. Some of her teams pay extra for competitions; others only perform at school events.

Cheerleading is part of her school’s athletic department, which offers funding, unlike most schools.

“It’s something we fought for,” says McGrew, a former cheerleader who knows how to rally the fans.

## Cheerleaders are various shapes and sizes

Cheerleaders still get a bad rap for being snobby and focused on looks. That image lingers, thanks to shows like “Glee” where cheerleaders are mean.

Actually, today’s cheerleaders are much

more inclusive. They come in a variety of looks and body sizes. A few cheerleading teams even include students with special needs.

“Sometimes we are all portrayed as being stuck-up, which is a stereotype,” says Red Bluff High School cheerleader Chase Feusi. “They think we are always wearing our uniforms at school. We aren’t like that at all.”

Cheerleaders say the main benefit isn’t prestige but being part of a team and learning important life skills.

“It’s a really good bonding experience,” says Agoura High varsity cheerleader Samantha Starling. “These girls are like my second family.”

“Cheerleading helped me to get through high school,” relates Monesha Stroman of Oakland High School. “Once I started cheerleading, my grades got better.”

Her coach, Turner, adds, “Cheerleading helps girls work together because they have a goal they are striving for. It gives them confidence and self-esteem. When you see girls blossom and mature, it’s so worth it.”

Boys can be cheerleaders, too.

“There’s not many of us,” says Everett Fitzpatrick, Agoura High junior varsity. “But we’re awesome.” ■



“Cheerleading should be considered a sport because of the safety factor,” says **Jesse Cerda** in Fontana. “We’re lucky our athletic department provides trainers to make sure our kids are safe.”

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# CTA & You

Member-driven actions, conferences, benefits and all things CTA



While most CTA members are celebrating the Fourth of July, delegates to the annual NEA Representative Assembly will be meeting in Denver.

KATIE YOUNG, MODESTO TEACHERS ASSOCIATION, AND OTHER MEMBERS OF CALIFORNIA'S DELEGATION ARE SHOWN ATTENDING LAST YEAR'S RA. READ ABOUT THIS YEAR'S RA AND OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS ON PAGE 58.

# California Casualty lowers rates for CTA members

**THERE ARE MANY** benefits to membership in the California Teachers Association and National Education Association. One of the most popular member benefits is California Casualty's automobile and homeowners (and renters) insurance. California Casualty recently announced a program improvement for policies in California that is making many members happy.

RoseAnn Hernandez, Southwest Teachers Association, loves California Casualty. She's been insured with the company for over 20 years. "When I had a claim, they were prompt and professional. I recommend California Casualty to all my co-workers."



Ginger Hunt

RoseAnn and other CTA members will now have something new to cheer about. California Casualty reduced home and renters insurance rates in California April 1. Most CTA members can expect an average savings of 16 percent.

That's just the beginning of the savings. Those who combine their auto and home insurance can save an additional 18 percent. California Casualty instituted other premium saving options that include a dramatic discount for new homes, a discount for having no claims the past three years, a new roof discount, and a broader range of deductible choices. Yearly premiums could go down hundreds of dollars per year.

"I have no doubt these changes are going to make a huge difference to our customers and their families," says California Casualty President Joe Volponi. He adds that reducing home and renters insurance rates is "such an important issue, especially since it potentially affects all California residents."

Ginger Hunt, Fullerton Elementary Teachers Association, concurs. "I love California Casualty. I was a member of another insurer for a long time, but California Casualty saved me about \$300 per year. Yay!"

That sentiment is echoed by Brandee Barnaby, Tustin Education Association. She said, "I've been with California Casualty (auto and home) for years. The customer service and rates can't be beat. I recommend them to all my friends."



