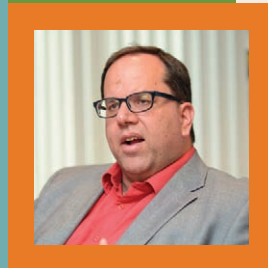


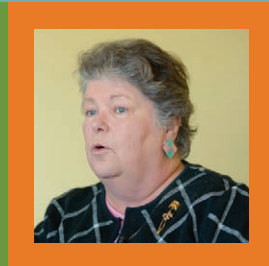
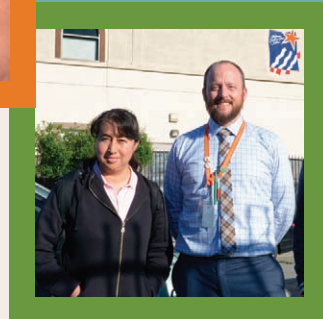
california educator

MAY/JUNE 2017 VOLUME 21 ISSUE 8



LET'S BE CLEAR ABOUT CHARTER SCHOOLS

We talked with educators and parents at both charter and traditional schools. While some charters deserve support, many shortchange students to make profits. What can we do? **PAGE 18**



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UKULELE
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RESPECT
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PLAN FOR LIFE
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PAGE 48

LYNWOOD
District of the Year
PAGE 53



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Vista

#WeAreCTA

OUR VOICE, OUR UNION, OUR PROFESSION



WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

MAGAZINE

UNITY AND PASSION

See a roundup of CTA's statewide Day of Action activities. **PAGE 38** [f](#) [t](#)
#CTADayofAction

BACKPACK FULL OF CASH

Matt Damon-narrated documentary on how privatization of education hurts students. **PAGE 42** **#backpackfullofcash**

SUMMER TRAVEL APPS

Send real postcards from your phone, use your phone's camera for instant translation, and more. **PAGE 45**

YOUR DESK: SIT OR STAND?

New standing desks offer mobility and flexibility. **PAGE 46**

PLAN FOR LIFE AFTER SCHOOL

Veteran educators should do their homework before considering retirement. **PAGE 48**

DIGITAL

DO YOU HEAR US?

NEA's "Social Justice Poets" and students speak out about their hopes for the future. [▶](#) neadjustice.org

UKULELE GETS RESPECT

Watch music teacher Lauren Bowman play with students. [▶](#) cta.org/ukeclass

THE KIDS GO NUTS

Merced fourth-graders lobby state legislators to make the almond the state's official nut. **PAGE 13** [▶](#) bit.ly/2qpwaYr

STAND UP FOR STUDENTS

Oakland parent at rally urges charter school accountability. [▶](#) bit.ly/2rEwF0v

CTA'S NEW MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Listen, read and watch, in multiple languages. **PAGE 56**



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

SUMMER INSTITUTE

Boost leadership skills, meet professional development goals at CTA's premier training workshop, July 30-Aug. 3. cta.org **#CTAS12017**

SOCIAL & RACIAL JUSTICE

Help grow the education justice movement at NEA's conference, June 28-29 in Boston. nea.org/racialsocialjustice

NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION

Teachers can start the journey by attending Jump Start!, June 26-28 in San Diego. CTA members register for free. [f](#) bit.ly/2r4COXx

MEMBER BENEFITS

SAVE ON FITNESS

Get in shape with discounts on gym membership, workout gear and home fitness. **PAGE 55**

RETIREMENT MADE EASY

Get peace of mind with CTA's Retirement Savings Plan, a 403(b) just for members. ctamemberbenefits.org/rsp

SHOPPING AND TRAVEL

Save up to 50 percent on dining, shopping, movies and theme parks, and up to 81 percent on hotels, car rentals, cruises and more. Log in to Access to Savings now. ctamemberbenefits.org/access

Above: On CTA's May 1 Statewide Day of Action, Arvin Teachers Association shows its support. For more coverage, see page 38.



FEATURE

LET'S BE CLEAR ABOUT CHARTER SCHOOLS

Some California charter schools serve their students and educators well. But corporate charters are making education a business where student learning takes a backseat to profits. Commonsense solutions can help. **PAGE 18**

- **Charter School Vignettes**, beginning on page 22
- **Follow the Money**, page 24
- **Solutions at Work**, page 31



THIS PAGE:

Left: Former charter educator Ceci Carrasco talks with a student. Right: Sweetwater Counseling & Guidance Association members on CTA's May 1 Day of Action.

COVER:

Clockwise from top left: Helix TA's Ben Stone, Celerity Dyad parent and students, CAVA teacher Brianna Carroll, UTLA's Alex Caputo-Pearl, Oakland EA's Trish Gorham, Alliance Ouchi-O'Donovan's Adalinda Avila and Dan White, Parent Voices Oakland's Clarissa Doutherd, former charter teacher Dayana Alborno.



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LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK. We accept signed email and letters (250-word limit); we excerpt user posts from CTA social media platforms. Content subject to editing for clarity and space. Photos must have identifications and permissions. Opinions expressed by the writers are not necessarily those of CTA. Editor@cta.org; [#WeAreCTA](https://twitter.com/WeAreCTA)



Libraries and Teacher Librarians

I looked at the Day of the Teacher poster on the inside back cover of the April issue. Where is the library in your depiction of the school?

Today's teacher librarians do more than merely check out books. We **teach** others how to find, evaluate, use and share information safely in our digital society. We **collaborate** with teachers. We **build** library collections. We **coach** teachers and students.

We **harmonize** between reluctant readers and bibliophiles, between library and textbook management, and between teachers who want to use us and our skills for instruction of information literacy and administrators who want to use our space for meetings and AP testing.

We **herd** library staff and student assistants. We **advocate** for our role and our space. Teacher librarians are passionate about empowering students and staff with free knowledge. We deserve a space in every California school.

WENDY MURRILL

Elk Grove Education Association

403(b) Awareness

I've seen more than a few folks at my school, and in the district, who simply don't have the time to do the research necessary to pick a good 403(b) product — and, let's not kid ourselves, some vendors don't really want to make the process easy. But after reading "The 403(b): Buyer Beware" (April), I have a better grasp of the complexities of this complicated issue and look forward to attending a pre-conference session on 403(b) plans this year. Knowledge is power. Thank you, CTA, for empowering me to make smart decisions for my future.

COREY PENROSE

Vacaville Teachers Association

Pure Advocacy

I want to express agreement with the president's message in the April edition ("We've Always Been Advocates") simply because teachers truly care about their students in all their needs. As in any profession, there are a few bad apples, but most educators view their work as a vocation.

However, I'm concerned with the constant push for a different kind of advocacy, one that advocates a leftist ideology under the guise of kindness and compassion. The social justice poster that was pictured underlines my concerns with slogans that despite being true only tend to divide races or gender ("Black Lives Matter," "Women's Rights Are Human Rights"), or are ultimately meaningless ("Kindness Is Everything," "No Human Is Illegal"), or insidiously promote an atheistic vision of the world ("Science Is Real," "Love Is Love").

As CTA President Eric Heins wrote, "All students matter and all students deserve a quality public education." We simply need to continue being student advocates as we value and affirm them without surreptitiously promoting a leftwing ideology.

JIM BRADY

Fremont Unified District Teachers Association



CONTEST: *Educators Are Everywhere*

Take your *Educator* with you when you hit the road this summer. We're looking for photos of you with your *Educator* wherever you land for vacation, research or professional development. Send us your pic and tell us what you're doing by July 25. Three winners will receive a gift card for school supplies, and we'll show them and many more in an upcoming issue. Email editor@cta.org with *Educators Are Everywhere* in the subject line, and remember to include your full name and chapter.

▲ Associated Pomona Teachers' Elsa Clark, above, visited George Washington University last summer.



CCTC Approved Reading and Literacy Added Authorization

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

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

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

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

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

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- Teaching Adult Learners Professional Certificate
- Teaching Online Certificate
- Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Professional Certificate
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For more information, please contact Morgan Appel,
Director of Education at: (858) 534-9273 or mappel@ucsd.edu

extension.ucsd.edu/education

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CTA/NEA membership dues for the fiscal year (Sept. 1, 2016, to Aug. 31, 2017) are \$843, including a \$20 refundable contribution (see cta.org/contribution for details). Up to \$18.62 of CTA annual dues is designated for CTA/ABC political activities to support state and local candidates and/or initiatives and is not deductible for income tax purposes.

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

CALIFORNIA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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MISSION STATEMENT

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

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Education Is About Kids, Not Profits

California educators are building a better state for public education. In neighborhood schools across the Golden State, we are partnering with parents to create a public education experience that is unique to the students in their community. No one knows better what students need and what works than those closest to them. But our student-centered approach isn't championed by everyone. Increasingly, where we see kids in need of a quality education, others see profits.

President Trump and Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos are promoting this corporate, for-profit agenda. Their proposed federal education budget would cut \$10.6 billion from public schools to fund a private school voucher scheme. Among the programs on the chopping block: after-school programs, arts education, loans for low-income students, class size reduction and professional development. California voters have repeatedly rejected school vouchers because of their harm to public schools and their failure to improve education for the students who receive them.

While school vouchers are a glaring example of harmful reform efforts, charter schools are a more complex issue. Originally touted as a way to foster innovation and free school communities from restrictions imposed under the Education Code, California's charter school law has actually created a system where two types of charters now exist. Some have developed and operate under the original intent and spirit of the law; others have been created for less idealistic reasons. The majority of new charter schools are purely big business. They are

organized and managed by private companies, putting profits before kids and often exploiting employees and engaging in discriminatory enrollment practices.

When done right, with educator and parent support, charter schools can work for local communities. When done wrong, they're bad for both students and educators. (See our story of student-centered charters that work and profit-centered ones that don't, page 18.)

Many charter school educators are members of CTA. Our successful efforts to organize educators in charter schools have allowed those teachers to be treated more professionally and empowered them, where necessary, to be better watchdogs against fraud and abuse. Educators in unionized charter schools say their teaching environment is more collaborative and student-centered.

In addition to organizing employees at charter school sites, CTA is working with lawmakers to ensure that charter schools are accountable, transparent and accessible. A trio of CTA-backed bills, SB 808, AB 1360 and AB 1478, would do just that.

In addition, we have seen the school privatization industry and its billionaire backers increase their involvement in politics, pouring huge amounts of money into local school board races, as well as state and national elections. The May election in Los Angeles Unified School District became the most expensive school board race in history. The deep-pocketed corporate reform industry spent nearly \$10 million (which works

"The corporate agenda for public education is dangerous."



Eric Heins speaks at a CTA May 1 Day of Action event in Oakland. Photo by Mike Myslinski

out to \$144 per vote) to successfully elect their candidates. They outspent a coalition of educators, parents and working families by 2-to-1. This is deeply troubling; that money was spent for a reason. Wealthy corporate reformers like Eli Broad have vowed to put 50 percent of Los Angeles students into privately run charters, and now they have a school board that can help them get it done. United Teachers Los Angeles, with CTA support, will continue to fight that effort, which would devastate the school district and its students.

The corporate agenda for public education is dangerous. Unfortunately, it is very well funded and has advocates in places as high as the White House. But I am confident that in the long run, their money and power will be no match for the commitment and solidarity of 325,000 CTA members, along with parents and community members, who will continue to push back and defend public education from attacks so that all California students get the quality education they deserve.

Eric C. Heins
CTA PRESIDENT
[@ericheins](#)



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Teacher Passion — and Power

Teacher passion is a powerful thing. Educators' innovative ideas and drive to share them expand young minds and can inspire even greater creativity and learning. It's what CTA's Institute for Teaching (IFT) calls "strength-based teacher-driven change."

Since 2008, IFT has been building on teacher passion with its grant program that funds educators' instructional projects. The grants have helped launch everything from middle school girls constructing a full-size, fully functioning R2 droid to an elementary school expanding on its student newspaper with live interviewing and video production across multiple grade levels.

Others are noticing what's happening. *Education Week's* Charles Taylor Kerchner recently wrote of the program: "Want more innovative teaching? I know the secret sauce. Find teachers who already innovate, get out of their way, give them a little money, and invite them to share the results with other teachers."

As we point out in "**IFT Sees Big Jump in Interest**" (page 10), applications for IFT grants have skyrocketed, underscoring what we already know: Educators don't lack for great ideas and vision to execute them.

Take, for example, how so many of you seized the moment on CTA's May 1 state-wide Day of Action (see "**A Day of Action**

Beth Micari, with scissors, celebrates a new garden.

She won a 2016-17 IFT Impact Grant that helps Kaweah High School students gain hands-on experience in the nursery and floral industries.

The Exeter Teachers Association member was recently named California Continuation Education Association State Teacher of the Year.



and Unity," page 38). Educators demonstrated their commitment not only to high-level teaching, but to quality public schools that are safe places for all students to learn and grow. The walk-ins, marches, rallies and protests on that day gave notice to those who would undermine and defund public schools.

They include corporate charter schools, as our cover story "**Let's Be Clear About Charter Schools**" (page 18) explains. While some charter schools are student-centered and deserve support, others take taxpayer dollars for their own gain, failing both students and educators. The lack of accountability and transparency has led to criminal investigation of charter management organizations, including Celerity Educational Group and Tri-Valley Learning Corporation. **Legislation** to hold charters to the same standards as traditional schools is important to support (page 33).

On a more positive note, student-centered themes run throughout CTA's new media campaign on TV and radio, online, and in social media ("**Welcoming Walls**," page 56). Featuring CTA members, the campaign reminds everyone of the value of public education. TV ads highlight public schools' central roles in communities, welcoming all and bringing us all together. Radio spots focus on the pledge

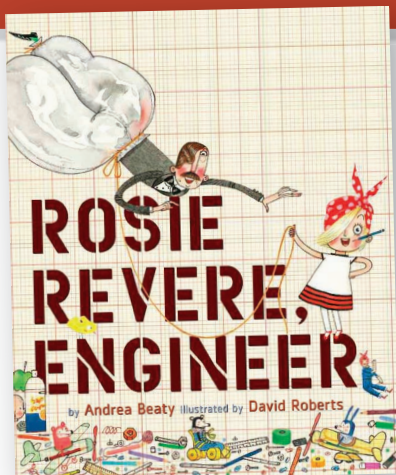
that educators live by, advocating for students through such essentials as smaller class sizes, a well-rounded education, and a belief that all can succeed.

Lynwood educators did just that, as "**District of the Year**" (page 53) shows. In a remarkable achievement, teacher passion and investment in mostly minority and immigrant students in an area of high poverty and high crime led to Lynwood Unified School District being named 2017 College Board Advanced Placement District of the Year.

And suddenly, it's summer. Our veteran educators should not miss "**When Is It Time to Retire?**" (page 48), with tips on planning life after school. Others of you are set to travel, relax at home or hone your professional skills. Maybe you'll want to learn something new — and Lauren Bowman would recommend the ukulele. We're sure you'll agree after reading our Member Spotlight, "**The Ukulele Gets Respect**" (page 15).

Katharine Fong

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THOUGHTFUL READS

↓ Time for Pride

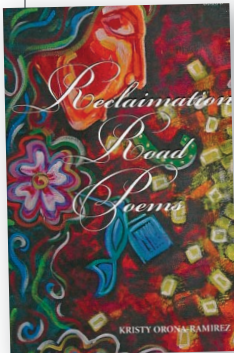


This year, even more than usual, LGBTQ+ and other students have been bullied and threatened in our schools and communities.

USE LGBT PRIDE MONTH in June to talk about the impact that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning people and groups have had on history and culture all over the world. This will build awareness and empathy, and help LGBTQ+ students feel safer and more affirmed. All students will benefit from a better understanding of history and the groups within their community.

Include positive representations of LGBTQ+ themes and history in class curriculum, available from GLSEN (glsen.org) and the Anti-Defamation League (adl.org). The American Library Association's listing of LGBTQ-inclusive texts, called The Rainbow Book List, is at glbtrt.ala.org/rainbowbooks.

