

# California EDUCATOR

California Teachers Association September 2009 Volume 14 Issue 1

*"History is a race  
between education  
and catastrophe."*

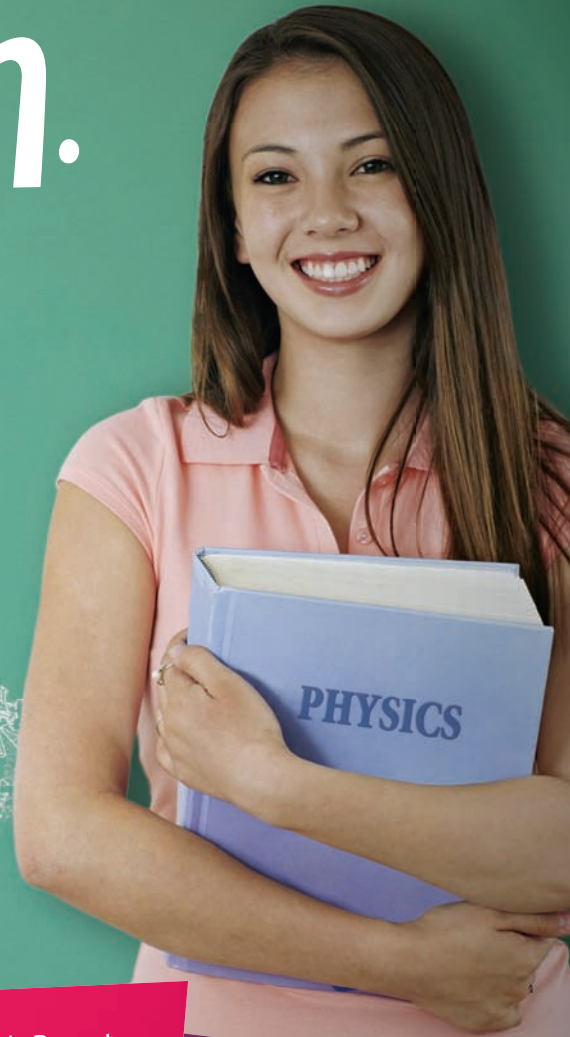
H. G. WELLS

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**COPING WITH CHANGES  
DURING CUTBACKS**  
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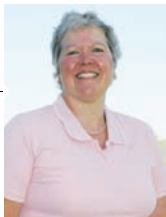
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On the cover: **English Language Development instructor Casey Doose works with student Daniel Diaz at Martin Luther King Middle School in Oceanside.**  
Story on page 6.



# ¡Sí Se Puede! ¿Por Qué No?

BY CTA PRESIDENT DAVID A. SANCHEZ

**A**s we return to school this fall, students and educators face the harsh reality of more than \$17 billion in cuts to public education. Class sizes are painfully larger, and many art, music, career technical education and other vital programs have been eliminated. More than 20,000 teachers, nurses, school librarians and counselors lost their jobs this year, and colleges and universities have turned away thousands of students. Together, these cuts represent the largest slash to California schools since the Great Depression.

And yet, many people in communities across California aren't aware of how these cuts are affecting their neighborhood schools. They think that if the grass is groomed and the flag is flying, then schools are okay. Many people — especially those without kids in school — don't see the severe lack of resources and how dire the situation really is. They don't always realize how hard educators work, in spite of diminishing resources, to keep our schools running and our students learning.

Over the summer, CTA engaged in hard-fought battles in Sacramento and managed to win some pretty important victories. Along with our allies in the Education Coalition, CTA succeeded in protecting Proposition 98 — the state's minimum funding guarantee — and the "maintenance factor," a provision that requires the state to restore to schools in good economic times the money cut from schools in tough times. When lawmakers adopted a final budget revision in mid-July that closed a \$26.3 billion revenue gap, they sided with CTA and public education by refusing to suspend Proposition 98's protections and agreeing to restore more than \$11 billion to schools over the coming years.

This year, as we head back to school, things will be different, and we need to respond accordingly. We need to reach out to the public and talk to them about the problems we face with public education in California. To help you plan and promote local events, CTA is relaunching its Stand Up for Schools social network. The site,

[www.standupforschools.org](http://www.standupforschools.org), is part of a new organizing effort designed to get schools and students the funding they need by changing the broken state budget and political system in Sacramento. We all know that public education is essential for children and communities. Public schools are truly the heart of our neighborhoods and more than an investment we make in our children's future — they're the best investment we can make in everyone's future. It's up to us to let the public know, to tell the story of how these cuts are hurting our students. CTA is also telling that story with a series of new radio and newspaper ads that launched last month.

The hard work of California educators and students was reflected this month as a record number of students are passing the High School Exit Exam — 90.6 percent of the Class of 2009, or nearly 433,000 students, passed the exam by the end of their senior year. Overall, these numbers show what dedicated teachers and education support professionals can do despite working in a state that ranks 47th in per-student funding. But as the recent unprecedented cuts play out in our schools this year, these gains will be harder to reach.

Most of you have probably heard talk lately about President Obama and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's ideas about education reform in their "Race to the Top" (RTTT) guidelines. CTA has been carefully watching the situation with RTTT, a competition of one-time education funds for \$4.35 billion in grants, which is part of the federal stimulus package (*read more on page 30*). This plan is completely misguided and is not the change that was promised by the new administration. Instead, it is just more of the unfair mandates and one-size-fits-all approach we found with No Child Left Behind. A central tenet of RTTT is to pay and evaluate teachers based on student test results. We all know that evaluating teachers based on a single test score is bad for schools and bad for students. It pits teacher against teacher without regard for real student

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*California Educator* is published for the information and edification of its members. The editorial philosophy is governed by the policies of CTA. Articles and advertising reflect that philosophy.

Letters to the editor may be sent to [editor@cta.org](mailto:editor@cta.org).

Publication of advertising in the *California Educator* does not indicate CTA approval of the product or of the companies that purchase advertising.

Advertising rate card and information is available from WebSolutions, Media Division,  
5666 Spruce Harbor Court, Las Vegas, NV 89122  
(702) 838-3434; FAX (702) 838-3355

CTA/NEA membership dues for the fiscal year, Sept. 1-Aug. 31, are \$783, including a \$20 voluntary contribution. Up to \$17.97 of CTA annual dues is designated for CTA/ABC political activities to support state and local candidates and/or initiatives and is not deductible for income tax purposes.

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

*California Educator* (ISSN 1091-6148)  
is published monthly except January, July and August for \$6.47 per year (included in dues) by:

CALIFORNIA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION  
1705 Murchison Dr., Burlingame, CA 94010-4583  
(650) 697-1400; FAX (650) 552-5002  
[editor@cta.org](mailto:editor@cta.org), [www.cta.org](http://www.cta.org)

Postmaster: Send change of address to  
*California Educator*, P.O. Box 4178,  
Burlingame, CA 94011-4178.

Periodicals Postage Paid at Burlingame, CA,  
and additional mailing offices.

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





Dave Crosland, hiredmeat@gmail.com

WHAT'S NEW AT CTA.ORG

- > **Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds survey**  
Take the CTA survey on nutrition and physical activity in schools.  
[www.cta.org](http://www.cta.org) (at the bottom of the home page)
- > **New Member Center**  
Use this one-stop shop with information, resources and opportunities for involvement to get your school year off to a great start.  
[www.cta.org/membership/benefits/New+Member+Center+Landing.htm](http://www.cta.org/membership/benefits/New+Member+Center+Landing.htm)
- > **Promote health care reform with town hall meetings**  
Get involved and help support efforts to gain quality, affordable health care for all.  
[www.cta.org/issues/other/Health+Care+Issues.htm](http://www.cta.org/issues/other/Health+Care+Issues.htm)
- > **Stand Up for Schools**  
Join in the fight and stand up for public education.  
[www.standupforschools.org](http://www.standupforschools.org)
- > **Swine flu info and tips**  
Find resources and links to information about the H1N1 swine flu virus.  
[www.cta.org/community/other/Swine+Flu.htm](http://www.cta.org/community/other/Swine+Flu.htm)



*"I found out that PE was the favorite class of many of my students. So I began gearing my science lessons for the outdoors."*

Casey Doose, Martin Luther King Middle School in Oceanside

calendar	oct 2009	<input type="checkbox"/> Oct. 2-4 <input type="checkbox"/> Oct. 9-11 <input type="checkbox"/> Oct. 9-11 <input type="checkbox"/> Oct. 16-18 <input type="checkbox"/> Oct. 23 <input type="checkbox"/> Oct. 23-25	Region 1 Leadership Conference, <b>Santa Clara</b> CCA Fall Bargaining/Leadership Conference Region 2 Leadership Conference, <b>Reno</b> GLBT Conference, <b>Palm Springs</b> Incentive grants deadline for winter conferences CTA State Council of Education, <b>Los Angeles</b>
	nov 2009	<input type="checkbox"/> Nov. 13	GLBT Safety in Schools grant/scholarship deadline
	dec 2009	<input type="checkbox"/> Dec. 2-3	Secondary Literary Summit IX, <b>Costa Mesa</b>
	jan 2010	<input type="checkbox"/> Jan. 15-17 <input type="checkbox"/> Jan. 22-24 <input type="checkbox"/> Jan. 29-31	Rural Issues Conference, <b>Las Vegas</b> Good Teaching Conference, <b>Burlingame</b> CTA State Council of Education, <b>Los Angeles</b>
	feb 2010	<input type="checkbox"/> Feb. 5-7 <input type="checkbox"/> Feb. 5-7 <input type="checkbox"/> Feb. 26-28	CCA Winter Advocacy Council Region 3 Leadership Conference, <b>Costa Mesa</b> Urban Issues Conference, <b>San Jose</b>
	mar 2010	<input type="checkbox"/> March 2 <input type="checkbox"/> March 5-7 <input type="checkbox"/> March 12-14 <input type="checkbox"/> March 26-28	Read Across America Equity and Human Rights Conference, <b>Irvine</b> Good Teaching Conference, <b>Los Angeles</b> CTA State Council of Education, <b>Los Angeles</b>

**Our mistake**

In the story "Program helps at-risk students focus on positives" in the June 2009 issue of *California Educator*, we neglected to cite *Merced Sun-Star* reporter Danielle Gaines as a source for information included in the article. We apologize for the oversight.

Check out the new **interactive digital version of California Educator online!** Visit us at [www.cta.org](http://www.cta.org).



# Coping with changes during cutbacks

“Back to school” is traditionally a time of anticipation, excitement and hope. School employees look forward to working with a new batch of students, trying new strategies, and using last year’s successes and failures to improve outcomes in the new year. This year, however, is different due to unprecedented cuts. In addition to anticipation, you might be feeling worry or anxiety at the beginning of the school year.

You might feel discouraged, having seen colleagues receive pink slips in the first round of budget cuts, and then again in the unprecedented second round of late-summer cuts. Beloved and innovative programs that took years to build at school sites may have been downsized or dismantled entirely.

Due to layoffs, you may be reassigned to a different grade level, have new and different responsibilities, or be transferred to a different school site if your campus was closed for lack of funding.

Schools typically increase combination classes to save money, so instead of teaching just one grade, you might be responsible for teaching two different grade levels with two sets of curricula and two sets of standards. School districts throughout the state are increasing class sizes, necessitating the need for crowd control.

These changes are bad for students, teachers and classified school employees. They are bad for teaching and learning.

And in the long run, inadequate school funding will cost California dearly.