Brandee Barnaby

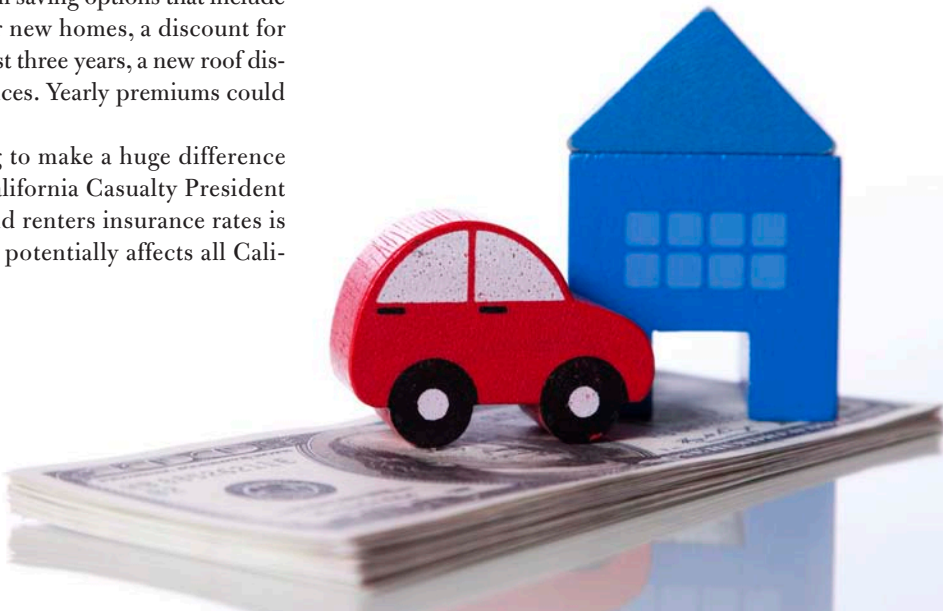
The rate reduction comes on top of already preferred rates and benefits not available to the general public, such as a waiver of your deductible for vandalism or collisions to your insured vehicle parked at the school where you work, free ID Defense with each policy, and E-Z Pay options.

California Casualty protects heroes, like educators, who work hard to protect and enhance the quality of life in their communities. They have been the provider of auto and home insurance for CTA since 1951. Now it could cost you even less to have the protection you and your family need.



RoseAnn Hernandez

Find out how much you might be saving by calling a California Casualty representative today, even if you have quoted with them before. Call 800-800-9410 or visit [www.calcas.com/CTA](http://www.calcas.com/CTA). You can also see their new ad on the back cover of this magazine. ■





# Hold a healthy meeting?



IF YOU ARE PLANNING a school or association meeting, summer outings with the family, a book club or a community event, check out the Healthy Meeting Toolkit. It offers helpful tips on serving healthier foods, contracting with a facility for a healthy conference, talking to a caterer about group meals, and integrating physical activity into meetings.

Meetings can be productive or they can be stressful. Creating a culture of health and wellness in meetings and conferences (or family events) is an important way to help people eat well and be physically active, foster healthier work environments, and cultivate social norms around healthier choices and behaviors. The toolkit is available through NEA's Health Information Network (HIN) and its partner, the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity (NANA). ■



## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE:

- Offer recommended servings of fruits, vegetables and whole grains, especially for all-day meetings.
- Place healthier foods and beverages in prominent positions, where they are most likely to be seen and more likely to be chosen.
- Post calories in worksite cafeterias and at conferences and meetings when possible.
- Provide reasonable portions of foods and beverages (i.e., avoid large portions).
- Consider not serving food at breaks that are not mealtimes; instead provide physical activity.
- Offer physical activity opportunities that are relevant to the audience and environment to help people achieve at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day.
- Provide a tobacco-free environment.
- Prioritize sustainable practices when possible, by minimizing waste, encouraging recycling, and sourcing products from sustainable producers.
- Evaluate efforts to hold healthy meetings and conferences and make adjustments over time to continue to improve the acceptability and healthfulness of choices.



## GO ONLINE

[www.neahin.org](http://www.neahin.org)  
[www.healthymeeting.org](http://www.healthymeeting.org)



# Calendar

See our upcoming events at [cta.org/calendar](http://cta.org/calendar)



## NEA Representative Assembly JULY 1-6

Colorado Convention Center, Denver

With 8,000 delegates (including more than 1,000 from California), the RA is the world's largest democratic deliberative body. CTA members will help set policy and chart the direction of NEA business. Find out more:

[www.nea.org/ra](http://www.nea.org/ra)

## JUNE 1 *Application Deadline*

### NEA Foundation Grants

The NEA Foundation awards grants to educators: Student Achievement Grants support improving academic achievement; Learning and Leadership Grants support high-quality professional development activities. Applications are reviewed three times a year.

Find out more: [neafoundation.org](http://neafoundation.org)

## JUNE 3 *Election*

### Statewide Primary Election

Make your vote count and help get out the vote. See CTA's recommendations for candidates and ballot initiatives. May 27 is the last day to request a Vote-By-Mail ballot.

Find out more: [www.cta.org/campaign](http://www.cta.org/campaign)

## JUNE 16 *Delivery Request Deadline*

### CalSTRS Retirement Progress Report going paperless

CalSTRS is changing how it delivers the annual Retirement Progress Report to its members. If you have been receiving the report by mail, it will be delivered online on myCalSTRS.com beginning this fall. If you wish to continue receiving it by mail, you must request mail delivery by June 16. Find out more:

[www.calstrs.com/retirement-progress-report](http://www.calstrs.com/retirement-progress-report)

## JULY 17-20 *Conference*

### Presidents Conference

Fairmont Hotel, San Jose

This training is geared for local chapter leaders. New presidents and Community College Association chapter presidents begin on Thursday with specially tailored training; others join them Friday for electives and workshops to enhance leadership skills.