PROBLEM-SOLVING, creative thinking and resiliency are big parts of *Rosie Revere, Engineer* (grades 1-2), by Andrea Beaty and illustrated by David Roberts. Rosie is a quiet kid by day and brilliant inventor by night. She builds a flying contraption to help her great-great-aunt Rosie the Riveter realize her dream, but feels like a failure when it doesn't work. Her aunt insists that Rosie's invention was a big success. You can only truly fail, she explains, if you quit.



An overweight kid who sells ties to help bring in money to the family, a tall girl who speaks her mind, a gay middle schooler, and a boy branded as a troublemaker are the heroes of *The Misfits* (grades 6-8), the first book in a series by James Howe. They're taunted, demeaned and labeled by schoolmates, but at least they have one another. The misfits end up surviving seventh grade and learn to see themselves as the full, complicated human beings they are.

In *Reclamation Road Poems* (grades 9-12), author Kristy Orona (formerly Orona-Ramirez) explores through poetry her journey of self-discovery as a young, urban American Indian woman. Orona is an Alvorad Educators Association member and CTA liaison with the California Association of Teachers of English.

For other 2016-17 books recommended by California Reads, see cta.org/californiareads. #californiareads.



Boost Your Skills at CTA's Summer Institute

WANT TO COMMUNICATE — online, on TV and on point — like a pro? Need to engage members on a deeper level, or master best instructional practices?

Concurrent strands at CTA's premier training workshop, July 30–Aug. 3 at UCLA's Conference Center, help you boost your leadership skills and meet your professional development goals. They include: Communications, Community Engagement, Instruction and Professional Development (focusing on social-emotional learning and



continuous improvement), Legal, Member Benefits, and Negotiations and Organizational Development (tracks: Emerging Leaders, Essential Bargaining Skills, Advanced Bargaining Skills, School Finance, and Economic Justice).

For details and to register, see cta.org. #CTASI2017.

HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS HEROES

The theme of NEA's 2017 Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner is "Living the Legacy: After 50 Years, Still We Rise," in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the awards. Two Californians are among this year's honorees, who will be feted at a gala dinner in Boston on July 1. For more information, see nea.org/grants/HCR Awards.html.



CTA Board member **MARTY MEEDEN** (Leo Reano Memorial Award), an educator for 33 years, has worked for equal educational opportunity and rights for all marginalized students and educators throughout his life. He has fought to eliminate Native mascots, correct inaccurate curricula, and debunk other misrepresentations of Native Americans and Alaska

Natives in our academic culture. In addition to serving as chair of the NEA American Indian/Alaska Native Caucus, he has served as co-chair of CTA State Council's Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee, chair of its American Indian/Alaska Native Caucus, and chair of CTA's Ethnic Minority Early Identification and Development program.

KENT WONG (Ellison S. Onizuka Memorial Award) has served as director of the UCLA Labor Center, a resource for workers' rights and economic justice, for the past 25 years. An attorney, activist and educator, Wong has dedicated his life to the labor movement. He was founding president of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO, the first national organization of Asian American union members and workers. He has also been at the forefront of immigrant rights. CTA has worked with Wong on multiple projects, including with Dreamers, hosting and visiting teacher unions in China and other countries, and summer union work with students. Wong is a vice president of the California Federation of Teachers.



NEA FOUNDATION GRANTS

JUNE 1 APPLICATION DEADLINE

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

ISTE 2017 CONFERENCE & EXPO

JUNE 25-28 CONFERENCE

San Antonio, Texas. The International Society for Technology in Education is a nonprofit organization that advocates for education technology. More than 15,000 educators will attend the annual conference, which offers hundreds of professional development opportunities and edtech exhibits.

► conference.iste.org/2017

NEA CONFERENCE ON RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

JUNE 28-29 CONFERENCE

Boston, Massachusetts. "Growing the Education Justice Movement." This conference (formerly the Joint Conference on the Concerns of Minorities and Women) provides a unique space for education stakeholders to engage on issues that impact educational opportunities for communities of color, LGBTQ+ and women. ► nea.org/racialsocialjustice

NEA REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY

JUNE 30-JULY 5 CONVENTION

Boston, Massachusetts. With 8,000 delegates (including about 900 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. ► ctago.org

PRESIDENTS CONFERENCE

JULY 20-23 CONFERENCE

Fairmont Hotel, San Jose. This training is geared for local chapter leaders. New and second-year presidents and new community college chapter presidents begin on Thursday with specially tailored core training; others join them Friday for electives and workshops to enhance leadership skills. ► ctago.org

SUMMER INSTITUTE

JULY 30-AUG. 3 CONFERENCE

UCLA Conference Center, Los Angeles. CTA's premier training workshop offers 10 concurrent programs that will prepare you to accomplish your leadership role in your chapter and meet your professional development goals. ► ctago.org



Students at Willows Intermediate School with their custom canoe paddles used for teacher Bill Shively's canoe adventure program, funded by IFT.

IFT SEES BIG JUMP IN INTEREST

A record 129 CTA members applied for grants from CTA's Institute for Teaching (IFT) for the 2017-18 school year — the largest number of applications in the eight years of the program and an increase of 31 percent over last year's total.

The grants, which include Educator Grants up to \$5,000 and Impact Grants up to \$20,000, fund teachers' innovative instructional projects that need a monetary boost to launch.

Two-time grant recipient Bill Shively, a math teacher at Willows Intermediate School north of Sacramento, takes students on overnight canoeing trips to develop their self-regulation skills. "Outdoor experience promotes peer relations, identity, belonging, competence and autonomy, all of which are foundational to their emotional intelligence," he says.

Student, parent and community enthusiasm has allowed Shively's program to be written into the school district's LCAP, with a small amount of funding provided.

Other IFT projects have received LCAP support, and have had a similar impact on students and schools. "IFT has been so impressed with the creativity and passion of our members," says Dick Gale, IFT manager and program director. "Their determination to discover strength-based solutions for their students has enabled the program to make a positive difference in many local school communities."

IFT grants are funded by voluntary dues contributions from CTA members. All members are eligible to apply for a grant. Learn more at teacherdrivenchange.org. Join the conversation at [#CTAIFT](https://twitter.com/CTAIFT).



Love Your ESP

Cindi Lunsford from Mariposa School of Global Education holds up CTA's 2017 ESP Day poster. Lunsford is a special education paraprofessional and secretary of the Las Virgenes Classified Association (and serves on LVCA's negotiating team). On the support CTA and LVCA offer: "I like having something bigger than just me as an individual looking out for students, schools and the people who work in them."

We appreciate Lunsford and all ESP colleagues every day, not just on May 23. [#CaliforniaESP](https://twitter.com/CaliforniaESP).

Steele Canyon Speaks Up

Steele Canyon High School, a charter school in Spring Valley, San Diego County, received an award in March for its efforts to encourage teens to speak up when they recognize signs of an individual who may be a threat.

The Best Overall School Award was presented by the nonprofit group Sandy Hook Promise for the school's participation during "Say Something Call to Action Week," an annual event that stresses prevention of violence and bullying before they happen. Students created posters, produced videos, and made wristbands that read "Say something," among other activities.

Sandy Hook Promise was co-founded by Nicole Hockley, whose son was killed in the 2012 school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut. Hockley presented Steele Canyon with the award and a check for \$2,500.

Join the conversation at [#SaySomething](https://twitter.com/SaySomething).





The St. Hope organizing committee and SCTA executive committee, from left: Alan Hill, Bob Priestley, Larry Hopper, David Fisher, Nikki Milevsky, Michelle Hanley, John Tran, Mike Lorente, Cindee Stewart, Kingsley Melton, Laura Shirley, Angelia Brye-Jones, Chesshuwa Beckett and Hasan McWhorter.

ST. HOPE EDUCATORS DEMAND A VOICE

In early May, a majority of educators at St. Hope Public Schools in Sacramento signed a petition asking to join the Sacramento City Teachers Association. The St. Hope charter school system was founded by former Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson; his wife, former chancellor of public schools in Washington, D.C., and controversial education “reform” advocate Michelle Rhee, is chair of its board of directors.

Kingsley Melton, a law and public service educator at Sacramento High School (one of the five St. Hope schools), and his fellow educators are concerned about lack of transparency at St. Hope regarding school finances, recruitment and retention of educators and staff, professional development, and policies.

“To deliver on the vision of great public schools at St. Hope, teachers and educators need a seat at the table when decisions are made that affect us and affect our students,” Melton says.

The petition is now with the state Public Employment Relations Board (PERB). The union is expected to be certified by PERB before the end of May.

Educator Excellence

RON KUNNEN, a member of the Stanislaus Association of Certificated Personnel, has been named the 2017 Teacher of the Year for the Juvenile Court, Community and Alternative School Administrators of California.

Kunnen teaches construction trades at the Stanislaus Military Academy in Turlock. His classes have worked with Habitat for Humanity on home construction projects, built more than 30 free community “little libraries,” and constructed tables and benches for the Stanislaus County Office of Education outdoor education program, Foot-hill Horizons.



JESSICA VILLANUEVA, Fairfield-Suisun Unified Teachers Association, and **KATHERINE SHAW**, Bellflower Teachers Association, are winners of the 2016-17 Milken Educator Award, which celebrates and empowers outstanding educators.

Villanueva, a Suisun Elementary second-grade teacher, was recognized for her work maximizing the impact of technology in her classroom. By using Google Slides for presentations and iMovie for book trailers promoting their favorite stories, her students learn research skills, collaborate with their peers, and hone their public speaking skills.

Shaw, a kindergarten teacher at Washington Elementary in Bellflower, is known for her classroom energy — she is constantly in motion, engaging with her students, and shapes her approach to accommodate a variety of learning needs. She has a high number of English learners and often uses student backgrounds to personalize lessons.

Villanueva and Shaw are among 33 educators nationwide who received the 2016-17 award, now in its 30th year. The honor comes with an unrestricted \$25,000 cash prize.

Photos courtesy Milken Family Foundation



Quotes & Numbers

Compiled by **Mike Myslinski**



“As teachers, we know that our diversity makes us stronger. We see it play out every day in our classrooms and on the playgrounds, and that’s why we celebrate, embrace and protect it.”

—CTA President **ERIC HEINS**, in his commentary published in EdSource to celebrate California Day of the Teacher, May 10.

“The billionaires bought this election by spending more than has ever been spent in a school board race in U.S. history, more than big-city mayor races, and more than most U.S. Senate races. Like Donald Trump and Betsy DeVos, they want privatized, unregulated schools that don’t serve all kids.”

—United Teachers Los Angeles President **ALEX CAPUTO-PEARL**, in a press statement after the May 16 LA Unified school board election where pro-charter candidates defeated union-backed Steve Zimmer and Imelda Padilla.

“After the first episode, I couldn’t get through the rest of the series. They had altered characters [from the novel] so much that it didn’t feel like the same themes were being presented. We ended up watching the first episode in class to critique it, and a lot of my students who had read the book didn’t care for it.”

—Analy High School English teacher **ELIZABETH DEICHLER**, West Sonoma County Teachers Association, whose campus is where the Netflix TV series *13 Reasons Why* was largely filmed, quoted in a May 10 *Los Angeles Times* story about the reactions and concerns of educators nationwide. The series is about a 17-year-old girl who commits suicide and leaves behind 13 audiotapes explaining what led her to take her life.

“We ask all Californians and the Burbank community to join us in pledging their support for a strong, inclusive, safe, adequately funded and innovative public education system.”

—Burbank Teachers Association President **DIANA ABASTA**, quoted in *Burbank Leader* coverage of a BTA press event on the May 1 CTA Day of Action.

“Two Countries, One Community.”

—Message on signs carried by Calexico educators, students and parents at a dramatic May 1 CTA Day of Action unity event at the nearby Mexican border wall.

\$9.7 MILLION

Amount spent by billionaires and other charter school supporters to defeat two union-backed candidates, Steve Zimmer and Imelda Padilla, in the May 16 Los Angeles Unified school board election, according to a May 21 analysis by the *Los Angeles Times*. Unions were outspent nearly 2-to-1.

\$1.3 TRILLION

Total amount of student debt in the U.S., more than double what it was in 2008, according to a May 21 *New York Times* editorial about how the debt is hurting families and the economy.

\$1.2 MILLION

Median price of a home in San Francisco in April, the *San Jose Mercury News* reported May 21.

\$65,000

Salary of a homeless, 35-year-old San Francisco Unified math teacher who struggles with soaring housing costs and was profiled May 9 in the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

60%

Percentage of charter school teachers in Sacramento City Unified School District who are unionized and part of the Sacramento City Teachers Association (SCTA). Educators at Sacramento’s St. Hope charter schools — whose board is chaired by anti-union activist Michelle Rhee — are the latest to petition to join SCTA, *USA Today* reported May 3.

By @samdemuro

GLOSSARY

Finsta: "Fake" Instagram account, used for a closed group, such as a soccer team or select friends.

Rinsta: "Real" Instagram account, carefully curated for public consumption. (Many teens say their finsta is much more authentic than their rinsta.)

Adulting: Attempt to grow up and be mature, such as "I cleaned my room!" **#adulting** or "I had ice cream for dinner **#adultingfail**"

TFW: That feeling when.

GOAT: Greatest of all time.

Fam: Usually closest friends.

I'm weak: That was hilarious.

Low key: Quietly, not for everyone to know.

Squad: Crew, group of friends.

TBH: To be honest.

Jayson Chang (@changtheworld), East Side Teachers Association, shows why he took the pledge.



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FOURTH-GRADE CLASS GOES NUTS

In early May, a Merced fourth-grade class lobbied state legislators to make the almond the "Official State Nut." Led by teacher Marc Medefind, Merced City Teachers Association, the 25 students from Margaret Sheehy Elementary testified before the Assembly Committee on Governmental Organization about the almond's history, economic value, agricultural importance and health benefits. Assembly Member Adam Gray (D-Merced) supported the idea and sponsored the legislation as AB 1067 (now amended to include the walnut, pistachio and pecan).

Medefind said that in learning about California geography and symbols at the start of the year, his class found that California was "underrepresented because we don't have an official state nut." His students wrote letters to Gray in September; for the committee meeting, they rewrote their letters and practiced their delivery. See their persuasive testimony at bit.ly/2qpwaYr.

Educator Marc Medefind (top right, with glasses) with his fourth-grade class, a few mascots and Assembly Member Adam Gray.

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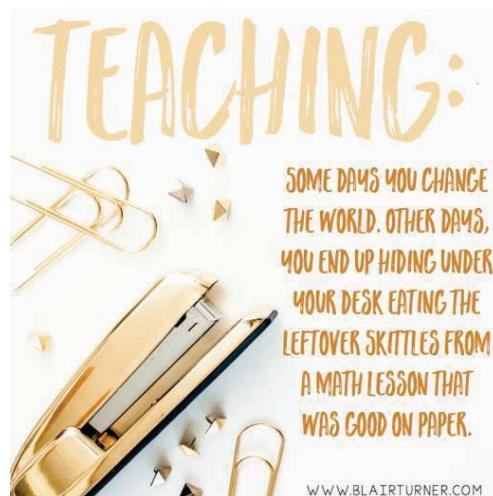
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Meme of the Month



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Lauren Bowman
in front of the
class ukuleles

Member
spotlight



In Lauren's words:

It's a great instrument because...

anyone at any age can learn to play it and master it within a short amount of time. You can play any kind of music style on it. Students this past year have learned to cover songs by Maroon 5, Twenty One Pilots, Vance Joy, Ed Sheeran, Adele, Israel "Iz" Kamakawiʻōle and Bruno Mars. Now they can cover songs independently. Ukulele is much easier on the fingers than a guitar. It's portable. You can take it anywhere. It weighs less than 2 pounds, and you can get a decent one for \$45.

Students enjoy playing because...

it's fun. Students pick up the ukulele who would never dream of playing an instrument. Students can play covers or write their own music. And those with beautiful voices can audition and accompany themselves on the ukulele.

In the future...

I'd definitely like to take some of the students to a ukulele festival in Hawaii, where ukulele classes are required in schools. We just got University of California "a-g" approval, and I'm working on a second-level ukulele class. You might say that the ukulele is finally getting the respect it deserves.

