



# California EDUCATOR

California Teachers Association November 2009 Volume 14 Issue 3

*"The beautiful thing  
about learning is that  
no one can take it  
away from you."*

B.B. King

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SUPPLIES TO STUDENTS**

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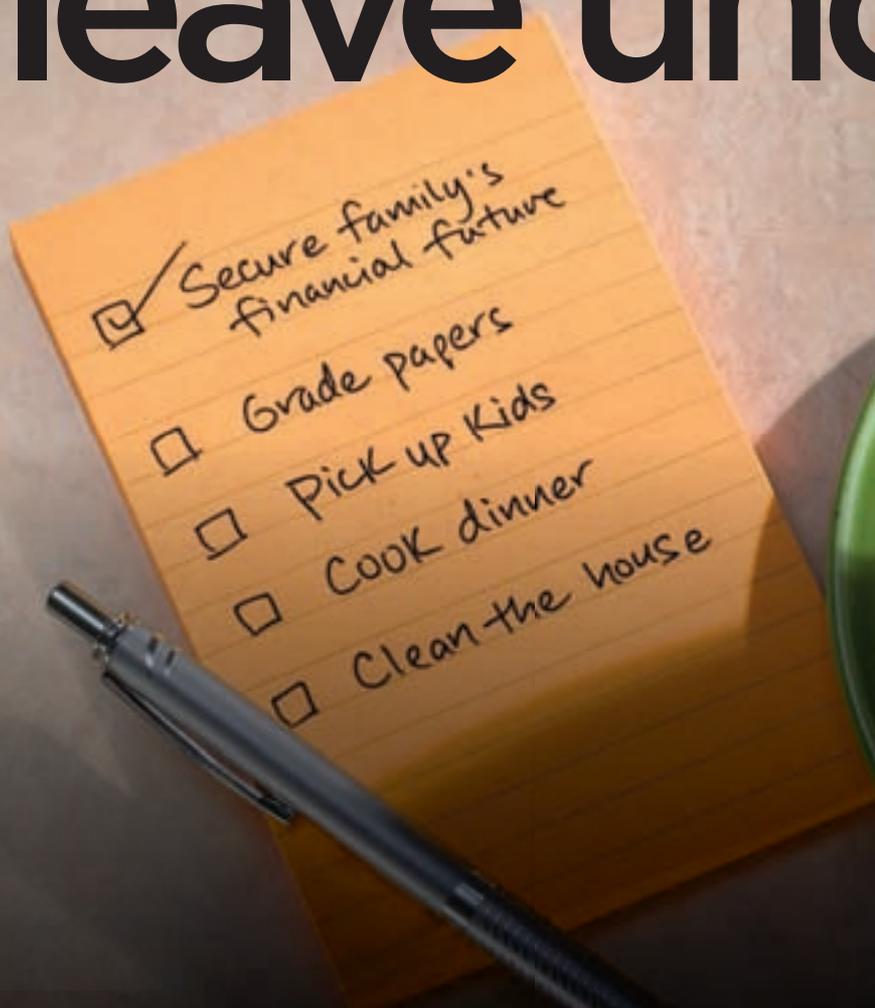
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GROWING IN VALUE**

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**WHAT IS A TEST SCORE?**

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On the cover: **San Lorenzo Education Association member and adult school teacher Venetta Cormier-Walker.**  
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# ¡Sí Se Puede! ¿Por Qué No?

BY CTA PRESIDENT DAVID A. SANCHEZ

I remember the way a classroom felt to me before No Child Left Behind (NCLB), when teaching was about encouraging students to learn rather than requiring them to practice rote memorization. My passion for being a teacher then was driven by the enthusiasm I saw on my fellow teachers' faces and the excitement in the eyes of children learning new, challenging concepts. Today, so much of what is seen in the classroom is stressful and prescribed, and all about the test at the end of the road and very little about the road itself along the way. It's as if politicians are concerned more with handing out ribbons at the finish line than with student growth in the classroom. NCLB has created a testing-focused system that does very little to help produce students with well-rounded, multifaceted learning experiences.

Now, testing is always going to be an integral part of education, and teachers use tests regularly to evaluate what students know and how they have progressed. But educators also know that a single test score never tells the whole story — it is a snapshot in time. It is simply not an effective means by which to completely evaluate the progress of a student or the efficacy of a teacher.

Our current system of high-stakes testing puts pressure on educators to focus on teaching to the test rather than teaching the child. NCLB has promoted a culture of competition that inevitably produces winners and losers — not proficient learners. Add to that the many differences in learning style among our students, and you have a recipe for failure.

A state like California, with such a diverse population of students, needs to account for those differences by offering multiple learning tools and recognizing multiple measures of student achievement. That's one of the reasons why the Obama administra-

tion's original guidelines for Race to the Top (RTTT) funding were so problematic, as they continued NCLB's overemphasis on testing as the sole measure of student achievement and as a means of evaluating teachers. CTA and NEA responded immediately, and our members made their voices heard.

The final RTTT regulations were just released. We certainly still have concerns and are reviewing all the details, but there were some improvements. The final guidelines include multiple measures of gauging student growth and, in turn, teacher effectiveness. They also call for teacher involvement in designing evaluation systems and provide a fourth option of assistance for helping lower-performing schools.

Since these new guidelines reflect the Obama administration's views on education reform, we know they will be the basis for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The past mistakes made with NCLB need to be erased and rewritten, not built upon. The Obama administration seems poised to bring in new ideas for education with the coming year — some we agree with and some we do not. We're hopeful that the new administration, as it looks toward the future, will want to help rather than hamper the success of our public schools. Teachers need to be treated as the educated professionals they are and given the tools they need to properly educate their students.

With your continued help and with all of us working closely together, we will rebuild the public education system in California. This challenge is something we are ready to face, because in the end the path of education is just as important as the finish line.

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¡Sí Se Puede! [Yes we can! Why not?], words inspired by César Chávez, encourage us to remember that, together, we can achieve great things.



Dave Crossland, hiredmeat@gmail.com

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*“For me, teaching is basically test prep — and test prep means rote memorization on multiple choice tests. I feel like I’m a proctor more than a teacher.”*

*Annie Davidian-Moos,  
Dinuba Teachers Association*



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	<b>dec 2009</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Dec. 2-3	Secondary Literary Summit IX, <b>Costa Mesa</b>
	<b>jan 2010</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Jan. 8 <input type="checkbox"/> Jan. 15 <input type="checkbox"/> Jan. 15-17 <input type="checkbox"/> Jan. 22-24 <input type="checkbox"/> Jan. 29-31	Deadline to enter César E. Chávez Awards Program Deadline for CTA State Gold Award nominations Rural Issues Conference, <b>Las Vegas</b> Good Teaching Conference, <b>Burlingame</b> CTA State Council of Education, <b>Los Angeles</b>
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# LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

## LETTERS?

Dear Editor:

I am honored to be a CTA chapter president and a 20-year teacher who has always believed in the power of unions. Unfortunately, general union membership in the U.S. has declined, and the younger generations of employees in many professions are not connected to the significant contributions made by unions on behalf of the workers they represent.

The October 2009 issue of *California Educator* should serve as a primer on this subject for education bargaining unit members statewide. The variety of topics covered about CTA's history as a union — from collective

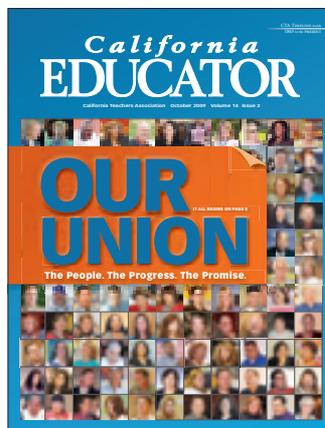
colleagues into collective action, both locally and statewide. Public education faces unprecedented challenges. We must engage a new generation of union activists to stand together to protect and enhance the rights we've gained, while working to move our profession forward.

*Tracy Pope  
President, United Teachers of  
Santa Clara*

Dear Editor:

The Union Issue was fantastic and very much needed. Our members are at an all-time low and are wondering what the Union/CTA does for them — a bit ironic, as they *are* the union and should be asking or participating to help strengthen the union. I am encouraged that CTA is having small organizing meetings to have discussions with our members. CTA needs to get back into our locals and show a presence to our members and continue to encourage them to get involved and organize and stay unified.

*Carol J. Mathews  
Manhattan Beach Unified  
Teachers Association*



bargaining to grievances to the political structure of State Council to the support of human rights — shows the broad spectrum of CTA's reach. Coupled with personal accounts from CTA members, words of wisdom from labor experts and scholars, and general information about the power of labor unions, this issue of the *Educator* must be used by those of us in leadership roles to inform, enlighten and ignite our

### Send us your comments

Letters to the editor regarding stories appearing in *California Educator* may be sent via mail, fax or e-mail.

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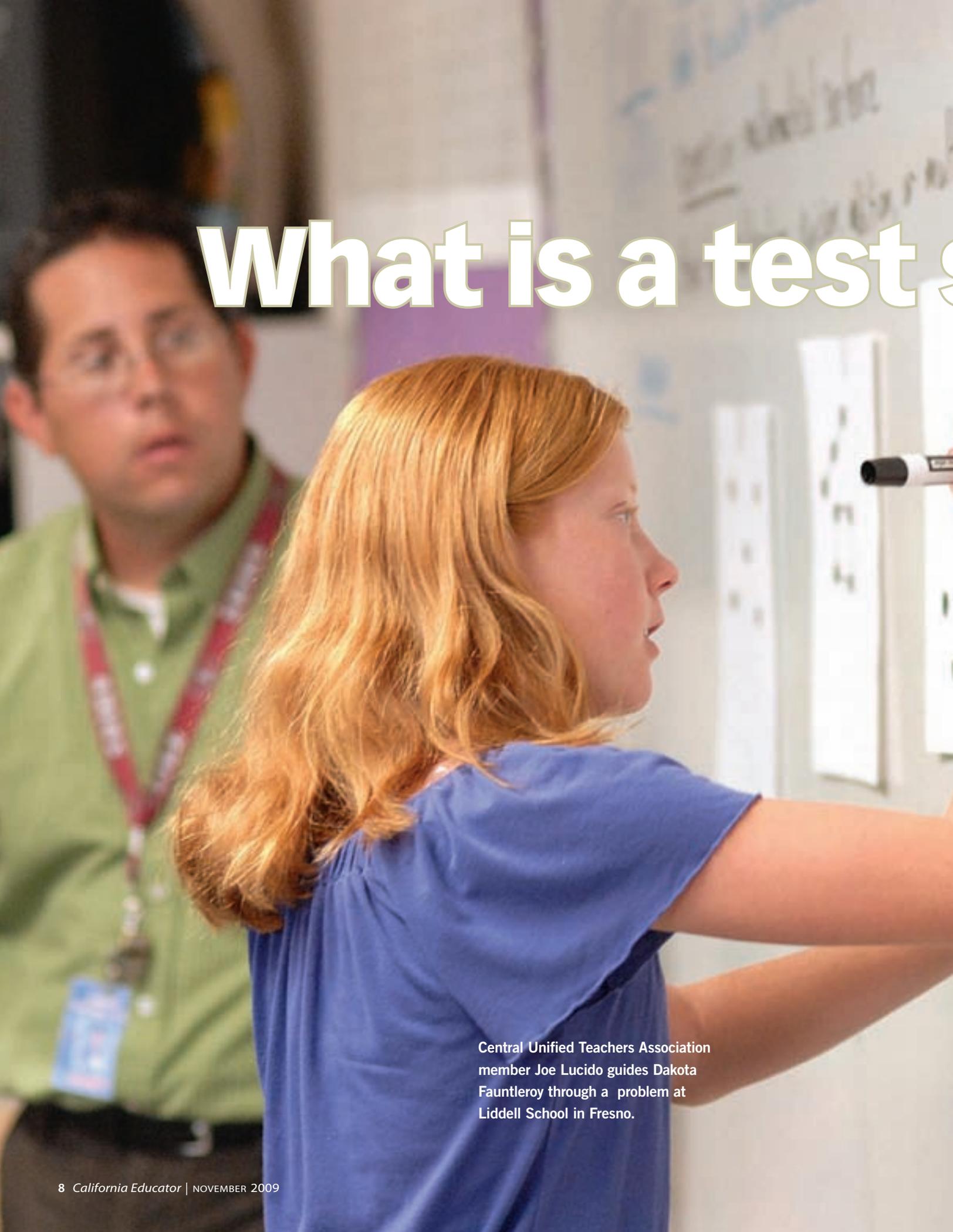


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# What is a test s



Central Unified Teachers Association member Joe Lucido guides Dakota Fauntleroy through a problem at Liddell School in Fresno.