More than \$18 billion has been cut from schools and colleges. This is the single largest cut to public education since the Great Depression — with K-12 schools taking 60 percent of the state budget cuts. But there’s some good news: Thanks to the work of CTA, the budget agreement protects the state’s minimum school funding law, Proposition 98, and will repay schools and colleges more than \$11 billion.

Surviving is not enough. We must make our voices heard so the public realizes that it is not business as usual at schools, even if the grass is green and the flag is flying. “We must tell our story to the public,” says CTA President David A. Sanchez. “We must start by educating ourselves and our members. It’s time to change the debate in Sacramento. But first, we must change conversations in our local communities to build a movement that supports more funding for our public schools.”

The following articles will offer some new coping techniques for CTA members experiencing the challenges this new school year presents. For survival tips we sought out real experts — school employees who have lived through these experiences. Their advice is wise, practical and sometimes humorous. And best of all, during these tough economic times, they are willing to share it for free. >>>



STAND UP FOR SCHOOLS

Now is the time to **STAND UP FOR SCHOOLS!** The movement behind Pink Friday did not end on March 13. We must continue in our efforts to bring awareness to what is really happening to public education in California. You can play an active part by sharing your story, e-mailing your legislator, or writing a letter to the editor of your local paper. Visit [www.standupforschools.org](http://www.standupforschools.org) and join the movement! (See page 29 for related story.)

Stories by Sherry Posnick-Goodwin • Photos by Scott Buschman



Oceanside Teachers Association member and seventh-grade social studies teacher Bob Sustachek at Martin Luther King Middle School.

# Handling crowded classrooms, members create solutions

It's not unusual for Yolanda Benito's classroom to be packed with high school students. Some mornings, she has as many as 50. Amazingly, during a recent visit, most were on task and attentive.

Benito's students at Del Rio Community School in Brawley are considered "high risk" and were not successful in traditional school. But they like Benito's dynamic style of teaching that's jam-packed with activities. During a recent language arts class, for example, they were divided into teams for the following: pairing up vocabulary words in the style of the TV game show "The Match Game"; playing a version of "Jeopardy!" with categories related to literature; and competing to see who could come up with the most synonyms. Then they sat at computers to work on individual projects.

"Every 20 minutes I change my focus," explains Benito. "These students exhaust me and I probably exhaust them. But it works."

Teaching a large class is nothing new for Benito, who serves as president of the Imperial County Office of Education Teachers Association. But it's definitely more challenging than teaching a smaller class, she says.

"I keep them constantly busy, because it decreases behavior problems," she relates. "I do a lot of hands-on activities. I use a lot of auditory, visual and kinesthetic strategies. And I'm always on my feet. If I was sitting at my desk monitoring things from afar, it wouldn't work. I'm always walking around making sure they are on task and checking their notes."

She rewards students by finishing in-

struction five minutes early and giving them time to chat, which prolongs instructional time by reducing discipline.

"I have to do a lot more preplanning," she confides. "I over-prepare. If I think a lesson might only take 55 minutes, I'm prepared for 70 minutes, and I do a lot of weekly planning instead of daily planning."

"I try to have a sense of humor," says Anh Nguyen, who teaches geometry classes with 40-plus students at North High School in Torrance. "If I am animated and interesting to the students, it's easier to keep them engaged, and it makes the class environment more enjoyable for them — and for me."

Nguyen is always on her feet, going from student to student to make sure they "get it" before moving on to a new topic.

"I need to walk around and monitor whether they understand what I am teaching — I can't just stand up there and recite the lesson," continues Nguyen, a member of the Torrance Teachers Association. "I establish rules and strictly enforce them to maintain control of the class. A class in chaos is impossible to teach — particularly when they are this large."

"Discipline is one of the largest challenges of teaching a large class," agrees Bob Sustachek, a seventh-grade social studies teacher at Martin Luther King Middle School and a member of the Oceanside Teachers Association. "With a large class, you can't keep your eyes on all students at the same time. Kids tend to chatter more in a larger class than in a smaller class. And there can be so many



**LEFT:** Yolanda Benito, president of the Imperial County Office of Education Teachers Association, at Del Rio Community School in Brawley.

**OPPOSITE TOP:** Geometry teacher Anh Nguyen at North High School in Torrance.



more interruptions.”

To maintain discipline, an ounce of prevention works best by fostering a personal connection with them. “I eat lunch in my room and students are welcome to come in and socialize as long as they are well-behaved. Connecting to students is important. They know me well and I know them well. They feel that I care about them.”

While it’s important to connect with students individually, it’s important to foster a sense of community within a larger class, he adds. “I try to give them positive reinforcement as a group, saying, ‘You guys did so well on a test, I’m very proud of you,’ and treat them as a class, or almost like one person. Otherwise, they will feel like 40 individuals and act like 40 individuals.”

Sustachek has more than 40 students in some classes, including students with learning disabilities and English learners.

He uses a lot of humor to hold their attention. For each class, he has mapped out a complex seating chart. He places struggling students nearest to him — and also puts them close to students that excel and can serve as “models.” Groups sit at tables and frequently discuss open-ended questions. They never know in advance which student will be called upon to answer. To save time, students are given numbers 1-8 at each table and he picks one number out of a hat to pick spokespeople at all tables.

“That way, nobody can hide,” says Sustachek.

It’s easier for students to hide — and fall between the cracks — when classes are overcrowded, says Lora Novak, a teacher at Westlake High School and a member of the Unified Association of Conejo Teachers. This includes advanced placement classes.

“Students think that when they are



one of 38, they can hide and let a few talkative people lead the class,” says Novak. “But I have a seating chart with all their pictures on it. I make checks on it when they open their mouths and grade them on participation. When they know they are being held accountable in a large class setting, it forces them to talk and to contribute.”

*“It’s easier for students to hide and fall between the cracks when classes are overcrowded.”*

*Lora Novak, Westlake High School*



Bob Sustachek’s crowded classroom at Martin Luther King Middle School.

# Coping with reassignment, closure and layoffs

Stephanie Cobb knows what it's like to be the new kid on the block, even though she's been teaching in the Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District for nearly two decades. After 16 years at one school, she was involuntarily transferred to a different school in 2007. At first, she felt like a stranger in a strange land.

"Everything changed for me. I went from teaching first grade to second grade. I had to learn a new curriculum and get to know a new staff, and was suddenly in a huge school. There were so many new faces, it took me a couple of months to learn everyone's name."

Being told to change schools is becoming more commonplace, and many teachers throughout the state are experiencing similar trauma this fall as budget cuts result in school closure.

The logistics of having to move can be overwhelming. Cobb called upon those who worked at her former school, retired teachers and even the substitute teacher who had filled in for her in the past. Her friends helped her to pack, unpack and get organized, which eased some of the burden for the Fairfield-Suisun Unified

*"What you did at your last site may be totally different than what you do at your present site — you have to be flexible."*

*Stephanie Cobb, Fairfield-Suisun Unified Teachers Association*

Teachers Association (F-SUTA) member.

It took some time, but eventually Cobb began to feel at home in her new school. Many teachers went out of their way to welcome her. She found that the more questions she asked, the more helpful they were.

"To make it work, you have to be flexible," she advises. "What you did at your last site may be totally different than what you do at your present site. There are different people and a different routine. And being new, you go through a 'testing period.' But if you're positive, other people are likely to be positive with you."

A settlement reached last fall, which was sparked by union activity, allowed 41 F-SUTA teachers who were involuntarily transferred under a form

of reconstitution to return to their old school sites. However, Cobb is staying put. "It has worked out well for me," she says. "Sometimes when you get moved, you get moved to a better situation."

Colleen Dunaway has survived the pain of school closure more than once in the Cotati-Rohnert Park School District, which has declining enrollment. One school closed seven years ago and another in 2007-08. Presently she is working at John Reed Elementary School, and enjoys working there.

"I guess you could say those in our district are pioneers in California when it comes to school closures," says Dunaway, a member of the Rohnert Park-Cotati Educators Association (RPCEA). "There was no protocol on how it was supposed to happen. Nobody knew what to do or say. It was very hard emotionally, but it was also hard physically. Teachers had to empty out their own cupboards and rooms of supplies."

**LEFT:** Fairfield-Suisun Unified Teachers Association member Stephanie Cobb with her second-grade class.



RPCEA came up with its own protocol for how a school closure should be handled, and bargained the new language into the contract. In the past, teachers were assigned to rooms crammed with items others had left behind, and were responsible for disposing of them. Rooms at their new sites are now clean. Teachers from closed schools are no longer assigned combination classes the first year, to ease their adjustment.

Dunaway says one of the hardest things was adjusting to a different student population. She was accustomed to teaching English learners, and the first time she was reassigned she did not have any of those students in her class. She missed working with that population.

Grieving is a normal part of school closure, says Dunaway. “But try and keep it short and be professional. It sounds cold and callous, but you have to be flexible, make new friends and see it as a professional adventure. You have to go with the flow.”

Grieving for pink-slipped colleagues has been tough for Lisa Hatfield, a member of the Las Virgenes Educators Association who teaches at Wright Middle School in Calabasas. Many new teachers were laid off, including one that Hatfield mentored.



**Lisa Hatfield**  
Las Virgenes  
Educators Association



“I walked into the office right after the pink slips came out and started crying. The office manager said, ‘Cry, go ahead, get it out.’ How else do you get past it?”

But now it’s time to pick up the pieces, and crying is not an option. Co-workers have been very supportive of one another through this difficult time.

“We’re a tight group,” relates Hatfield. “We celebrate holidays, weddings and births, and we grieve our losses together. On Friday we gather to unwind, and hugs in the hallway

**ABOVE:** Leilani Kemp at Laurel Creek Elementary School in Fairfield. **INSET:** Nevaeh DeSouza works with geometric blocks.

are not uncommon. That will never go away, and that is why we will survive.”

“At this point, there’s nothing I can do about it,” she says. “I may not have a choice about what happens, but I do have a choice on how I react. I can sit back and be miserably unhappy, or I can stand up and do whatever job I need to do. My job is to go in there every day and make sure my kids are achieving. And that’s what I will do.” ♦

# Dealing with classroom cuts: freebies and discounts can help

When life gives her lemons, Vicki Nosanov-Goldman has her nutrition students make lemon meringue pies and lemon bars. When life gives her other items, she also finds a way to use them.

For instance, when someone gave her shovels and fire pits, her social studies students cooked outdoor meals like slaves — which they happened to be studying. When the Girl Scouts donated rolls of fabric, Nosanov-Goldman started a sewing club where students made togas.

And then there's the squash — lots of squash — that someone gave her from a local garden. Students cut the squash into pieces to store in a donated freezer and will use it in the future to make squash bread.

"I call myself the Princess of Begging with Dignity," jokes Nosanov-Goldman, a nutrition and social studies teacher at Bret Harte Middle School and a San Jose Teachers Association member. "I grew up poor in Banning. I'm shameless. I have a great sense of humor about this. I'm a scrounger."

If a company is going out of business, she asks for computers, paper and office supplies that CEOs would rather donate

than sell. At garage sales, she asks sellers to donate items for her "prize bucket" to reward good students. If a teacher retires, she is there to collect what's left behind. She applies for grants constantly and attends educational conferences, where she stocks up on posters, pens and pencils. For fun, she browses "freecycling" on Yahoo and "free listings" on Craigslist.

Among her most prized donations are computer monitors, turn-of-the-century needlepoint, Native American artwork, atlases, a microwave oven, a refrigerator, three boxes of Tupperware and carts for schlepping things around. She also won, through Project Citizen, an all-expense-paid trip to Louisiana for her and eight students to attend the National Conference for State Legislatures.