The Ukulele Gets Respect

Meet the state's only high school uke teacher

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin Photos by Scott Buschman

The ukulele is small, has just four strings, and is fairly easy to play. Neither toy nor miniature guitar, it falls somewhere in between, making it the Rodney Dangerfield of musical instruments because it doesn't get much respect.

Perhaps that's due to its name. Brought to Hawaii by Portuguese immigrants in 1879, the instrument was given its Hawaiian name meaning "jumping flea" because players' fingers jump from string to string.

For baby boomers, it evokes memories of Tiny Tim, whose unexpectedly high falsetto rendition of "Tiptoe Through the Tulips" while strumming the uke was an instant sensation, in the same way

William Hung's off-key rendition of Ricky Martin's hit "She Bangs" evoked national hilarity for millennials.

But in the skilled hands of music teacher Lauren Bowman and students at Lawndale High School, the ukulele is finally getting its due. Bowman, a Centinela Valley Secondary Teachers Association member, learned to play ukulele through the Internet 13 years ago while bedridden with a knee injury.

Now lovely strumming sounds emanate from her classroom and throughout the school at lunchtime. Students as diverse as football players, rockers, rappers, and those with special needs have taken the tiny instrument to heart. The



campus, say students, is a happier place, because it's hard to be in a bad mood with ukulele music around.

The instrument became an instant hit when Bowman brought it to commercial music class. When she began playing, so many students said "That looks fun" and "I think I could learn to play that" that she formed a club with colleague Amy Jennings. The club became so popular, she asked her associate principal if she could start a class. The administrator was so moved when a student played George Harrison's "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" on the ukulele that she suggested presenting the idea to the principal, but the principal at the time said no.

That didn't stop this plucky educator. Bowman continued to teach ukulele along



Lauren Bowman and students Maleyna Arias, Mynor Cifuentes and John Chavez. Watch them play together at cta.org/ukeclass.

with other instruments in commercial music classes, held regular concerts and advised Ukulele Club. When a new principal came on board, she asked again. The administrator, a huge supporter of music, granted permission for a stand-alone course. Her class received 70 soprano

ukuleles the following year, and from donorschoose.org the school received a bass ukulele and 12 more concert ukuleles.

Today she teaches 120 students in four ukulele classes. Some of her students have even spontaneously played "Tiptoe Through the Tulips" for her. ■



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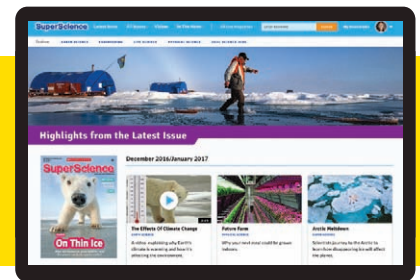
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Go High, Not Low

*An educator's job is not to blame
and shame other teachers*

By **Belinda White**



"No wonder Johnny is so low, he had _____ as a teacher last year."

Most teachers work hard. That is a given. What makes the job harder is insults from colleagues — even those not meant that way.

On any given afternoon, you are working as usual through your lunchtime at the paper cutter so you can post materials on the classroom bulletin board. A fellow teacher is in the same workroom during their lunchtime as well, working equally hard on another task.

The other educator teaches a grade one year above yours, and says, "Wow, I have a lot of your kids this school year. They're so low. But at least they're not like last year where they didn't even know how to sit in their chairs."

Would you be insulted? I was. I thought to myself, "Do you think I intentionally just let the class watch cartoons all day and daydream about Christmas?"

Of course not. I was working with my class like most teachers do. I taught them every day. I was diligent and consistent in my efforts to have the students assigned to me leave my class at a higher level than when they arrived.

My job is not to blame the previous year's teacher and accuse him or her of how low their kids are when they get to my classroom. My job is to increase their knowledge from where they are when they come to me.

**"The least we can do
as fellow educators
is stop blaming each
other and saddle up
and teach."**

I heard one teacher say to her class while passing out colored pencils, "You get what you get, don't throw a fit." This motto should be plastered in every school hallway at the beginning of each school year.

All students are not coming to our classrooms as certified geniuses. We have to teach them. We have to increase the knowledge and skills they have. Teachers should not blame and shame other teachers. Every time I hear a teacher complaining and groaning about what another teacher didn't do, I want to tell them, "You get what you get, don't throw a fit."

We are quick to pass the blame. Colleges blame high schools, high schools blame middle schools, middle schools blame elementary schools, elementary schools blame parents, and parents blame the schools and the government. Where does it end?

It doesn't. But the least we can do as fellow educators is stop blaming each other and saddle up and teach.

One of my previous superintendents, Dr. Thelma Melendez de Santa Ana, used to say often in her speeches, "No shame, no blame, no excuses." I'm with her. ■

Belinda White is a member of Associated Pomona Teachers.

LET'S BE CLEAR ABOUT CHARTER SCHOOLS

Not all charter schools are created equal — especially these days. Some are student-centered and deserve our support. Others are profit-driven and are failing our students and our state.

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin
Photos by Scott Buschman

W

hen California became the second state in the country (after Minnesota) to enact charter school legislation, it was meant to allow greater flexibility for innovation within public education.

The intent of the Charter Schools Act of 1992 was to provide opportunities for teachers, parents, students and community members to establish schools that operate independently from the existing school district structure. This flexibility would be a way to improve student learning, increase learning opportunities for all students, encourage the use of innovative teaching methods, create professional opportunities for teachers, and provide parents and pupils with expanded choices within the public school system.

Since then, charter schools have expanded in California (there are now more than 1,200, with 56 opening in 2016-17 alone), and the original intent often takes a backseat to corporate endeavors. Increasingly, charter schools are operated by large private management organizations where important decisions are frequently made without sufficient oversight, far from the school communities and students they are meant to serve.



Clarissa Doutherd, left, executive director of Parent Voices Oakland, with Kim Davis of Parents United for Public Schools in front of the recently shuttered Castlemont Primary Academy. The charter school, which shared space with Castlemont High School, closed abruptly in February, displacing nearly 100 Oakland students. "The Castlemont schools promised many things to families," Doutherd says. "But they didn't have enough money to function."



See video interviews with several parents and educators featured in this story at bit.ly/2ri7Rit.



AT A GLANCE

In the following pages, we take a closer look at charter schools in California — those that play by the rules, and those that bend them to the breaking point. And we offer some commonsense solutions to close the accountability loopholes exploited by so many corporate charters.

Charter School Vignettes

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“The original intent of the law underscored the importance of charter schools developed at the local site level and with the full participation of all stakeholders, including educators, school board members, parents, guardians and other community members,” says CTA President Eric Heins. “But corporate, for-profit companies have hijacked the system, and there is no accountability and transparency for how they spend taxpayer money.”

Charter schools are public schools funded by taxpayers, yet many do not hold themselves accountable to the standards other public schools are held to. For example, many don’t share financial records, hold open meetings, or adopt conflict-of-interest policies. Charter school boards are typically appointed, not elected, leaving a board more beholden to those in charge than those it serves.

This lack of oversight and transparency has paved the way for fraud, corruption and mistreatment of students and staff at an increasing number of charter schools, documented in multiple studies and reports. It has also led to some charters denying equal access to students.

CTA has been working on the legislative and organizing fronts to address these issues. The union has welcomed charter school educators and helped them have a voice in their schools. Approximately 250 of California’s charter schools are unionized, and CTA proudly represents more than 7,300 charter educators.

CTA knows charter school teachers, like traditional public school teachers, care deeply about their students and work hard to help them succeed. Many charter schools are locally driven, provide an excellent education and deserve our support. For example, Green Dot Public Schools California is a Los Angeles charter operator that strives to be open, equitable and inclusive.

But when student learning takes a backseat to corporate profits, CTA cannot stand idly by.

“What we are seeing as the dominant norm these days — corporate charters making education a business and profiting on the backs of our children — is just not acceptable and shouldn’t be allowed any longer in California,” says CTA Board member Terri Jackson, chair of CTA’s Organizing Task Force.



P

arents stand outside Celerity Dyad Charter School in South Los Angeles at 2 p.m. to pick up their children.

The few who are willing to be interviewed say they are pleased with the school. They say teachers do a wonderful job of going the extra mile to help students succeed.

When asked if they are worried about the future of Celerity, most are unaware that the school's operator, Celerity Educational Group, is being investigated for fraud and corruption by the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, and the U.S. Department of Education — or that their school could close, since its charter wasn't renewed. (The State Board of Education, in fact, voted to close Celerity Dyad and sister school Celerity Troika on May 11.)

A father who wishes to remain anonymous says he has read *Los Angeles Times* articles about lavish spending by Celerity management and is aware the FBI raided Celerity's LA headquarters and removed computers for its investigation.

"My wife and I worry," he admits. "We are very poor. We want our kids to have a good education so they can succeed and have a better economic situation than where they come from. It bothers me if kids are not getting what they need because someone is stealing. That's a crime. It's sad if people are taking advantage of a population where most of the people can't speak English."

Julio Rodriguez, who has two children at the school, knows that the school's charter was not renewed and that an appeal was filed. "I received a letter that said if the school closes down, it will close in name only and reopen under another name," he says. "Parents were told not to worry."

The fraud and corruption charges Celerity faces are not unusual. State regulators have uncovered more than \$81 million in fraudulent and wasteful spending at charters throughout the state, reports Kids Not Profit, a coalition of education, parent, civil rights and community organizations (including CTA) dedicated to changing the type of behavior that prompted the *Washington Post* headline "Why California's charter school sector is called 'the Wild West.'"

Nonetheless, profiteers have a "master plan" to put half of all Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) students into unregulated, privatized charter schools by 2023. (LAUSD already has more charter students — estimated at 130,000 — than any other U.S. school district.) Billionaire Eli Broad contributed half a billion dollars to the cause, with more donated from other billionaires, including the Walton family of Wal-Mart.

Numbers



In the US:

7,000
charter
schools

3,000,000
students

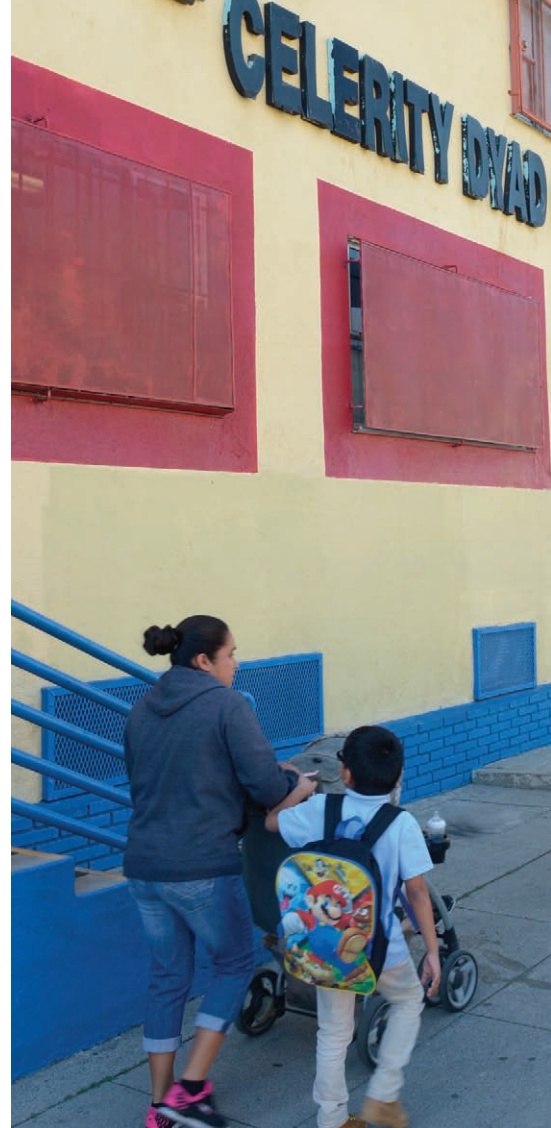


In California:

1,255
charter
schools

600,000
students

1 in 5 charter
schools in the
country is in
California.



United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) is committed to fighting the takeover. Last year 82 percent of UTLA members voted to approve a dues increase to fund the fight.

"It's an absolutely ongoing battle and multiyear struggle," says UTLA President Alex Caputo-Pearl. "Broad has an eight-year plan. We have a similarly long view."

Caputo-Pearl adds that UTLA represents more than 1,000 charter school teachers and is not fighting against them or parents whose children attend charters.

"We are fighting against deregulation and privatization of public education. We are fighting for our schools to be the best they can be — and become community schools that parents and students feel ownership of," says Caputo-Pearl.



Celerity schools are being investigated simultaneously by the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, and the U.S. Department of Education for fraud and mismanagement. The CEO has spent lavishly while Celerity teachers have lacked basic supplies such as pencils, paper and books.

What \$100 Million Could Have Paid For

The salaries of nearly **1,300** teachers.

Additional funding of more than **\$166,000** per school district.

Decreasing class size by **10** percent.

The lack of accountability and transparency in the charter school industry has led to myriad cases of fraud, waste, abuse and mismanagement, some of which are documented on these pages. Students have suffered, and taxpayers have been hit hard as well.

The Center for Popular Democracy estimated that California stood to lose more than \$100 million to charter school fraud in 2015 alone.

The chart outlines what \$100 million could have been used for in that one-year period.

Draining public schools

LAUSD is not the only district eyed for takeover. Capital & Main revealed a secret plan, also financed by billionaire profiteers, to put 50 percent of Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) students into corporate charters.

Unknown to Oakland's parents until recently — and without open debate by the school board — the charter expansion scheme for Oakland is an open secret, comments Bruce Fuller, an education and public policy professor at UC Berkeley. Fuller believes massive charter school expansion will push Oakland toward bankruptcy, because taking half of the district's students means taking half of the district's Average Daily Attendance (ADA) funding, while schools must continue paying salaries and operating costs.

Approximately 25 percent of OUSD students are enrolled in charter schools — compared with 16 percent of total enrollment in LAUSD — making it the district with the highest percentage of charter-enrolled students in the state.

Trish Gorham, president of the Oakland Education Association (OEA), fears charter school expansion will put Oakland at the tipping point by taking the cream of students and leaving traditional schools with those with learning disabilities and other challenges that require more costly services from schools.

"Eli Broad wrote that Oakland is a prime target for takeover by national charter school organizations," says Gorham. "The Rogers Family Foundation declared it wants to have 20,000 'quality seats' in Oakland by 2020. In charter school lingo, quality seats equal



After billionaires poured in nearly \$10 million to support pro-charter candidates in the May runoff for two LA Unified school board seats, UTLA President Alex Caputo-Pearl says the fight is only beginning. "We will fight against privatizing our public schools and against creating 'separate and unequal' for our kids."



Students at Helix Charter High practice their tap dancing moves.

HELIX CHARTER TRANSPARENCY KEEPS THINGS REAL



It's a beautiful spring day, and students have just finished final exams. School's out, but many choose to hang around. Some go to a computer lab for tutoring. Others are happily tap-dancing. Still others de-stress in a yoga class.

There's a unique vibe at Helix Charter High School in La Mesa, San Diego County. Most of the 2,400 students are not just "doing time." They are active participants in their own learning.

In 1998, Helix became the first comprehensive high school in the state to convert to a charter high school. Teachers, education support professionals and administrators formed their own independent charter school, although they still contract with Grossmont Union High School District to provide services for students with special needs. Some educators chose to leave after the switch because they lost transfer rights, but most opted to stay and are glad they did.

"We've been union since Day 1," says Ben Stone, a social studies teacher and president of the Helix Teachers Association. "Many people are surprised that we created a union, but it's worked out well."

Helix staff changed the school calendar, went to a quarterly system and tweaked the schedule. Educators were able to create their own curriculum, which includes a freshman "skills

class" to ease the transition between eighth and ninth grades, and a weekly advisory class. D's were eliminated; students were told they better earn at least a C because colleges don't accept F's. Graduation requirements changed: Nobody walks across the stage without completing 40 hours of community volunteer work and a 20-hour senior project of their choosing where they must apply real-world skills, make a formal presentation and write a lengthy research paper.