A vertical photograph on the left side of the page shows a person's hand and forearm writing on a whiteboard. The hand is holding a marker and is in the process of writing. The whiteboard has some faint, illegible markings. The word "score?" is written in large, bold, green-outlined letters across the top of the whiteboard area.

# score?

There's no denying that test scores are a big deal in today's society. They can greatly affect real estate prices — dictating where people will live and won't live — and can foster either community pride or uneasiness. They are the yardstick by which we measure student achievement, plotting the course of a student's future as an adult. But an inherent defect of the testing system is the fact that test scores alone do not demonstrate the full range of a student's abilities or their capacity to learn. The focus on high-stakes testing and the pressure on educators to teach to the test tend to deny students a well-rounded, multifaceted education — and often leave students emotionally stressed and unprepared for the rigors of higher learning where critical thinking skills are a necessity.

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

In the following stories you'll read about the current controversial nature of testing in California. We discuss with educators the science of testing and how the majority of tests are structured so that a certain percentage of students will consistently fail. You'll read about one teacher who previously taught in an affluent community in Walnut Creek (where test scores are above average) and now teaches in an economically depressed region of Richmond (where scores are below average) — the same teacher

with significantly different results in each setting. We'll also take a look at the inner workings of standards-based testing and see how tests are intrinsically flawed, seldom taking into consideration the many socioeconomic and cultural factors that affect the students of this diverse state. As educators, if we really want to provide California's students with the best possible education and a greater head start on a successful future, we need to ask ourselves the question: *What really is a test score?* >>>

# Same teacher, different class

## means different results

“Keep your eyes on the magic wand,” Melanie Perkins tells her students as she points to the words on her oversized book. “Let’s read the title together. It’s *One Hungry Monster*. Let’s use our best monster voices.”

The students read and growl simultaneously, following the wand.

If there’s one thing Perkins knows how to do extremely well, it’s teaching young children. She is enthusiastic, nurturing and patient, and makes learning enjoyable for her 24 students at Nystrom Elementary School in Richmond.

Perkins did not always teach at Nystrom, a school in Program Improvement facing sanctions under No Child Left Be-

hind. She began her teaching career in the affluent community of Walnut Creek. Switching to Nystrom was a matter of choice; she threw tenure to the wind because she wanted to go where she was most needed.

In Walnut Creek her students scored in the high 800s or low 900s on STAR tests. But after 18 years, she needed a challenge. At the urging of a friend, she visited Nystrom. The minute she walked in, she knew she was meant to teach there. And she’s remained at the low-income school for the past four years. It is the challenge she wanted and then some. Nearly all of her students are English learners who live in poverty. Many come to school hungry. They live in a community plagued by gang violence.

“On my first day of school, there was a drive-by shooting on the street behind the school,” recalls Perkins, a member of United Teachers of Richmond. “There

were two bullets on the playground where the kids have recess. It happens here a lot. One family told me that they have spent the night in the bathtub because they are afraid of bullets coming into the house.”

Despite working harder than ever, the veteran teacher wasn’t the least bit surprised when students at her new school missed the 800 mark in STAR test results. They scored much lower, in fact, than her students in Walnut Creek. And despite what she is hearing from politicians, her teaching skills are not the reason, says Perkins.

“I’m absolutely the same teacher I was in Walnut Creek,” says Perkins. “But students here have a much harder time and come to school much less prepared. They are not proficient in English. Their first language may be Spanish, Chinese or Arabic. They have limited vocabulary and limited experiences. Most have not been

**BELOW:** United Teachers of Richmond member Melanie Perkins takes her students through a class at Nystrom Elementary School.



*“I’m absolutely the same teacher I was in Walnut Creek. But students here have a much harder time and come to school much less prepared.”*

*Melanie Perkins  
United Teachers of Richmond*



beyond their neighborhood. They don’t even know that the San Francisco Bay is just a few blocks away. Compare that to my students in Walnut Creek who fly to Paris for spring break.”

If schools evaluate and pay teachers based on their students’ test scores, Perkins thinks, it will hurt rather than help

low-income schools. Why on earth, she asks, would somebody volunteer to teach the most challenging students when they could teach in wealthy communities where students score higher? It would drive away qualified, hard-working, experienced teachers where they are most needed, she says.

**ABOVE:** Melanie Perkins’ kindergartners involved in rhyming lessons.

“If teachers were evaluated based on their test scores, nobody would want to teach here at Nystrom,” she says. “How would they fill teaching positions? There is already a high turnover because it’s a tough place to teach. To me, the tests mostly measure how well a child understands English.”

And that’s precisely why it is so important that the federal Race to the Top regulations don’t mandate that teacher evaluations and salary be based solely on how their students perform on standardized tests, says Perkins.

This year, Perkins is teaching kindergartners. Even though they won’t be tested, there is intense pressure to get them ready for testing in the future. But she does not want to destroy a love of learning in her youngsters, so she incorporates play into learning activities whenever possible.

“I just wish the people making the rules would live in our school for a couple of weeks before they tell me how to do my job,” sighs Perkins. “It frustrates me to no end when they tell me how fast a child — fighting against the odds — should be achieving. I don’t think it’s unreasonable to expect my students to score high, but it’s unreasonable to expect them to score high under somebody’s else’s time table with no perception about what is going on in their lives.” ❖

### Correlation between travel and academic achievement

A study by the American Resort Development Association found that children who travel over summer break — whether to a beach, historic site or a national park — did better in reading, math and general knowledge than their peers who didn’t vacation.

The study used the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study of the Kindergarten Class database from the U.S. Department of Education. The database contains information on 21,600 children followed from kindergarten through fifth grades. This year’s study examined children’s early school experiences as well as family and life experiences, such as summer activities. The parents of a subsample of 5,047 children were asked about summer travel. Academic achievement was measured with a series of standardized tests in the three areas of math, reading and general knowledge.

A series of analyses were conducted to determine the relationship between summer vacation travel and academic achievement in children entering first grade. Specifically, the study explored whether going on a vacation, the number of days spent on a vacation and

places visited were linked to academic achievement in the areas of reading, mathematics and general knowledge. The results revealed a significant difference in academic achievement and taking a family summer vacation trip. Children that traveled with their family over summer vacation scored higher on academic achievement assessment tests than those who did not travel. Children who visited plays or concerts, art or science museums, historical sites, beaches or lakes, national or state parks, and zoos or aquariums had significantly higher academic achievement scores than those who did not.

“To date there has never been a study that plainly shows the correlation between travel and academic achievement,” says researcher Jessica Parker, Clemson University. It was interesting to see the impact on a child when they spend vacation time away with their family.

Although the results indicate that summer vacation travel and academic achievement are linked, other factors such as income level, parent’s educational level and language spoken at home may influence these findings.

# Should teacher evaluations be based on test scores?

Last summer, President Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan announced the criteria for participation in “Race to the Top” — a competitive federal grant program for one-time dollars given to California that in all likelihood would not exceed \$500 million. The guidelines for inclusion in the competition stipulate that California must not have any legal, statutory, or regulatory barriers to linking data on student achievement or student growth to teachers and principals for the purpose of teacher and principal evaluation. This situation has sparked debate over the issue of linking test scores to teacher evaluation and pay.

“Test scores are useful for teachers when it comes to understanding which areas students may need help in,” says CTA President David A. Sanchez. “But students are more than one test score and so are educators. There is no research or evidence that evaluating or paying teachers based on test scores improves education.”

“There is a problem when you start trying to equate what a student knows to what he has been taught in that year,” says Curtis Washington, a CTA Board member and longtime math teacher in a high-scoring high school in Millbrae. “There is not always a direct correlation. Teachers may get credit for things students have learned from teachers in previous

years or that they may have learned from their parents, since teachers only have them a few hours every day.”

Though at the local level data is available to teachers and school administrators to analyze and evaluate student progress, multiple measures are used to evaluate teacher effectiveness. Newspapers statewide have reported that the Long Beach Unified School District evaluates teachers based on their test scores. But this is false, says Michael Day,

president of the Teachers Association of Long Beach.

“It’s been a crazy ride, but there is zero truth to this rumor,” says Day.



**Curtis Washington**  
CTA Board Member

*“The idea of linking teacher evaluations with test scores might be an easy concept, but educating a child is a lot more complicated than that.”*

*Michael Day, Teachers Association of Long Beach.*

“In Long Beach, we use test scores and data to increase student achievement, not to punish teachers. A teacher could deliver a fantastic lesson that hits all the right points and messages, and there could still be students who for one reason or another don’t get it. The student could have been absent, not eaten a good breakfast, or there could be a myriad of other factors beyond a teacher’s control.

“Teachers need to be judged on their teaching

and their performance in the classroom. It might require more work on the part of administrators to observe what is happening in the classroom, instead of looking at a sheet of paper with numbers on it. The idea of linking teacher evaluations with test scores might be an easy concept, but educating a child is a lot more complicated than that.”

Testing expert Alfie Kohn fears that if teachers were evaluated solely on test scores it would foster competition among teachers that could harm students. “Even if the tests were good and their results meaningful, making children, teachers or schools struggle against one another, so that one can succeed only if others fail, is disastrous to everyone concerned.”

“Using test scores as the sole basis to pay or evaluate teachers devalues education and pits everyone against each other,” says Babette Jaire, a special education teacher and presi-

dent of the Madera Unified Teachers Association. “Everyone striving to get money for their department is not what education is supposed to be about. It’s about giving children a chance to explore different options and develop a passion for something, whether it’s art, music or science. It’s about developing true citizens of the world. It’s good to have goals in education. But goals should not be the only thing that matters.” ✦



**Babette Jaire**  
Madera Unified Teachers  
Association

## The facts about Senate Bill 19

Senate Bill 19 was signed by the governor Oct. 11 to clarify existing law regarding student test scores and teacher evaluations. Because a great deal of confusion continues to surround the legislation, we've compiled some frequently asked questions and answers to shed light on the matter.

### Is it now legal to use student assessments as a component of teacher evaluations?

State law already requires the use of student assessment results in the evaluation of teachers, including the use of criterion-referenced tests as determined by local teachers and administrators. Many districts include student assessments as one component of evaluations and are using data to improve instruction, teacher effectiveness and student learning. Those evaluation processes must still be negotiated.