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

## JULY 21 *Entry Deadline*

### Photo and Cartoon Caption Contests

The *Educator* is running two contests for CTA members as we head into the summer break. Take a photo of yourself holding a copy of the *Educator* at an interesting or fun location. Send us the photo and a brief description of what we're seeing. Prizes are three \$50 gift cards for school supplies.

Send us a caption for the cartoon shown on page 60. The prize is a \$150 gift card for school supplies. Email your entry with your name, local chapter, email address and phone number to [editor@cta.org](mailto:editor@cta.org).

## AUGUST 3-7 *Conference*

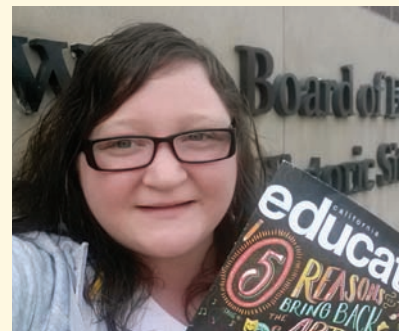
### Summer Institute

UCLA Conference Center, Los Angeles

Training for chapter leaders includes sessions in Instruction and Professional Development (focusing on Common Core), Communications, Emerging Leaders, Bargaining, School Finance, Health and Welfare Issues, Legal, and Member Benefits. Find out more:

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

## EDUCATORS ARE EVERYWHERE! PHOTO CONTEST



So, bring us along this summer, send a selfie, and win school supplies!

**ARE YOU TRAVELING** or volunteering this summer? We thought so, because educators are everywhere. We thought it might be fun to take your *Educator* along. Yes, we mean your CTA magazine.

Take a photo of yourself, with your magazine, between now and July 21. You may win school supplies!

Yes, we're offering prizes! Three \$50 gift cards for school supplies.

So...

1) Take a selfie with you and your favorite *Educator* magazine at an interesting or fun location.

2) Email your selfie and a brief description of what we're seeing, with your name, local chapter and current email address, to [editor@cta.org](mailto:editor@cta.org).

This is Casey Menzel holding the *Educator* at the *Brown v. Board of Education* National Historic Site in Topeka, Kansas. (The site is the former Montgomery Elementary School, one of the schools named in the landmark U.S. Supreme Court desegregation decision.)

Entries will be accepted through July 21, 2014. All entries submitted will be reviewed. Committee members will consider creativity, location, distance, celebrity sightings, etc.

Have fun on your summer travels.



## Common Core and summer learning

Come with questions, leave with answers!

**NO MATTER THE TOPIC** or the grade configuration of your school or your role, you'll find outstanding workshops at CTA's conferences. Go to [www.cta.org/conferences](http://www.cta.org/conferences) for details on summer offerings.

### **CTA's Summer Institute is Aug. 3-7 at UCLA**

Summer Institute offers nine strands with tracks of instruction that span the entire week (Sunday to Thursday) and two that are two and a half days. Sessions include Communications, Instruction and Professional Development (IPD), Emerging Leaders, Bargaining, School Finance, Health and Welfare Issues, Legal Issues, and Member Benefits.

### **The IPD Strand: Focus on Common Core**

District administrators, curriculum coordinators and other educators are invited to attend the IPD Strand, which centers on the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the accompanying new state assessment system, California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP).

### **Participants will:**

- Find new ideas to enhance instructional strategies for the CCSS.
- Distinguish the difference between coherence in standards and instruction.
- Examine the six item types that will be used to measure the CCSS.
- Learn about Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) for interim and summative assessments.
- Learn how to use formative assessments for student learning.

### **Keynote speakers and topics include:**

- **Dr. Bobb Darnell**, Achievement Strategies — "Match Curriculum to the Common Core State Standards."
- **Cathleen Richardson**, Apple Distinguished Educator — "Technology to Support Curriculum and Instruction."
- **Dr. W. James Popham**, Technical Advisory Committee, Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium — "Smarter Balanced Assessment and Formative Assessment for Instruction."

Selected sessions will be simulcast live on the Web and archived at [www.cta.org/ipd](http://www.cta.org/ipd).



### **Gifted and Talented Education Certificate**

UCSD Extension's Specialized Certificate in Gifted and Talented Education offers training for educators who want to teach and develop programs for gifted and talented students. The program meets training requirements for educators, counselors, psychologists, administrators, and others responsible for GATE (Gifted and Talented Education) program services.