The school has four grade-level vice

“
The only people
we are beholden
to are your typical
stakeholders:
parents, students
and the state
Education Code.
”

BEN STONE,

President, Helix Teachers Association



principals and a CEO instead of a principal. There's a waiting list to enroll, and a lottery determines who gets in. Eighty-one percent of the population consists of students of color, and there is a 90 percent graduation rate.

Funding flexibility has allowed the school to buy laptops for students, and Helix is halfway toward that goal.

A nine-member Charter Governing Board, consisting of parents, staff, community members and a student, makes policy decisions. Meetings are open to the public.

"That way we avoid corruption," says

English teacher Alicia Gibson previously worked at a non-unionized charter school and says there's no comparison with Helix. "We all have input here."



Stone. "For example, when our union sits down to do our negotiations with the front office, the CEO shows us the books and where the money is going. A totally open budget committee of certificated employees, classified employees, administrators and community members oversees the budget, and if anyone wants to see it, they can."

The school is funded by grants and receives state funding, he adds.

"We are not funded by billionaires; we are funded by 'thousandaires' and public money," says Stone. "So we are beholden to nobody. The only people we are beholden to are your typical stakeholders: parents, students and the state Education Code."

Political science teacher and bargaining chair John Geary, who has been at the school since the conversion, lauds the environment of mutual respect. He says that during negotiations, union members and administrators treat each other politely, and he's never seen a shouting match.

"We're on the up and up," he says proudly.

English teacher Alicia Gibson taught at a non-union charter before Helix. She says there's no comparison.

"We all have input here on how we run the school. We are all working together so our students can be successful."

charter seats. Oakland, like other districts in the country targeted for takeover, has a high percentage of poor and bilingual students with parents desperate for any kind of resources."

The Oakland-based Rogers Family Foundation, founded by former Dreyer's Grand Ice Cream chairman and CEO T. Gary Rogers and his wife, created a nonprofit ironically named GO (Great Oakland) Public Schools. GO unleashed an avalanche of out-of-town money to elect pro-charter school board candidates and influence elections, says Gorham.

OEA, with some financial help from CTA, contributed \$40,000 toward electing public education advocates to the school board during the 2016 election, but charter school proponents poured \$700,000 into the campaign, winning three of the four seats.

"We cannot compete with that kind of money," says Gorham. "And it's happening up and down the state with school boards, counties and city council seats. They are purchasing seats to get results. It's pay to play."

Gorham insists she's not a conspiracy theorist, but says she has no doubt a conspiracy is afoot.

"All you have to do is look at the appointment of Betsy DeVos and see that, yes, there really is a plan funded by billionaires to destroy our public school system

as we know it, which takes away the guarantee of a free and public education that is the foundation of our democracy. We all need to wake up and fight against something that was predicted 20 years ago, which is now at our doorstep."

Who controls public education?

Public education is a \$600 billion industry — and the last bastion of government in which private enterprise does not yet have a major stake. So-called reformers may say they advocate for school choice, but contribute money to PACs with an eye toward privatizing public schools and running them as a business (see sidebar, page 24).

But privatization of other institutions has not gone so well, points out education expert Diane Ravitch. For example, the Federal Bureau of Prisons concluded that privatized prisons were not as safe and were less likely to provide effective programs for education and job training to reduce recidivism. Privately run fire departments sometimes charge homeowners to put out fires. And doctors in privatized hospitals may perform unnecessary surgeries to increase revenues, or avoid treating patients whose care is too costly.

A key goal of privatization is eliminating unions, cutting worker benefits, expanding work hours, and laying off veteran employees who earn the most, adds Ravitch, noting that privatization eliminates protections against many rights workers take for granted.

The question, then, is what



Oakland Education Association President Trish Gorham at a rally for charter school accountability. Photo by Mike Myslinski



the real choice is when it comes to who controls public education. Should districts be governed by communities, teachers, education professionals and democratically elected school boards? Or should public education be left to profiteers who want to make money from educating children?

Districts have little control

It's not difficult to open a charter school. But it's very difficult to prevent one from opening.

Charter management organizations (CMOs) are not required to show there is a need for additional classroom seats in the district — unlike school districts seeking to build new sites. Also, they are not required to prove their school offers a superior education or targets an underserved population to be granted a charter.

Many districts have denied charters, only to see them approved by the county or the State Board of Education. Private charter management companies are able to run schools and operate completely separate from the district.

When a charter authorizer is outside the district, oversight is not at the local level and is usually infrequent, reports In the Public Interest (ITPI), a comprehensive research and policy center committed to democratic control of public goods and services. A school's charter must be renewed every five years by its authorizing agency. Nonrenewal often leads to a lengthy appeal process.

School districts are required by law to provide free space to charter schools, even when it is a hardship for existing schools. Prop. 39, passed in 2000, requires school districts to make "reasonably equivalent" facilities available to charter schools upon request. This has sparked battles in some communities.

Frequently, charters simply move in and colocate in other schools for free. In districts where space is tight, charter schools operate in malls or warehouses. A former Los Angeles charter teacher now teaching in Lynwood recalls sharing space with a church; students had to walk past coffins on their way to class. At virtual schools, facilities are not an issue, since students rarely if ever see teachers.

CMOs are building empires

Over the past 15 years, California charter schools have received more than \$2.5 billion in tax dollars to lease, build or buy school buildings. A new report by ITPI, "Spending Blind: The Failure of Policy Planning in California Charter School Funding," reveals that a substantial portion of this money — an estimated \$1 billion — was spent on charters that performed worse

FOLLOW THE MONEY

Backed by billionaires with their own agenda for public education, a new industry around charter schools is growing in California. These taxpayer-funded public schools are frequently operated by for-profit corporations, and many do not follow the same laws and regulations that traditional public schools are required to follow. The lack of accountability has led to financial gains for corporate charter operators and their investors.

THEIR AGENDA

- 1. Divert money from California's neighborhood public schools** to fund privately managed charter schools, without accountability or transparency to parents and taxpayers.
- 2. Cherry-pick students**, weeding out those with special needs.
- 3. Spend millions to influence** local legislative and school board elections across California.

MONEY TO BE MADE

Public education is a \$600 billion industry. Profiteers disguised as reformers advocate for school "choice," but contribute huge sums to political action committees with an eye on the prize: privatizing public schools and running them as a business.

Public Education



TOP FUNDERS OF THE PRO-CHARTER AGENDA

California's privately managed for-profit charter schools are championed by a group of billionaires who want private corporations to be able to profit from public education.

BUYING INFLUENCE

In the 2016 election cycle, more than **\$27 million** was spent by **six political action committees (PACs)** to influence legislative, school board and county office of education elections in California, where key decisions about charters are made.

Money from 10 wealthy donors (see column at right) was moved into the following PACs:

- The EdVoice Independent Expenditure Committee received more than \$8 million.
- The California Charter Schools Association (CCSA) received more than \$9 million.
- The CCSA PAC also moved more than half its money into a separate PAC, misleadingly named the Parent Teacher Alliance, which has been confused with the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and has led to deception over candidate endorsements.
- Parents and Teachers for Student Success.
- Govern for California Action Committee.
- Students for Education Reform.



JOHN ARNOLD made a fortune at Enron and at his own hedge fund. He supported anti-public school candidates in 2014, and with his wife **LAURA** has been a big donor to efforts to privatize public schools and cut secure retirements for working families.



BILL BLOOMFIELD, Baron Real Estate, donated money through the Koch brothers' political network to influence California elections in 2012. That same year he spent more than \$7.5 million of his own money on a failed congressional bid.



ELI BROAD, developer and entrepreneur, also donated money through the Koch political network to influence California campaigns. He has given more than \$7 million to anti-public school candidates and causes.



DORIS FISHER of The Gap and her family are major funders of the corporate charter movement, funneling hundreds of thousands of dollars into PACs and lobbying efforts to weaken public schools.



REED HASTINGS, Netflix CEO and former president of the State Board of Education, has given huge contributions to anti-public school candidates and offered \$100 million to promote tech charters. He has said that elected school boards are obsolete, and wants to replace democratically elected school boards with nonprofit corporations and appointed members.



ARTHUR ROCK, a Silicon Valley venture capitalist, has supported school voucher campaigns and is a big supporter of privately managed charter schools and pro-charter candidates in California.



Wal-Mart heirs **JIM WALTON**, **ALICE WALTON** and **CARRIE WALTON PENNER** (not pictured) have spent millions supporting charter schools, private school voucher schemes and anti-public school candidates.

Should Be About Kids, Not Profits

Charter schools' lack of accountability and transparency has led to financial gains for for-profit corporate charter operators and the billionaires who invest in them, but has too often been disastrous for thousands of California students and has cost taxpayers millions of dollars in waste, fraud and abuse.

Kids Not Profits (KidsNotProfits.com) is a coalition of educators, parents, and civil rights and community groups.

Get the facts, figures and latest news about the impact current laws have on our students and communities.

Instead of subsidizing corporate charter schools run by for-profit companies with taxpayer dollars, we should be using the money to strengthen our local neighborhood public schools for all California children. Public education should be about kids, not profits. **Take Action at KidsNotProfits.com.**





K12 NOT MAKING THE GRADE

CAVA teacher Brianna Carroll works remotely with online students.

In July, the state Attorney General's Office announced a whopping \$169 million settlement with K12 Inc., a for-profit online charter school operator charged with false advertising and violating unfair competition laws.

K12, which manages 14 affiliated nonprofit schools known as California Virtual Academies (CAVA), was accused of using deceptive advertising to mislead parents about students' academic progress, parent satisfaction, class size, and more. There were also allegations by a whistleblower that K12 counted logging on for only one minute a day as a full day of attendance, wasting taxpayer dollars and harming students by depriving them of quality instruction.

Concerned CAVA teachers had been calling for improvements at their school for years, and had begun organizing. In early 2014, a supermajority of CAVA educators asked the Public Employment Relations Board to be recognized as a CTA bargaining unit to have a stronger voice in student learning and improving working conditions. Because of CAVA opposition, the decision in favor of the educators took 17 months.

"Now, these teachers can begin to address the problems that are hurting their students, such as insufficient time spent on instruction, high teacher turnover, and too much public money going out of state," said CTA President Eric Heins of the PERB decision in November 2015.

CAVA schools enroll approximately 13,000 K12 students. Fewer than half of students who enroll in the online high school earn diplomas, and almost none qualify to attend California's public universities, according to the *San Jose Mercury News*. The company has received more than \$130 million in state funding over the past 12 years. In fiscal year 2016, K12 reported revenues of \$872.7 million.

CAVA teachers — who are negotiating their first union contract — want to know exactly how the money is being spent. CAVA recently laid off 18 teachers midyear with only four days' notice, which not only upset students, but increased class sizes and teacher caseloads, says teacher Brianna Carroll of Livermore, who is helping to negotiate the contract. She says that nearly half of the school budget goes

“
A lot of teachers believe CAVA could offer a great education for students.

”

BRIANNA CARROLL,
California Virtual Educators

to the charter management company and curriculum, which resulted in CAVA's huge debt to K12.

"CAVA doesn't seem to be focused on the success of students; it seems focused on achieving enrollment and increasing attendance," she says. "But a lot of teachers believe that CAVA could offer a great education for students and become something that teachers could be proud of."

Legislation to increase accountability and transparency will help, says Carroll.

"We have been asking CAVA for their financial statements, attendance figures, and how much administration is getting paid, but they haven't delivered. They keep a very closed system. If they don't want to be transparent, they may be hiding something, in my opinion."

ALLIANCE ORGANIZING TO HAVE A SAY



Alliance Ouchi-O'Donovan's Adalinda Avila, Dan White and Ismael Hernandez.

"All we want is a voice," says Adalinda Avila, a math teacher at the Alliance Ouchi-O'Donovan 6-12 Complex, a charter school in Los Angeles.

Educators at Alliance College-Ready Public Schools want a voice in decision-making, and the ability to negotiate working conditions and what's best for students without fear of reprisals. They want to help stop the 20 to 30 percent annual turnover of staff and be treated fairly and with respect.

To make this happen, they are organizing to become new members of United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA), joining growing numbers of charter school educators who see strength in numbers. Presently, there are more than 49 independent unionized schools in Los Angeles including Green Dot schools, Camino Nuevo, Los Angeles Academy, Granada Hills Charter High, Palisades Charter High, El Camino Charter High, Pacoima Charter Elementary, Montague Charter Elementary, Birmingham Charter High, Ivy Academia, Global el-

ementary and middle schools, Accelerated Schools, and Ocean Charter.

Alliance is the largest operator of charter schools in Los Angeles, with 12,500 students in 28 schools. An organizing effort launched by teachers in 2015 has been met with heavy employer resistance, including surveillance, discrimination, and blocking access to union activity. Alliance's behavior has been so extreme that the Public Employment Relations Board, which protects the legal right to unionize, obtained a court injunction prohibiting Alliance administrators from interfering with teachers' unionizing efforts.

In April, a state audit found that Alliance raised a \$1.7 million war chest from private donors to fight its own teachers and counselors, and had already spent nearly \$1 million on its anti-union campaign plus \$2.2 million in legal fees (excluding costs for this year). The audit

also found that Alliance failed to comply with federal law on sharing parent and student information; Alliance had turned over alumni information to California Charter Schools Association to enlist parents against teachers' efforts to organize.

Teachers and parents at Alliance have denounced the actions by the charter's board and management, saying money should be spent on students, not on fighting teachers.

Pro-union teachers are standing strong for social and economic justice as well, including advocating for safe schools to ensure immigrant student rights.

"Unionization is not just about our school district or our profession," says Dan White, who teaches 10th-grade environmental science at Ouchi-O'Donovan. "The gap between economic classes is widening in America, and unions help bridge that gap and preserve the middle class."

than nearby traditional public schools, were built in neighborhoods that already had enough classroom space, were found to have discriminatory enrollment policies, or engaged in unethical or corrupt practices.

In addition, in some cases CMOs have been able to keep buildings used as charter schools as their private property.

CMOs in fact have built vast empires by constructing private real estate holdings worth tens of millions of dollars. For example, the charter school network Alliance College-Ready Public Schools



Bob Lawson

have become national chains that in many cases, you can't benefited from over \$110 million in federal and state taxpayer support for its facilities, which are not owned by the public, but are part of a growing empire of privately owned Los Angeles area real estate now worth more than \$200 million.

Sometimes CMOs act as both building owner and landlord to charter schools, with a charter school paying "rent" to CMOs for schools built with public funds.

Bob Lawson, director of ITPI special projects, says the tangled web is often difficult to unravel.

"There are so many corporatized charters that



understand or know who is running the school. It's contracted out to a charter management organization which subcontracts to other organizations, and when you ask questions, they will claim that information is proprietary."

The taxpayer money used by CMOs to lease, purchase and build their own school buildings results in the overbuilding of charter schools and creates a "significant crisis" for many school districts, according to ITPI. In a time of scarce resources and great needs, public funds are being spent on overbuilding of charter schools that are not needed and not any better than existing neighborhood schools, while draining resources from them.

Further, the ITPI report notes that charter schools constructed with conduit bonds (issued by a municipality on behalf of a private entity) become the private property of the charter operator. Even if the charter is revoked, neither the state nor the local school district can take control of the property.

Charters constructed or acquired with private funds but whose mortgage payments are reimbursed through the state's Charter School Facility Grant Program are typically owned without restriction. If such schools close down, owners can turn the buildings into condos or retail space, or sell the property at a profit. "Neither the school district nor any other public body is entitled to recoup the public dollars that have gone toward creating the facility," says the report.

Parents denounce false promises

"Families are caught in the crosshairs of a very contentious political battle," says Clarissa Doutherd. "The fact that the corporatization and privatization of education is taking money and resources out of public schools is a concern for me."

We need to build up public education so we're not vulnerable to corporate and private interests.

CLARISSA DOUTHERD,
Parent Voices Oakland

Doutherd, executive director of Parent Voices Oakland, stands with Kim Davis of Parents United for Public Schools on a sidewalk in front of a chain-link fence surrounding the recently shuttered Castlemont Primary Academy. The school, which shared

space with the still-operating Castlemont High School, closed abruptly in February, displacing nearly 100 Oakland students.