"I don't mind asking for things. I don't mind rejection. If people say no, they say no. But I say, 'I'm a teacher, would you mind...?' and they often say yes. When I get something good, I'll throw my lesson plan up in the air and use whatever I have for a teachable moment."

In an ideal world, educators don't beg for

## A variety of free supplies

- > [www.freakyfreddies.com](http://www.freakyfreddies.com) For free printables, worksheets, DVDs and subscriptions.
- > [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org) Find things people no longer want that may be invaluable to your class.
- > [www.kidsinneed.net](http://www.kidsinneed.net) Distributes school supplies to low-income schools for free.
- > [www.agiftforteaching.org](http://www.agiftforteaching.org) Transfers surplus materials to teachers for free.

handouts and scrounge for discounts and freebies. But when public schools don't receive the basics, teachers are left scrambling. Bargain hunting is time-consuming and may not always pay off. However, for those who love the thrill of the chase, it can be gratifying.

The following are some bargain hunting strategies from CTA members.

**Barbara Elliott Sanders** — Literacy coach at Sunnyslope Elementary School in San Diego and member of the Southwest Teachers Association



**LEFT:** San Jose Teachers Association member Vicki Nosanov-Goldman talks about stretching classroom dollars at Bret Harte Middle School.

**Philosophy:** “Teachers shouldn’t have to ask. We know this, but we do it anyway for our students.”

**Strategies:** Attends open houses for teachers at places like Office Depot and Staples, where pencils, highlighters, paper and other supplies are given out. Takes advantage of free days for teachers at local museums and receives curriculum packets with fun activities. Asks for extra promotional items like rulers, pencils and pens at county fairs or community events. Enlists local restaurants to help with fundraisers and snacks: Outback cooked dinner for a set price and let the school keep the profits; Starbucks supplied free coffee for parent workshops. Asks local sports teams — the San Diego Chargers and the Padres — for promotional items left over at the end of the season, and uses sports posters and items as incentive prizes for students. Invites community members she meets schmoozing to be guest speakers at her school.

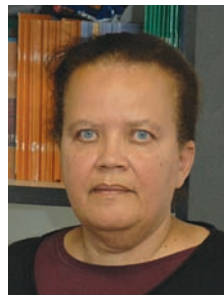


**Richie Wong** — Third-grade teacher at Visitation Valley Elementary School and member of United Educators of San Francisco

**Philosophy:** “I’m pretty good at telling people why I need money. I say, ‘We’re poor, and my students perform very well on the test.’”

**Strategies:** Uses [www.donorschoose.org](http://www.donorschoose.org), a website where teachers from disadvantaged neighborhoods are

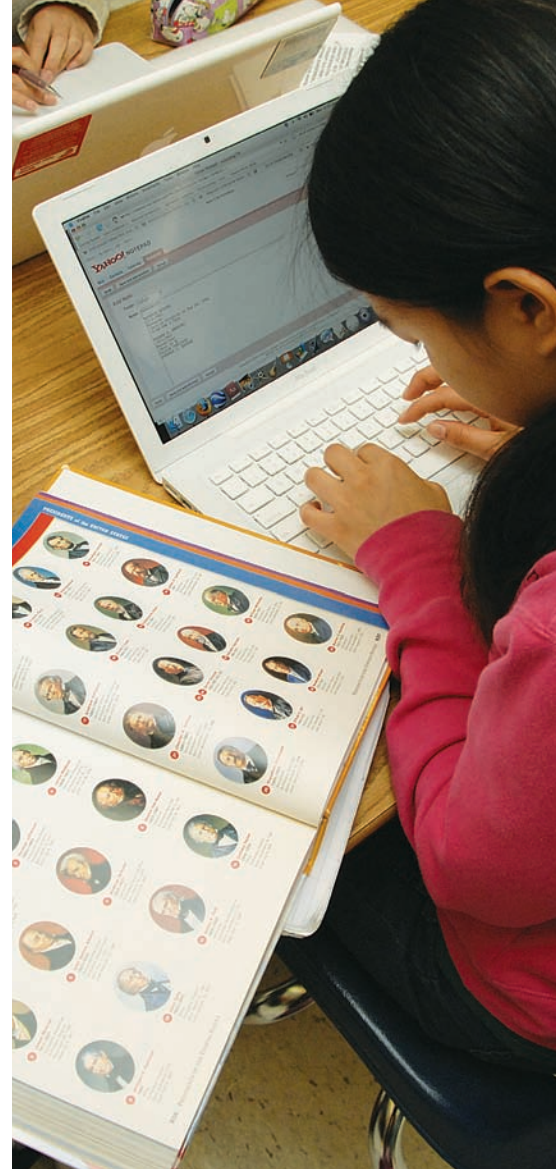
matched with donors to pay for items the school can’t afford. Last spring, Wong needed \$800 to take his students to Golden Gate Park for a field trip with San Francisco Nature Education, a nonprofit bird-watching organization. Through the website he was matched with a donor who fronted the money for the trip. Students, accompanied by naturalists, were able to experience lots of wildlife and received a guidebook to help identify animals. He also receives money through [www.adoptaclassroom.com](http://www.adoptaclassroom.com) that helps pay for books and supplies.



**Denise Stewart** — English language development teacher at Willow Glen High School and member of the San Jose Teachers Association

**Philosophy:** “I love the Internet. I live on it. But if a site isn’t teacher-friendly, I move on.”

**Strategies:** The website she and two friends co-founded, [www.ellteacherpros.com](http://www.ellteacherpros.com) (click on “Recommendations”), offers a wealth of websites with free educational games, databases, lessons, WebQuests and resources. She suggests visiting the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times* online for free lessons in economics, history, science and technology; and websites for news agencies such as MSNBC and AP to get videos of political events, weather or important stories of the day. She especially likes [www.filamentality.com](http://www.filamentality.com) where teachers can post and share hotlists and WebQuests for free. ❖



**ABOVE:** Rebecca Sze at her computer at Bret Harte Middle School in San Jose.

## Denise Stewart’s online picks for freebies

- [www.storylineonline.net](http://www.storylineonline.net) Actors read children’s stories online.
- [www.waterproof-paper.com/graph-paper](http://www.waterproof-paper.com/graph-paper) Different styles of graphing paper.
- [www.coolmath.com](http://www.coolmath.com) Math and science for all levels.
- [www.readwritethink.org/student\\_mat](http://www.readwritethink.org/student_mat) Among other resources, “Comic Creator” invites students to create their own comic strips.
- [www.studentsoftheworld.info/menu\\_infopays.html](http://www.studentsoftheworld.info/menu_infopays.html) Helps further communication between young people all over the world.

# Coping with combo classes: double grades, double the work?

“Calling all second-graders,” Mary Weaver calls out to her class of 20 at Descanso Elementary School. Eight students walk over to the corner table for direct instruction with Weaver in language arts.

“If I have an uncle, would you spell his wife A-U-N-T or A-N-T?” asks Weaver. When students answer correctly, she praises them for being “Super Seconds.”

Meanwhile, a dozen first-graders are sitting on the floor, absorbed in writing books titled “My Bear.” Nearby are stuffed bears in shoe box beds put together by Weaver, offering inspiration.

“Now it’s time for my Super Seconds to go to their seats and start working in their journals,” says Weaver. “Will all of my first-graders join me?”

And so it goes throughout the day, with Weaver alternating between the two grades. Some activities are shared, including a math lesson on counting and physical education, where balls bounce atop a parachute held by all the students.

This Mountain Empire Teachers Association member makes juggling look easy, even though teaching a combination classroom is anything but. Weaver — a nominee for San Diego County Teacher of the Year — has some advice for teachers given combo classes, so that they and their students can thrive.

“Constantly assess students to see where they are academically,” she says. “Use multiple assessments so you can monitor their progress and so you know who you have to help. Watch them for possible learning problems, too.”

She advises teachers to include both grades in activities whenever possible, but at different levels. For example, she

asked both grades to write a letter to President Obama, but first-graders wrote sentences and second-graders wrote paragraphs.

She has work stations with separate curriculum for each grade to receive direct instruction, but otherwise mixes up grade levels in her seating chart. This creates a feeling among students of belonging to a class, rather than a grade. It also prevents cheating, since students sit next to others with different curriculum.

When they finish assignments, students can choose from “buckets of books” to read for pleasure, or do computer activities at their own pace. This fosters independence, a helpful characteristic for students in multigrade classes.

Teaching a combination class can be a tremendous amount of work initially, says Judy Smith, a teacher at Georgetown School, but it does get easier over time.

“Sometimes you can group by ability and not by grade level. The key is that you have to know your standards for each grade level so you can integrate them as much as possible,” says Smith, a member of the Black Oak Mine Teachers Association (BOMTA) who has taught multiage classrooms for 20 years. “If you are doing a math lesson on addition, for example, look at the standards for both grade levels and put it together for a lesson in the way that you want.”

“The class and individual students benefit most when the spread of abilities includes highs and lows within all the grade levels represented in the classroom,” says Smith. “All students

have strengths to bring to a classroom, no matter their age or academic ability, and will take on a leadership role in different ways when given the opportunity.”

Combination classes can be liberating because they offer teachers creativity and variety, says George Sheridan, a teacher at Northside Elementary School in Cool and president of BOMTA. And it works best, he says, when teachers focus on meeting the needs of students rather than only thinking in terms of grade level.

“Oftentimes when I do a lesson, I am addressing standards for the first and second grade simultaneously. For instance, I might read a story

from *Frog and Toad Are Friends* to my whole class. The second-graders could reread the story, creating a double-entry journal with passages from the book on one page and their thoughts about those quotations on the facing page. Meanwhile, the first-graders could create storyboards, retelling the story with illustrations of key scenes and single lines of text

as captions. Sometimes students have the same task, but different standards for their work.”

If possible, says Sheridan, share students with colleagues. “Last year, when I had a 2-3 class, I sent third-graders next door to a third-grade teacher just for math. At the same time, another teacher with a 1-2 class sent me her second-graders just for math. We didn’t look at it as ‘your kids’ or ‘my kids.’ We were a team responsible for all the kids.”

When he first was assigned to a 1-2



**George Sheridan**  
Black Oak Mine  
Teachers Association

**RIGHT:** Mountain Empire Teachers Association member Mary Weaver at Descanso Elementary School. **INSETS:** Students at Descanso Elementary School involved in PE and art classes.

combination class, Sheridan thought it would be the worst year of his career. “I felt like I was always behind. After about six weeks, I realized that the problem was that I was trying to teach the entire grade 1 Houghton Mifflin language arts program and the entire grade 2 program.

“When I stopped worrying about the adopted curriculum materials, I was able to design lesson plans that worked for me and for my students. The key was designing plans that allowed me to build on what students knew and were able to do, rather than trying to shoehorn all students into one of two standard molds. It turned out to be a great year.” ❖



# Making the grade change: colleagues can help transition

When administrators switched Casey Doose from teaching fourth-graders to teaching eighth-graders, the English Language Development (ELD) instructor briefly went into a state of shock. She didn't have much time to prepare.

"The first thing I did was get to know the standards and the expectations of the new grade level," says Doose. "That was huge."

When she wasn't cramming to learn eighth-grade standards, she was asking teachers in her newly assigned grade level for pointers. Mostly, she wanted to know how eighth-graders behaved.

"I had no idea what to expect from an eighth-grade personality, or what kids are like at that age" explains Doose, who still is teaching eighth-graders at Martin Luther King Middle School in Oceanside.