### Should I be alarmed about the passage of SB 19?

Deletion of the "state firewall" language regarding student and teacher data systems does not impact state collective bargaining law or local bargaining agreements. The state does not evaluate teachers and this bill doesn't create a statewide evaluation system.

### Did CTA have a position on this bill?

CTA members reviewed the legislation, and CTA took a "watch" position based on the assumption that SB 19 was unnecessary, since teacher data and student data have always been linked at the district level. With changes in this bill, however, California is now eligible to apply for federal Race to the Top funds under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

### What is CTA's position when it comes to test scores and teacher evaluations?

CTA supports assessment protocols that measure teacher quality using multiple measures including teacher practices and teacher performance.

### Does the state now have access to my personal information under the law?

No, the law provides additional protections for teachers, so their personal information will not be revealed. SB 19 guarantees that the state teacher data system (CALTIDES) does not include the names, Social Security numbers, home addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of individual teachers. It also states that teacher data shall not be used in violation of any federal or state law that is designed to protect an individual's right to privacy or the confidentiality of an individual's personal information.

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# What do standardized tests really show?

Depending upon your point of view, standardized tests are an accurate measure of student achievement; a somewhat accurate indication of student achievement; or are just one of many factors to be considered in assessing what students have learned in the classroom.

“Standardized tests, if they are used properly, indicate whether a child is succeeding in school,” says John Halcon, a professor of education at CSU San Marcos, specializing in bilingual/multicultural education, racism in education, and the educating of at-risk students. “But if they don’t speak English and they’re given a STAR test in English, what have I shown you except that they don’t speak English?” (STAR tests are administered each spring to measure academic achievement of all students in grades 2-11, including English learners, in California public schools.)

Even standardized tests in math given to English learners mostly reveal that a student does not speak English well, says Halcon, a member of the California Faculty Association and co-author of *The Best for Our Children: Critical Perspectives on Literacy for Latino Students*. “When you get to the word problems, they are in English. So testing for word problems is only a test to see if they speak English well enough to solve it.”

## Tests not proof of comprehension

Christina Rodriguez, a seventh-grade math and pre-algebra teacher at Giano Intermediate in Rowland, finds test results helpful when teachers have to place students in the math class appropriate for their level of understanding. Her school has a software program that allows her to look at the scores of students from previous years to see if they are ready for algebra. Teachers also look at which standards their students struggled with the previous year so they can

focus on them in current classes.

Test scores are helpful, says Rodriguez, but they are not proof of comprehension. Some students are just good test takers, and they are taught how to choose the right answer through the process of elimination, she explains.

“Let’s say they have a question about a slope of a line,” says Rodriguez. “The line is going down, so I can teach them that it means negative. They know how to eliminate the choices that are positive. They can eliminate answers and maybe take a 50-50 chance between two answers. But that doesn’t mean they know how to find the slope of a line.”



John Halcon  
CSU San Marcos

## Divide between rich and poor

Standardized tests are an excellent measure of how rich or poor the student population is, says Alfie Kohn, who has authored several books about standardized testing.

“We know that 80 to 90 percent of av-

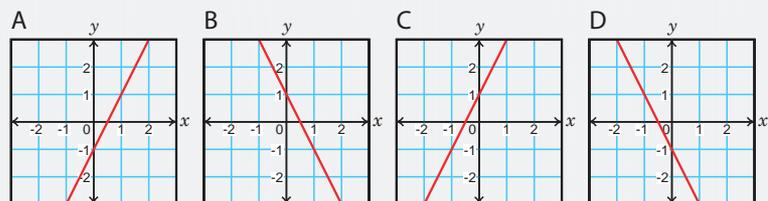
erage test scores for a school or district can be explained, statistically speaking, without knowing anything about what happened inside the classrooms. They’re driven by socioeconomic factors,” says Kahn. He believes scores may also indicate how much time has been spent preparing kids to do well on specific tests through constant test prep and drilling, rather than encouraging them to become independent thinkers and enthusiastic learners.

By “flagging” differences in student performance by race and class, high-stakes testing reveals the “long-standing inequalities” in many schools and neglect of poor and minority students, comments Linda Darling-Hammond in an article, “Evaluating No Child Left Behind,” published in *The Nation*. NCLB, she adds, has shifted the focus to “testing rather than investing” in our public schools.

Hammond, author of 13 books and countless journal articles on education

## A typical test question

Which graph best represents the equation  $y = -2x + 1$ ?



In the equation,  $-2$  is the slope of the line. Since it’s negative, the line is going “downhill.” Choices A and C, which have positive slopes, can be eliminated. (The correct answer is B.)

policy, is a professor of education at Stanford and co-directs the university's School Redesign Network. She notes that inner-city and poor, rural schools most in need of support instead pay a "diversity penalty" for serving a wide range of students and stand to lose funds under NCLB instead of getting the help they need.

"Standardized tests can only show us what a student knows if the conditions are right," says Curtis Washington, a math teacher and a CTA Board member. "When conditions are right, the kid had a good breakfast and a good attitude and the stars are aligned."

Washington served on the state's High School Exit Exam Committee and its High School Restructuring Committee. As a math teacher at a high-performing high school, he has seen cases where students bubble in the answers without reading the questions or "make pretty faces with the bubbles" because they don't care about the results, since scores are not reflected on their report card grades. When that happens, they do not accurately reflect what students know.

In the San Mateo Union High School District where he has taught for many years, Curtis has seen overemphasis on testing and labeling schools as so-called "failures" have a devastating impact. One school with lower test scores was given a bad rap by some parents in the community, resulting in lower enrollment and lesser funding as students enrolled in other schools or transferred out.

"Because of testing, kids in some schools are left behind," says Washington. "Competition reduces diversity and the

**RIGHT:** Seventh-grade math and pre-algebra teacher Christina Rodriguez goes over a problem at Giano Intermediate in Rowland.





*“Test prep means rote memorization on multiple choice tests. I worry that my students are missing out on learning to love literature.”*

*Annie Davidian-Moos, Dinuba Teachers Association*

overall excellence of a school. The school in my district with lower scores has the reputation of being a little rougher, but it's still a good school. And because of test scores, that school has been stigmatized within my district and now has less to offer students in the way of programs and opportunities.”

### **Lack of a well-rounded experience**

Tests scores do not show the myriad of strengths that each child brings to the classroom and to society, says Joe Lucido, a fifth-grade teacher at Liddell Elementary School in Fresno and a member of the Central Unified Teachers Association.

Lucido co-founded Educators and Parents Against Testing Abuse with his father, Rog Lucido, a retired teacher, because they believe students are becoming turned off to school due to con-

stant testing and pre-testing. It is not uncommon for students to take upward of 6 to 10 tests a year outside of their regular test to prepare them for the “real” test, says Lucido.

“There’s never been a study proving more testing equals more learning,” he says. “It doesn’t.”

“Standardized testing doesn’t show the growth my children make,” says Babette Jaire, a longtime special education teacher for students with mild to moderate disabilities at Alpha Elementary School in Madera. “It doesn’t offer a true snapshot of a student’s growth that year. And it makes them feel like failures. It makes the school environment very stressful for children, teachers and administrators.”

It takes time for new programs and curriculum to take effect, so scores may not show instantly whether something is working or not. Nonetheless, says Jaire, president of the Madera Unified Teachers Association, schools become

“frantic” to find instant solutions and are constantly switching tactics without sound reasoning.

“Schools feel that they have to find something else right away. Everyone is at a frantic pace to find the next best thing. They say, ‘We tried that and it didn’t work after a year, so throw it out.’ There is a feeling of insecurity, and children lack a foundation to build upon previous knowledge. Data takes time; and we have to take time to reflect on what it means.”

Annie Davidian-Moos, a teacher at Dinuba High School, believes that testing also reveals what kinds of things students have been exposed to. For example, questions may refer to Cinderella, glass slippers and a clock striking midnight. Some of her students, especially English learners, have never heard of Cinderella.

She became an English teacher to share her love of literature with students. But only her honors class reads novels. Other students read excerpts of novels or anthologies in their textbooks.

“For me, teaching is basically test prep,” says the Dinuba Teachers Association member. “And test prep means rote memorization on multiple choice tests. I feel like I’m a proctor more than a teacher. I worry that my students are missing out on learning to love literature.”



**LEFT:** Student Abel Sanchez watches as his teacher reviews a difficult problem at Giano Middle School in West Covina. **TOP:** Isabel Gonzalez and Danika Flores at Giano Middle School.

## Not prepared for college

FairTest, the National Center for Fair and Open Testing, recently reported that too much testing leaves students unprepared for college. Five-year trend data released in August by FairTest shows that ACT (American College Testing) scores have remained flat — and that little progress has been made in college readiness or in reducing the achievement gap — despite students experiencing a test-driven approach to so-called school reform since they were in fifth grade.

“Based on ACT scores, they are not better prepared for college and the workforce, and over the same period, the racial achievement gap has not narrowed,” notes the study. “The ACT trend data confirm recent results from the federal government’s own National Assessment of Educational Progress: NCLB is not effective.”

Overemphasis on testing leaves students unprepared for the real world, she says. “I worry that I’m setting them up for failure in college because they don’t have time to write very much anymore. Putting full paragraphs together is a chore. It’s all about the test.”

As for the California High School Exit Exam, researchers with PACE recently reported that CAHSEE had reduced the graduation rate for girls and minorities, and that the students subject to the CAHSEE requirement learned no more between 10th and 11th grade than similar students in the previous cohort who were not subject to the exam requirement.

But testing isn’t likely to be reduced any time soon.

“The pressure from business roundtables to privatize education has never



been higher,” says Lucido. “The rope around the neck of schools being judged by their test performance has tightened almost irreversibly. Many testing companies have lobbied our Legislature to increase the assessment in schools. It seems to me that the current trend is to ‘test for the test’ so that one can do well on the test. It’s a big quagmire of nonsense that has no basis in research, only corporate ideology.”

To really measure what students know, Darling-Hammond advocates using performance or “formative” assessments that measure critical-thinking skills in addition

**TOP:** Dinuba Teachers Association member Annie Davidian-Moos.

to current assessments.

CTA also supports student assessment systems that use multiple measures instead of a one-day snapshot based solely on test scores, says CTA President David A. Sanchez. “We support an assessment system that measures and encourages a focus on writing, research, scientific investigation, problem solving, and a host of other critically important skills.” ❖



**LEFT:** Makayla Riddlespringer listens to teacher Joe Lucido.

## Are tests structured for failure?

It's not surprising that the state with the highest standards in the world also has the most complicated testing system when compared to other states. Some believe that standardized testing in California is structured in such a way that a certain percentage of students, and in turn schools, will consistently be failing.

Standardized tests are designed to produce a "score spread," or a distribution of scores that can be compared, says James Popham, a former UCLA professor, test researcher and author of several books including *Classroom Assessment: What Teachers Need to Know* and *The Truth About Testing*. When test questions are answered correctly by too many students, they are removed from the test during yearly revisions, he says.

This is not happening everywhere, says Popham. "In some states, standardized tests are designed to help teachers do a

better job. In other states, like California, accountability tests are absurd. For example, in California you have content that teachers think is most important, and it is content they stress and spend time on, so their kids tend to score well on it. Items that too many kids score well on are removed from the test. It's a killer. You have a test built by a testing company that is more interested in trying to produce comparisons among test takers than measuring educational quality."