Charters often close — sometimes in the middle of the school year — leaving students and staff stranded. Thirty-two charters were shuttered last year in California, making the state second in the number of closures nationwide (after Florida with 35),

In California:



Number of charter schools currently unionized: 250

Number of charter school educators represented by CTA: 7,300



Tax dollars or taxpayer subsidized funds received by charters over the past 15 years: \$2.5 billion*

*Source: In the Public Interest



Discipline was

an issue at Rocketship, says Ceci Carrasco, who taught STEM classes at Rocketship Los Sueños Academy in San Jose for two years. Some students reacted to the regimented environment by kicking the walls, throwing things and acting out. When she asked administrators for help, they did not respond in a timely manner.

Students had reason to be angry. Some classes were three hours long. Nearly 100 students were stuck in a "learning lab" sitting at computers for 1 1/2 hours each day; they had to be quiet most of the time. Bathroom breaks were restricted, and several

according to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. And closures mean taxpayers and districts are left with unpaid bills and forced to pick up the pieces.

The primary school — along with the Castlemont Junior Academy for teens, which closed in 2016 — was opened in 2015 by the nonprofit Youth UpRising, which ran out of money despite generous funding from the state and private donors, including the Walton family.

Taking on additional students after charters close has cost OUSD several hundred thousand dollars at a time when it faces a tremendous shortfall. Neither Davis' nor Doutherd's children attended the closed campuses, but they worry about plans to increase charter schools in their community.



ROCKETSHIP FAILING THEIR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS

Angela Khai and Ceci Carrasco taught at Rocketship before transferring to a public charter school in San Jose. Both speak of student behavioral issues at Rocketship in part due to extended computer labs and restricted bathroom breaks. Rocketship educators were paid according to their test scores and parent involvement.

students had accidents or developed bladder infections as a result.

“There absolutely were behavior problems,” says Carrasco, who transferred in the fall to Bachrodt Academy, a San Jose Unified School District charter school, where she teaches a combination class for grades 3-4.

Because students were put into learning labs for much of the day, schools with more than 600 students could operate with as few as six teachers, plus aides. But money saved by replacing teachers with computers and noncredentialed staff resulted in test scores plummeting.

Rocketship has 13 schools in the San Francisco Bay Area, Tennessee and Wisconsin. From 2010 to 2013 the “nonprofit” company increased its assets from \$2.2 million to \$15 million — and Rocketship relies primarily on state money for its \$52.6 million budget, reports the *San Jose Mercury News*.

A shortage of bathrooms — and em-

phasis on instructional minutes — meant students were restricted on bathroom breaks. A pediatrician told the *Mercury News* several students had urinary tract infections. Accidents were frequent, says Carrasco. Former Rocketship teacher Angela Khai, who also teaches at Bachrodt, says accidents were at times intentional, just so students could go home.

Students were not allowed to talk in classrooms and hallways and during lunchtime at Rocketship schools. They were also forced to sit in the “slant” position (feet flat on the floor, back straight, head up and hands folded on top of the desk) and to maintain this position even when writing.

Teachers typically worked from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and were paid according to their test scores and parent involvement. They were micromanaged by coaches on every element of their teaching and forced to administer tests nonstop. They were afraid to complain, since they were



at-will employees. Turnover was rampant.

At Bachrodt, Carrasco and Khai enjoy “freedom” and a happier, less stressful environment. They also appreciate San Jose Teachers Association membership and due process.

“Sometimes I felt like I was working at a startup in Silicon Valley,” says Khai. “It was like, ‘Here’s a model, let’s try to replicate it as much as possible.’”

“The Castlemont schools promised many things to these families in terms of community supports, academic interventions, and other things that were not available to them,” says Davis. “But they didn’t have enough money to function, and that impacted individual families a great deal. There has been an absolute lack of accountability for making sure charters are doing what they are supposed to be doing”

Doutherd says billionaires don’t understand the dynamics of Oakland’s vibrant history and unique culture or the challenges they face, and worries charters are becoming the “McDonald’s” of education.

“As the mother of an African American son with special needs who is really struggling in the public school system, I have made

the personal and political choice for my family to invest in the public school system for my son. But many families feel forced into other options when their children’s needs are not being met. Children, quite frankly, are being pipelined into prison. So, we as a community need to do some organizing and do the necessary work to build up public education, so we’re not vulnerable to corporate and private interests.”

Charter school proponents often target poor and minority families, telling parents that charters will “save” their children from a poor or indifferent public school system. However, a legacy of broken promises is changing that perception. In October, the NAACP Board of Directors called for strengthening public oversight of charter schools’ governance and practice.



LIVERMORE A CAUTIONARY TALE

On the first day of school this year, hundreds of students withdrew from Livermore Valley Charter School and Livermore Valley Charter Preparatory High School. Tri-Valley Learning Corporation (TVLC), which operates the two campuses along with two in Stockton, is under investigation by the Alameda County District Attorney's Office for fraud and criminal charges, including:

- Recruiting high school students from China and charging their families thousands of dollars for tuition and housing.
- Uprooting exchange students from Livermore with little notice and busing them to TVLC's Stockton schools.
- Using tax-exempt bond proceeds intended for schools, to purchase an expensive home and sports car for former CEO Bill Batchelor, and to open a private school.
- Assault and battery, child cruelty, and failure to report child abuse by three employees connected to the Livermore schools.

In the beginning, Livermore Valley Charter School was a wonderful place to work, say former staffers Emily Wafler, Dayana Albornoz and Laura Morgan, who left midyear to teach at Livermore Valley Joint Unified's Satellite Campus, an "overflow" district school that absorbed an influx of former charter students.

Founded by a grassroots group of educators, parents and community members in 2004, the TK-8 charter school initially offered a fun, innovative and collaborative



Clockwise from top: Dayana Albornoz, Emily Wafler and Laura Morgan all left the Livermore charter schools midyear to teach at a district school. Those who remain have unionized.



environment where teachers had a voice in how the school was run.

Teachers suspected something was wrong when the school relocated to a nicer facility — and their direct-deposit paychecks were no longer deposited in a timely manner. They were told that the Stockton schools kept them afloat. Then a parent suggested using Google to look up Batchelor's home — a newly purchased mansion.

"We heard that the bond proceeds paid for several new houses and cars," says Morgan, who teaches transitional kindergarten. "Many of us who worked alongside him were not surprised. Some of the programs going on seemed fishy."

The principal was accused of "overspending" and resigned. Layoffs ensued. Teachers unionized, and those who remain belong to the Livermore Charter Education Association. But many left.

"Toward the end, there was no money for toilet paper," says Albornoz, a fifth-grade teacher. "We started school

in August, and our bathrooms hadn't been cleaned over the summer. Parents came to clean our school. There was no janitorial service, and there were mouse droppings."

Morgan hated to see her son leave during his senior year, but when she learned that accreditation for the high school was being withheld, she felt there was no choice.

"Lifelong friendships got torn apart, and having a do-over senior year was devastating for my son," says Morgan, one of the school's founders.

Wafler, a fifth-grade teacher, urges other charter educators to take heed.

"Stay involved," she cautions. "Attend board meetings. Ask questions. If you get the brush-off, demand accountability. If you are standing by yourself, find like-minded allies also interested in transparency. And if you feel you aren't being listened to, go to your charter authorizer. Make your voice heard."

The goal is to make charters the way the law intended, so students, parents and the community have a voice.

TERRI JACKSON,
CTA Board Member

“We are moving forward to require that charter schools receive the same level of oversight [and] civil rights protections and provide the same level of transparency as traditional public schools,” said Roslyn M. Brock, then NAACP chairman. “Our decision today is driven by a long-held principle and policy of the NAACP that high-quality, free public education should be afforded to all children.”

Brock and the NAACP called for a moratorium on charter school expansion until:

1. Charter schools are subject to the same transparency and accountability standards as public schools.
2. Public funds are not diverted to charter schools at the expense of the public school system.
3. Charter schools cease expelling students that public schools have a duty to educate.
4. Charter schools cease to perpetuate de facto segregation of the highest-performing children from those whose aspirations may be high but whose talents are not yet as obvious.

Charters cherry-pick students

Before Julian Vasquez Heilig became a professor of educational leadership and policy at Sacramento State University, he was involved with charter schools. The California Faculty Association member served on a charter school board in Texas and was a “21st century instructor” or teacher’s aide at Aspire Elementary and Middle School in East Palo Alto.

At Aspire, he enjoyed working with a fourth-grader named Gary, who was energetic, precocious and intelligent. He was also at times mildly disruptive and perhaps a bit hyperactive.

One day, recalls Heilig, Gary disappeared. Heilig learned he had been expelled from the charter school and replaced with a new student from

The Union Makes Education Strong

Says Morris saw a dramatic difference at Ballington Academy for the Arts and Sciences in El Centro after unionization in 2012. Before unionizing, educators were afraid to speak up for their students and feared being fired; high turnover had a big impact on student learning; and pay and benefits were below what teachers received in surrounding areas.



Sarys Morris

After educators formed the Ballington Educators Association, things improved, says Morris. Teachers received a significant raise, and turnover decreased. The school hired an art teacher and opened a science lab, which teachers had requested for years.

“Once we didn’t have to worry about losing our jobs as at-will employees, we were able to advocate for our students and for ourselves,” adds Morris, now a teacher in Brawley and a Brawley Elementary Teachers Association member. “CTA helps teachers do that.”

Charter school educators such as Morris love teaching, and many strongly believe in their school’s potential. But several recent trends threaten charter school stability and student success.

When small schools grow into charter management organizations (CMOs) with multiple campuses, decisions once made at the school level are now made at CMO headquarters. As a result, many teachers feel they don’t have a voice in policies affecting students and their profession.

The heavy workload, compounded by a high cost of living and low pay, means high educator turnover and burnout are real problems.

To address these trends, charter educators are unionizing to have a stronger voice in important decisions, to support initiatives that lower teacher turnover, and to build stable school communities their students deserve.

CTA is currently working on first contract campaigns with many charter schools, including Livermore Valley Charter School, iQ Academy California, Island Union Elementary in Lemoore, and St. Hope Public Schools in Sacramento (see background on St. Hope’s unionization on page 11).

“Teacher voice through union power has pushed our CMO to be more transparent, open and accountable,” says Angel Maldonado, president of Asociación de Maestros Unidos, the union for Green Dot Public Schools California. “Being unionized guarantees educators respect, fair treatment, and a say in what is best for our students. It lets our members feel safe in advocating for our students.”

For information about unionizing: cta.org/charterschools.



CELERITY THE OPPOSITE OF AUSTERITY



Parent Julio Rodriguez says a Celerity letter told parents if the school closes it will open under another name.

Teachers at Celerity

charter schools were surprised at the lavish holiday party with open bar, blackjack tables and limousine service for guests. They were also surprised to learn that the CEO charged Armani suits, expensive restaurant meals and chauffeur service on a company credit card. After all, the school wasn't providing basic supplies such as paper, pencils and books, forcing teachers to pay out of pocket or use DonorsChoose.org.

Celerity Educational Group manages eight Southern California schools. In January, federal agents swarmed its headquarters, taking laptops and copying computer data. The FBI, Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Department of Education are investigating Celerity for fraud and mismanagement.

It shouldn't take the FBI to convince a charter to open its books. But Celerity has long shrugged off official scrutiny.

While an LAUSD investigation was under way in 2015, Celerity went national, expanding into Ohio, Florida and Louisiana. Celerity founder and CEO Vielka McFarlane — who earned \$471,842 in 2013 — launched Celerity Global Development, a parent company of the schools in her empire, offering herself as a consultant to other schools.

Prior to the raid, LAUSD denied charter renewals for Celerity Dyad in South Los Angeles and Celerity Troika in Eagle Rock, voicing concerns about the schools' finances. On May 11, the State Board of Education voted to close Dyad and Troika, citing similar concerns. Celerity Dyad parent Julio Rodriguez says a letter from the school told him not to worry, because it will close and reopen under a different

name if the charter is not renewed.

McFarlane expensed her Armani suits for "public appearances" and spent thousands of taxpayer dollars on fine dining. Lisa Cordero, a former Celerity Dyad teacher, told the *Los Angeles Times* that when McFarlane told staff "Education is a business," it sounded alarm bells.

Despite the investigation, Celerity recently targeted Arminta Elementary School for "colocation." Celerity charter schools are currently operating rent-free, at taxpayer expense, at eight district schools, and are seeking space on 10 more public school campuses next year.

"Celerity has violated the public trust," says United Teachers Los Angeles President Alex Caputo-Pearl. "Why give them more public space?"

a waiting list because he didn't fit the mold of a typical student. Heilig was dismayed and disillusioned.

"I am angry that a child as bright and promising as Gary can be so easily expunged," he says.

Charter schools by law cannot discriminate against students based on disability, ethnicity or national origin. Yet many do. An American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) report, "Unequal Access: How Some California Charter Schools Illegally Restrict Enrollment," finds that out of 1,200 charter schools in California, at least 253 (more than 20 percent) have policies that are "plainly exclusionary," such as:

- Denying enrollment to and expelling students who do not have



Julian Vasquez Heilig

strong grades or test scores.

- Denying enrollment to students who do not meet a minimum level of English proficiency.
- Discouraging or precluding immigrant students from attending by requiring parents to provide Social Security numbers or proof of citizenship.
- Refusing to enroll students unless their parents volunteer their time or donate money.

Research shows challenging students are routinely "counseled away" from charter schools when they attempt to enroll. Unlike traditional public schools, students can be expelled without due process, and charters have a national suspension rate 16 percent higher than other public schools.

Advocating for Transparency, Accountability and Equal Access

For more information, see cta.org/charterschools.

CTA supports all public educators, whether they work at traditional or charter schools, and believes all students deserve a quality education. Charters are public schools, funded by taxpayer money. But many don't hold themselves to the same standards as traditional public schools. This has led to severe problems at taxpayer, educator and student expense. CTA is working to address these issues through legislation — and unionization.

PROBLEM:

Charter schools are **not subject to oversight or transparency**. This means they are not accountable and can operate in secret, which can lead to waste, fraud and abuse.

Charter schools can **cherry-pick students**. This denies equal access to all students. It can leave school districts with a larger percentage of kids with high needs, and because Average Daily Attendance funds follow students to charter schools, a smaller amount of money to serve them.

Charter school petitions are often approved by entities **far removed from local school districts** and communities. This means local funding and educational objectives are often ignored or dismissed.

Educators at non-union charter schools often have **no say in decision-making**, and can be hired and fired at will.

SOLUTION:

AB 1478, by Assembly Member Reggie Jones-Sawyer (D-Los Angeles), makes governance of charter schools **transparent and accountable** to the taxpayers who fund them. It would make charter schools subject to the Brown Act, requiring open meetings; the Public Records Act, requiring open books; and two laws preventing conflict of interest. It prohibits charter school board members and their immediate family from financially benefiting from their schools.

AB 1360, by Assembly Member Rob Bonta (D-Alameda), **prohibits discriminatory admissions and enrollment practices** and ensures due process in pupil discipline. Charters would be required to provide fair access to all students regardless of ZIP code, socioeconomic status, race, grades or native language. It clarifies that schools cannot weed out students with special needs, require parental volunteer hours as criteria for admissions, and must comply with federal and state constitutional due process regarding suspension and expulsion.

SB 808, by Sen. Tony Mendoza (D-Artesia), legislates **local control of charter schools**. It requires that all charter school petitions be approved by the school board of the school district in which they are located. An appeal of a charter school denial would be allowed by a county board of education only if the district committed a procedural violation in reviewing the petition — in which case the county board would remand the petition to the school district for reconsideration. (Charter schools operating outside the district in which they are based could continue operating until the date on which renewal is required — and then go before the local school district's board.) The bill also allows a school board to deny a charter petition if granting a charter would impose financial hardship on the district.

These educators have **the right to unionize**. Approximately 250 of California's charter schools are unionized, and CTA proudly represents more than 7,300 charter educators.



A report by UCLA's Center for Civil Rights reveals that in 2011-12, black students were four times as likely to be suspended from charters as white students. And of the 5,250 charter schools studied, 235 suspended more than 50 percent of their students with disabilities.