The online program is designed for those new to gifted education and for experienced educators.

The GATE Certificate is:

- **100% online**
- Offers a comprehensive examination of characteristics and identification, curriculum differentiation, teaching strategies, and program development for gifted and talented students
- Provides resources to build challenging curriculum and innovative instructional techniques

Required Courses include:

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### **For More Information**

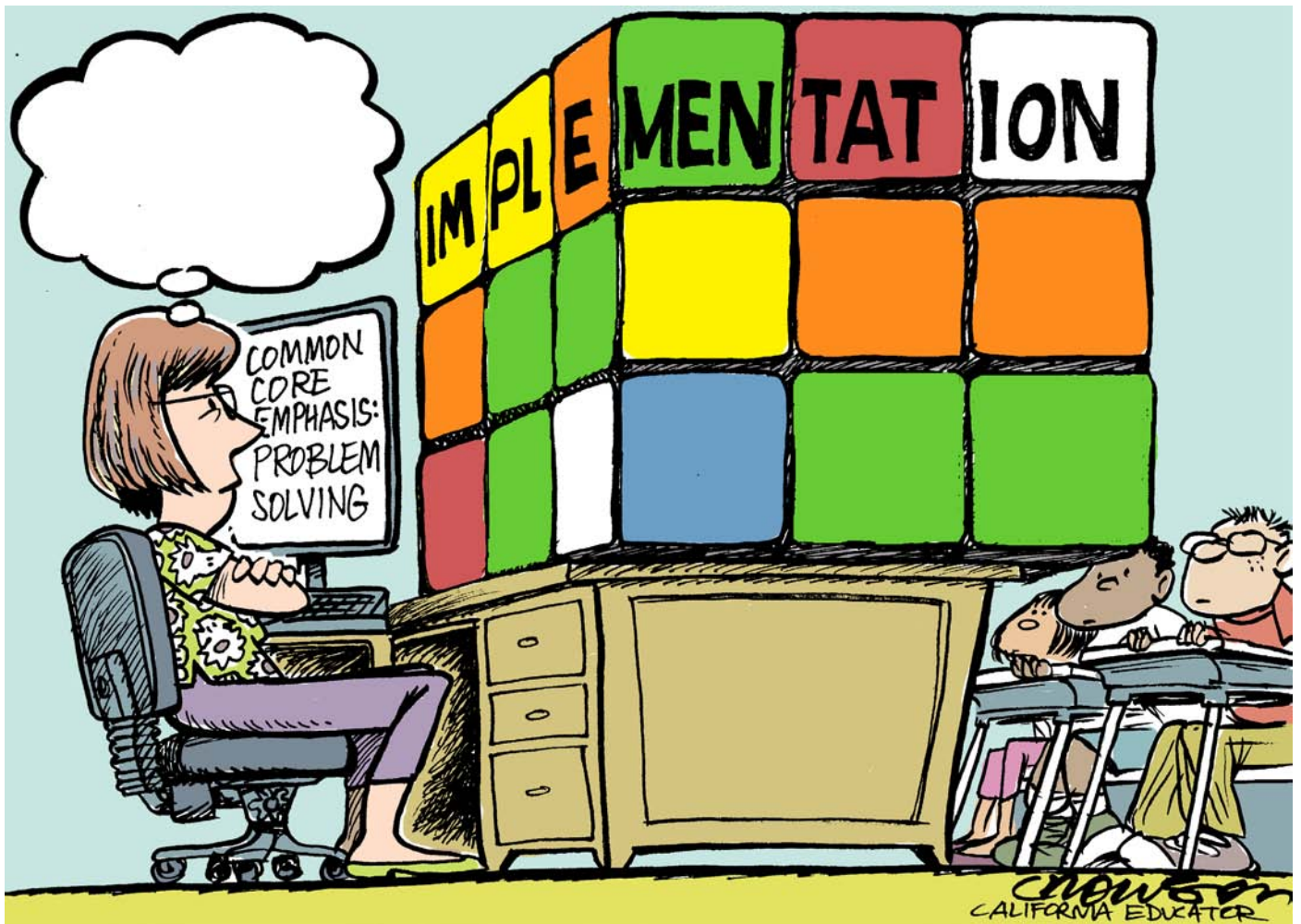
Please contact Morgan Appel, Director of Education at: (858) 534-9273 or [mappel@ucsd.edu](mailto:mappel@ucsd.edu)



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*By Richard Crowson*



*"I have recommended many a colleague to University of San Diego, Continuing Education."*

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