

California EDUCATOR

California Teachers Association September 2011 Volume 16 Issue 1

**ARE WE
ENDANGERING
SCIENCE?**

READ MORE » PAGE 12

TIPS
for **BACK TO
SCHOOL**

» PAGE 10

ANNUAL REPORT
of the CTA ECONOMIC
BENEFITS TRUST

» PAGE 45

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FEATURES



10 BACK TO SCHOOL TIPS

Five educators share their advice on what you can do to start the year off right. You'll discover unlikely places to find school supplies, get links to helpful websites, and more.



12 ARE WE ENDANGERING SCIENCE?

With science counting for little to nothing on standardized tests, schools are focusing on it less. As a result, some educators say we are inhibiting students' curiosity and losing ground globally.



20 CANCER PREVENTION

For more than 15 years Jeri Harris has been part of a cancer study with 133,000 other California female teachers. Findings are now helping people everywhere learn how to prevent some types of cancer.

IN THIS ISSUE

22 MAKING A DIFFERENCE

- 22 Young Leaders
- 26 Meet CTA President Dean Vogel
- 28 Explaining the value of 'Getting Back to Schools'

30 ACTION

- 30 State leaders vow to stabilize school funding for coming year
- 32 NEA RA highlights
- 33 Dream Act helps undocumented students get aid
- 34 CTC appointments ensure voices of practitioners will be heard
- 35 SOS draws big response in state, national rallies
- 36 Mapping new political lines
- 37 Seizure bill goes to governor over educators' objections

38 TAKING A STAND

- 38 Pension Truth Squad hits the road
- 40 Misleading paycheck initiative seeks to silence the working class
- 42 'Parent trigger' law gets new regulations

45 ETC.

- 45 2009 Summary Annual Report for CTA Economic Benefits Trust Member Welfare Benefit Plan
- 46 The 'exergaming' champ

ON THE COVER



► Kevork Madooglu, pictured with his students, teaches AP physics and chemistry at John Burroughs High School in Burbank.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dean E. Vogel

Our union will lead the way

There's something about the traditional start of school in September that always brings me back to my first few years as a new teacher. I remember spending most of my time in my classroom just really concentrating on my job, learning my craft, and trying to be the best teacher I could be.

There were so many challenges! Lesson plans, attendance sheets, curriculum, classroom setup, learning about my students' needs, meeting their parents, working with the school administration. The process was exciting, exhilarating, and yes, overwhelming. That was when I learned that engaging with colleagues and getting their support helped me improve as a teacher and made it easier to find my comfort with the intensity of it all.

I also began to see that many of us had some of the same challenges, and they could best be addressed if we combined our efforts. And it was that realization that led me to get involved in my local association.

There is often one issue that gets us involved in the union. For me, it was the need for elementary prep time. I truly felt that elementary teachers, like secondary teachers, needed release time during the school day to prepare, so I began attending union meetings to lobby for support. I banded together with other like-minded folk, I helped lead the charge, and together, we secured release prep time for elementary teachers.

Soon after, my local president followed me out to the car one day, and encouraged



me to run for a position on the executive board of the Vacaville Teachers Association. I was hooked.

I can tell you that I didn't get into teaching to be a union member or a leader. I learned, though, that when I was engaged in my union, I could be part of real change for my students and for my profession. That was a huge realization for me, and one that continues to inspire me as your president.

We've been through a lot of challenging times together in the past few years as funding for schools and colleges has been on the chopping block. And while this year we were able to stabilize funding for K-12 schools, our community colleges and universities took another cut. As we continue to advocate for better funding for public education and other essential services, we undoubtedly will face further challenges to our profession, our secure retirements and our right to unionize. A new paycheck deception initiative has already been filed and will qualify for a 2012 election. We've beat this type of initiative twice before and we'll beat it again.