### Moving the goal post

The STAR test is "refreshed" each year, with new items added and others removed, confirms John T. Lawrence, director of the state Standards and Assessment Division. Nearly 50 percent of questions on each test are items from the previous year's test, and about half are new, he says. Each of the questions is designed to have an individual

"range of difficulty" with some questions that 80 percent of students are expected to get right and others that only 20 percent are expected to answer correctly. If questions don't match their expected range of difficulty, they may be removed.

He says that the goal is not to make STAR tests more difficult by changing the questions, but to make it as close to the previous year's test as possible.

The STAR tests are "criterion-referenced tests," which means students are graded on what they know, not in relation to each other on a bell-shaped curve as in a norm-referenced test. However, since the goal is to separate out students' scores and label some as proficient and others as failing, Popham and other experts say that it's just a matter of semantics.

There are also different "versions" of the same STAR test depending on grade level and content area, says Lawrence. Some language arts tests for one grade may have 14 versions and there may be as many as 20 versions of some science tests.

A little-known fact is that some of the questions students struggle with don't actually count when it comes to scoring. They are "imbedded field testing questions" that may be counted in future tests, depending upon how well students answer them, says Lawrence.

Questions on the California Standards Tests, the major component of the STAR program, are written by California educators and test developers. When asked to define "educator," Lawrence says that all "item writers" must have had at least three years' classroom experience at the appropriate grade level and content area.

"Some have retired and others have moved into administrative positions, but all have spent at least three years in the classroom," he says.

At least 70 percent of the questions in a STAR test assess "key standards."

And then there are “rotating” standards. Half may be rotated every two years and one-third rotated every three years. You can look at the state’s Blueprints at the California Department of Education’s website ([www.cde.ca.gov](http://www.cde.ca.gov)) to see which standards are key and which are rotating, but there is no information as to what specific year they will rotate in or out. It can be very confusing. One rotating algebraic standard, for example, reads: “Given a specific algebraic statement involving linear, quadratic or absolute value expressions or equations or inequalities, students determine wheth-

er the statement is true sometimes, always or never.”

Some questions have a higher point value than others, but teachers have no idea which questions or standards provide students more points. Tests, of course, are kept under lock and key.

With so much at stake, classrooms in California have become, in the words of many teachers, “testing factories,” with constant test prep and no time for critical thinking. But that is not supposed to be happening, says Lawrence.

## NAEP results do not tell the whole story

In addition to separate state and federal accountability systems — the state’s Academic Performance Index (API) and the requirements of No Child Left Behind — there is the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a federally mandated assessment of a sampling of fourth- and eighth-graders across the country. While sometimes referred to as the “Nation’s Report Card,” it is an unreliable method to gauge the progress of students from one state to another due to differing standards. Because the NAEP assessments are not currently aligned to California’s content standards, and each state is allowed to set its own standards under No Child Left Behind, NAEP scores are an inaccurate means of comparison.

NAEP scores this year show that California’s fourth-graders were higher than only two southern states and the District of Columbia, and tied with five other states. State officials say it’s partly because 30 percent of California’s fourth-graders who were tested were English learners, compared with 10 percent nationwide. Eighth-graders in California tested higher than only Mississippi and the District of

*Continued on page 38*

### To prep or not to prep

“In the Department of Education we are discouraging teachers from focused test prep. There are pieces of the Ed Code that forbid it. They are not supposed to drill it or give practice tests over and over so that students are memorizing the correct response and don’t know the fundamental skills to get an answer. We want kids to understand critical thinking skills that demonstrate what they know and can do in assessments.”

Nonetheless, teachers say such “drill and kill” instruction has become the norm at most schools with so much pressure over standardized testing, says Joe Lucido, a teacher in Fresno, member of the Central Unified Teachers Association and founder of Educators and Parents Against Test Abuse/People for the Ethical Treatment of Children.

Before STAR tests are administered, teachers must sign an affidavit that says they will not reveal the contents of the test. Then they must watch a video where they are told that test prep is not to be used to prepare students for testing and that it is against state law.



**TOP:** Joe Lucido, a Central Unified Teachers Association member, watches as Joey Lingard solves a problem at Liddell School.

“What is highly confusing is that the state of California produces a practice test that looks just like the STAR test,” says Lucido. “They are sent to schools. How in the world is that in compliance with the law that we aren’t supposed to be test-prepping our kids? To me, these books are a violation of the law.” Furthermore, says Lucido, districts may contract with companies that have “benchmark” tests aligned with state standards that are supposed to be predictors of how students will score on the tests and teachers use these to prepare students for real tests.

“The state says you aren’t supposed to test-prep, but if you are in a high-poverty school, there’s a lot of pressure,” says Lucido. “If the principal asks you to do test prepping and you don’t, you can be considered out of compliance with school policies. It’s a dark secret and it’s happening. Because teachers

*Continued on page 38*

# Financial literacy **growing**

A study by Arizona Pathways to Life Success for University Students (APLUS) released in May shows nearly 73 percent of students surveyed resorted to at least one “risky” financial behavior, such as maxing out credit cards or not paying bills on time. Nearly one in five of those surveyed has used some extreme strategy for meeting day-to-day financial needs, such as taking out payday loans or using one credit card to pay another. Financial literacy is not required curriculum in California — and the most recent legislative attempt to make it a requirement was vetoed by the governor in January. Presently, 12 states require financial literacy courses for graduation. Several studies have concluded that students living in states requiring specific financial education coursework had higher overall test scores than students in other states.



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

Now there is a renewed push for schools to tackle the subject in light of mass layoffs, investors being scammed out of their life savings, the near stock market collapse and the foreclosure crisis. In fact, says a member of the President’s Advisory Council on Financial Literacy, the country’s recent economic

woes have provided the best teachable moment to inform young people about finance since the Great Depression.

Last year businesses, educators, government officials and community groups gathered for the biennial California Summit on Financial Literacy. Co-sponsored by the California Society of Public Accountants and the California Jump\$tart Coalition, the summit’s goal was to find ways to help combat financial illiteracy in California.

“As participants in this summit, we welcomed the opportunity to come together to discuss constructive ways we can help ensure that California’s young people have the skills to manage their personal finances responsibly,” said Jack O’Connell, state superintendent of public instruction, in a joint statement with personal finance expert Jean Chatzky. “If we fail, we not only put this generation of students at risk, but future generations and the stability of our economy.”

## ► Teaching dollars and sense

Economics teacher Vicky Banks asks her students to pick out a future career they might pursue based on their skills, interests and salary. Students pour over the list of careers in their workbook and highlight those that are most appealing. Some of the jobs require years of college and others do not. Salaries are also listed.

Many of the students at Hoover High School in San Diego think they’ll be living lavishly until the next part of the lesson: taking their net pay and using a calculator to deduct expenses — already determined by a percentage of income — for rent, groceries, utilities, transportation, health care, education and entertainment. Students must also put money aside for savings and emergencies.

It’s the first time most students have ever budgeted. Many gasp as they discover that what once seemed like “lots of money” quickly dwindles into much less.

Savannah Rock chooses to be a multimedia specialist for a “huge salary” of \$51,000 per year gross pay. But she learns quickly that at the end of each month, she’ll be lucky to have even \$1,000 left over.



**LEFT:** Hoover High School student Savannah Rock learns the value of a buck in economics class.



**Ellen Towers**  
San Diego Education  
Association

# in value

**RIGHT:** San Diego Education Association member Vicky Banks talks with her economics students about the importance of personal budgets.

“If I don’t save anything for repairs or emergencies, I could be in trouble if something big happens, like my car breaking down,” she worries.

Rock admits that money sometimes burns a hole in her pocket. “Most of the time when I spend money, it’s not something that I really need,” she says. “I wouldn’t even think about saving any of my paycheck without this lesson. I’ve never budgeted before, but now I can see that it really makes a lot of sense.”

## ► Curriculum for responsible spending

Rock and her classmates are on the second day of a unit titled “Personal Financial Literacy, the Game of Life,” designed to educate them about handling money. The crash course in financial literacy is taught during a regular economics class over a period of 11 days. San Diego Unified School District is presently the only district in the state that has financial literacy as a graduation requirement — and likely is a trendsetter in this area.

The unit covers a wide range of topics including recognizing identity theft; the importance of investing; how to balance a checkbook; the way a credit score can impact your job and lifestyle; and even how the Patriot Act can affect bank accounts. Teachers say it could be the most relevant information students learn during high school.

“We started working on this before



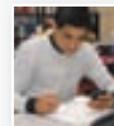
the economic downturn, and it ended up being timely,” says Banks, a member of the San Diego Education Association (SDEA). “It’s critical for students to learn how to create a budget, monitor their spending, avoid debt and only spend money on things they really need.”

Teachers, including Banks, began developing the curriculum three years ago with the help of community members including Kristy Gregg, a vice president of San Diego National Bank, and John J. Hargrove, a retired judge at the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of California. After debuting as a pilot project, it’s now in place throughout the district’s 18 high schools.

“I think we used to assume that parents were teaching this,” says SDEA member Ellen Towers, who helped create the curriculum. “But that isn’t hap-

pening. Parents may think it’s a personal matter or may have trouble themselves with finances. Parents are more likely to talk to students about sex than finances.”

But somebody needs to talk to students about financial responsibility, because a credit score can have as much impact on them as their GPA — and



### Visit us online

Learn more about the financial curriculum Vicky Banks and her colleagues helped create by going to [www.sdccte.org](http://www.sdccte.org) and clicking the “Personal Financial Literacy” link.



## A WEALTH OF RESOURCES

- > The state Department of Education has launched an online library on its website listing numerous – and mostly free – money-managing sources for k-12 teachers, students and parents. [www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/fil/finlitk12.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/fil/finlitk12.asp)
- > The California Council on Economic Education offers a web-based program that teaches financial and economic education through animated vignettes. [www.moneywiseteen.org](http://www.moneywiseteen.org)
- > The California Jump\$tart Coalition encourages curriculum that ensures the basic personal financial management skills are attained during the K-12 educational experience. [www.jumpstartcoalition.org](http://www.jumpstartcoalition.org)
- > The public-private partnership between the state Department of Education, State Board of Equalization member Betty Yee and Visa Inc. developed a free, NFL-themed money-management video game called Financial Football. [www.practicalmoneyskills.com/games/trainingcamp](http://www.practicalmoneyskills.com/games/trainingcamp)

students will be tempted with credit cards the minute they graduate, says Kenny Chen, an SDEA member who uses the curriculum in his economics classes at Patrick Henry High School.

“When they go to college they will walk through the student union and there will be vendors in carts and kiosks offering them credit cards with giveaways. Students think that when they turn 18 they’ll start working, get a car, rent an apartment and use a credit card to cover any deficit. But they need to learn that racking up debt can have drastic consequences. Just one late payment can stay on their credit report for seven years. Hopefully this will make them think about the lifestyle they want to lead.”

His students, who recently ended the study unit, have already put the information to good use. Some say they have helped parents with filing college financial aid forms. Others have researched buying cars or filed their own tax returns.

Cassie Pugh, 18, says she is now more aware of “wants versus needs” and is going to cut back on her spending. Once she started budgeting, she was startled to learn that her coffee habit at Starbucks was costing close to \$80 per month.

Mary Nooristani vows she will avoid credit card debt. “I am not going to be tempted with free things. They try and get you on a hot day with free ice cream, but it’s not free if you sign for a card with a 20 percent interest rate.”