**BELOW:** English Language Development instructor Casey Doose works with eighth-graders Maribel Guzman (left) and Indira Vilchis at Martin Luther King Middle School in Oceanside.

"In addition to speaking with colleagues, I did child development research, so I would know how to treat them. I wanted to gear my lessons so I wasn't being condescending or too challenging. I wanted to push them, but not so hard that they couldn't be successful. It's hard when you switch grades, because you don't know what to expect in terms of behavior and capabilities."

She gave students a questionnaire to fill out on the first day. She asked them what they wanted out of her class — and from her as a teacher. She asked them about what they liked to do — and disliked doing — both inside and outside of the classroom. And she referred back to these interviews when she wanted to connect better with her students.

"I found out that PE was the favorite class of many of my students. So I began gearing my science lessons for the outdoors. It was really successful. When we were studying atoms, they would run around and act like different parts of the

atom. If they were electrons they were always in motion, dropping different balls into a bucket that represented the nucleus of the atom for protons and electrons. It was so much fun."

If you switch grades, says Doose, try to look at the experience as an adventure and learning experience in child development. "It's cool because you learn what's coming up next for students you have taught or what they have already gone through."

Kate Pitrone had been a kindergarten teacher for seven years. Last year her principal switched her to second grade at Dyer Kelly Elementary School in Sacramento. It was only two grade levels, but a world of difference.

"I was very upset," recalls Pitrone, a member of the San Juan Teachers Association. "My passion was kindergarten, and I had received so much professional development for kindergarten. I didn't understand why they were switching me."

"The past year has been extremely stressful," Pitrone admits. "It was like my first teaching year all over again. It was very time-intensive trying to figure things out. But my partners were really good, and I relied on them to help me through this year. It helps to immediately connect with someone who is teaching that grade level."

In addition to studying standards of the new grade level, Pitrone recommends looking at the standards of the previous grade level to have an idea of the skills students should already possess. She suggests going to trainings and asking for release time to observe the classroom of a teacher in the grade level you have been reassigned to.

"Don't be afraid to ask your peers for help," says Pitrone. "Ask lots and lots of questions." ❖







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October is Breast Cancer Awareness month. Remember to schedule a mammogram.



# Surviving breast cancer

Breast cancer provided Modoc County teacher Patti Perkins Carpenter with plenty of lessons for her students over the past school year — not the least of which was that if this ever happens to them, it is something they can live through.

Stories by Dina Martin • Photos by Rick Holloway

That's exactly what Carpenter is doing nearly a year after receiving her breast cancer diagnosis last September, the day before Back to School Night at State Line Elementary School in New Pine Creek in rural Modoc County.

During the last school year, Carpenter underwent surgery, chemotherapy and radiation, and often commuted 240 miles to the nearest cancer center in Klamath Falls, Ore., for treatment. Especially tough for her were the four weeks of radiation treatment, which required her to make the five-hour round-trip commute over mountain roads each day. Yet Carpenter also managed to keep up with the progress of her students and even resumed her full-time teaching duties in the spring, just in time to take the entire school of 25 K-8 students on a weeklong Outdoor Education trip to Sacramento and the foothills.

"That trip was one of my treatment goals," says Carpenter. "A lot of these kids never get to the city, so we go every three years to Sacramento. It was fantastic! I made it!"

As one of two teachers in the two-room rural school, Carpenter worked with long-term substitute teachers for the year, but made frequent visits to the classroom where she led reading circles,

wrote lesson plans, graded papers and met with parents for conferencing. She also wrote periodic e-mails to parents and friends that detailed her journey through diagnosis, treatment and recovery. In such a small, tight-knit community, she received as much care and attention as she gave. Students and parents showered her with cards, letters, pictures and gas money, and were taught a lesson in empathy and compassion along the way.

"The day before I headed to my first chemotherapy, one of my eighth-grade boys who doesn't usually show much emotion gave me a big hug and told me he'd be thinking of me. It was pretty touching," she says.

Later, when she lost her hair and her eyebrows and eyelashes due to the side effects of the chemo and she started wearing scarves, the kids learned to joke with her that she looked like a pirate or fortune teller. She remembers attending the school's Spring Fling Week, which allowed her to go back to school in her pj's on Pajama Day, and paint a face on the back of her bald head for "Backwards Day."

"If you can't laugh, it makes it a lot harder," says Carpenter. "For me, joking with the kids was my touch with reality



Breast cancer survivor and Modoc Teachers Association member Patti Perkins Carpenter at a community golf tournament that benefited the American Cancer Society.

and normalcy. It was a big thing."

Now, three months out of treatment, Carpenter is on the road to recovery. She has regained her energy and is walking 12 miles a week. In August, she worked with the Modoc Teachers Association on a community golf tournament that benefited the American Cancer Society and the Modoc County Breast Cancer Support



**“Take it from me”**  
 Why women should schedule  
 regular mammograms.  
 Page 21 >

Group, which provides support as well as expenses for women to travel out of the county to receive mammograms.

“We talked about hosting a golf tournament two years ago to build camaraderie and community support,” she says. “Now it’s turned into a fund-raiser for the support group, which is near and dear to my heart.”

# Cancer study findings

Along with her mother, who is a retired teacher, Modoc Teachers Association member Patti Perkins Carpenter has been a participant in the California Teachers Study, a longitudinal study that has tracked cancer and the health of more than **133,000 female teachers**.

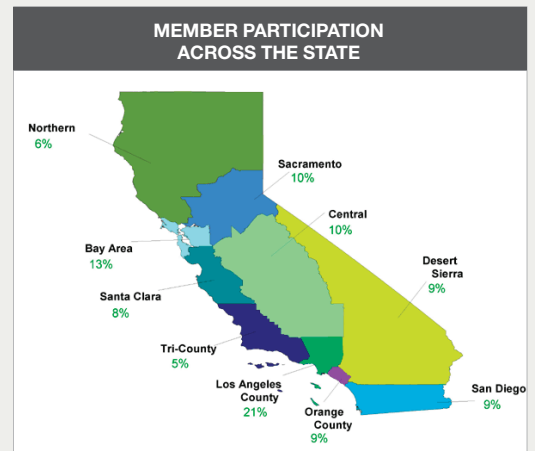
Little did she know when she became a participant that she would be battling cancer herself in the ensuing years.

She remembers going through the extensive health survey and being amused by questions that asked her how often she eats broccoli or whether she lived near high tension wires or grew up around feedlots. The survey is part of a research project of the Northern California Cancer Center (NCCC), which studies cancer causes, trends and prevention. The center has been collaborating with several California institutions in collecting and analyzing survey data and data on cancer occurrence for the study.

“As I filled it in, I thought how fortunate I was that no one in my family had cancer. I thought I was healthy and that I ate right,” says Carpenter. “It just shows you that you never know what’s going to happen.”

Carpenter, like thousands of other teacher participants, has provided valuable information that is leading to some interesting cancer theories and is likely to be used in research well into the future.

Begun in 1995, the initial study collected data from an extensive questionnaire that focused on lifestyle, medical history, and women’s health. Since then, study participants have completed additional surveys. Questionnaires were mailed to every CalSTRS member, which resulted in over 40 percent of the members wanting to be involved in the study. The questionnaire information has been linked with data from the California Cancer Registry, which has tracked all cases of cancer diagnosed in the state since 1988.



“Teachers have been so valuable to us in this study,” says Pamela Horn-Ross, a research scientist for the NCCC and a founding investigator of the California Teachers Study. “They’ve been totally cooperative, enthusiastic and engaged.”

“They’ve given us great data. In some ways, California teachers will be the ‘Harvard Nurses’ of the future,” says NCCC research scientist Christina Clarke, referring to a landmark study of more than 180,000 nurses that provided a wealth of information about women’s health. “In fact, we are now planning a new study involving California teachers that we hope will be as impactful as the nurses’ study in providing important new data to inform women about how dealing with menopause will affect their risk of cancer and heart disease in the future.”

Early findings from the study confirmed concerns previously expressed by teachers that they experienced a higher rate of breast cancer than comparable women in California.

The study has found that teachers have much lower rates of lung cancer and death from heart disease than the general population because they are a “spectacularly non-smoking group,” according to Clarke.

Unfortunately, research also indicates that teachers have a 30 percent higher rate of uterine cancer and a 50 percent higher rate of melanoma (see sidebar page 20), two areas the study’s investigators are now actively researching.

*Continued on page 20*

Scientists don't yet know why the breast cancer rate is still higher among teachers. One theory is that it may have something to do with teachers' reproductive patterns. Teachers in the study tended to delay childbirth, or did not have any children altogether, both of which have been associated with a higher risk of breast cancer.

Some of the survey information is leading Clarke to some brand-new ideas that may be important in the prevention of breast cancer. For example, data from the survey shows that teachers who grew up among stables, farm animals, and their manure have a lower incidence of breast cancer than the rest of the female population.

Clarke is conducting a study that tests the "hygiene hypothesis" as it relates to breast cancer. This idea holds that reduced or delayed exposures to microbes in childhood, or living in a mostly disease-free, sanitized environment, hampers development of a healthy immune system.

In her grant application, Clarke wrote, "Some of the impetus for this research comes from hearing breast cancer survivors say, 'I've never been sick a day in my life, and now I get breast cancer!'"

Working in collaboration with the Northern California Cancer Center are several other institutions, including the University of California at Irvine, the University of Southern California, and the City of Hope, all of which are conducting research studies that draw from the teacher data. Researchers from NCCC and their partner institutions are looking at other factors that may have an impact on cancer, including obesity, diet, alcohol, second-hand smoke, and air pollution.

"I am so proud of our teachers," says CTA President David A. Sanchez. "Their participation in this important study shows that their influence goes far beyond the classroom. The information that thousands of our teachers have provided will one day have a major impact on the health of women in this nation and the world."

*For more information on this study, visit [www.calteachersstudy.org](http://www.calteachersstudy.org); for prevention tips visit [www.nccc.org/preventiontips](http://www.nccc.org/preventiontips).*

**Interested in participating in future cancer research? California teachers are needed to volunteer for new studies. For more information, go to [www.teachersresearch.org](http://www.teachersresearch.org).**

## Melanoma: Know the risks

Although breast cancer has garnered its share of attention, the Northern California Cancer Center has also shed some light on a troubling increase in the rates of melanoma, a skin cancer affecting both men and women.

Cases of melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, are on the increase in all age, sex and socioeconomic groups — but particularly among non-Hispanic white men over the age of 65, according to a study released earlier in the year by NCCC research scientist Christina Clarke and colleagues from Stanford University, the University of Southern California and Washington University.

While prior studies suggested that the increase in melanoma cases is merely due to more screening, the NCCC study showed otherwise, and estimated an overall increase in melanoma occurrence at the rate of 3.1 percent a year — with the rate in non-Hispanic white men increasing nearly 5 percent per year. Results of the study provided hard evidence that rates of early-detected thin tumors as well as late-detected thick tumors have increased.

"Because we were able to break out and also to detect increase in melanoma

occurrence both for thick melanomas and for persons living in impoverished areas, we can rule out this idea that melanoma is just going up because of more screening among persons with good access to screening," Clarke said. "Now we can focus on making sure all patients know about melanoma and have improved access to screening, which can catch melanomas before they become deadly."

The study was conducted using data collected from the Surveillance Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) national cancer monitoring program.

**To reduce the risk of developing melanoma, the National Cancer Institute recommends:**



Avoiding exposure to midday sun (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.) whenever possible.

Wearing protective clothing in the sun (long sleeves, pants, hats).



Protecting yourself from UV radiation using lotion, cream or gel that contains sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher.