"These exclusionary policies violate the California Education Code, the California and U.S. constitutions, and state and federal civil rights law," states the ACLU.

CTA-backed AB 1360 seeks to prohibit discriminatory practices in charter access and due process. See page 33 for details.

CTA seeks charter oversight

CTA has worked with elected leaders to create legislation that addresses many of the issues around charters, including responsible use of public funds and local control of education and resources.

"CTA's goal is to make charter schools the way the law intended them to be — democratically run — so students, parents and the community have a voice, instead of being run by distant corporations carpetbagging our school system so billionaires can make money," says Terri Jackson, a fourth-grade teacher and United Teachers of Richmond member who serves on the CTA Board.



Terri Jackson

The proposed laws reflect a new way of thinking, says Lawson of In the Public Interest. He notes that under current law, "the impact of a charter school on surrounding schools can't be considered when approving a charter application. But we think it should be, and that the law should change. New legislation would allow that through local control."

When CTA attempted to pass legislation last year to make charters accountable and mandate transparency, it was vetoed by Gov. Jerry Brown, a charter school founder. CTA has worked hard to reintroduce three bills — AB 1478, AB 1360 and SB 808 — which, in addition to making charters transparent and accountable, prohibit discriminatory admissions and enrollment practices and legislate local control of charters. (See story, page 33.)

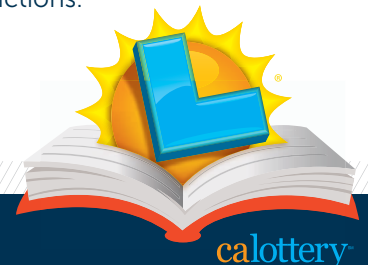
"CTA is not going to stand by and allow billionaires to profit on the backs of students or allow charter schools to operate without transparency and accountability," says Heins, noting that President Trump's proposed budget provides a \$168 million increase in funding for unregulated charter schools — as well as millions more for private school vouchers. "Our students deserve better. Our parents deserve better. And our teachers deserve better." ■

ENHANCING EDUCATION



Funding That Supports California Public Schools

Last fiscal year, Lottery players contributed **\$1.5 billion** in supplemental funding to public schools. That distribution includes K-12 schools, community colleges, the California State University, the University of California, and other school jurisdictions.



For more information on the Lottery's contributions to California public schools, please visit: www.calottery.com/givingback

Legislative Update



STATE BUDGET REVISION INCREASES EDUCATION SPENDING

The May revision to Gov. Jerry Brown's proposed budget saw an increase in funding for students of greatest need and community colleges. However, CTA is concerned that a proposal to lock in ongoing future cuts to public education is essentially "gaming" Proposition 98, the state's minimum school funding law.

Recognizing higher state revenues than expected in January, Brown added \$1.4 billion to the Local Control Funding Formula, which will help local school districts recruit and retain highly qualified teachers, and help students have access to tools and resources they need.

Money was also restored to allow more children to attend state preschool programs and support child care providers. "We share the governor's commitment to provide health care to all children," says CTA President Eric Heins, "but also share his concerns about health care cuts proposed by the Trump administration and the devastating impact they would have in California."

Community colleges will receive additional funding to help increase course availability and hiring of full-time faculty. But the budget contains cuts to the California State University (CSU) and University of California systems, which Heins calls "deeply disappointing."

"CTA strongly opposed the student tuition hikes approved by the CSU trustees," he says. "College should be affordable to all. Inadequate funding for higher education hinders the state's ability to create an educated workforce to fuel our economy."

The California Faculty Association is calling on the Legislature to approve a 2017-18 state budget that funds CSU by \$325 million above the current year funding.

CTA is calling for formal certification of Prop. 98. It opposes Brown's proposal to reduce the minimum school funding guarantee contingent on future state revenues, and take ongoing money away from schools.

A final budget must be signed by July 15.

Assembly Member Rob Bonta at a rally supporting legislation for charter accountability, transparency.
Photo by Mike Myslinski



↑ BILLS TO STOP CHARTER SCHOOL WASTE, FRAUD

Lawmakers, educators, parents and a broad coalition of community supporters are rallying around a package of CTA-sponsored bills that would ensure California charter school accountability and transparency, along with unbiased access to all students.

SB 808 by Sen. Tony Mendoza, AB 1478 by Assembly Member Reggie Jones-Sawyer, and AB 1360 by Assembly Member Rob Bonta would address many of the injustices and fraudulent practices that are negatively impacting California's students. For details about these bills, see page 33.





↑ OPPOSE AB 1220

On Lobby Day, May 17, CTA chapter presidents urged lawmakers to oppose AB 1220 by Assembly Member Shirley Weber (D-San Diego) because it would have a detrimental impact on the state's ability to attract and retain quality educators amidst the critical teacher shortage.

The bill would extend the teacher probationary period from two years to up to five years. It would also require priority for professional development funding be provided to probationary employees in year 4 or 5 of the probationary period, ignoring the big-picture goals of a school community and hindering the school district's ability to set its staff development priorities in alignment with the needs identified in its Local Control and Accountability Plan.

Current law gives a school administrator two years to determine whether an educator is the right fit for the needs of students and the district. During that time, a teacher can be fired without cause. CTA believes extending the probationary period has no benefit for students and would actually keep ineffective teachers in the classroom longer.

Lobby Day, from top: San Diego Education Association President Lindsay Burningham, Tustin Educators Association President Roger Kavigan, CTA Board member Barbara Dawson, Sweetwater Education Association Secretary Gretel Rodriguez, staff person, and Assembly Member Todd Gloria (D-San Diego). CTA Board member E. Toby Boyd with Sen. Bill Dodd (D-Napa), right, and staff person. Photos by Erika Sizemore

OTHER CTA CO-SPONSORED LEGISLATION

AB 43 by Assembly Member Tony Thurmond (D-Richmond) imposes a tax on businesses contracting with a state prison, the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, or the Department of General Services to provide a state prison with goods or services. The revenue will be used for school programs and early interventions to prevent people from being incarcerated. The bill prohibits the tax from being passed through to the state by way of higher prices for goods and services.



AB 45 by Assembly Member Thurmond requires the California Housing Finance Agency to administer a program to provide financing assistance to a qualified school district and qualified developer for the creation of affordable rental housing for school employees, and appropriates \$100 million from the General Fund for this purpose.

AB 52 by Assembly Member Jim Cooper (D-Elk Grove) creates a standard orientation for California's public employees with employee organization participation (to include sexual harassment, workplace violence, whistleblower protections, and disaster and emergency procedures).



AB 699 by Assembly Member Patrick O'Donnell (D-Long Beach) prohibits discrimination and provides protections based on a student's immigration status by:



- Monitoring whether districts are adopting antidiscrimination procedures and policies based on immigration status.
- Prohibiting school officials from collecting information about the immigration status of pupils or their family members.
- Prohibiting an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officer from entering a school site without receiving approval from a principal or district or county superintendent.

SPRING 2017 ELECTION RESULTS

In the most expensive school board race in U.S. history, the California Charter Schools Association and its billionaire supporters won a pro-charter majority on the Los Angeles Unified school board after pouring nearly \$10 million into the campaigns for their two candidates in the May 16 election. They outspent locally supported candidates backed by **United Teachers Los Angeles** by 2-to-1.

The pro-charter group's goal is to privatize public education at the expense of neighborhood schools. (See cover story on charter schools, page 18.)

"We will continue to work with coalition partners to ensure passage of three key bills — AB 1360, AB 1478 and SB 808 — to ensure accountability, transparency and equity to unregulated charter schools," says CTA President Eric Heins.

"Together, we will fight to invest in our neighborhood public schools. We will fight for all students and against President Trump's and Secretary DeVos' plans to privatize our schools and divide our communities."

Elsewhere, CTA's Association for Better Citizenship (ABC) Committee supported three candidates for the **Glendale Teachers Association's** local school board. Shant Sahakian, Armina Gharpetian and Greg Krikorian were all elected.

CTA/ABC also supported two local school board measures — both parcel taxes to boost revenues for schools and protect academic programs, as well as attract and retain highly qualified



LA Unified school board candidate Steve Zimmer, center, with UTLA members at the May 1 Day of Action march. Pro-charter school supporters outspent local, union-backed candidates by 2-to-1.

educators. One, in Hayward through the **Hayward Education Association** and the **Association of Educational Office and Technical Employees**, passed. The other, in Los Gatos through the **Los Gatos Elementary Teachers Association**, did not.

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- Learn why the situations are racist (stereotyping, tokenism, cultural appropriation, etc.)
- Acquire tools to interrupt these situations in order to help create a more loving and just world

"...your game was a remarkable tool. What better way to suggest critical thinking and generate deeper awareness of U.S. culture's white racial frame?" — Kevin Cummins, High School Teacher, Albuquerque, New Mexico

"I learned that my whole life I have been treated a certain way by the people around me because I am white, which I had never really thought about before." — White student player

"...I appreciate the realistic/practical action-based solutions presented in the game." — African American student player

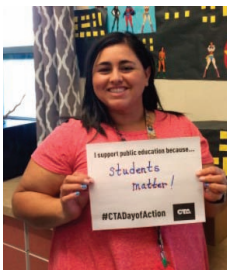
FREE DOWNLOAD at www.roadtoracialjustice.org Created by Kesa Kivel



Associated Calexico Teachers members and city leaders stand at the border with Mexico.

A Day of Action and Unity

Educators show their support for students, schools



Turlock Teachers Association member and first-grade teacher Michelle Hamilton.

On May 1, CTA's statewide Day of Action, thousands of educators participated in walk-ins, demonstrations and rallies to profess their unwavering support for all students, including vigilance in making schools safe zones and steadfast advocacy for the public education all California students deserve. They were joined by parents and community members.

In one of the most impactful actions, Associated Calexico Teachers members, together with CTA Board member Roberto Rodriguez and city leaders, marched from Jefferson Elementary School to the Mexican border. Calexico has been identified as an "area of priority" for the Trump administration's proposed wall. Marchers held signs that read "Two Countries, One Community."

"What is more limiting to the minds of our young people than a giant wall standing in front of their dreams?" ACT President James Taylor asked the crowd. "Educators, parents, students and community members do not stand for isolation, for limitations. We will not stand for walls. Instead, we stand for unity. We stand together in the face of this affront to our community, and we will return this message based on fear with a message of love and a greater understanding of what a community can be."

See more photos and video from the day at [Storify.com/WeAreCTA](https://www.storify.com/WeAreCTA) and on CTA's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages: [#CTADayofAction](https://twitter.com/CTADayofAction) [#WeAreCTA](https://twitter.com/WeAreCTA).

Burbank Teachers Association members at George Washington Elementary.



Hilmar Unified Teachers Association represents.



Palos Verdes Faculty Association's Jason Calizar, Alex Morales and Derek Larkins.

Eastlake High educators and Sweetwater Education Association members form a wall of support.



At left, United Teachers of Santa Clara members with students and parents at Mayne Elementary. Inset at left: Members, district and elected officials at CTA news conference at the Santa Clara County Office of Education in San Jose.



UTLA officers lead the chapter's contingent at a massive march and protest in L.A.



Above, Association of Rowland Educators members show their spirit.

BARGAINING ROUNDUP

Details of these stories at cta.org/bargainingupdates



GPTA members stand in unity.

↑ GOLDEN PLAINS DISTRICT WANTS 13 EXTRA DAYS

First, **Golden Plains Teachers Association (GPTA)** members warned Golden Plains Unified School District administrators that teacher turnover is hurting students as educators flee to neighboring schools because of poor compensation. Then administrators admitted in a news story that they hire intern teachers and those with short-term permits to ensure every classroom is staffed. "It's difficult to attract and keep teachers when they're pulled and poached away," said one principal.

Now the district says it will agree to GPTA's 7 percent salary raise proposal only if educators work an additional 13 days. This would mean teachers' work year would increase to 198 days, and they'd still make less than neighboring school districts. "How would this solve the turnover in teachers?" GPTA President Henry Ortiz asks.

While the district has received historic increases in funding, it has not made investments in teacher recruitment and retention. Teachers and parents are rallying to convince the school board to provide the resources, opportunities and qualified staff to ensure all students can succeed.

See video of GPTA's Brad Riley leading members in singing "GPTA for Our Kids" at youtu.be/CQrJcSgPmk.

RIPON TEACHERS GET NEW CONTRACT

On May 9, the **Ripon Unified District Teachers Association** reached a tentative agreement with the Ripon Unified District. The agreement, later ratified by RUDTA members, offers increases in stipends for long-serving educators, counselors, and sports coaches and advisers, among others. Also included is a new master's degree stipend of \$1,500 and an extra professional development day.

In addition, the contract calls for salary increases retroactive to the 2015-16 school year through the 2017-18 school year.

FULLERTON SPECIAL ED ACTION COMMITTEE

Fullerton Elementary Teachers Association's new contract gives members increased planning time to improve student instruction and enhance lesson plan delivery. To address ongoing concerns of special educators regarding their exceptional students, new language establishes the Special Education Action Committee to evaluate student workloads and class sizes for the 2017-18 school year.

Members also extended a \$500 stipend program for all teachers of combination classes for an additional year, changed the title of salary columns to ease teacher eligibility, and won a 2 percent retroactive salary increase to the beginning of the 2016-17 school year.



SBTA members at the April 4 rally.



SANTA BARBARA FINALLY, AGREEMENT

On April 5, the **Santa Barbara Teachers Association (SBTA)** and the Santa Barbara Unified School District reached a tentative agreement that provides a 2 percent salary schedule increase and additional pay for voluntary participation in summer professional development. It was reached one day after a huge turnout of SBTA members and community supporters rallied to protest the district's failure to even put a salary increase on the table. The agreement also includes a district commitment to begin bargaining for 2018-19 in February 2018 and to conclude in April 2018. It was overwhelmingly ratified by SBTA members April 17.

HEMET BROKEN PROMISE LEADS TO MEDIATION

Hemet Teachers Association (HTA) has made ending teacher turnover a top priority for their community. Earlier, the chapter extracted a pledge from Hemet Unified School District (HUSD) to compensate local teachers at the county's median pay, to help halt the continuous exodus of teachers who find better conditions in nearby districts.

Because the district's current offer falls below the annual cost of living, it not only breaks that promise to HTA, but also calls into question the seriousness of HUSD's commitment to improve instruction by retaining great teachers for all students in the Hemet community. After mediation, if no settlement is reached, HTA and HUSD will move into fact-finding.

BUENA PARK HEROES, NOT ZEROS

Filling the Buena Park Unified School District boardroom at the May meeting, **Buena Park Teachers Association** members wore T-shirts reading "We are heroes, not zeros" in protest of a zero percent salary offer that is considered an insult to every teacher in the district. Orange County is one of the most expensive communities in the U.S. Noncompetitive pay makes recruiting new educators a much more difficult task. Impasse has been declared, and the first mediation session is scheduled for June 20.



SMETA members take to the streets.

SAN MATEO EDUCATORS HOLD PROTEST

San Mateo Elementary Teachers Association

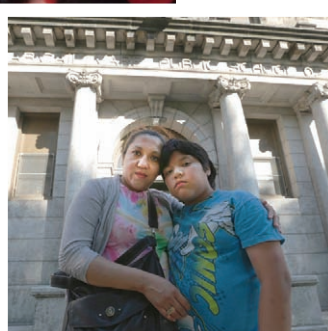
(SMETA) members held protests at the San Mateo-Foster City School District offices in late April and at the school board meeting May 18 over the lack of a contract settlement that meets their goals of salary increases and reduced class sizes. Frustrations at the table continue, even though the K-8 district is expected to have about \$48 million in reserves by the end of the fiscal year on July 1.

"This district refuses to prioritize teachers' salaries to help stop the turnover in this high-cost area," says SMETA President Julie MacArthur. "Salaries must be competitive. Recruiting and retaining educators is crucial to the success of our students and our community."

Negotiations continued in May. In San Mateo County, the \$51,070 starting salary for these educators ranks 17th among neighboring school districts.