**TOP LEFT:** Government and economics teacher and United Teachers Los Angeles member Eduardo Lopez works with Carmen Gonzalez at Roosevelt High School. **OPPOSITE:** Joanique Patten and Eric Kaisa listen to a financial literacy lesson at San Lorenzo Adult School.

### ► Stock market lesson pays dividends

Does the ringing mean it's time for class to begin — or is it the Opening Bell? There's excitement in the air as students open their laptops and begin trading stocks, bonds and mutual funds.

Eduardo Lopez, a government and economics teacher at Roosevelt High School in Los Angeles, is proud that his students know how to read a financial table and understand the jargon of the stock market. When he began teaching four years ago he considered the stock market his weakest content area and worried about how he would cover it.

After attending a workshop sponsored by the California Council on Economic Education (CCEE), his class signed up for the council's California State University Stock Market Simulation Game. Teams of students invest a hypothetical \$100,000 in stocks and mutual funds via an internet site and compete locally and statewide for awards. Last year his class came in 50th out of 500 schools.

"The kids love it," says Lopez, a member of United Teachers Los Angeles. "Pretty soon, they are speaking of splits and dividends, and they start talking about terms like opportunity loss. And the CCEE provides a subscription to the Wall Street Journal, so kids are reading in the paper to see which companies are up and coming. They realize that their investments are connected to the real-life economy."

"Today, we had a loss of \$40," says student Peter Cuzul of his team, The Studs. "It's frustrating, because we have only one stable stock and the others fluctuate. But it's fun, and I'm learning how to invest and how to read charts of companies. In the future, if I decide to invest in the market, I'll know how."

The class is about to end and Lopez urges them to make trades before it's too late. "If you want to compete, sometimes you have to risk it all," Tony Pineda urges



teammates on The Brokers, first-place team in the class.

"We'd do a lot more research and be much more careful if it was real money," says team member Carlos Gutierrez. "Maybe we're lucky that it's not."



#### Visit us online

Experience the Stock Market Simulation Game for yourself at [www.csusms.com](http://www.csusms.com).

### ► Keeping it real

"How many of you want to buy a car?" asks David Ellington, a resource teacher at San Leandro High School. Every student raises his or her hand.

When he asks students to name "hidden fees" that come with purchasing an automobile, no hands go up. The San Leandro Teachers Association member explains they will also have to pay sales tax, inspection fees, insurance, warranty, vehicle registration fees and maintenance costs.



**LEFT:** Kenny Chen, a member of San Diego Education Association, shows Chelsea Mills (left) and Cassie Pugh that realistic budgeting often means cutting back. **BELOW:** David Ellington, San Leandro Teachers Association. **LOWER LEFT:** Venetta Cormier-Walker, San Lorenzo Education Association.

“They never tell you about these things. But most people pay an additional \$3,000 to \$7,000 the first year, no matter how cheap the car is.”

Ellington believes financial literacy is a way to get his mild-to-moderate special education students fully involved in the community and enfranchised into society. He invites community entrepreneurs, stockbrokers, real

estate brokers and bankers into his classroom to speak with students about money.

“I talk to my students a lot about debt,” says the San Leandro Teachers Association member. “I had a senior who was already \$1,400 in debt, and I realized that students need a better understanding of finances. They think they can pay something off in months and it can take years. Sometimes they purchase a cell phone and find themselves in a bad contract for years.”

Venetta Cormier-Walker, a teacher at the San Lorenzo Adult School, revamped her curriculum during the summer to include lessons on financial literacy. Some of the curriculum is tied to math lessons, reflecting her philosophy of keeping it real and proving to students that school has practical applications in the real world.

“I felt the need to do this because everyone should know how to save money, how to shop, and how to manage limited funds with diminishing resources,” says Walker, a member of the San Lorenzo Education Association.

Her students are young adults, but

many of them are not savvy with money. One of the lessons she has constructed alerts students to the dangers of super sales and hidden delivery fees. Another looks at buying gasoline from a station that advertises for less, then charges more because there is a fee for using a credit or debit card.



“Many of my students come from challenging environments and have not learned how to budget or save,” Walker explains. “It’s not easy. One of the biggest issues in educating these students is that their generation has a sense of entitlement — and that includes finances. My job is to help prepare them for the future, and teaching them to make smart choices.” ❖





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# Making a Difference

## Data show QEIA schools making academic gains

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan likes to talk about states needing to concentrate reform efforts on low-performing schools. In California, teachers like Amy Kraft in Sacramento County have been doing just that for a few years now thanks to a CTA-sponsored law that's helping our schools of great need succeed.

Her school, Oakdale Elementary in the Twin Rivers Unified School District — one of 499 schools targeted by the Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA) — has made huge academic gains, thanks to extra resources provided to those sites. New data show significant academic growth is taking place at Oakdale, which nailed down a remarkable Academic Performance Index (API) score of 828 for 2008-09.

When the CTA-sponsored QEIA (SB 1133) was enacted in 2006, eligible schools were those in the bottom two deciles for performance. The legislation grew out of the settlement of a lawsuit between CTA and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger over funding owed to schools under Proposition 98.

Kraft says, "QEIA has allowed us to fully implement our vision for Oakdale," a vision that includes meeting the individual needs of all students and expecting more from them. "Our students deserve the best education we can offer, and that means we need the necessary resources available to us in order to accomplish this. QEIA has been an invaluable resource for our staff and students."

No other state has made this kind of targeted commitment of resources to help its troubled schools. Over eight years, the targeted QEIA schools will get nearly \$3 billion in help.

CTA President David A. Sanchez says new data showing success at QEIA schools are preliminary, but undeniable. The data show why investing in challenged schools instead of punishing them is by far the better choice, he says.

"These targeted schools of greatest need are making classroom gains because of proven reforms like smaller class sizes, extra teachers, more counselors and better staff training," Sanchez says. "What teachers predicted about the value of this landmark CTA-sponsored law three years ago is coming true today. Increased achievement by students in QEIA schools is happening across the state."

On average, the 499 QEIA schools scored 5 points higher than similar schools in the state's API for the 2008-09 school year — the first full year of extra QEIA resources. Also, 351 of the 499 QEIA schools met their API academic growth targets.

The state's API accountability system uses test scores to gauge progress and sets a target of 800 for every public school. Seven QEIA schools exceeded this 800 API score benchmark, and Twin Rivers Superintendent Frank Porter was elated that the collaboration of teachers, parents and students was paying off.

"QEIA provides the resources and focus needed to fundamentally improve student learning,"

says Porter. "At Oakdale Elementary, teachers, administrators, staff, and families have worked together in the best interest of students and have made an amazing difference. Oakdale, a school serving low-income students where 89 percent qualify for free or reduced-priced lunches, grew their school API score 152 points in two years. That represents significant student learning that may not have happened without QEIA."

In San Diego County, three QEIA schools in the same Chula Vista Elementary School District also had API scores greater than 800. The QEIA-funded resources, excellent teachers and committed administrators raised the API

scores at Harborside Elementary (845), Otay Elementary (824), and Silver Wing Elementary (805), says Peg Myers, president of Chula Vista Educators.

Myers also cited smaller class sizes — about 24 students maximum in grades 4-6, and 20 in the lower grades — as a key to success, along with teacher collaboration time. "It's true collaborating. They plan together. Everybody has input and everyone is respected."

Parents and administrators are joining teachers in praising the new data showing the progress of QEIA schools. "Parents want the best for their children, and the data show that QEIA clearly can help to deliver

*Continued on page 36*

### QEIA accomplishments

#### Schools leaving Program Improvement

- **Alameda County:** Marilyn Avenue Elementary, Livermore Valley Joint Unified; ACORN Woodland Elementary, Oakland Unified.
- **Los Angeles County:** Aeolian Elementary, Los Nietos Elementary District; Evergreen Elementary, East Whittier City Elementary District.
- **Orange County:** Martin Elementary, Santa Ana Unified; Kinoshita Elementary, Capistrano Unified; Melrose Elementary, Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified.
- **Tulare County:** Jefferson Elementary, Dinuba Unified.

#### Schools exceeding the state's API score target of 800

- **Sacramento County:** Oakdale Elementary, 828 API score, Twin Rivers Unified.
- **San Diego County:** Harborside Elementary, 845, Otay Elementary, 824, and Silver Wing Elementary, 805, all in the Chula Vista Elementary School District; Clover Flat Elementary, 825, Mountain Empire Unified.
- **San Francisco County:** Miraloma Elementary, 851, San Francisco Unified.
- **Ventura County:** Grace S. Thille Elementary, 827, Santa Paula Elementary School District.

#### The top three of the 51 QEIA schools that gained 50 points or more in API growth for the 2008-09 school year

- **Shasta County:** Juniper Academy, 122 points, Redding Elementary School District.
- **San Francisco County:** Malcolm X Academy, 99 points, San Francisco Unified.
- **Riverside County:** Cahuilla Desert Academy Junior High, 98 points, Coachella Valley Unified.

# Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Issues Conference: What members had to say

interviews by Bill Guy

The first ever CTA Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Issues Conference held in Palm Springs in October addressed GLBT issues involving educators, education support professionals, students and the community. Here's what CTA members had to say about the conference.



**Lisa Vaughn**  
**Mount Pleasant Education Association**

As a school counselor, I work with many students who struggle with sexual identity. So professionally, being able to gain knowledge and strategies about how to best support them was very rewarding. Personally, the conference gave me an opportunity to support colleagues who often find it unsafe to be open about their sexual orientation in the workplace. The workshops on bullying, teen suicide and unconscious bias were engaging and full of wonderful materials for me to take back to my colleagues and to use with my students.



**Carol McDaniel**  
**Riverside County Office Teachers Association,**  
**alternative education program itinerant specialist/resource specialist**

The GLBT conference was a wonderful experience! All the attendees not only wanted to be there themselves, but they welcomed fellow attendees without reservations based on color, age, sex, sexual orientation, race or disability. We openly discussed personal experiences, focusing on how we could apply our learning to our students and their situations.



**Laura Alvarez**  
**Mount Pleasant Education Association,**  
**Grade 5 dual immersion and MPEA past president**

The conference gave light to the growing problems affecting my students on a daily basis, and some of the workshops actually gave me strategies to use when GLBT students come to me for help. In northern California, we are facing more and more hate crimes and suicides due to the ignorance of GLTB issues. As teachers, we need to unite and help all of our students, not just those with whom we may be more comfortable.



**Mark Allen**  
**Mount Pleasant Education**  
**Association, K-5 math coach**

Despite the weekend being too short, the conference was great on several levels. For those familiar with the multitude of issues addressed, it was a helpful refresher of all the things we often take for granted. For everyone else, it was a great introduction to issues, both obvious and otherwise, that GLBT students and staff face on a daily basis.



**Eleanor Juanita Evans**  
**GLBT Issues Advisory Committee, Conference Planning Committee, GLBT Caucus co-chair**

This conference was a groundbreaking opportunity to obtain honest solutions to deal with GLBT issues, safe school concerns, and human rights discrimination that confront not only GLBT students and members, but our entire community. It represents one more step towards achieving equality and justice for all. The 207 conference attendees had wonderful opportunities to learn how to become better advocates for positive change and to promote respect, acceptance, and empathy for all students and members. A significant number of conference attendees were attending their very first CTA conference, so the GLBT Conference also enabled new voices to be heard.