Wearing sunglasses that have UV-absorbing lenses.

## Tips for prevention and early detection of cancer

### Detection

- Many growths can be found early and treated. Schedule regular mammograms to check for breast cancer.
- Melanoma is the most serious of the common types of skin cancer, but it can often be found early and treated successfully.
- Mutations in certain genes can make cancer more likely to develop. Learn about the different kinds of genes that can be involved in cancer, how some can be passed from parents to children, and what genetic testing can reveal about cancer risk.
- Use early detection methods that can find precancerous changes in some parts of the body, such as the Pap test, colonoscopy, and prostate examination.

### Prevention

- Eat a healthy diet, with an emphasis on plant sources.
- Exercise regularly and maintain a healthy weight throughout life.
- Learn about the cancer risks posed by your surroundings and what you can do about them.
- If you drink alcoholic beverages, limit your intake to no more than 1 drink per day for women or 2 per day for men.
- Protect against the sun by finding shade, wearing hats, sunglasses, and clothing to shield your skin from the sun. Sunscreen alone is usually not enough protection.

# Take it from me

**“I HAD MY FIRST MAMMOGRAM WHEN** I was 40 years old and then followed a routine of getting mammograms every two years until I hit age 48. I felt very healthy, hadn’t discovered any lumps through self-examinations, and was not worried about cancer since there was no history of any type of cancer in my family for at least three generations.

“So I waited three years before scheduling my next mammogram, and bingo, I had a cancerous tumor which had grown to over 2 centimeters in diameter, and cancerous cells were also detected in one of my lymph nodes.



**Patti Perkins Carpenter**  
Modoc Teachers Association

“Early detection is such a key determinant in the prognosis for cancer survival, so I still lose sleep over not going in for a yearly mammogram that might have detected my tumor at an earlier stage. I was told by a couple of my doctors that because of the specific location of my tumor and the density of my breast tissue, the tumor would have been hard to detect through self-examination alone. Even after I knew the tumor’s location, I couldn’t feel it.

“My first e-mail that revealed my cancer diagnosis to friends, family, and all of my teaching colleagues in Modoc Joint Unified School District

ended with me imploring all women reading the message to schedule a mammogram and all husbands, sons or brothers of women to encourage their wives, mothers or sisters to have a regular mammogram. I think the word got around quickly that if you didn’t want to be hounded about having regular mammograms, stay away from Carpenter. But hearing from women that they had scheduled a long-overdue mammogram because of my sometimes assertive encouragement seemed to help empower me in my own personal fight against breast cancer.

“Some women need to get over the feeling that mammograms are inconvenient, uncomfortable and somewhat embarrassing. Your life or the life of those women you care for may depend on the early detection of breast cancer that a mammogram can provide.” ✦

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## Beverly Hills ESP outraged over outsourcing

Many who belong to the Beverly Hills Education Association ESP unit work part time and have been hoping for increased hours. But instead of offering these support professionals more hours, the school district has been “outsourcing” classified positions and hiring nonunion employees with employment agencies. Adding insult to injury is the fact that outsourced, nonunion employees have been given full-time positions — at twice the hourly rate of union members.

Most union employees are paid approximately \$15 an hour while the nonunion equivalents are earning about \$30 an hour.

“They never even asked us if we would like to work more hours,” says Linda Omansky, president of the ESP bargaining unit consisting of approximately 100 classroom aides and nurse’s assistants. “Our members are hardworking, and they come back year after year making very little. We have been treated like second-class citizens.”

The district neglected to

fly the positions so that members could apply for them. According to Omansky, the contract states that “even though the district has the right to outsource jobs, administrators are still supposed to come to us first and fly the available positions.”

Outsourcing classroom aides isn’t even saving the district money, argues Omansky, a general education paraprofessional for 30 years who works at El Rodeo Elementary School. She calculates that it costs the Beverly Hills Unified School District a quarter of a million dollars more per year for the outsourced employees — even when taking into account that outsourced employees receive no benefits from the district while union members who work a minimum of 19.5 hours a week do receive them.

Most BHEA-ESP members are special education classroom aides working with special-needs students who are extremely challenging. Many don’t work enough hours to receive benefits. In some cases, says Omansky, a few extra

hours could greatly improve their quality of life.

“Some members have been asking for years to have their time increased and get more hours,” says Omansky. “Many of them can’t use their jobs as their main livelihood and need other sources of income. What the district has been doing is a slap

*“What the district has been doing is a slap in the face, and makes no sense when it’s not saving the district any money.”*

Linda Omansky,  
Beverly Hills Education  
Association

in the face, and makes no sense when it’s not saving the district any money.”

For nearly a year, Omansky talked with the assistant superintendent of human resources in hope of resolving the situation. But that person left the district just when the union and the school

district were close to an agreement. Now bargaining members are worried that they’ll have to start all over with a new administrator who recently came on board. Members have appeared at numerous school board meetings to express their unhappiness.

“It’s very frustrating,” says Omansky. “Most of my bargaining unit members are very upset. But I will continue fighting for them until this injustice is resolved.”

SHERRY POSNICK-GOODWIN



Photo by Scott Buschman

**ABOVE:** Linda Omansky, Beverly Hills Education Association member and president of the ESP bargaining unit, speaks about outsourcing in her district.

# Court ruling sets guidelines for school mailboxes

A recent court ruling reaffirms the rights of teachers to engage in political activity in the workplace during non-duty time — but stipulates that teachers are not guaranteed the right to use school mailboxes to urge the support or defeat of a candidate for public office.

The California Supreme Court ruled against the San Leandro Teachers Association (SLTA) in June, upholding the district's right to bar literature from school mailboxes containing recommendations for or against candidates for public office.

The ruling does not apply to literature that merely “encourages” members to become involved in upcoming elections and informs them how to do so. Also, unions may use school mailboxes to distribute literature urging members to engage in political action besides casting a ballot, such as contacting legislators about pending legislation. For example, a newsletter or flier that says “Write to your congressman about No Child Left Behind reauthorization” would be permitted because it is not related to any specific election campaign.

The decision stems from an incident in 2004 when SLTA members put newsletters in member mailboxes urging them to support association-backed school board candidates in an upcoming election. The San Leandro Unified School District told the union that state law barred use of district

mailboxes for such usage. SLTA filed a complaint to the Public Employment Relations Board, which was dismissed, so SLTA sued in Alameda County Superior Court, where a judge ruled for the union in 2006. This decision was overturned by the Court of Appeals before going to the state's high court.

The Supreme Court ruling says that districts are not “compelled” to exclude candidate endorsements from school mailboxes. However, if a district chooses to exclude such endorsements from school mailboxes, the court believes that it constitutes a “reasonable regulation” based on Education Code section 7054 (a), which prohibits the use of a school district's “funds, services, supplies, or equipment” for urging the support or defeat of political candidates.

While the ruling upholds the right of a district to exclude political endorsements from mailboxes, it did not rule that districts must do so.

Under the ruling, the district may refuse unions the right to place political candidate campaign literature in school mailboxes — as long as the district does not allow any other group or individual to leave such candidate endorsement literature in school mailboxes. If, however, a district allows anyone to distribute a candidate endorsement in school mailboxes, it must allow everyone else the same right.

SHERRY POSNICK-GOODWIN

## What the ruling means to CTA chapters

If a school district allows anyone to distribute literature through the school mailboxes that contains political endorsements, it must allow the union to use mailboxes for that purpose, too. If one side is allowed to and your association is not, contact the CTA Legal Department.

Union literature containing political endorsements may still be left on tables, chairs or countertops in faculty lounges.

Union literature about ballot propositions or initiatives may be entitled to greater protection. So if your school district refuses to allow your union to distribute such union literature in the school mailboxes, contact the CTA Legal Department for assistance. (The court reserved judgment on whether school districts may refuse to allow unions to distribute literature in school mailboxes endorsing ballot propositions rather than candidates, noting that another provision of the Education Code provides greater protection for such activity.)

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# Suspension of special education CAHSEE hailed

There was one silver lining in this year's draconian budget: Special education students will no longer have to pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) in order to receive a diploma if they pass

Special Education Committee, who teaches eighth-graders with learning disabilities in San Jose. "It has been very hard for them. They want to be like everyone else and pass that test. Too much emphasis on CAHSEE has been to their detriment."

"We're hoping it will be a long-term, permanent solution," adds Walsh, a member of the Oak Grove Education Association.

"It's kind of a temporary reprieve until they come up with a solution," says Ed Amundson, a high school special education teacher in Sacramento and chair of NEA's National Special Education Project. "Who knows what's going to happen?"

The governor signed Assembly Bill 2040 by Fabian Nuñez, former speaker of the Assembly, over a year ago. It paves the way for development of "alternative testing" of students with learning disabilities based upon the recommendation of a panel of "experts" selected by the State Board of Education. Until a form of alternative testing is ap-

proved, special education students are off the hook. However, with no firm deadline, it's unknown how long the "shelf life" of the exemption will last, says Amundson. And the exemption will not apply retroactively to the tens of thousands of students denied diplomas in 2008 and 2009. Special education students were issued "certificates of completion" or alternative diplomas in a few communities, including Fresno and Cupertino. According to law, students were also given the option of additional time in high school.

Some of Amundson's students returned for a fifth year of high school and passed the CAHSEE. Others came back and did not pass. Last year during budget negotiations, CTA argued that if the state was going to keep cutting funds, students couldn't be expected to meet the state's requirements.

Some special education students, says Amundson, will likely never pass the CAHSEE no matter how hard they try.

And because they were forced to take so many CAHSEE intervention classes, they were unable to enroll in vocational classes to make them employable.

"For the next two years, I won't focus so much on the CAHSEE," he says. "Now my students will be able to get the vocational classes that they need but weren't able to get in the past. And meanwhile, Sacramento has time to come up with some real solutions."

"I think the decision was definitely a step in the right direction," says Christina Williams, a special day class teacher and member of the San Juan Teachers Association. "We need to recognize these students for their attendance, work and participation in their classes and earning good grades despite their learning disabilities. Those things should be sufficient measures for their success and to ensure that they graduate."

*"We need to recognize these students for their attendance, work and participation in their classes and earning good grades despite their learning disabilities."*

Christina Williams,  
San Juan Teachers  
Association.



Photos by Scott Buschman

**ABOVE:** Christina Williams, a special day class teacher and member of the San Juan Teachers Association, says decision on CAHSEE was a "step in the right direction." **BELOW:** KC Walsh, chair of CTA's Special Education Committee.



all their classes and have enough credits to graduate. The budget signed by the governor last July suspended the exit exam graduation requirement for special education students in the class of 2010 and perhaps after that. It was part of a compromise move after Democrats proposed doing away with the CAHSEE requirements during budget negotiations. "We're grateful this happened for these students," says KC Walsh, chair of CTA's

SHERRY POSNICK-GOODWIN



# Do you understand your Weingarten rights?

Your principal calls you into her office, shuts the door and asks you to sit down. She questions you about the way you handled a certain situation and begins to make accusations. You start to feel anxious and worry you could face disciplinary action.

Should you invoke your Weingarten rights? The answer is yes, absolutely.

Based on the 1975 U.S. Supreme Court ruling of *NLRB v. J. Weingarten, Inc.*, union employees are entitled to have

union representation at meetings with supervisors that are investigatory or that could lead to disciplinary action. These rights have become

*Union employees are entitled to have union representation at meetings with supervisors that are investigatory or that could lead to disciplinary action.*

known as the Weingarten rights.