Scenes from *Backpack Full of Cash*, in Philadelphia: Protest against school privatization; a student and his mother in front of Abigail Vare Elementary, now closed and set to be sold to a real estate developer.



Backpack Full of Cash

Documentary narrated by Matt Damon offers frightening look at privatization

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin

The phrase “backpack full of cash” implies shady transactions, such as drug dealing or arms smuggling. But the new documentary *Backpack Full of Cash* depicts something equally sinister: the privatization of education and how it can rob poor students of the education they deserve.

Backpack offers a painful look at the impact on traditional schools when funding is diverted for privately run schools. Though it focuses primarily on schools in Philadelphia and New Orleans, it’s a must-see for Californians to fully comprehend where the state may be headed soon if the pro-charter movement is not held accountable.

It’s not pretty. When traditional schools lose students, they lose money for librarians, teachers, smaller class sizes, music and books. Meanwhile, schools’ operating costs stay the same, since districts must still pay for

salaries, transportation, maintaining buildings and “keeping the lights on,” explains narrator Matt Damon, actor and public education advocate, whose mother is a teacher.

Backpack was made by Sarah Mondale, an Emmy-nominated filmmaker and public school teacher in New York. The title is based on corporate reformers’ belief that every student should be allowed to take their share of public education dollars — a “backpack full of cash” — to a school of their choice, whether a corporate-run charter school, online school, religious school or other private school. However, the phrase could also apply to billionaires — the Gates, Walton and Broad families — who spend millions to elect pro-charter, pro-voucher candidates nationwide in ongoing efforts to privatize public education.

Backpack opens at South Philadelphia High School, where there is a closetful of band uniforms but no music teacher, a library but no librarian, and just two counselors for more than 1,000 students. Heartbreaking scenes show suffering students trying their best in a district on the verge of financial collapse. One says tearfully, “They *want* to see us fail.”

Meanwhile, across town, a brand-new charter school welcomes students in gleaming, high-tech classrooms. But all is not as it seems.

We learn that the charter schools cherry-pick students based on expectations of how they will perform on standardized tests. Philly charter schools have mostly white students in a city of mostly minorities. English learners and students with special needs are routinely “counseled out.” Some charter schools mete out harsh punishments to students who do not sit up straight or keep their eyes on their teacher. Some charter schools go bankrupt and close.

School scenes are interwoven with comments of educators, students, parents, education experts, voucher and charter proponents, and others who explain that the privatization movement is part of a plan to defund public education by draining resources from public schools.

Education writer David Kirp fears public schools that educate both rich and poor are fast becoming an endangered species. He explains that billionaires pump resources into charter schools to make them showcases so they can make the case for more charters and say they are better than traditional schools — even though numerous studies show students in charter schools perform no better than students in traditional schools.

The message that public schools are failing and students need alternatives coincided with impossible goals set under No Child Left Behind, says education expert Diane Ravitch, who can be seen in the film addressing CTA

Q&A With Sarah Mondale

Director of *Backpack Full of Cash* and head of Stone Lantern Films, which co-produced the film with Turnstone Productions.

Why did you make this film?

I come from a family of teachers. My mother taught English to adult immigrants in the public schools of Washington, D.C. My grandmother taught in a rural one-room schoolhouse. I have worked as a teacher myself. My father was a professor of American studies who believed deeply in the importance of public education for our democracy. So some years back, when I started hearing the constant repetition of the “Public schools are failing” narrative in the media, I felt like I had to do something.

What were some of the challenges in getting it made?

We sent out our first fundraising proposals in fall 2011. We started shooting in 2012. We ran out of money in 2016. So we launched a Kickstarter campaign, and got help from over 400 people from all over the country (and from other countries too!), including parents and teachers. We finished the film in April. Now we need to get it out to the public. We are seeking funds for distribution.

Another challenge was figuring out how to tell the story in a way that makes sense to viewers. I think teachers understand what a charter school is and how vouchers drain money from public schools, but most noneducators find these issues confusing. The coded language used by advocates of school “choice” makes it even harder. Our intention was to try to connect the dots between charter schools, vouchers,

high-stakes testing, cyber charters, and the privatization movement, and take a big-picture look at how they are impacting public schools, including the most vulnerable children who rely on them. The heroes of the film are educators, parents, activists and students who are fighting for their own education.

What kind of reaction are you getting in screenings?

So far, the film has gotten enthusiastic responses from audiences. Educators, parents, students and many ordinary citizens have told us that they learned a lot from watching the film and want to get involved in supporting public schools. We have gotten over 90 requests for screenings from groups around the country who have contacted us through our website — backpackfullofcash.com — just in the past 10 days [at the end of April]. We know that the timing is right for this film, and are thrilled that it is striking a chord with the public.

Are you more worried about school privatization now than when you began making *Backpack*?

Yes and no. There is a tipping point where competition from private-sector “options” starts to drain public schools of funding, and then people start to lose trust in them. I feel that many cities are approaching that point. If the current administration in Washington makes good on its promise to back privatization with federal dollars, that could



“Why dismantle public schools? Why not make them work well for everyone?”

accelerate the trend. On the other hand, the public is aware of the issue and people are energized right now, so that gives me hope.

How can members of the public fight back to save public education?

There are organizations in every state (and at the national level) advocating for public schools. We are developing a discussion guide for the film which we will distribute to groups doing screenings. It will include links to these organizations so people can get involved. Plus, people can get active in their own schools, speak out, write letters to the editor, blog, support candidates who are pro-public education, or consider running for the school board themselves.

We know public schools face huge challenges. But we want to keep the focus on the bigger, complex problems — child poverty, segregation and unequal funding. The question we had when we started this film is still the same: Why dismantle public schools? Why not make them work well for everyone?

members at a conference. But schools are not failing, says Ravitch, a former U.S. assistant secretary of education.

“Test scores are the highest they’ve ever been in American history. The dropout rate is the lowest it’s ever been. And people are shocked to hear this because there’s been this constant din of *failure, failure, decline, decline.*”

Next, it’s on to New Orleans, where charter school

operators rushed in to take over the decimated public school system after Hurricane Katrina. Vouchers — referred to as “scholarships” — were also approved in Louisiana, allowing private schools to use taxpayer money to educate students. The headmaster of a Christian school where half the students receive vouchers tells the filmmakers his school’s curriculum is based on creationism, and teachers discuss “the theory of evolution and why it’s not true.”



Teachers See the Possibilities

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Public schools in Union City, New Jersey, are presented as an alternative to privatization. When a court case forced the state to adequately fund public schools, students thrived, even those living in poverty. In fact, New Jersey's public schools now have the narrowest achievement gap in the country between poor students and those who are not.

Charter school operators intentionally focus on poor neighborhoods, *Backpack* points out, taking resources away from where they are needed the most.

"You go into a wealthy community and you won't see charter schools," observes Rhonda Brownstein, former executive director of Education Law Center, which advocates for

"The movement for free-market 'reform' has largely ignored the larger challenges that need to be addressed — child poverty, racial segregation and unequal funding."

— From the creators of *Backback Full of Cash*

largely ignored the larger challenges that need to be addressed — child poverty, racial segregation and unequal funding," say the film's creators in a statement.

In the epilogue, in what may have been an unanticipated add-on after the election, we see privatization proponent Betsy DeVos appointed U.S. secretary of education. It's noted that in her home state of Michigan, test scores dropped drastically after \$1 billion was spent on charter schools.

"What does this mean for America's future?" we are asked at the end of the film.

The answer is far from certain, and the battle to save public schools is just beginning. ■

To find a screening near you, or to request a screening, visit backpackfullofcash.com or facebook.com/backpackfullofcash. There is a charge for screenings, determined by type and size of the venue.



Actor and activist Matt Damon, whose mother is a teacher, narrates *Backpack Full of Cash*.



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By Terry Ng



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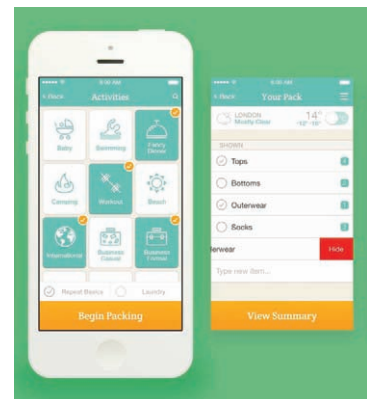
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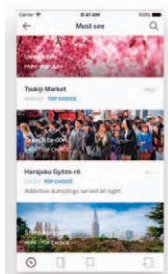


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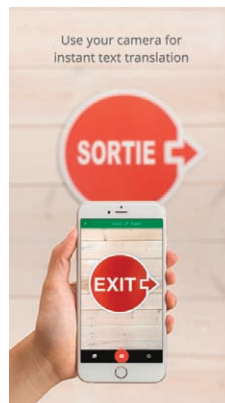
Haven't made a blow-by-blow itinerary for your summer trip yet? Not to worry — with a few clever apps you just decide where you're going and they guide you through the journey. Whether it's a long weekend getaway or an exotic global trek, you'll be prepared with these essential apps to get the most out of your travels. All are available for iOS and Android.



Guides by Lonely Planet

(Free)

Packed with offline maps, phrasebooks, currency converter and advice from on-the-ground experts, this app covers an incredible range of cities and is a great resource before and during your trip.



Google Translate *(Free)*

Headed abroad, but don't speak or read the native language fluently? Google Translate to the rescue. Use your microphone for speech translation, and your camera for instant text translation between 103 languages. There's even a conversation mode for instant two-way speed translation in 32 languages.



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Both Hasia Babicz, right, and her students have standing desks with wheels, which makes it easy for them to move around and form horseshoes, circles and other groupings.



Take a Stand

Educators find mobility, flexibility with standing desks

By Dina Martin
Photo by Scott Buschman

When students at Vallecito Elementary School in San Rafael began using standing desks two years ago, fifth-grade teacher Hasia Babicz didn't take the news sitting down. She acquired one herself.

"I told my students, 'If you're standing, I'm standing,'" says the Dixie Teachers Association member. "I never liked sitting desks anyway. You're up and down, up and down. This is not a profession where you sit."

Vallecito first piloted standing desks in one class to rave reviews, and has since become an all-standing school for students. Still, Babicz is the only teacher to "take a stand." She obtained permission from her principal — who also has a standing desk — to use some of her classroom funds to offset the cost of the desk.

"I'm an active person, and this accommodates my personality," she says. "Now, I have furniture that works with me, instead of the other way around. I almost can't remember not having a standing desk."

In truth, Babicz still has a teacher desk in her classroom, but it has become secondary to the standing desk, whose 5-foot tabletop is able to fit her laptop, grading book and students' papers. The desk moves easily on its wheels and weighs almost nothing. Babicz and her students can zip around her small classroom, forming horseshoes, circles and other groupings when she calls out, "Brakes up."

Of course, Babicz has had to change her work style, finding alternative storage for folders and other items, but that is all but forgotten now. "Now that I have my standing desk, I won't go back," she says.

Are they good or bad?

The history of standing desks can be traced back to the 1400s — it is said Leonardo da Vinci used one when he came up with his many ideas such as flying machines and armored cars.

Ergonomically correct and commercially available standing desks of today, however, became popular over the past decade, as office workers began spending more and more of their day sitting in front of a computer screen. They're now making their way into homes and classrooms, where teachers are finding they help fidgety kids stay more focused.

Still, the jury is out on whether standing desks — or sit-stand desks that can be adjusted for height — are any better for their users. Recent studies indicate that there is little evidence that sit-stand desks or even fancier treadmill desks help burn calories or prevent the harm of sitting. In fact, there is little evidence that standing is better than sitting, according to Jos Verbeek, a researcher at the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, who studied the impact of standing and sit-stand desks.

“The idea you should be standing four hours a day? There's no real evidence for that,” he said in a 2016 interview with National Public Radio. “I would say that there's evidence that standing can be bad for your health.”

Bob Hill, education manager for Ergotron, one of the major manufacturers of sit-stand desks, advocates that people listen to their bodies.

“Ergonomists say that the best posture is the *next* posture. We look at the ills of too much sedentary behavior and encourage people to move on to the next posture,” he says, noting that a sit-stand desk is adjustable and allows more movement.

Hill says that standing or sit-stand desks may be the wave of the future, since they are mobile and adjustable to any size student.

“They fit in nicely with personalized learning, adaptive learning, and allow for greater classroom efficiency,” he says.



Flexispot's sit-stand desktop workstations can move up or down with ease.



Ergotron's mobile desks let you move around the classroom with ease.

Greater connectivity, agility

Many teachers develop back problems from too much standing, or from working in “child-size environments” where they must bend and stoop, or lift and carry. To be sure, some teachers can't picture themselves using or wanting a standing desk.

Educators like Babicz say the benefits outweigh the drawbacks. Teachers in crowded, smaller rooms have found that standing desks take up less space, and some models designed with cubbies and pull-out drawers allow them to cut clutter and become even more organized. Standing desks can also eliminate podiums and AV carts; newer versions can accommodate laptops, tablets and DVD players, allowing teachers to easily integrate PowerPoint presentations and SmartBoards. Some note that the desks allow better collaboration and more engagement with students, such as one-on-one discussions or viewing student presentations.

Robert Brewer, an eighth-grade science teacher at Montera Middle School and Oakland Education Association member, uses a standing desk to supplement his traditional desk. Brewer has a large 50-foot-long classroom, so his portable desk allows him to easily navigate through the space to reach students. While his surface space is smaller than Babicz's desk, it is large enough to accommodate class handouts and his Chromebook. He even rolls it out into the hallway between classes to work with his colleagues.

“It helps me get more work done and makes me a bit more efficient,” he says. ■

“Now, I have furniture that works with me, instead of the other way around.”

—HASIA BABICZ,
Dixie Teachers Association



Norma Heeter and Ellie Cole maintain busy lives after leaving the classroom.

When Is It Time to Retire?

Do your homework and plan for life after school

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin Photos by Scott Buschman

NORMA HEETER loved being a high school Spanish teacher. Unlike some of her colleagues, she was not counting the days until retirement.

“I always thought I’d stay as long as possible and go out kicking and screaming,” she muses.

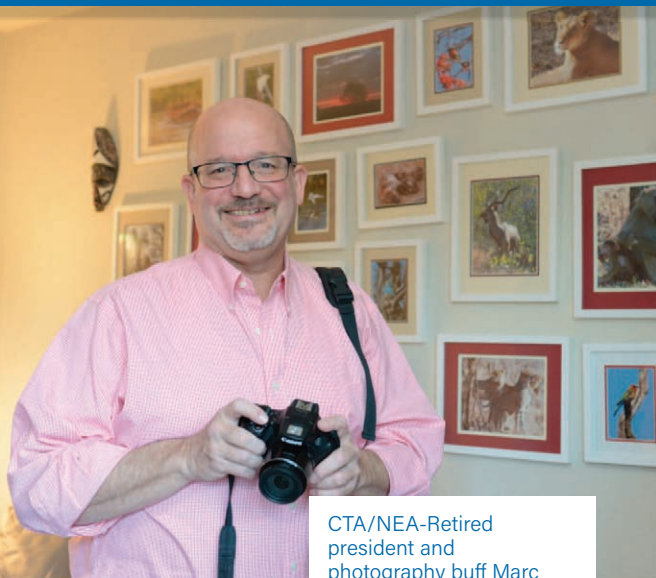
But in 2003, Heeter left the classroom to become a Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) consulting teacher, which allowed her to work a longer contract and raise her final salary. She served as a PAR teacher for three years, working under a hostile and unpopular superintendent who often targeted teachers unfairly. She finally decided that after 39 years of teaching, she had

had enough. It was time to retire and enjoy life.

“The minute I sent in my retirement papers, I felt a sense of great relief, and I wanted it to happen immediately,” she laughs. “It was the right decision.”

These days she is busy as the president of the San Diego Education Association’s chapter of CTA/NEA-Retired, whose members enjoy luncheons, movies, museum visits and other outings. She goes on runs with her Corvette Club, and was also president of that. And she enjoys spending time with her husband and grandchildren.

“There are plenty of things to do,” she says, while lunching with longtime friend and fellow SDEA retiree Ellie Cole.