CTA photos by Jonathan Goldman

# Vallejo educators donate \$12K in supplies to students

In a gesture of solidarity with their hard-hit community and the families they teach, members of the Vallejo Education Association in the Vallejo City Unified School District spent four nights after school in October distributing \$12,000 in school supplies that they had donated to help the city's students.

The successful Solano County event by the 800-member VEA provided bags of vital school supplies to 2,000 students in grades K-8.

"We just wanted to stand up for our schools and our students in a way that reminds them how much we care," said Christal Watts, president of the Vallejo Education As-

sociation. "We want to give back to our community, which has been hit so hard by the economy and the foreclosure crisis. Times are hard, people are hurting, and these school supplies could help our students succeed in the classroom and at home."

From Oct. 19 to 22, the teachers distributed to students bags of pens, pencils, notebooks, coloring pencils, crayons and pencil sharpeners at four locations in town. In addition, Watts said, students got free books to take home and enjoy, thanks to the donation of 50 boxes of books from the Friends of the Vallejo Public Libraries.

"We're going to build on this event," said Watts. "We want to

build alliances with the community that are ongoing."

The *Vallejo Times-Herald* newspaper even discounted VEA ads about the locations for donations, and reported on the event in an Oct. 20 story with the headline "Teachers get 'A' for sharing."

"I think the teachers are doing great," Vallejo resident Albert Cusseaux told the paper on the first night of the giveaway, held at a library where he brought his 8-year-old neighbor. The boy, a third-grader at Grace Patterson Elementary, thanked teachers as he accepted the free supplies and looked for his favorite adventure books amid the stacks of donated editions.

The newspaper also printed a letter to the editor from VEA activist Ron West, a teacher at Steffan Manor Elementary and co-chair of the union's action committee, who wrote about the hard economic times affecting the classroom.

"This year, Vallejo's teachers have seen more children than ever come to school without many of the basic supplies that families normally send their children to school with. During these difficult economic times, many families just don't have the money for things like pencils, paper and colored markers," wrote West. "So why are Vallejo's teachers doing this? Because it is in their nature, and it is what teachers do."

Educators also spent time speaking with parents during the handing out of materials about the future of the school district, which has been hit hard by state education cuts — and where about 70 teachers laid off earlier this year still can't find jobs.

Donations were handed out in Vallejo at the John F. Kennedy Library, the Continental of Omega Boys and Girls Club, Greater Vallejo Recreation District Children's Wonderland Park, and Springstowne Library.

Watts posted photos of the event on CTA's social networking site, [www.standupforschools.org](http://www.standupforschools.org), where members can share stories about the cuts to public education, create and publicize events, and connect with other members.

"The parents who came by were so excited," Watts said. "They kept looking in the bags to see all the supplies, and they spent a lot of time with their children picking out free books to take home and enjoy."

MIKE MYSLINSKI



Vallejo Education Association photo by Ron West



**ABOVE:** Vallejo Education Association member and eighth grade algebra teacher Meg Elliott hands out school supplies to students in need at Springstowne Library. The school supplies, totaling \$12,000 donated by members, were given out to 2,000 students in grades K-8.



## Sweetwater gets contract, community support

Unity, determination and skillful organizing strategies combined to give the 2,100 members of south San Diego County’s Sweetwater Education Association (SEA) a new contract settlement in the midst of difficult economic times.

In addition to using more traditional communications methods including printed fliers and one-on-one meetings at building sites, SEA kept members and the community constantly informed via almost daily website updates. Communications efforts also broke new ground by coordinating traditional methods with updates via social networking websites, including an association page on Facebook and bargaining strategy “tweets” via an association Twitter account.

Efforts to exert pressure on the board of the Sweetwater Union High School District (SUHSD) began in August, with SEA members picketing school board members’ homes each Saturday, leafleting their neighbors with requests that they support SEA’s contract settlement proposals.

“SEA members and our supporters took almost complete control of a SUHSD school board meeting Sept. 21, 2009, by stacking the public comments portion, making it impossible for them to begin their actual business session until almost 10 p.m.,” says SEA President Alex Anguiano. “Taking

that board meeting over was the first time that the school board ‘got it’ that we were serious about going all the way and that we weren’t going to let them off the hook.”

A powerful turnout for the Oct. 7 fact-finding session marked SEA’s culminating activity. More than 1,200 SEA members and supporters from the San Diego County Labor Council, CTA/NEA-Retired, and practically every classified and certificated local in the county were present to support the effort. Association fact-finding team members reported that the noise generated by picketers marching outside the district office gave them tremendous support. It turned out to be sorely needed encouragement during the marathon negotiating session that lasted almost 24 hours until the teams reached a tentative contract agreement around dawn the next day.

Parents proved to be valuable supporters. SEA members actively sought parent support by going out into the community to inform parents of the labor dispute and the stakes involved. Parents responded with tangible support by speaking for a fair settlement at school board meetings and attending rallies. One parent complained bitterly about the almost \$28,000 expenditure by the district for sending letters to parents regarding bargaining.

Not only does the three-year agreement ratified in October



CTA photo by Bill Guy

**ABOVE:** In support of the Sweetwater Education Association, 1,200 educators and community members marched outside the Sweetwater Unified School District office to support SEA members during a pivotal negotiating session.

wipe out egregious take-backs illegally imposed by the district, but the beefy 95 percent approval rate of voting members leaves SEA in a strong position to tackle its next goal — turning over three anti-teacher members on SUHSD’s board and those school administrators who fomented the unnecessarily difficult bargaining process.

“The school board behaved dishonorably in negotiations and must be held accountable in the November 2010 elections,” says Anguiano, citing the board’s unacceptable “last, best offer” impositions, which included a permanent increase in pupil-to-teacher class ratios, a two-tiered benefit plan that discriminated against new hires, the elimination of the adult school’s break stipend, the unilateral cancellation of a contract article related to a school’s ability to set its own unique sched-

ule, and the insertion of a management rights article that would have weakened association member rights.

“When the district engaged in only perfunctory bargaining sessions before illegally imposing their unacceptable offer — without even waiting for the fact-finding teams to be selected — it was obvious they intended to take advantage of the difficult economy to gouge out take-backs, decimating the integrity of our contract,” says Anguiano. “But instead of rolling over, SEA members and our supporters rolled out an extremely effective series of communication and organizing strategies that resulted in SEA’s ultimate success.”

SEA members plan to keep up the momentum generated by their bargaining success to go after the seats of the three school

*Continued on page 36*

# ACTION

## Sanchez discusses challenges ahead for public ed



CTA photo by Dave Earl Carpenter

**LEFT:** Keynote speaker and television personality Tavis Smiley (center) along with (from left to right) CTA Executive Director Carolyn Doggett; CTA President David A. Sanchez; CTA Vice President Dean Vogel; and CTA Secretary-Treasurer Gail Mendes at the October State Council. **BELOW:** Delegates involved at Sunday's session.

In a call to action to State Council delegates, CTA President David A. Sanchez urged educators to use the 88th annual American Education Week, Nov. 15-21, to “do something in your community to highlight how the budget cuts are hurting your students and schools.”

He also warned of new election cycle threats ahead — new ballot initiatives designed to silence the political

voices of public employees and restrict how union dues are spent to fight for them.

“I know many challenges lie ahead for us, but united, we will overcome,” Sanchez vowed.

He asked all educators to tell the public during the vital American Education Week — set aside by the National Education Association decades ago to honor U.S. public

schools — how state education funding cuts of more than \$17 billion over the past two years are hurting California students. Class sizes are soaring and programs like music, art, sports and vocational education are being eliminated. As CTA members did with “Pink Friday” layoff protests earlier this year, teachers must sound the alarm during this national event, Sanchez said.

“Whether it’s a town hall meeting, a protest, distributing fliers to parents, writing to the local newspaper or posting on your favorite blog — any activity that will raise awareness is welcome and badly needed.”

He noted that resources for these events can be found at [www.standupforschools.org](http://www.standupforschools.org). “And I encourage you to use

that site to share ideas, post upcoming events, and engage in conversations about how cuts have affected our schools and what we can do about it.”

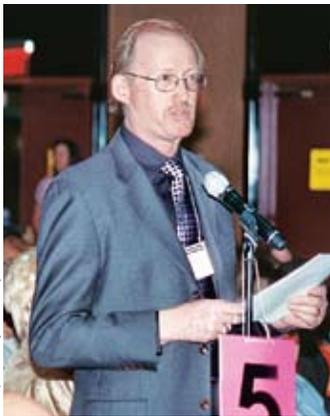
CTA chapters must help tell the story of the ongoing education cuts crisis at the local level. “Some chapters have done a great job getting the word out — some of you have held events — some of you have done it through your Service Center Councils,” Sanchez said. “But we must keep up the pressure and look for all opportunities to tell this story.”

He said part of the story should be that it’s “obscene for the state Legislature to be handing out tax breaks to large corporations,” as lawmakers did this year for a windfall of \$2 billion to big businesses, when our schools are experiencing the largest funding cut since the Great Depression.

Also, it’s time for CTA to “change the debate in California” to focus on how a hand-



CTA photo by Mike Mysinski



CTA photo by Mike Myslinski

**ABOVE:** CTA Board member Don Bridge addresses delegates at the first State Council of Education session of the 2009-10 school year in October.

ful of legislators can “shut down the budget process every year because it takes a two-thirds vote to pass the state budget and raise revenues.”

Sanchez updated Council on key federal fights. He not-

ed that CTA helped slow down the rushed process by the governor and lawmakers to make sweeping changes to California education laws just so the state can qualify for one-time grants from the federal Race to the Top program.

He said the Race to the Top process has revealed how the Obama administration might want to handle the looming reauthorization of No Child Left Behind — with more of the one-size-fits-all approach that would hurt students and schools.

On NCLB, Sanchez said, “We are continuing to provide input and testimony. After all, we want to erase, rewrite and reauthorize — not re-test, re-label, re-test, repeat, re-test and regurgitate.”

MIKE MYSLINSKI

## Organizing plan seeks to strengthen CTA

**A**s part of a new grassroots plan launched this summer to re-energize CTA’s organizing culture, State Council delegates spent time in small “relational meetings” similar to meetings that are going on in CTA chapters across the state to build solidarity within the union’s ranks.

In their committee meetings, delegates brainstormed about ways CTA should be fighting to increase public education funding, and what all members of the union can do to help.

The goal of the long-term organizing plan is to reach all teachers and education support professionals and to hear their voices, CTA President David A. Sanchez told delegates.

“We must reach out to the normally silent majority who work in our schools every day. We must engage them to join our

efforts to stand up for our students and defend our public schools. We must help them realize that they are CTA, and that this fight is our fight, together.”

The goals of the plan are to promote and protect quality public education and all CTA members; expand the organizational capacity of CTA; and re-establish and strengthen a culture of organizing at all levels of the union. To guide State Council on future issues, the responses from small meetings going on in the field will be assessed by the four CTA regions and then by the Board of Directors.

“CTA’s organizing campaign is all about you and connecting with our members,” said Sanchez. “We are growing a new organizing culture that will allow us to build an even stronger union, reach out to more members, and rebuild our base of support.”