The case is based on an employee who worked at a food outlet operated by J. Weingarten, Inc. She was summoned to an interview with

supervisors and questioned about failing to pay full price for a box of chicken. The employee, a member of the Retail Clerks Union, asked for a

union representative several times, but her request was refused by the manager each time. The employee reported what had happened to her shop steward and other union representatives. As a result of her being denied a union representative, an unfair labor practice charge was filed with the National Labor Relations Board, and the ruling in favor of the employee was appealed numerous times until it went before the high court.

To invoke Weingarten rights, a union member should say something like this: "If this discussion could lead to my being disciplined, I request union representation at this meeting, and that the meeting be postponed until my union representative arrives." When the employee makes the request for a union representative to be present, management has three options: It can stop questioning until the representative arrives; it can call off the interview; or it can tell the employee that it will call off the interview unless the employee voluntarily gives up their rights to union representation

(an option the employee should always refuse).

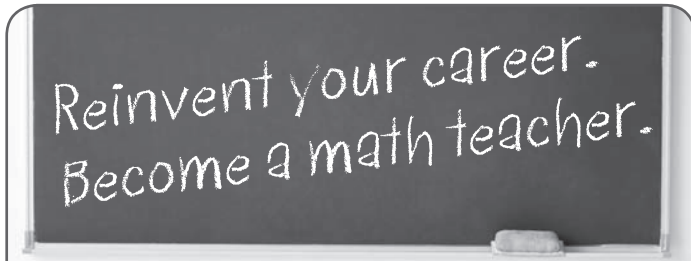
Employers will often assert that the only role of a union representative in an investigatory interview is to observe the discussion. The Supreme Court, however, clearly acknowledged a representative's right to assist and counsel workers during the interview.

The Supreme Court also ruled that before an investigatory interview, management must inform the union representative of the subject of the interrogation. The representative must also be allowed to speak privately with the employee before the interview and at any time during the interview. During the questioning, the representative can interrupt to clarify a question or to object to confusing or intimidating tactics.

While the interview is in progress the representative cannot tell the employee what to say — but may advise them on how to answer a question. At the end of the interview the union representative can add information to support the employee's case.

"Employees must demand their right to be represented in these investigatory interviews," says Priscilla Winslow, assistant chief counsel of the CTA Legal Department. "Don't be afraid to ask for what you are entitled to."

SHERRY POSNICK-GOODWIN



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# Are California schools ready for digital textbooks?

**W**ill digital textbooks begin a new chapter of technology in the classroom? Or will they deepen the digital divide between students who have and have-nots?

Among teachers, the issue is not exactly an open and shut case.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger launched his Digital Textbook Initiative last June as a way for schools to help close the budget deficit. Under the initiative, high school students will have access to digital science and math textbooks starting this school year.

Digital textbook content developers submitted materials over the summer to officials at the California Department of Education — as well as teachers with the Learning Resources Network — to make sure they were aligned with the state standards. Of 16 digital textbooks reviewed, 10 met at least 90 percent of state high school math and science standards, according to the governor's office.

While these books are available for free, they have to be downloaded in some form onto computers or printed out by teachers for distribution to students. Various bills are in the pipeline to fund digital textbooks, but have been stalled due to the state's budget crisis.

The average textbook costs \$75 to \$100. But for students without computers, digital books could be costly. They would require an electronic reader known as a Kindle that costs hundreds of dollars — and then pay nominal fees for downloading through Amazon to access digital textbooks.

CTA's Curriculum and Instruction Committee members have discussed the pros and cons of digital textbooks, and apparently the reviews are mixed.

"It's basically a split decision among members when it comes to digital textbooks," says Nancee Fine, president of the Victor Elementary Teachers Association. "Some of us think it would be a good thing because it's a great way to save money and not have kids with backpacks that weigh 100 pounds. But if stu-

dents don't have a computer or a Kindle, they won't have access to these textbooks. And teachers will be back to making copies again, which is not cost-effective. With budget cuts, more schools are limiting paper and limiting the numbers of copies teachers can make. So in theory it sounds terrific, but when it comes to practicality, I don't know if we're there yet."

"Every child should have a textbook according to the Williams settlement," says Mary Rose Ortega, a CTA Board member who serves as liaison to the committee.

"Does this mean access to digital books on top of regular books? If the governor wants to substitute one for another, is it fair access? Not really."



Photo by Scott Buschman


**Mary Rose Ortega**  
CTA Board member

"Good professional development will be needed for teachers to understand how digital textbooks fit into their classrooms and how to design modules around it," says Daly Jordan-Koch, a teacher at a Title I elementary school and a Vallejo Education Association member who is vice chair of the committee. "Digital textbooks could mean huge changes in terms of traditional ways of running a classroom."

Students who are poor or living in isolated areas would be at the biggest disadvantage, says Ortega. "It's a well-known fact that students in schools located in underserved communities do not have computers and can't

*Continued on page 38*


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# ACTION



**LEFT:** Assembly Speaker Karen Bass (center) joins CTA Executive Director Carolyn Doggett, Vice President Dean Vogel, President David A. Sanchez, and Secretary-Treasurer Gail Mendes for a Summer Institute town hall meeting at UCLA.  
**BELOW:** Kathy Bakhit, of the Citrus College Faculty Association, speaks at the town hall meeting at Presidents Conference in Asilomar.

CTA photo by Dave Earl Carpenter

## CTA creates new organizing campaign to set the stage for changes in Sacramento

At summer conferences this year, CTA leaders focused their efforts on organizing around the massive cuts to public education, rallying local communities to engage in the fight, and changing the two-thirds rule to pass a budget and approve new revenues.

In response to the sad state of public education funding in California, CTA is mobilizing members with a major organizing campaign to bring awareness to the more than \$17 billion in cuts. The new strategy encourages every local affiliate to plan events to reach their local communities and stand up for our schools. (You can get involved by logging on to [www.standupforschools.org](http://www.standupforschools.org). See sidebar on facing page.)

While parents and members of

the community drive by schools in their neighborhoods and see the grass is groomed and the flag is up, many have no idea how bad the situation is inside California schools, how schools are starving for additional resources.

“Public education has taken a beating,” said CTA President David A. Sanchez at Summer Institute in Los Angeles. “It doesn’t do our students any good for us to just grin and bear it and pretend everything’s okay.”

The summer conferences set the stage for discussing the new approach CTA leaders have envisioned for organizing against the latest massive cuts. Members attending the Presidents Conference and Summer Institute talked

about tactics members might use to get the word out, such as not masking the problem and letting parents know how bad things are at school. Some talked about holding town hall meetings to engage the public in the discussions. Others spoke about the necessity of changing the two-thirds vote to secure and safeguard funding for public education. The following is what members at the conferences had to say.

### Presidents Conference

Leaders at the first-ever town hall meeting during Presidents Conference in Asilomar offered personal input on how to educate community members and the pub-



Photo by Scott Buschman



CTA photo by Mike Myslinski

**ABOVE:** Karina Curiel (right), president of the Gonzales Teachers Association in Monterey County, being interviewed outside the emotional CTA town hall meeting at Presidents Conference.

lic about the severity of the crisis facing schools and also shared their organizing strategies.

Form a coalition with local organizations, classified employees and administrators, advised Layne Wheeler, president of the Santa Barbara Teachers Association and chair of the Channel Islands Service Center. The tri-county coalition in her area is starting to get the message across. "Let people know that business is not being done as usual," she said. "There is a crisis in California, and they can help change it."

"Don't mask the problem," echoed Janice Allen, president of the San Jose Teachers Association. "If you have no paper and no supplies, take these issues to all the parent groups. If people go by and they see the flag up, the door open and buses pulling up, they think it's business as usual."

Participants agreed it's time to change "business as usual" in Sacramento and Washington. And CTA must lead the fight — starting with getting rid of the

two-thirds vote required to pass a state budget.

"Our requirement for a supermajority to pass a budget and implement new taxes has created a super minority in this state," said Michael Kinsley, president of the John Swett Education Association. "We need to cut back on the minority's power base. They've been controlling the discussion for far too long. We need to shame them for what they've done to children in this state. It's disgraceful, and they need to be held accountable."

Work with your local superintendent if possible, advised Pat Sabo, a member of the Healdsburg Area Teachers Association and Service Center chair. Teachers in her area have met with administrators and jointly developed a flier they will hand out on Back to School nights about the dire future of education throughout California.

Kathy Bakhit, president of the Citrus College Faculty Association, urged attendees not to forget about higher education.

"We're here and need your help," said Bakhit. "It has affected us greatly in community colleges. This crisis has caused us to cancel at least 300 class sections. Thousands of students are not able to get classes, which delays graduation and transfers to CSU and UC campuses."

*Continued on page 36*

## Continue to Stand Up for Our Schools

Join other CTA members at [www.standupforschools.com](http://www.standupforschools.com) to help bring awareness to what is really happening to public education in our state. California's public schools and colleges have been cut by more than \$17 billion. These cuts are going to impact an entire generation of kids.

Members have made loads of headlines in the past year that shine a light on the plight of public education — but we can't let it end there. The momentum created this past year with Pink Friday and Stand up for our schools was just the beginning.



Use [www.standupforschools.com](http://www.standupforschools.com) to set up a profile; create events; gain ideas about hosting events; and connect with other members.

### What you can do now:

- **Share your story.** The more the public hears about the drastic, personal impact these cuts are having, the more likely they are to speak up on behalf of education.
- **Call or e-mail your Legislator.** Tell them that investing in public education is an investment in California's future.
- **Write a letter to the editor of your local paper.** Lawmakers read their hometown papers to keep abreast of what their constituents are thinking.

**Our voices are needed now more than ever before. Join in the action at [www.standupforschools.org](http://www.standupforschools.org).**



Photo by Scott Buschman

# Race to the Top could undermine student progress

In August, the U.S. Department of Education, President Obama and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced the criteria for the “Race to the Top” (RTTT) competition for \$4.35 billion in grants — a one-time education fund connected with the federal stimulus package. According to Duncan, the purpose of the fund is to promote innovation and reform.

Unfortunately, regulations in the plan are a one-size-fits-all approach similar to No Child Left Behind, which has failed students and schools for the last several years. These top-down regulations undermine state education laws and the role of collective bargaining. The new regulations also mandate using student test scores as a “significant factor” in evaluating and paying teachers; overhaul states’ content standards; create a new, national testing system that must be implemented by spring of 2010; and limit the so-called solutions to helping lower-performing schools to reconstitution, charter school conversion and closure.

CTA believes that the misguided regulations of RTTT are repeating the past mistakes of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) — including an overreliance on test scores as an accurate measure of student achievement and teacher effectiveness. Lawmakers should slow down their rush to apply for these funds, and allow time to thoroughly evaluate the long-term fiscal and policy implications of the entire situation.

“NCLB taught us that one size does not fit all,” says CTA President David A. Sanchez. “The federal gov-

ernment should let states and local school districts determine how best to meet the needs of their students.”

One specific tenet of the plan is that states must have no “legal, statutory or regulatory barriers to linking data about student achievement or student growth to teachers for the purpose of teacher and principal evaluation.” Despite the claims made by Secretary Duncan and the concerns of the governor, student testing data is already linked to teachers at the local level in this state.

Right now, this data is available locally to teachers and school administrators to analyze and evaluate student progress.

State law also 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.

At recent media briefings, CTA has worked hard to educate the public on the status of current law in California and to show the harmful implications the proposed RTTT guidelines may have for students and members. CTA members have also been outspoken about the necessity of reviewing the guidelines of RTTT thoroughly before rushing to change the law.