We have a proud history of standing together and making things better for our students and our profession. I am honored to be president of CTA during these critical times, and I will work hard to make sure the union continues to make it easier for you to focus on your students and being a great educator.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

You will notice some design changes in this issue of the *California Educator* magazine as a result of an initial set of recommendations from members. In our continued effort to bring you the best membership magazine possible, we need to hear from you. I invite you to fill out our readership survey in the *Educator* section of www.cta.org. You'll automatically be entered to win an iPad, on which you can read future issues of the magazine. So flip through these pages and then let us know what you think. Your opinions matter and will help shape future issues.

JONATHAN GOLDMAN, *Managing Editor*

CTA online



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▶ WHAT'S NEW AT CTA.ORG



'Let's Get Back To Schools' Media Campaign

Download fliers, print ads, radio spots and more to use for Back to School night or to hang on your classroom bulletin board.

www.cta.org/backtoschool2011



CalSTRS Report by Legislative District

Searchable reports that illustrate the retirement demographics of teachers by legislative district, such as average age of retirement to average retirement salary.

www.cta.org/CalSTRSReports



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TOP TWEET

@CATeachersAssoc | 24 Aug
Teachers evaluate students all year long in the classroom. Duncan's focus on test scores demeans an educator's professional judgment.

MOST POPULAR FACEBOOK POST

8:30pm | 17 Aug
From the 2011 PDK/Gallup poll: Americans rate their public school teachers more highly now than they have in the past. More than 70% of Americans say they have trust and confidence in the men and women who are teaching in public schools.

▶ VIRAL VIDEO



Matt Damon's takedown of Reason.tv reporter when questioned about teachers' job security. bit.ly/pLqgww or go to www.youtube.com and search for "Matt Damon defends teachers."

FAVORITE COMMENTS

Roberto Rodriguez
11:16am | 16 Aug
I don't give credence to test scores, but will teachers' unions be credited with increases just as they are blamed for declines?

Patrick Flaherty O'Flaherty
8:32pm | 18 Aug
Imagine that! Schools with 'school' people running them performed better than schools with 'politicians and businessmen' running them. Who'd a thunk it???



» GET CONNECTED TO CTA FOR ALL THE LATEST NEWS. BECOME A FACEBOOK FAN. FOLLOW US ON TWITTER. WATCH US ON YOUTUBE!

SAVE THE DATES



As you plan your calendar for the school year, make sure to include the following CTA events. Note that incentive grants are available to encourage attendance at those with asterisks.

Sept. 29-Oct. 2

CTA REGION II LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
Grand Sierra Resort, Reno, NV

Oct. 7-9

CCA FALL CONFERENCE
Doubletree Hotel, Sacramento

Oct. 14-16

REGION I LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
Asilomar Conference Grounds,
Pacific Grove

Oct. 21-23

CTA STATE COUNCIL OF EDUCATION
Westin Bonaventure, Los Angeles
Jan. 27-29
March 23-25
June 8-10

Jan. 13-15, 2012

ISSUES CONFERENCE*
Rio Hotel, Las Vegas, NV

Jan. 20-22, 2012

REGION III LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
Westin Hotel, Costa Mesa

Feb. 3-5, 2012

GOOD TEACHING CONFERENCE NORTH*
Marriott Hotel, San Jose

March 2-4, 2012

**EQUITY AND
HUMAN RIGHTS CONFERENCE***
Marriott Hotel, Irvine

March 16-18, 2012

GOOD TEACHING CONFERENCE SOUTH*
Hyatt Regency Orange County Hotel,
Garden Grove

April 20-22, 2012

REGION IV LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
Sheraton San Diego Hotel and Marina,
San Diego

calendar

BACK TO
SCHOOL

RESOURCE

PD and Common Core Curriculum: *Now on iTunes*

With school districts under pressure to make every dollar count, professional development funding has become extremely limited. So, beginning this year, to help teachers and schools meet their needs, the California Department of Education (CDE) has partnered with Apple to launch "CDE on iTunes U," a collection of resources that educators can download at their leisure and free of charge at www.cde.ca.gov/re/mm/it.

In addition to professional development tools, the collection includes educational resources like grade-level curriculum and information on the Common Core State Standards. The collection is accessible via mobile device as well as computers.