CTA/NEA-Retired president and photography buff Marc Sternberger has been traveling the world.

“Yes, there’s a whole world out there beyond teaching,” chimes in Cole, a former elementary school teacher. “All you have to do is look.”

Plenty of veteran teachers are looking to join Heeter and Cole soon. Most retire between ages 57 and 66. In 2012, the state noted that 21.5 percent of teachers were over 55. Approximately 11,300 California teachers retired in 2015. By 2019, the nation will have lost half the teachers it had just a decade earlier due to retirements, the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future predicts.

But before deciding to retire, teachers must do their homework to see if the time is right. Heeter, for example, made sure that she was psychologically and financially ready.

“I wanted to make sure I could afford to retire, because I know some teachers who retired prematurely and then went back to the classroom because they couldn’t afford it. I didn’t want that to happen to me.”

Make sure you have enough income

In California, K-14 teachers, employers and the state all contribute to the California State Teachers’ Retirement System (CalSTRS). You are entitled to retirement benefits if you are at least 50 years old with 30 years of service, or at least 55 years old with five years of service.

The first step is to see what you’ll receive monetarily. At the CalSTRS website (calstrs.com) you can find your local CalSTRS office and schedule a free appointment with a counselor to discuss what you can expect from your pension, or defined benefit, based on your age, salary and years of service.

CTA/NEA-Retired

If you are retired or retiring, you don’t have to lose your CTA benefits. Just join CTA/NEA-Retired, the only retiree organization affiliated with CTA and NEA, which includes an NEA Retirement e-newsletter for timely tips on Medicare, taxes, investing and more. Among the benefits are:

- **CTA Group Legal Services** — One-hour advice and consultation relating to retirement benefit issues, health and welfare issues, and substitute employment. Also, once a year there’s free legal consultation for 30 minutes on any matter except taxes, immigration and intellectual property.
- **NEA Liability Insurance** — \$1 million professional liability insurance for members who decide to substitute after retiring.
- **CTA Disaster Relief Assistance** — Those who have experienced significant losses due to disasters in California may be eligible for financial assistance from a special fund.
- **Eligibility for discounts and special rates** — Discounts available for auto and home insurance, travel and entertainment, vision care, car rental, dental visits, hearing aids, pet insurance, Medicare Part D, travel packages, credit union services, and more.
- **Having a political voice** — Learn how you can lobby against attempts to privatize Social Security or erode Medicare or pension benefits.
- **Staying connected** — Share interests and socialize by participating in local CTA/NEA-Retired chapter social functions with former colleagues and fellow retirees.

You can pay annual dues of \$54 by having \$4.50 deducted monthly from your CalSTRS pension check, pay annual dues of \$60 by check or credit card, or pay one-time dues of \$450 for life membership by check or credit card. For more information, visit cta.org/retired or email CTA-Retired@cta.org.

The website also has a retirement benefits calculator to help figure out your approximate monthly income. Check out its “Why Wait” and “What If” calculators to see if your retirement savings are on track — and what a difference a few years might make.

Your defined-benefit plan gives you a guaranteed pension if you are vested (eligible for retirement benefits, with a minimum of five years of service). According to CalSTRS, though, the median pension benefit replaces only 60 to 65 percent of pre-retirement income, which may not be sufficient for a comfortable lifestyle.

However, a defined-contribution plan such as a voluntary 403(b) plan gives you the opportunity to supplement your pension with additional savings. It’s like the 401(k) plan in the private sector. More information



Beware the Social Security offsets

As a California public school educator, you do not contribute to Social Security, so you will not receive a Social Security benefit for your CalSTRS-covered employment when you retire. If you are counting on Social Security through your spouse or other employment, learn the facts. Two federal rules, the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset, may leave you with a smaller Social Security check or possibly no check at all. These rules affect only your Social Security benefit. Your CalSTRS retirement benefit will not change.

To learn all the facts about this, visit calstrs.com/sites/main/files/socialsecurity2016_15.pdf.

about 403(b) plans and vendors can be found on the CalSTRS website. The CTA Retirement Savings Plan, a best-in-class 403(b) plan, was developed last year by CTA. To learn more, visit CTAMemberBenefits.org/rsp.

When speech-language therapist/special education teacher Marc Sternberger was considering retirement from Pittsburg Unified School District, he contacted a CalSTRS counselor to see what income he would receive after 38 years of working in California public schools and contributing to CalSTRS.

“I had enough years of service, but would get the maximum if I waited until I was one year older,” he recalls. “But then my district offered a retirement incentive, which was negotiated by our chapter’s bargaining team, which I just happened to chair. So I helped negotiate an attractive retirement package, then retired along with 28 other members.”

The former Pittsburg Education Association member was pleased to learn from his investment counselor that he would be bringing home \$7 more per month if he retired than he was currently making while working full time, based on his pension, the retirement incentive, and the 403(b) he’d been contributing to since his early 30s.

Since retiring six years ago, he’s traveled to Africa on safari and recently went to Machu Picchu and the Galapagos Islands, where he indulged his passion, photography. Sternberger also volunteers weekly in a friend’s elementary school carpentry class. “It’s my way of staying



Lois Hale retired seven years ago from Compton. Now she rises early every day for power walks with friends.

connected to the education profession — minus the stress and paperwork.”

As president of CTA/NEA-Retired, he’s busy organizing events, workshops and meetings. His goals — and those of CTA’s retiree affiliate — include helping members manage their retirement while continuing their involvement in CTA. (See more on CTA/NEA-Retired on page 49.)

“I’m having fun and staying involved in CTA and the politics that impacts retirees and public education,” he beams. “I make myself available to answer questions from retirees and active CTA members planning to retire. You might say I’m the ‘Dear Abby’ of retirement.”

Make sure you have health care

“Just as important as determining whether you’ll have a livable income is whether you will have adequate health insurance, because teachers tend to retire before age 65, when Medicare kicks in,” says Sternberger.

Some locals’ contracts include health care until 65, and there are still a few that have lifetime coverage. Contact your local chapter or employer to learn if you will have any health benefits in retirement, and if so, whether benefits continue once you are eligible for Medicare.

If you’re not covered, there are still options.



Mary Rose Ortega remains politically engaged, including with CTA/NEA-Retired.

Tips for a happy retirement

- Figure out in advance what you want from retirement. Decide how you plan to spend your days and how you will stay active and fulfilled.
- Share with your spouse or partner about what you want out of retirement.
- Come up with a plan for sufficient income and health care.
- Choose when to retire and follow through. People who retire by choice are happier than those who feel they must.
- Stay engaged and healthy through volunteering, hobbies or part-time work.
- Learn new things.
- Keep a schedule of sorts. It's not how much free time you have, but how you manage it. Having a schedule prevents boredom, loneliness and depression.
- Spend time with your children, grandchildren and friends.

Source: *Forbes.com*

Married educators can possibly be added to a spouse's plan. Another option is taking a job outside of the teaching profession for the health benefits.

According to CalSTRS, the availability of affordable health care can have a tremendous impact on the ability of retirees to maintain their standard of living.

CalSTRS does not provide health or dental insurance coverage, because these things are collectively bargained at the local school district level. Under California Education Code sections 7000-7008, school districts, community colleges and county offices of education must offer retiring CalSTRS members and their spouses or registered domestic partners the opportunity to continue their medical and dental insurance at their own cost. There are also insurance plans available through both NEA and CTA Member Benefits, and Medicare Supplement plans after Medicare coverage begins.

As a CalSTRS member, you are eligible to purchase long-term care insurance, which can alleviate financial worries if serious illness strikes, from CalPERS (California Public

Employees' Retirement System). For more information, visit www.calperslongtermcare.com.

Make healthy choices

Good health is about more than just insurance; it's also about embracing a healthy lifestyle. Research shows exercise reduces the risk of early death, helps control weight, and lowers the risk of heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes, depression and some types of cancer. Exercise helps retirees stay strong and flexible so they can continue to do the things they enjoy — travel, play with grandchildren, live independently — for years to come.

Lois Hale has dropped weight since retiring seven years ago from Compton and has never felt better. She gets up early every day and goes for daily “power walks” with friends in Inglewood.

“We call ourselves the ‘walk it off buddies,’” she says.

Now that she's lost weight, she can indulge her other passion in life, which is clothes shopping and bargain





A 30-year teacher, Robin Schreiber retired and found fame as the Golden State Warriors' "Dance Cam Mom."

hunting. She and a friend will drive to another county if there's a bargain to be had.

"I love being retired," says Hale, former president of the Compton Education Association. "I'm finally free and don't have to worry about all the responsibilities teachers have."

As president of the Compton chapter of CTA/NEA-Retired, she stays busy and socially connected. She enjoys volunteering in her former district, serves on three committees, and helps out with Read Across America.

"Don't wait to retire, because if you wait too long, you can't enjoy it. And retirement is so enjoyable!"

Stay engaged

Mary Rose Ortega is so busy these days, she can't figure out how she managed to work full time. Now that she's retired, the former Los Angeles teacher and longtime CTA Board of Directors and NEA Board member can devote herself to political causes dear to her heart, such as volunteering with the Association of Mexican American Educators, the Democratic Party and political campaigns. She is also the legislative representative for the United Teachers Los Angeles chapter of CTA/NEA-Retired.

Having a sense of purpose and staying connected to one's community is of critical importance to staying happy and mentally healthy as a retiree, observes [Forbes.com](#).

"Retirees have the experience, the knowledge and the time to help out with political causes, but we are often an untapped resource for CTA," Ortega observes. "We have to

let the younger generation know that just because we're older doesn't mean we aren't available."

She's also having fun. She recently attended Oldchella, a three-day rock concert featuring the Rolling Stones, Paul McCartney, The Who and Bob Dylan. She travels with her husband to his work conferences, and reads books she never had time for before. She's renovating her home, which has a spectacular view of Los Angeles, and her grandchildren visit often.

"The best things are days when you can get up in the morning and not do anything," she says. "I love that, too."

Find a hobby

Experts say hobbies make for a happier retirement. Robin Schreiber, an artist, thought she'd mostly be painting and exhibiting her work in local galleries.

But after a video of her dancing at a Golden State Warriors basketball game went viral — there are 220 million views of her on YouTube — dancing has become her new hobby.

A teacher of 30 years, Schreiber expected to slip into retirement quietly. But the former Hillsborough Teachers Association member has done anything but, and it all started with a sweater.

She bought the Warriors' ugly holiday sweater for her son, but he said, "No, thanks." She wore it to a game and decided that people needed some cheering up after the ugliness of the presidential campaign. So, when the music came on, she danced. The crowd — viewing her on the Jumbotron — went wild.

She was asked to do a holiday performance with the Warriors Dance Team, and TNT flew her family to New Orleans for the All-Star Game, where she met some of her favorite players, including Steph Curry. Recently, an apparel company approached her about a T-shirt with her likeness. She is giving motivational talks to schools about cyberbullying, because people have ridiculed her online, much to her great indifference.

"Yes, I'm having fun with this," she admits. "The best part of being retired is doing whatever you want."

See Robin "Dance Cam Mom" Schreiber create a stir on social media at bit.ly/2pPp4Ly. ■

Lynwood Teachers Association (LTA) member and AP teacher Luis Vega celebrates Lynwood's success in expanding AP course access and raising AP test scores.



District of the Year

Lynwood Defies Odds to Grab Top Honor

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin

In an improbable feat that proves investing in education helps students overcome poverty, language barriers and living in high-crime areas, Lynwood Unified School District was one of three districts in the nation — and the only one in California — to be named a College Board Advanced Placement District of the Year.

Lynwood is located near Compton and the Los Angeles airport. Ninety-six percent of the district's students are people of color, and many receive free or reduced-price lunch, which is the federal indicator for poverty within schools. The rate of violent crime in Lynwood is 34 percent higher than the average rate in California and 53 percent higher than the national rate, according to areavibes.com.

Yet despite the obstacles students face, the district received the prestigious award last year for being the national leader among medium-size school districts in expanding access to AP courses while simultaneously improving AP scores. It was among 433 districts in the U.S. and Canada



LTA member John Ude teaches AP engineering at Firebaugh High School.

to be included on the College Board's annual AP District Honor Roll.

In other good news, a record number of Lynwood High School students prepared to take the AP exams in May, and the district's graduation rate is skyrocketing. Two high schools — Lynwood and Firebaugh — had a 93 percent graduation rate in 2016.

Lynwood Teachers Association (LTA) member Saswati Bhattacharyay, an AP calculus teacher at Firebaugh, was emotional when she heard the amazing news.

"My students' success is my success," she says. "I am tremendously proud of them."

The key to convincing students to take AP classes?

"I try to build dreams in their hearts,"

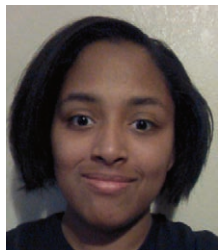
says Bhattacharyay. "I want them to have dreams of having an educated and successful life. I connect with them and build their mathematical foundation so they go for challenges. They are seeing success happening, and this builds a culture."

Luis Vega, an AP fine arts teacher at Lynwood High and LTA member, was also thrilled at the news.

"Teachers do what we do every day, but it feels great to get recognition from the College Board," he says. "I'm proud to be part of this academic progress that is the result of working with the district, parents and the community. I appreciate that the district provided the resources that we needed to make this happen."



The transformation began five years ago, when the district decided it was time to rewrite the mission statement. Teachers, administrators and parents set a goal of having open access to AP programs with-



Shavon Johnson

out prerequisites or tracking, and increasing the number of AP classes.

The district scheduled summer boot camps to prepare students for the rigorous AP courses, emphasizing basic skills and academic subject fundamentals.

“Once they are in the AP program, we give them a lot of support,” says

Bhattacharyay. “We stay after school and help them at lunchtimes and on Saturdays. With so many intervention classes and other support, they can pass the AP tests.”

Vega says the district motivates students by having Lynwood alumni visit and share their college stories. Staff take students on field trips to museums and colleges.

Shavon Johnson, a senior who took AP English, psychology and art classes, will attend CSU Northridge in the fall. When her teachers first suggested she enroll in AP classes, she admits, she was apprehensive. But they pushed, and she’s glad they did.

“When I needed help, they helped me out. And now I’m going to college. The AP classes definitely helped with my GPA.”



LTA members and AP teachers Debora Araujo-Garcia and Edilia Padilla are recognized.

Building student confidence fosters more confidence, says Bhattacharyay, and she expects students will perform well on AP tests this year.

“We have won this award, but we still have a long way to go,” she says. “Our goal should be to have all of the students successfully passing their tests.” ■

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Welcoming Walls

New CTA ad campaign highlights educator values, safe and inclusive schools

Some build walls to divide us. But as a new CTA TV ad campaign says, school walls — from whiteboards to library shelves to classroom walls full of student art — welcome all and bring us together.

The CTA Media Fund campaign features members. As with previous campaigns, it reminds the public about the value of public education and CTA's ongoing advocacy for schools as safe, nurturing environments where students can learn and grow. It demonstrates the excellent student-centered work educators do in their classrooms, schools and colleges every day.

The campaign extends to radio, online and social media ads.

“Schools should be safe havens that unite and build our communities. This new campaign drives that message home.”

—CTA President **Eric Heins**

technical skills and career training, which build brighter futures.

See and hear the new ads in English and Spanish at youtube.com/CaliforniaTeachers. Print ads translated into 11 languages are running in ethnic media.

The ads are airing in multiple media markets throughout the state and are on major and relevant websites. They are particularly timely with their strong message to students and families that California schools are inclusive and welcoming to all.

“CTA believes all students deserve a quality public education, and schools should be safe havens that unite and build our communities,” says CTA President Eric Heins. “This new campaign drives that message home.” ■

Take the pledge! Show your support for students and public schools. Go to cta.org/forallstudents.



Teacher and librarian Sarah Morgan, Acalanes Education Association, advises a student.



Sixth-grade educator Taunya Jaco, San Jose Teachers Association, is in her second year of teaching.



Jorge Sanchez, Redlands ESP Association, in one of several Facebook ads asking people to sign the pledge to give all students the public education they deserve.

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