Last month, at a joint Senate Education Committee hearing on RTTT in Sacramento, KC Walsh, an eighth-grade special education teacher and president of the Oak Grove Educators Association, gave personal tes-

timony about the existing laws on linking data and student achievement, and advised against the dangers of rushing to change education laws and policies in order to qualify to apply for RTTT.

“The current proposals threaten to undermine 10 years of work in California aimed at supporting effective teaching and learning,” said Walsh. “The Race to the Top’s very narrow definition of teacher effectiveness actually imposes a far lower standard of accountability than our

current law. In fact, the narrow limited definition will force schools to narrow their curricula, neglect already-proficient students, dumb down their standards, and focus solely on test results.”

“California has standards that

are recognized as among the most rigorous in the nation,” says President Sanchez. “This would mean a complete overhaul of California’s content standards and creating a new testing system at a time when California’s fiscal resources are stretched beyond their limits.”

Patricia Rucker, a CTA legislative advocate also at the hearing, spoke about existing tests and the sense behind using multiple measures to evaluate teacher effectiveness.

“Current tests are not designed and not valid for the purpose of determining student or school success — much less teacher success,” said Rucker. “CTA supports assessment protocols that measure teacher quality using multiple measures of evidence that have been validated for the purpose of teacher evaluation. Evaluations of teacher effectiveness should include measures

*Continued on page 38*



CTA photos by Len Feldman

**Patricia Rucker**  
CTA Legislative Advocate



**KC Walsh**  
Oak Grove Educators Association

## Concerns with Race to the Top

- Proposed regulations are more of the same one-size-fits-all approach of NCLB that has failed California students and schools for the last several years.
- Paying teachers based on a single test score will increase the likelihood of teaching to the test and make it harder to recruit and retain teachers.
- Proposed regulations would undermine California’s high academic standards, which are some of the most rigorous in the nation.
- The federal government should let states and local school districts determine how best to meet the needs of their students. There is no need to create another level of state bureaucracy to link student and teacher data.
- The grants represent one-time federal money. The governor could hold on to 50 percent of the funds to use as he sees fit. Those dollars might never reach the classroom.
- California can wait and apply for this one-time money in the second round of federal grants. That would give everyone time to review the proposed regulations and do what’s right and best for our students and schools.

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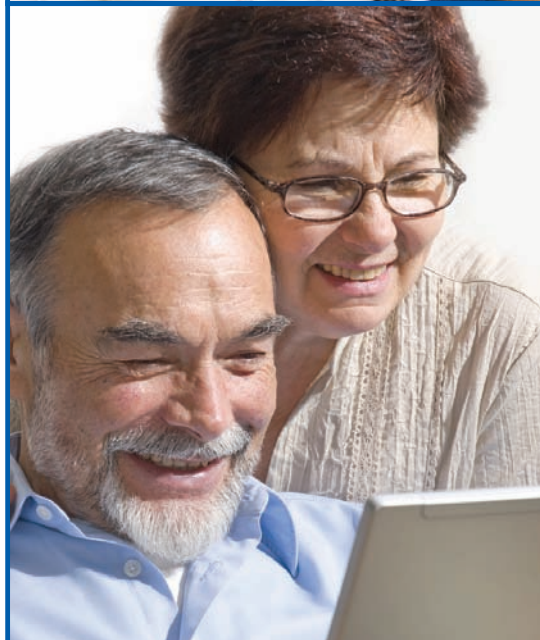
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# CTA, allies block suspension of Prop. 98, secure \$11.2 billion in long-term funding

**D**uring intense budget battles in July, CTA and its allies in the Education Coalition fought hard in the state Capitol to protect the state's minimum funding guarantee — Proposition 98 — and the “maintenance factor,” a provision that requires the state to repay schools in good economic times the money cut from education in hard times.

When lawmakers adopted a final budget revision in mid-July that closed a \$26.3 billion revenue gap, they sided with CTA and public education by refusing to suspend Proposition 98's protections and agreeing to restore more than \$11 billion to schools over the coming years.

By blocking the Proposition 98 suspension, CTA and the education community were able to keep school funding from being pushed into a future free fall that would have allowed the governor and lawmakers to make unlimited further reductions to school funding. Nevertheless, the final state spending compromise contained additional devastating cuts to public education funding, totaling the largest cut to California schools since the Great Depression.

“As the traditional school year begins this fall, students are returning to their campuses to find fewer teachers, fewer course offerings and fewer resources,” says CTA President David A. Sanchez. “All told, school funding was cut more than \$17 billion in two years. Class sizes will be painfully larger, and many art, music, career technical education and other vital programs are gone. More than 20,000 teachers, nurses, school librarians and counselors lost their jobs. Community colleges and universities will turn away thousands of students.”

The final budget measures also contained technical changes or relaxations of current state law that will allow districts to spend more of their reserve funds without triggering fiscal red flags. These changes will allow districts to utilize

more funds to support programs and avoid cutting positions just to shore up their rainy day accounts.

All during the budget debate, CTA and its allies warned lawmakers that additional cuts to public schools would drive California's ranking in terms of education funding even further down. They pointed out that even without the new cuts, California had already fallen to 47th nationally in per-student spending. Local educators throughout the state have been communicating that message to their lawmakers and the public.

“These cuts are unconscionable, and they mortgage our state's future,” says Sanchez. “Quality public schools build stronger communities. Educators stand with all Californians who were hurt by this budget brinkmanship in saying that

we must find a better way. We owe it to our students, and we all owe it to the future of our state.”

LEN FELDMAN




CTA photo by Len Feldman

**ABOVE:** Denis O'Leary was one of several CTA members who brought their hunger strike to Sacramento last month to let the governor know that budget cuts are “starving public education.”

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## Hunger strikers warn about starving schools

In August, a group of educators, school employees and school board members brought their hunger strike to the state Capitol. Spearheaded by a CTA member from Rio Vista who serves on the Oxnard school board, the group and three lawmakers warned the governor and legislators that their budget cuts were "starving public education."

They put their stomachs where their hearts are — in support of public education and students. Last month a group of Oxnard area educators, including Rio Vista elementary teacher and CTA member Denis O'Leary, brought their hunger strike to the state Capitol protesting the governor's education cuts.

O'Leary, who also serves as president of the Oxnard school board, California School Employees Association member Esmeralda Ahumada, and school board member Ana Del Rio-Barba were joined by Assembly Members Pedro Nava (D-Santa Barbara), Julia Brownley (D-Santa Monica), and Tom Torlakson (D-Martinez) at a Capitol news conference. They told reporters they were protesting the negative effect the cuts were having on students.

The hunger strikers spent nearly seven full days in a park in Oxnard, collecting signatures on petitions and letters to the governor protesting the devastating education reductions. They planned to turn the petitions and letters with more than 1,000 signatures over to the governor's office.

O'Leary called on the governor to "stand up and help our students and the future of California."

Del Rio-Barba, who sparked the hunger strike, said observers told her that their sacrifice wouldn't matter to public officials in Sacramento. "It's not about Sacramento, it's about children — and we can't sit back and let it happen."

Assembly Member Nava declared that he was introducing legislation to impose an oil severance tax on every barrel of oil taken out of the ground in the state. He said the tax would raise more than \$1.5 billion, funds that could be used to "feed" starving schools. "Even Alaska and Governor Palin and virtually every other state have oil severance taxes," said Nava.

LEN FELDMAN

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# Voluntary dues support CTA advocacy and scholarships



Photo by Scott Buschman

**LEFT:** Julia James holds a "Stand Up for Schools" sign for passing traffic at the Pink Friday rally last March at the state Capitol building.

**INSETS:** Benjamin Quiñones Jr., member of the Association of Colton Educators and recipient of a 2008 Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Scholarship, with President Sanchez; (from left) Joy Cornish-Bowden, an art teacher at West High School in Tracy, along with students Shannon French and Nicole Tellier, César Chávez Award recipients, and CTA Board member Marty Meeden.



programs. IFT works to research and promote teacher-driven reforms that work to improve public schools, with a

mind toward creating better teaching and learning conditions in all schools and helping struggling students and schools.

**B**ecause of CTA members' contributions last school year through the voluntary dues donation, CTA's Foundation for Teaching and Learning was able to greatly increase the number of grants and scholarships awarded to members and students across the state, and fund advocacy programs such as the successful Pink Friday campaign, which brought awareness to last year's attacks on public education.

"The voluntary dues fund has been vital in helping CTA create advocacy campaigns such as Pink Friday, a major statewide movement that brought attention to educator layoffs," said CTA President David A. Sanchez, "and in funding the TV campaign to battle the governor on the state budget. And soon after, when class size reduction was being attacked, CTA was able to mobilize and launch a TV campaign within two days."

The CTA Foundation for Teaching and Learning consists of the CTA Institute for Teaching (IFT) and CTA's scholarship and grant

programs. IFT works to research and promote teacher-driven reforms that work to improve public schools, with a mind toward creating better teaching and learning conditions in all schools and helping struggling students and schools.

The grant programs include the CTA Disaster Relief Fund; CTA Scholarships for Members; CTA Scholarships for Dependent Children; the L. Gordon Bittle Memorial Scholarship for Student CTA Members; Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Scholarships; the CTA César E. Chávez Memorial Education

Awards Program; and the GLBT Safety in Schools Grant and Scholarship Program.

"The fact that CTA would help to alleviate some of my financial burden with the MLK scholarship is very significant to me," said Benjamin Quiñones Jr., a member

of the Association of Colton Educators and a recipient of a 2008 Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Scholarship. "I appreciate this support immensely, and it reaffirms my strong belief in union membership."

CTA advocacy includes promoting policies to improve public education, such as additional funding for our public schools, smaller class sizes

in all grades, and affordable college for all students. It also includes fighting back attacks on teachers and public schools, such as massive budget cuts, voucher programs, NCLB, legislation to decrease education employees' pensions or attack teachers' professional rights, and the current push to accept funds for the faulty Race to the Top program.

The dues contribution is voluntary and flexible. New members are automatically enrolled in the default allocation of \$10 to support CTA advocacy efforts and \$10 to the CTA Foundation for Teaching and Learning.

No action on your part is needed to contribute the suggested amounts to support CTA advocacy efforts and the CTA Foundation. To reallocate or opt out of a portion or the full amount of your contribution, CTA's interactive Voluntary Member Contribution Change Form is available. Also available is a downloadable change form.

To make a desired change to your contribution, use CTA's online form at [www.cta.org/mycta/services/Voluntary+Contribution.htm](http://www.cta.org/mycta/services/Voluntary+Contribution.htm).

## Options for changing your donation

- CTA members can choose to contribute the suggested amounts to support CTA advocacy efforts (\$10) and the work of the CTA Foundation (\$10). **This is the default choice for new members. If this is your choice, you do not need to use the form.**
- CTA members can choose to opt out of a portion of the \$20 contribution by requesting a partial refund or by simply choosing to contribute to only one of the two categories.
- CTA members can choose to allocate the entire \$20 contribution to support either CTA advocacy efforts or the work of the CTA Foundation
- CTA members can choose to opt out of the entire \$20 contribution by requesting a full refund.

**There is no need to make a selection if you want to retain the same selection that you had last year.**

Learn more about CTA advocacy efforts and the CTA Foundation for Teaching and Learning by going to [www.cta.org/mycta/services/Voluntary+Contribution+article.htm](http://www.cta.org/mycta/services/Voluntary+Contribution+article.htm).