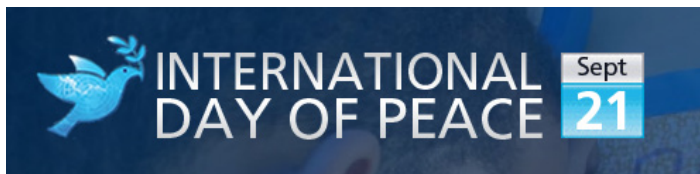
The CDE views it as a central repository where high quality professional development resources can be shared. For information about contributing resources without relinquishing your copyright ownership, visit www.cde.ca.gov/re/mm/it.



SEPT
21

HOLIDAY

International Day of Peace



The International Day of Peace ("Peace Day") provides an opportunity for individuals, organizations and nations to create practical acts of peace on a shared date. It was established by a United Nations resolution in 1981 to coincide with the opening of the General Assembly. Find out how you and your students can get involved and help create a more peaceful world at www.internationaldayofpeace.org.

Win an Incentive Grant* to attend CTA Conferences

Members attending CTA conferences can apply for incentive grants, which pay for transportation, conference fees, and lodging based on double occupancy. For the **Issues Conference** in Las Vegas Jan. 13-15, CTA offers incentive grants for minorities and small chapters (200 members or fewer). For the **Good Teaching Conference North** in San Jose Feb. 3-5 and the **Good Teaching Conference South** in Garden Grove March 16-18, CTA offers incentive grants for minorities and small chapters (100 members or fewer). For the Equity and Human Rights Conference in Irvine March 2-4, CTA offers incentive grants for minorities, white males, GLBT members, and small chapters (100 members or fewer). The application deadline for these grants is **Nov. 4**. www.cta.org/conferences

SEPTEMBER

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OCTOBER

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30						

OCT
15

NEA FOUNDATION GRANT

Win a Student Achievement Grant

The NEA Foundation awards grants to educators and education support professionals three times a year. The deadline for the next review period is **Oct. 15**. Student Achievement Grants support initiatives to improve academic achievement. Learning and Leadership Grants support high-quality professional development activities. The NEA Foundation has awarded more than \$7 million in grants over the past decade to educators and ESP members. The NEA website lists dozens of other grants and awards available to teachers and students. Visit neafoundation.org and www.nea.org/grants/grantsawardsandmore.html.

OCT
21

DEADLINE

Thank You Teacher Project

We know that many of you have received thank-you notes from students whose lives you've touched. Here's a chance to go public with them. As part of a special Thanksgiving story in the *California Educator*, we would like to publish some of those letters. If you have a note you'd like to share (don't be modest!), please send a copy to: Thank You Teacher Project, CTA Communications Dept., 1705 Murchison Drive, Burlingame, CA 94010, or e-mail to: dmartin@cta.org.

OCT
28-30

CONFERENCE

GLBT Conference *Hotel Zoso, Palm Springs*

Open to all CTA members, the third annual conference serves as a venue to address gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues facing educators, students and the entire education community. The keynote speaker is Margarethe Cammermeyer, former colonel in the National Guard and gay rights activist. Register at www.cta.org/conferences.



NOV
01

OPT-OUT DEADLINE

Your Contribution Makes a Difference

Thanks to voluntary contributions by CTA members this past year, the CTA Foundation for Teaching and Learning awarded more than \$400,000 in scholarships and grants, and CTA continued to fight against budget cuts and attacks on educators and public schools. New members are automatically enrolled in the default annual contribution of \$5 for the CTA Foundation and \$15 for advocacy efforts. Members may change their allocation or opt out. New members have 30 days from the date of enrollment; previously enrolled members may change their contribution during the window from **Aug. 1 to Nov. 1**.

www.cta.org/About-CTA/Voluntary-Contribution

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The Project Optimal Added Authorization in Autism was created to provide an affordable, accessible and credible educational program for California Education Specialist credential holders needing to add expertise in the areas of special education that were not part of their original credential authorization.

For more information about this or our **new TBI Added Authorization** program, visit projectoptimal.com.