MIKE MYSLINSKI

### In other action, State Council:

- Made “friendly incumbent” recommendations in key state races: Debra Bowen, for secretary of state; John Chiang, state controller; Bill Lockyer, state treasurer; Betty Yee, State Board of Equalization, First District seat.
- Elected teacher E. Toby Boyd of Sacramento to the CTA Board of Directors for District E, representing educators in the Sacramento County area. Boyd fills the seat of Michael Bustos, and his term of office runs to June 25, 2011.
- Elected three new NEA Board members: Sonia Martin-Solis of Alhambra for District 6/14; Kendall Vaught of Huntington Beach, District 9; and Sergio Martinez of Norwalk, District 13. Their terms expire on Aug. 31, 2010; Vaught’s term expires on Aug. 31, 2012.
- Directed CTA President David A. Sanchez to send a letter to the federal Centers for Disease Control and the state Public Health Agency “urging them to make teachers and other school employees who have direct contact with students be made a priority group for receiving the H1N1 vaccine.”
- Reaffirmed CTA’s belief in majority rule as a fundamental feature of our democracy by adding policy language stating that “any initiative, local measure or state policy should be passed by 50 percent plus one. CTA supports efforts to lower current supermajorities at the state and local level.”
- Approved sending to the executive officers for consideration by the appropriate CTA committee the exploration of the application of a sales tax on the sale of California real estate as an ongoing source of revenue for public schools.

## CTA support yields great gains on Election Day

**D**espite hard economic times, California voters approved many parcel taxes and school bonds at the polls Nov. 3 — and CTA campaign support made a huge difference in electing school board members backed by local teachers.

Where CTA provided campaign funding and other support to chapters, the success rate was 75 percent. Ninety of the 120 local school board candidates supported by CTA won their races; voters passed four of six parcel taxes that CTA backed.

In the Bay Area, CTA recommended Lt. Gov. John Garamendi to fill the seat of Ellen Tauscher in Congressional District 10, and he won with nearly 55 percent of the overall vote. Tauscher resigned in June to take a State Department job.

“Teachers made their voices heard in this election by securing more funding to save education programs and to build and renovate schools,” says CTA President David A. Sanchez. “The overwhelming suc-

*Continued on page 37*

# CTA moves carefully with Race to the Top

CTA representatives from every California legislative district have been contacting their state lawmakers to deliver a simple message: Legislators should carefully consider any revisions to state education law related to the Race to the Top (RTTT) federal grant program. Educators fear that a headlong race to change could become a rush to failure. The flurry of state legislative activity follows Congress's passage of the federal stimulus package — the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) — which funds the RTTT competitive grant program for public schools. States can apply for portions of the overall \$4.35 billion in grant money only if their state education laws conform to federally mandated regulations.

While the federal government has not yet adopted those implementing regulations, lawmakers in many states, including California, are rushing

to propose changes to their state laws in hopes of qualifying for the federal money. In some cases, changes have been driven by what state education officials believe are erroneous interpretations of state law by federal officials.

CTA leaders have met with Obama administration officials, including Education Secretary Arne Duncan, to help provide a clearer understanding of California's stringent education and accountability requirements, widely recognized as being among the toughest in the nation. The California Legislature has approved and the governor has signed one measure to delete a sentence in the Education Code perceived by federal officials to be a barrier to California's being able to apply (*see story below*).

CTA and its Education Coalition partners have been urging legislators not to hastily approve any omnibus measures, including one drafted by state Sen. Gloria Romero

(D-Los Angeles), a candidate for state superintendent of public instruction. Sen. Romero's bill, a special session bill called SBx5 1, would make wide-ranging changes to

teacher evaluation and student achievement measurements and remove the caps on the number of charter schools in the state.

LEN FELDMAN

## Why SBx5 1 is flawed

### The measure would:

- Lock into state law unnecessary changes Sen. Romero claims are needed to implement Race to the Top, even before the federal regulations governing the program have been adopted.
- Repeat the mistakes of the fatally flawed No Child Left Behind Act, including the overreliance on test scores as the only measure of student achievement.
- Modify regulations governing the entire School Improvement Grant (SIG) Program in hopes of helping California get one-time RTTT funds, but it would also cause schools to lose SIG money if they do not comply with the new state regulations.
- Force irresponsible and punitive changes in teacher and administrator evaluations.
- Allow unfettered increases in underregulated charter schools that are not responsible to the community.
- Substitute narrow compliance in place of innovation and local flexibility vital to schools' success.
- Increase costs and mandates at a time when schools are staggering under \$17 billion in cuts and 20,000 educator layoffs.

CTA members can help win this fight by contacting their state legislators and urging them to move deliberately on any RTTT-related changes. See [www.cta.org/issues/current/Race+to+Top+Landing.htm](http://www.cta.org/issues/current/Race+to+Top+Landing.htm) for more information and links to your lawmakers.

## SB 19 signed into law by governor

The first of the bills to “bring California into compliance” with the not-yet-drafted federal regulations has cleared the Legislature and gained the governor's approval. The measure, SB 19, by state Sen. Joe Simitian (D-Santa Clara), deletes a sentence in the state's Education Code that forbids using a state education database for purposes of teacher evaluation or pay.

SB 19 is intended to respond to a provision of the federal law implementing Race to the Top — the American Recovery and Re-

investment Act of 2009 (ARRA). The federal provision allows states to apply for the \$4.35 billion RTTT competitive grant program only if they have no “statutory or regulatory barriers to linking data about student growth and achievement to teachers for the purposes of teacher and principal evaluation.”

The target of the change was a sentence in the Education Code section that created CALTIDES — the California Longitudinal Teacher Integrated Data Education System — perceived to be

such a barrier to linking student data to evaluations.

CTA legal experts point out that SB 19's deletion of an Education Code sentence regarding the use of CALTIDES data in teacher evaluations “has no direct impact on any evaluation provisions in collective bargaining agreements. It does not supersede, nullify or require any changes to existing language that has been collectively bargained. It does not change existing Education Code provisions regarding evaluation, nor does it mandate making a change in

evaluation procedures.”

CTA experts also point out that evaluation procedures are within the scope of bargaining, and districts cannot unilaterally change their procedures. The experts also note that the Education Code has long provided for collectively bargained processes by which educators' evaluations reflect the progress of their students in relation to state standards.

LEN FELDMAN

To read more about SB 19, see our story “The facts about Senate Bill 19” on page 13.

# AB 1130 tracks achievement of students over time

**A** newly signed CTA-supported measure will help California qualify for hundreds of millions of dollars in federal education funding and provide a more accurate way of measuring student performance over time.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's signing of Assembly Bill 1130 by Assembly Member Jose Solorio (D-Santa Ana) clears the way for California's preparations to meet the student data tracking requirements of the Obama administration's education agenda. The data elements are mandated in federal legislation, the America Competes Act.

AB 1130 revises the school accountability system to include a growth measurement element in the academic performance index (API).

The measure seeks to guide education officials as they begin to expand the state API beyond its current scope, which relies heavily on student achievement test scores as the basis for comparison. AB 1130 would direct state ed-

ucation leaders to implement methods that would track groups of students over time.

An important finding of the legislation is the importance of transparency in the process. It also requires recommendations for changes offered by state panels to be brought back to the Legislature. Specifically, the bill requires the state superintendent of public instruction's Public School Advisory Committee to include in its deliberations measurement systems used by other states, and it brings the committee's recommendations back to legislative education and appropriations committees.

While the governor signed AB 1130, he vetoed a CTA-backed companion measure, AB 429 by Assembly Member Julia Brownley (D-Santa Monica).

AB 429 would have helped schools track the year-to-year performance of individual students, as well as the overall performance of all students as a group.

LEN FELDMAN

# Governor signs new version of QEIA revenue limits protection bill

**A**t the urging of CTA and its Education Coalition partners, the Legislature sent a measure to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger aimed at correcting an error in the 2009-10 state budget. On Nov. 5, the governor signed ABx3 56, by Assembly Budget Chair Noreen Evans (D-Santa Rosa).

The CTA-backed measure will protect \$402 million designated for the Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA).

The newly signed bill guarantees that the QEIA school districts are not going to have their revenue limits cut beyond the level of cuts experienced by other school districts. The bill will keep QEIA districts whole. In short, CTA was successful in getting legislation passed and

signed that protects QEIA districts from additional cuts.

Funding for QEIA is intended to provide additional assistance to schools whose students fall in the lowest deciles to improve their performance. Recent data, though preliminary, indicate that students in schools in the Quality Education Investment Act program are showing marked improvement (*see story, page 26*).

The appropriations for QEIA grew out of the settlement of a lawsuit between CTA and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger over funding owed to schools under Proposition 98.

LEN FELDMAN



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# CTA Provides Online Financial Tools For Educators



CTA released a new investment and financial planning education Web site, [ctainvest.org](http://ctainvest.org), to help educators with important investment strategies, including supplementing their retirement with 403(b) and 457 plans. This Web site was created

exclusively for educators and includes information on CalSTRS and CalPERS, as well as helpful articles and financial calculators.

Don't wait. Visit our new Web site today.

## Here's a sampling of what you'll find at [ctainvest.org](http://ctainvest.org)

- ✓ **Calculators from Standard & Poor's** – 403(b) Planner and more
- ✓ **Case studies** – CTA member testimonials about 403(b) investing
- ✓ **Financial and investment articles** – More than 130 informative articles on CalSTRS and CalPERS, women's retirement planning and 403(b) plans
- ✓ **Webinars** – Interactive tutorials that walk you through financial and investing concepts

## + PLUS:

- ✓ Sign up for e-mail updates
- ✓ Read the "Educator's Guide to 403(b) and 457 Plans"

# Initiatives filed attacking educator retiree benefits

Two initiatives that would undermine the secure retirement of educators and other public employees have been filed with the Attorney General's Office. Intended for the November 2010 ballot, the initiatives, sponsored by the California Foundation for Fiscal Responsibility and former state Assemblyman Keith Richman, are similar to the ones he filed in 2005. Like those in 2005, these initiatives attack the retirement benefits of teachers, police, nurses, firefighters and other public employees and do nothing to solve the current economic crisis. They are flawed, unnecessary and will make it harder to attract and retain quality teachers in our schools. They also completely overlook the fact that Wall Street excesses and corporate abuses are the real threat to retirement security for all Californians.

The average public employee retirement benefit is approximately \$4,300 per month after 29 years of service – and seven out of ten public employees receive retirement income of less than \$30,000 a year.

The initiatives are complicated and contain several different provisions. Most notably, they would reduce a teacher's retirement by about 30 percent and create a two-tier retirement system.

The initiatives would significantly hinder the ability of public employees – particularly teachers and those in the educational system – to retire at a reasonable age with an adequate retirement. Educators could not retire before age 62, with that number increasing for newer employees as the federal government increases Social Security age.

In order to achieve the same standard of living in retirement, a teacher must receive approximately

90 percent of what their final compensation was. The average replacement ratio for a teacher retiring now in the CalSTRS system is 62 percent, which means members will have to have enough in savings – and would need to be lucky enough to have enough Social Security earnings (made extremely difficult due to the federal offsets) – to make up the additional 20 percent needed to bring a member up to 80 percent. To make matters worse, an employee's retirement salary will be limited to 75 percent of their final compensation.

In addition to cutting teachers benefits significantly, the initiatives would prevent non-full time teachers from receiving any retirement or retiree health benefits. This would have a significant impact on community colleges and part-time faculty.

Finally, the plans create a two-tier system that would grandfather current employee's vested retirement and retiree health care into the existing system, but would make new employees ineligible for retirement benefits until reaching five consecutive years as a full-time employee.

These initiatives – both titled "New Public Employees Benefits Reform Act" – will soon be qualified for signature gathering. CTA encourages you not to sign these petitions.