# 2007 Summary Annual Report

## For CTA Economic Benefits Trust Member Welfare Benefit Plan

This is a summary of the annual report of the California Teachers Association Economic Benefits Trust Member Welfare Benefit Plan, EIN 94-0362310, Plan No. 590, for the period Sept. 1, 2007, through Aug. 31, 2008. The annual report has been filed with the Employee Benefits Security Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, as required under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA).

**Insurance Information:** The plan has contracts with Standard Insurance Company to pay life insurance, AD&D, temporary disability and long-term disability claims incurred under the terms of the plan. The total premiums paid for the plan year ending Aug. 31, 2008, were \$31,773,988.

Because they are so-called “experience-rated” contracts, the premium costs are affected by, among other things, the number and size of claims. Of the total insurance premiums paid for the plan year ending Aug. 31, 2008, the premiums paid under such “experience-rated” contracts were \$31,773,988 and the total of all benefit claims paid under these experience-rated contracts during the plan year was \$23,329,822.

The Plan finances, to specified members of CTA, death and dismemberment benefits through the CTA Death and Dismemberment Plan, a health information and well-baby program, a consumer benefits education program, a retiree discount vision program, and, intermittently, a premium holiday benefit. These benefits are self-funded by the Plan and are not insured by an insurance company.

**Basic Financial Statement:** The value of plan assets, after subtracting liabilities of the plan, was \$65,548,238 as of Aug. 31, 2008, compared to \$69,483,635 as of Sept. 1, 2007. During the plan year the plan experienced a decrease in its net assets of \$3,935,397. This decrease includes unrealized appreciation and depreciation in the value of plan assets; that is, the difference between the value of the plan's assets at the end of the year and the value of the assets at the beginning of the year or the cost of assets acquired during the year. During the plan year, the plan had total income of \$31,237,017 including employee contributions of \$31,773,988, realized gains of \$87,415 from the sale of assets and earnings from investments of (\$2,768,395).

Plan expenses were \$35,172,414. These expenses included \$2,908,080 in administrative expenses and \$32,264,334 in benefits paid to participants and beneficiaries.

**Your Rights to Additional Information:** You have the right to receive a copy of the full annual report, or any part thereof, on request. The items listed below are included in that report: 1) an accountant's report; 2) financial information and information on payments to service providers; 3) assets held for investment; and 4) insurance information, including sales commissions paid by insurance carriers.

To obtain a copy of the full annual report, or any part thereof, write or call the office of Risk Management/Member Benefits, California Teachers Association [the Plan administrator], 1705 Murchison Drive, Burlingame, CA 94010; (650) 697-1400. The charge to cover copying costs will be 25 cents per page.

You also have the right to receive from the plan administrator, on request and at no charge, a statement of the assets and liabilities of the plan and accompanying notes, or a statement of income and expenses of the plan and accompanying notes, or both. If you request a copy of the full annual report from the plan administrator, these two statements and accompanying notes will be included as part of that report. You also have the legally protected right to examine the annual report at the main office of the plan (California Teachers Association, 1705 Murchison Drive, Burlingame, CA 94010) and at the U.S. Department of Labor in Washington, D.C., or to obtain a copy from the U.S. Department of Labor upon payment of copying costs. Requests to the Department should be addressed to: Public Disclosure Room, Room N1513, Employee Benefits Security Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20210.

BY CTA PRESIDENT DAVID A. SANCHEZ

*Continued from page 4*

progress that can't be measured with a single test score. The administration knows this and should be promoting a multiple-measures approach to recognizing student achievement and teacher effectiveness. It will also make it harder to recruit and retain teachers in lower-performing schools, the very schools and students Secretary Duncan claims he wants to help.

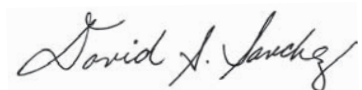
Supporters of RTTT say they want education reform to be based on research. Well, I don't know where they are getting their research, but the reforms contained in RTTT are not proven to work. In fact, numerous studies point out that these reforms don't work. Secretary Duncan has said that he wants educators to be a part of the process, so we must speak up. This plan is ridiculous in its requirements and disheartening in its nature. Our students deserve reform that is rooted in proven research and that takes into account their unique abilities and challenges. And educators deserve reform that respects their professional opinions and experience, and that strengthens the integrity of the profession.

Unfortunately, in order to comply with RTTT guidelines, Governor Schwarzenegger has convened

a special legislative session and is pushing a flawed package of education reforms similar to those rejected by voters in 2005. State lawmakers need to slow down and truly consider the long-term repercussions of their actions. None of these reforms reduce class sizes or restore one art or music program.

CTA has already provided feedback to Secretary Duncan on the proposed RTTT guidelines. I'm asking that you contact your state lawmakers and tell them to focus on getting our school the resources they need, rather than pushing more top-down mandates that punish students and educators. Tell them to slow down and be careful with the laws that govern our public schools and safeguard our children.

You can see that we have quite a year cut out for us. I want to let you know that CTA will make sure its members' voices are heard. Together we're going to create the positive change that will give educators the tools to create an educational system worthy of our students.



## 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. Passed Assembly; to Senate Education.	Senate Floor
<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>	Passed Assembly; to Senate Appropriations
<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

## Campaign

Continued from page 29

CTA President David A. Sanchez thanked leaders for their "phenomenal" ideas and said it is only the beginning of such dialogues throughout the state with members. "Fixing problems in Sacramento and funding for our schools are not things that will be taken care of overnight," he said. "It's a long-term process."

Sanchez added that getting rid of the two-thirds budget vote is a top CTA priority, along with eliminating tax loopholes for businesses and protecting higher education. Sanchez continued that call at Summer Institute in Los Angeles this year.

### Summer Institute

"One thing we know: We can't go back to school this year as though it's business as usual," said President Sanchez, rousing CTA's Summer Institute participants in

the conference's opening general session at UCLA to organize against the latest cuts to California public schools.

Sanchez's rallying cry echoed the overall theme of this year's



CTA photo by Bill Guy

**ABOVE:** Redlands Education Support Professionals Association member and district Director of Transportation Vickey Johnson.

Summer Institute, raising awareness about the devastating cuts to public education. Conference workshops, presentations and events were all geared toward providing participants with vital information and motivation to enlist in the campaign.

Participants honed their skills in workshop tracks that included bargaining skills, communications, health care benefits and issues, member benefits, legal issues, the Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA), community outreach and school finance. Emerging association leaders participated in an intensive program designed especially for newly identified and elected leaders.

A special town hall meeting titled "Public Education and Building a Better California" closed out the conference by giving CTA members the opportunity to share personal examples of the devastating funding cuts with California Assem-

bly Speaker Karen Bass (D-Los Angeles) and Los Angeles area media.

"We must not mask the pain as we tell our personal stories about how our students and our schools are hurting," said Sanchez. "We have to get the entire community involved to build support for additional revenues for schools."

Highlighting substantial cuts to elementary music programs in Bakersfield and Kern County, Eric Dyer — himself laid off from a choral teaching position in the Rosedale Union School District — warned of long-term consequences. "The loss of these teachers and programs is a tragedy. Not only will it be difficult to rebuild these programs, but the cuts will ultimately affect middle and high school music programs."

Redlands Education Support Professionals Association member and district Director of Transportation Vickey Johnson spoke about concerns for child

safety. "Why is the state cutting school transportation for our children when there is so much going on that makes it unsafe for children to walk to and from school?" asked Johnson. "We hear about so many children being abducted, and these cuts are sending the wrong message to our children about our concern for their safety."

"Improving support for public education is the best investment we can make for California's future," said Sanchez. "It's time to change the debate in Sacramento, but first, we must change conversations in our local communities to build a movement that supports more funding for public schools in California."

SHERRY POSNICK-GOODWIN AND BILL GUY

## Heads Up!

### Conferences

#### Secondary Literacy Summit IX

December 2-3, 2009

Costa Mesa, CA

Hilton Orange County

Sessions are designed for teachers, administrators, and specialists and will highlight best practices for benchmark, strategic and intensive interventions, content area literacy, and closing the achievement gap for English learners and special needs students. School panels will present sessions on improving schoolwide literacy. The Summit will also include a Publishers' Fair featuring the SBE-adopted English/language arts instructional materials.

For more information visit [www.cacompcenter.org/cs/cacc/print/htdocs/cacc/secondaryliteracy.htm](http://www.cacompcenter.org/cs/cacc/print/htdocs/cacc/secondaryliteracy.htm).

#### Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Issues Conference

October 16 - 18, 2009

Palm Springs, CA

Hotel Zoso

The CTA Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Issues Advisory Committee will be holding the first CTA conference on GLBT youth, members, and community. Topics will include discussions on the gender and sexual orientation continuum; unconscious bias; coming out for students and peers; and transgender and gender nonconformity.

For more information visit [www.cta.org/conferences](http://www.cta.org/conferences).

### Application deadlines

#### Incentive grants

Attendees of CTA's winter conferences are encouraged to apply for minority and small chapter incentive grants. The deadline is **Oct. 23**. Minority incentive grants are offered to members of racial-ethnic minority groups to encourage minority leadership within CTA. Small chapter incentive grants are offered to members from chapters representing 100 or fewer persons (150 or fewer for the Urban Issues Conference). In addition, white male and GLBT incentive grants are available for the Equity and Human Rights Conference.

#### Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender grants

The GLBT "Guy DeRosa" Safety in Schools Grant and Scholarship Program applications and brochures are currently available. The program was created to promote human and civil rights by making our public schools safe for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons. The deadline for this application is **Friday, Nov. 13**. Visit [www.cta.org/mycta/profession/GLBT+Issues.htm](http://www.cta.org/mycta/profession/GLBT+Issues.htm) for more information.



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# Textbooks

Continued from page 26

gain access to digital text. It's a big problem."

"When it comes to technology, we have the haves and we have the have-nots," says Jordan-Koch. "Many of the homes where my students live don't have computers, and students don't have access to technology. It is not a part of their lives. And schools don't have enough computers for every kid. In my school alone you would need to have more computers to have kids able to read these textbooks."

In times of budgetary cutbacks, says Jordan-Koch, schools are having a difficult time maintaining their technology. And making text-

books dependent upon technology has the potential for many glitches, he says.

"You would definitely need to pump money into building up school infrastructures to be able to run this stuff."

Jordan-Koch, a literacy teacher, thinks that digital textbooks could be helpful for English learners. "It could help them pronounce a word or even read a sentence for them. Technologically, it could enhance their ability to learn words in English and translate words into Spanish — or whatever students' primary language is."

But it could also change the way students learn and teachers teach. Students, for example, typically highlight passages in their textbook with a highlighter when pre-

paring for a test. And teachers may not be prepared to incorporate digital textbooks into their lesson plans and homework assignments without some training.

SHERRY POSNICK-GOODWIN

# Race

Continued from page 30

of teacher practices, teacher performance and teacher contributions to improving student learning through a broad and comprehensive array of evidence."

CTA fully supports using student testing data to improve student learning, instructional strategies and professional development, and has long supported and advocated for growth models as a better measurement of student achievement. CTA has also led efforts to improve lower-performing

schools in our state. The CTA-sponsored Quality Education Investment Act provides funding for proven education reform efforts, including smaller class sizes and teacher and administrator training, and for hiring much-needed counselors in high schools.

"After the governor cut more than \$17 billion from public education over the last two years, teachers certainly agree that our schools need and deserve more money," says Sanchez. "But calling lawmakers into a special session to rewrite state education laws so California can apply for federal Race to the Top grants before the guidelines have even been finalized and without public discussion is a knee-jerk reaction that our state can't afford — and could undermine the achievement and progress our students and schools are making."

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