Wiseburn School District is the Program Sponsor for the Project Optimal Autism Spectrum Disorders Program



NOV
04

GRANT/SCHOLARSHIP

GLBT 'Guy DeRosa' Safety in Schools Grants

Grants support projects and presentations that promote understanding and respect for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons. Scholarships support members enrolled in a teacher/counseling credential or graduate program who understand the importance of GLBT educators as role models. An applicant must be a CTA/SCTA member, or a public school student or district nominated by a CTA/SCTA member. Deadline **Nov. 4**.

www.cta.org/About-CTA/CTA-Foundation/Scholarships

MORE INFO

Visit the CTA website (cta.org) for resources to raise awareness of upcoming observances, like Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept. 15 to Oct. 15), and Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October.

NOV
13-19

EVENT

American Education Week



Distressed that 25 percent of the country's World War I draftees were illiterate, representatives of the NEA and the American Legion met in 1919 to brainstorm ways to generate public support for education. Together they came up with and launched American Education Week in 1921. This year marks the 90th annual celebration. The weeklong celebration features a special observance each day of the week.

Monday, **November 14**: *Kick Off Day*
Tuesday, **November 15**: *Parents Day*
Wednesday, **November 16**: *ESP Day*
Thursday, **November 17**: *Educator for a Day*
Friday, **November 18**: *Substitute Educators Day*

Use NEA's online toolkit on www.nea.org to join in the celebration.



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Secondary Literacy Summit XI Anaheim Marriott Hotel, Anaheim

“Linking Literacy to College and Career Readiness.” Sessions highlight best practices for improving adolescent literacy as well as instructional strategies for closing achievement gaps for English learners and students with special needs. Presentations feature secondary school teams that are improving literacy achievement for all students. Other sessions cover the Common Core Standards, Linked Learning, and Response to Intervention (RtI). The summit is sponsored by CTA, Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), California Department of Education, California Comprehensive Center at WestEd, and Center for the Advancement of Reading at CSU.

www.cacompcenter.org/secondaryliteracy

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— Erin Wade, principal,
Antelope Valley
Learning Academy

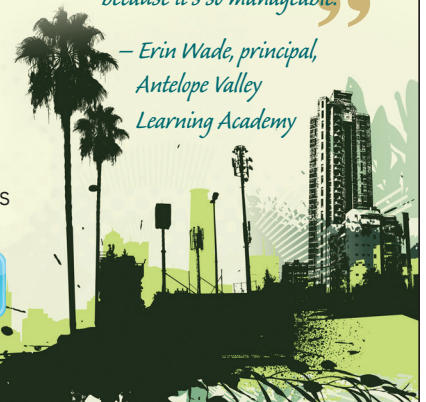
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BACK TO SCHOOL Tips

*Start the year off right with a little **advice** from fellow members.*

Educators are very generous when it comes to sharing advice, so we asked some CTA members to share their favorite tips, resources and strategies to help get your school year off to a great start. Here are a few ideas we hope you'll find beneficial.



Dan Arretche

SCIENCE TEACHER

ON RELATIONSHIPS:

To have a successful learning environment, there has to be a strong relationship between teacher and student. At the beginning of the year, I do an activity that's called "Four Square." I take a piece of paper, fold it into quarters, and ask students to fill out the "Four F's," which represent Friends, Favorites, Fun and Family. They put a picture of themselves in the middle. It gives me information on what kind of family they come from — whether they come from a big family, small family, stepparents or single-parent households — without being too invasive. In the "Fun" and "Favorites" categories, I get to know them as people a little bit so I can appeal to their interests. In the "Friends" category, I can see who their friends are and maybe not have them sit together. It also gives me a chance to see their writing style and figure out who needs to be sitting up close. I always do one first with a picture of myself from high school, and they get a good laugh out of that.