CTA is part of a broad coalition of labor organizations that includes, teachers, nurses, firefighters, police, correctional officers and state workers, that is working together to protect the secure and fair retirement of public employees.

*The Educator will continue to keep you updated with the public retirement benefits situation as it unfolds.*

## Heads up

### Deadlines

#### Declaration of Candidacy form for State Delegates to the 2010 NEA Convention in December *California Educator*

This is a reminder that the December issue of *California Educator* will include the official Declaration of Candidacy form for State Delegates to the 2010 NEA Convention in New Orleans. Declaration of candidacy forms will also be available on the CTA website ([www.cta.org/mycta/profession/conferences/cta](http://www.cta.org/mycta/profession/conferences/cta)).

#### CTA State Gold Awards

Nominations for the 2009 CTA State Gold Awards must be submitted by Friday, Jan. 15. CTA State Gold Awards may be bestowed upon any person or organization whose leadership, acts and support have proved them to be a true friend of public education deserving statewide recognition. Any CTA affiliate, other unit, or individual member may place a name in nomination. The nomination form may be downloaded from the CTA website ([www.cta.org/mycta/profession/awards/gold](http://www.cta.org/mycta/profession/awards/gold)). The nomination form must be accompanied by supporting materials and submitted to the CTA Communications Committee.

### Conferences

#### Rural Issues Conference January 15-17, 2010 Las Vegas The Orleans Hotel

CTA presents its 10th annual conference designed especially for rural educators and members of small CTA chapters. For the first time, CTA is opening registration to members from all state affiliates. This conference provides an excellent chance to discuss and learn about the latest issues, opportunities and solutions available to CTA members living and working in rural areas. The conference features workshops on such diverse topics as education reform, health care in rural areas, organizing for strength, school safety, school finance, and retirement issues.

#### Good Teaching Conference North January 22-24, 2010 Burlingame Hyatt Regency San Francisco Airport

The CTA Good Teaching Conference, presented in Northern and Southern editions, is designed to support excellent teaching and learning practices for classroom teachers. Offering a variety of diverse workshops in curriculum content areas for K-12 teachers, the conference provides opportunities for professional development and offers time to network and share ideas with colleagues and experts in the field. Highlights include sessions on innovative educational best practices, content development, technology, classroom management, and much more.

## SEND US YOUR COMMENTS



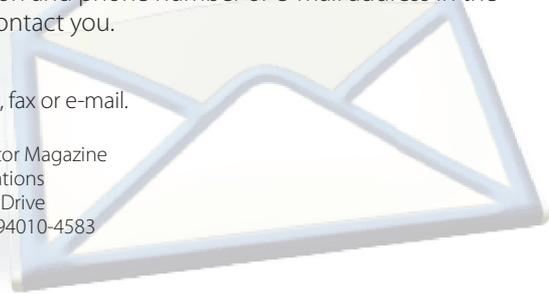
If any of the stories in the *California Educator* pique your interest, let us know your thoughts and we may publish your letter. Please include your full name, local association and phone number or e-mail address in the event that we want to contact you.

Letters may be sent via mail, fax or e-mail.

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## CTA-sponsored and co-sponsored legislation for 2009-10

	BILL #		STATUS
<b>SECOND-GRADE TESTING</b> Hancock	<b>SB 800</b>	Would eliminate second-grade tests in the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program effective July 1, 2010.	Senate Education; 2-year bill
<b>UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE</b> Leno	<b>SB 810</b>	Would establish a single-payer health insurance system in California. <i>(Co-sponsored bill)</i>	Senate Appropriations; 2-year bill
<b>IMMIGRATION INVESTIGATIONS</b> Mendoza	<b>AB 132</b>	Would limit the extent to which immigration raids disrupt students' education.	Vetoed by governor
<b>CONSEQUENCES OF DROPPING OUT</b> Block	<b>AB 374</b>	Would encourage schools to provide at-risk students with a "consequences of dropping out" notice developed by the CDE. <i>(Co-sponsored bill)</i>	Vetoed by governor
<b>COMMUNITY COLLEGE FUNDING</b> Furutani	<b>AB 551</b>	Would provide for a permanent backfill of shortfalls in property taxes to California Community Colleges.	Assembly Appropriations; 2-year bill
<b>50% LAW COMPLIANCE</b> Torlakson	<b>AB 581</b>	Would require the California Community Colleges chancellor's office to conduct annual random audits to ensure district compliance with existing law that requires 50 percent of education dollars to be spent on instructors' salaries.	Assembly Appropriations; 2-year bill
<b>75/25 FACULTY RATIO COMPLIANCE</b> Hill	<b>AB 1095</b>	Would ensure full compliance with law that mandates 75 percent of instruction be performed by full-time faculty in California Community Colleges within three years of passage.	Assembly Appropriations; 2-year bill

Photo by Glen Korengold

## Sweetwater QEIA

Continued from page 29

board members they believe have given up their responsibility for oversight and authority to Superintendent Jesus Gandara by condoning his unprofessional and hostile behavior toward the district's employees.

"By allowing Gandara and other school administrators to treat teachers unprofessionally and uncivilly, they fostered a totally unnecessary situation that caused employer-employee relations in this district to hit a low not seen since the teacher strike in 1981," says Anguiano.

"We have always known that these are difficult economic times and that they are likely to continue for several years. This settlement not only protects the integrity of SEA members' contract, but the struggle to achieve it has surfaced new leaders in our association, resulting in a membership strong and unified to face future challenges."

BILL GUY

Continued from page 26

a better education for more children and their families," says Jo Loss, president of the California State PTA, which has nearly 1 million members. "These findings also demonstrate that QEIA can be a crucial tool for closing the achievement gap among students in our state — and that is essential to building an education system that lives up to its promise for all children."

QEIA is helping schools that are serving more than 500,000 students who are mostly low-income, minority and English learners. All schools deserve adequate resources, but seeing QEIA funding help the three low-income Chula Vista schools top 800 in API scores is inspiring, says Jim Groth, who works in the same school district and represents the area on the CTA Board of Directors.

"This investment is paying off right now," says Groth. "It will only reap more and more academic rewards for our students in the years to come."

MIKE MYSLINSKI

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# Election

Continued from page 31

cess of so many school board candidates who were endorsed by educators means that more districts will listen to educators and work with them to keep cuts away from the classroom in the difficult months ahead for the state.”

Overall, seven of the 11 parcel taxes on local ballots across the state were passed by the required two-thirds margin, notes State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O’Connell. Two of the failed parcel taxes received more than 55 percent of the vote. Both CTA and O’Connell support SCA 6 by state Sen. Joe Simitian (D-Palo Alto) to lower the parcel tax approval threshold (currently two-thirds, about 67 percent) to 55 percent, the same as required for school construction bonds.

“Local communities need to generate much-needed funds for staff, libraries, sports, arts — all the important programs that are being decimated by the deep budget cuts to our schools this year,” says O’Connell. “I believe it’s

critical that the 55 percent approval threshold also be applied to parcel tax measures.”

It was a close win for one Marin County school district. Measure A passed with 68.13 percent yes in the Lagunitas Elementary School District. The extension for eight years of the \$325 annual parcel tax will fund smaller class sizes, library services, counseling, science and music classes, and other school programs that are threatened by state education cuts.

Other CTA-supported wins include the passing of Measure C in the Mill Valley School District, a \$60 million school bond to renovate schools; and the passing of Measure I in the Albany School District in Alameda County, a \$149 annual parcel tax to generate \$1.2 million annually to help counter recent district cuts of \$4.2 million. Albany voters also backed Measure J, which stabilizes existing school funding while maintaining funding for science, technology and foreign language classes. Both measures were supported by the Albany Teachers Association.

MIKE MYSLINSKI

## CTA BOARD EXPENSES

ALLEN.....	5,289.86	MEEDEN.....	7,301.70
BRIDGE.....	5,343.91	MELLENDEZ.....	8,233.98
BUSTOS.....	3,631.49	ORTEGA.....	4,274.16
CABELL.....	4,146.71	PEÑA.....	15,450.75
CICHOCKI.....	3,572.03	PORTER.....	6,242.50
CRUMMEY.....	1,849.01	ROGERS.....	3,583.94
DAWSON.....	2,604.37	SANCHEZ.....	11,280.93
DILLON.....	5,046.35	SHATUN.....	2,522.95
GROTH.....	5,099.31	STERNBERGER.....	1,326.33
HASSON.....	5,407.57	STONE.....	6,103.73
HEINS.....	7,478.17	VAUGHN.....	3,627.51
HENLEY.....	7,870.86	VOGEL.....	4,910.84
JACKSON.....	8,855.15		

Represents monthly average for a representative quarter of fiscal year 2008-09. During this reporting period, the normal and statewide activities include CTA Board meetings, State Council, Service Center Council meetings, Equity and Human Rights Conference, Good Teaching Conference, various task force meetings and other business related functions.



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# Tests

Continued from page 19

may be pressured to teach to the test, what is happening in the classroom would abhor many, many parents. Schools are pulling released sample test questions and focusing on how to get their kids to eliminate, guess and out-trick the test makers.”

“Everybody does it,” says Virginia Tibbetts, a fifth-grade teacher at Roosevelt School in Anaheim. “We’re requested to do it and have special periods during instructional time when we do it.”

Tibbetts, a member of the Anaheim Elementary Education Association, says that teachers take released sample test questions and show students how to narrow down the answers. “We put them on the overhead. There are usually two pretty outlandish answers, and we teach students

how to eliminate those right away. Then there is a ‘distractor’ answer which is pretty close to the correct answer, but just a little bit off, and it’s designed to distract you from the real answer. We teach kids how to recognize those. Kids can be taught to do this and it doesn’t prove they understand the

question. It’s teaching children how to pass a test rather than teaching them concepts about which they need to be adequately educated.”



**Lindy Monge**  
Magnolia Educators Association

### Unnecessary levels of stress

With so much pre-testing and pressure to score well, many students experience high levels of stress, says Lindy Monge, a sixth-grade teacher at Robert M. Pyles Elementary School in Stanton.

“By the time we get to the CSTs, the kids are very stressed,” she says. “They know how important it is. If a student moves up any level, be it from Far Below

Basic to Below Basic, or from Basic to Proficient, or any combination of moving up, then they get recognition with a medal. In sixth grade the pressure is more on them for the fact that we tell them all year that these scores on the CST will be used to determine their classes in junior high. If they don’t do well on them, they won’t be able to participate in electives, and instead will be taking remediation classes to improve in math and language arts. So instead of taking an art class, or woodworking, or computers, they will be taking two math classes, or an extra reading class along with their regular language arts class. Students are reminded of doing well on these tests almost daily.”

Over the years, she has seen students become mysteriously ill before testing, and teachers need to call them at home and tell them they need to show up.

“I’ve had kids leave the room throwing up,” says Monge, a member of the Magnolia Educators Association. “Sometimes they become frozen, and you have to talk them through it and encourage them. The high achievers are the most stressed. Sometimes their hands will go up and they point to something and say, ‘You didn’t teach me this.’ I have to explain to them that I have taught them the depth and breadth of standards-based education and if the question is being asked in a different way, they need to use their skills and knowledge to the best of their abilities. This goes on for two weeks of testing. There must be a better way to do this.”

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## NAEP

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Columbia and tied with four other states.

The fact of the matter is that nationwide scores are stagnant. But when you measure California students based on the state’s standards (among the highest in the country), the results tell a different story. The state’s API system says California students have been making steady progress.



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