Sandi Sidor

FIFTH-GRADE GATE TEACHER

ON SUPPLIES:

If you can't get what you need in the way of supplies, go to garage sales and thrift stores. It's best before and after Christmas, when people are getting rid of lots of stuff. You will find primary and upper-grade books, sets of watercolor paints and lots of supplies. Go to stores like Office Depot, Office Max and Staples when they have teacher giveaways. Sometimes they have games like ring toss, and I play them again and again to win things like pencils, plastic rulers or handheld pencil sharpeners. If businesses are moving or employees are retiring, ask them to donate obsolete stationery. It can be used as scratch paper. Envelopes can be reused to send information home or if students lose teeth. Visit stores and go to the dollar bin for extra supplies. And if one of your teachers retires, go dumpster diving! There's lots of great stuff.

PHOTOGRAPHY
Scott Buschman

West High School, Bakersfield
Kern High School Teachers Association

Smiley Elementary School
Redlands Teachers Association



Jenny Rovira

CORE SUBJECTS

ON TECHNOLOGY:

I use Apple's iWeb to create and maintain a website with a wrap-up of what we've done in class that day and "links" for students who want to go above and beyond, plus a "worksheet archive" where students can download handouts. I love Quizlet (quizlet.com) for making flashcards for students to study for upcoming tests. Many of my students have smart phones (like iPhones) or iTouches. A lot of free apps sync with Quizlet. Quizlet also has a Facebook interface that I can use to let students know I've created a new set of flashcards. It will appear on my Wall and on the News Feed with a quick link for students to navigate to the Quizlet site if they don't have an iPhone or iTouch. Another cool thing is an app called Class Cards. It randomizes students to call on, allows me to rate their responses, and backs up those scores to a server. Then I can print out data about each student's responses. It's awesome for informal assessments and tracking student learning.

Ladera Vista Junior High
Fullerton Elementary Teachers Association



Rosenda Thomas

SECOND-GRADE TEACHER

ON COMMUNICATION:

It's important to have good communication with the office and support staff. They can let you know about important things going on. For example, we had a big beehive at our school, and the first person I heard about it from was the custodian. I also try very hard to keep the line of communication open with parents. Sometimes they say they don't have time to help with homework, but they really just need someone to listen. You get a lot of respect and support from parents by lending an ear. I let them know that some children can work independently, and that I give out homework packets that cover Friday to Friday so they can work on them over the weekend with their child, even while sitting in the laundromat. I talk to them about setting limits at home and at school and tell them how to set up "contracts" with students so they know what's expected of them. When parents trust you, you can offer them advice on discipline so they can set limits that are reasonable and not too punitive.

Fruitvale Elementary School
Oakland Education Association



Lori Regalado

PRESCHOOL TEACHER

ON WEBSITES:

Here are my top four picks:

- www.theteachersguide.com/ClassManagement.htm provides classroom management strategies, discussion groups, books and printouts, as well as lessons. The website also has a link to a chat board along with printables that can be used to manage your classroom.
- www.teachervision.fen.com/classroom-management/resource/5776.html has resources for behavior management that are very useful. There is a section for social/emotional issues, conflict resolution and special needs.
- www.ccsd.net/ellp/programs/teachingguidelines.html provides guidelines for helping English language learners.
- And www.education-world.com/a_curr/curr139.shtml offers special education staff a large array of resources for their classrooms and how to modify lessons to involve special-needs students in daily lessons.

MORE INFO

Find more useful links at
www.cta.org/About-CTA/Useful-Links

Mentone Elementary School
Redlands Education Support
Professionals Association



IT DOESN'T TAKE A ROCKET SCIENTIST
TO KNOW » SCIENCE EDUCATION
IS BECOMING EXTINCT.

WITH THE RISE OF FEDERALLY MANDATED HIGH-STAKES TESTS IN ENGLISH AND MATH, SCIENCE EDUCATION IS GETTING PUSHED TO THE BACK BURNER.

ARE WE ENDANGERING SCIENCE?

PHOTOGRAPHY
Scott Buschman

Story by Sherry Posnick-Goodwin



Science lesson using goldfish strikes a chord with Carole Delgado's (left) kindergartners Rachel Farabee, Rishita Dhalbisoig (top), Nicole Benitoo and Brenon Kirkes (bottom).



THE KINDERGARTNERS AT Audubon Elementary School in Foster City stare intently at the goldfish swimming in a bowl. They are amazed to learn fish actually breathe through gills. They are intrigued to learn fish are covered in “scales” instead of regular skin, have eyes on the sides of their head, and move with the help of dorsal and lateral fins. Carole Delgado asks them to draw “missing” body parts on a diagram of a fish before they leave the table and make way for the next group of students.

“Science is important, and kids love it,” says Delgado, a member of the San Mateo Elementary Teachers Association. “The world is an exciting place, and it’s important for them to learn about it. But it’s so hard to find the time to teach science. If I could, I’d teach three science lessons a week. But I’m lucky to fit science in once a week.”

It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to know science education is becoming extinct in California’s schools, producing a negative impact on society. It’s a domino effect: Science gets short shrift in elementary schools that focus mostly on English and math due to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements. Students enter secondary school lacking a foundation in science, and their classes emphasize rote memorization instead of hands-on learning. With schools unable to afford materials for science labs, students think science is boring and pursue careers in other fields. Without a new generation of scientists, America loses its edge in creating new technology, finding cures for diseases and improving the overall quality of life.



Tim Williamson,
CSTA President

“It’s scary,” says Tim Williamson, president of the California Science Teachers Association (CSTA). “We have a huge population of baby boomers who are retiring, and we’re going to have a huge number exiting science and technology careers. Unfortunately, what we’re doing in K-12 is not getting kids ready to go into that pipeline. My big fear is that administrators in the California Department of Education will hit their heads like Homer Simpson and say, ‘D’oh, we should have had science instruction!’”

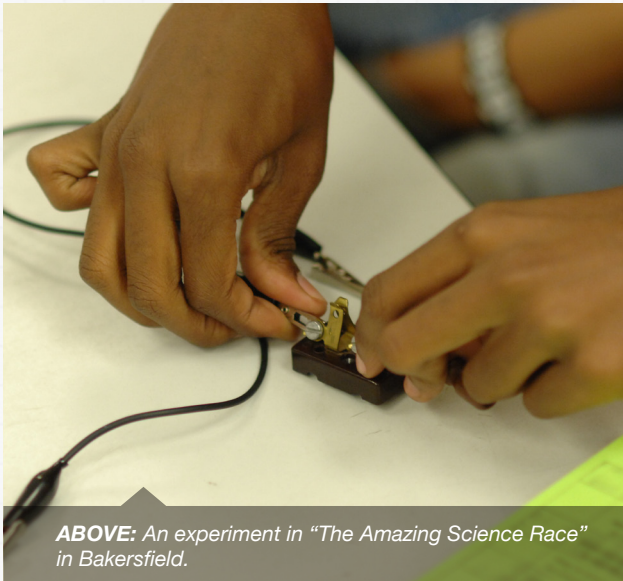
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS SHOEHORN IN SCIENCE »

Christina Conner, a second-grade teacher at Bertha Taylor Elementary School in San Jose, took several semesters of life science and physical science at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo so she could teach science in her classroom. But she doesn’t have time.

“I don’t feel as if I’m living up to my potential for teaching science,” laments Conner, a member of the Oak Grove Education Association. “There is so much stress about NCLB and so much drill-and-kill instruction before the state test that there just isn’t time for science. It’s sad, because kids love to learn about bugs and space and motion. It gives them something to look forward to.”

The best she can do is integrate science instruction with literacy lessons and throw in some facts to help them comprehend the text they are reading.

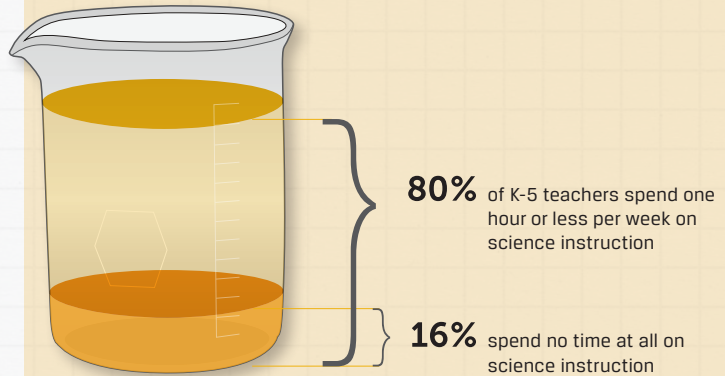
“At least we have science fairs, so parents can help kids with hands-on science projects as an extracurricular activity,” she says.



ABOVE: An experiment in “The Amazing Science Race” in Bakersfield.

A 2007 study of science education in Bay Area elementary schools found that 80 percent of K-5 teachers who are responsible for science instruction spend one hour or less each week teaching science, with 16 percent spending no time at all on science. The study, conducted by researchers from UC Berkeley’s Lawrence Hall of Science and WestEd, also found that a majority of elementary students have science instruction no more than twice a week, and many teachers feel less prepared to teach science than they do to teach math and reading. Teachers say they are so strapped for time that they typically have to “shoehorn” science instruction into reading and math lessons.

ACCORDING TO A STUDY OF BAY AREA ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS:



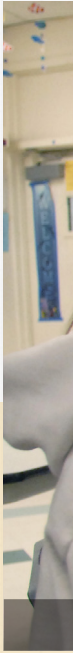
Source: “The Status of Science Education in Bay Area Elementary Schools,” Lawrence Hall of Science, UC Berkeley

Students are missing the first six years of science curriculum mandated by the state’s content standards, says Williamson, a CSU Long Beach professor and a California Faculty Association member. This makes it tough for students to catch up when they get to middle school and high school.

Williamson sees the effect in his own classroom. He teaches future teachers how to deliver science instruction. Many of them lack a strong science education themselves, and as a result they are fearful of teaching it.

“Students are comfortable teaching biology, but scared to death of conducting science labs for chemistry, electricity or sound,” says Williamson. “But when they get out of my class, they realize the fun and beauty of teaching the physical sciences. Now if they could just find the time.”

When youngsters aren’t exposed to science, they tend to think that it’s something they “aren’t good at,” according to an article, “Subject Matters: Science has an image problem,” on www.cnn.com. And when science is finally introduced, students are often instructed to memorize the “right” answers instead of being asked to think like a scientist — which is to pose a question and conduct experiments to draw conclusions that either answer the question or lead to further research.





ABOVE: Teresa Casallas' students in Bakersfield roll a die to determine who goes first in a science challenge.

“What’s great about science is that students think about what might happen and develop a trial-and-error mentality that allows them to become critical thinkers,” says CTA Board member Toby Boyd, a member of the Elk Grove Teachers Association. “Society has forgotten about the importance of problem-solving skills that will help children in the future and the workplace. Because of the lack of science instruction, we are now seeing students who are unable to show curiosity.”

BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF SCIENCE INSTRUCTION, WE ARE NOW SEEING STUDENTS WHO ARE UNABLE TO SHOW CURIOSITY.

TOBY BOYD, CTA BOARD MEMBER FROM ELK GROVE

When Boyd taught at Prairie Elementary School, the campus had a fully stocked science lab for students to conduct experiments. Due to budget cuts and increased emphasis on math and language arts, the science lab was “gutted,” and science instruction practically disappeared. Many schools these days rely on after-school programs to teach science, says Boyd, because there isn’t enough time in the regular day. Boyd was involved with an after-school program in his district called MESA (Mathematic, Engineering, Science Achievement).

“If it wasn’t for that after-school enrichment program, I wouldn’t have been able to expose children to things they needed to learn,” he says. “Sometimes I had 35 to 50 students who came to learn about science, in grades from kindergarten to sixth grade.”

An *Education Week* article, “Role of Science Learning Outside of School Grows,” confirms that schools are indeed turning to outside sources such as muse-

ums, astronomy and robotics clubs, after-school programs, and science competitions. This benefits children who have access to such enrichment opportunities, but many students are not being exposed to science at all, says Boyd.

“It’s too bad. You never know whose light might be turned on by science and who will come up with the cure for cancer or a technological wonder that will help mankind unless they are given the opportunity.”



ABOVE: Jose Alvarenga records data for Camille McGee and Alyson Bravo in Bakersfield.

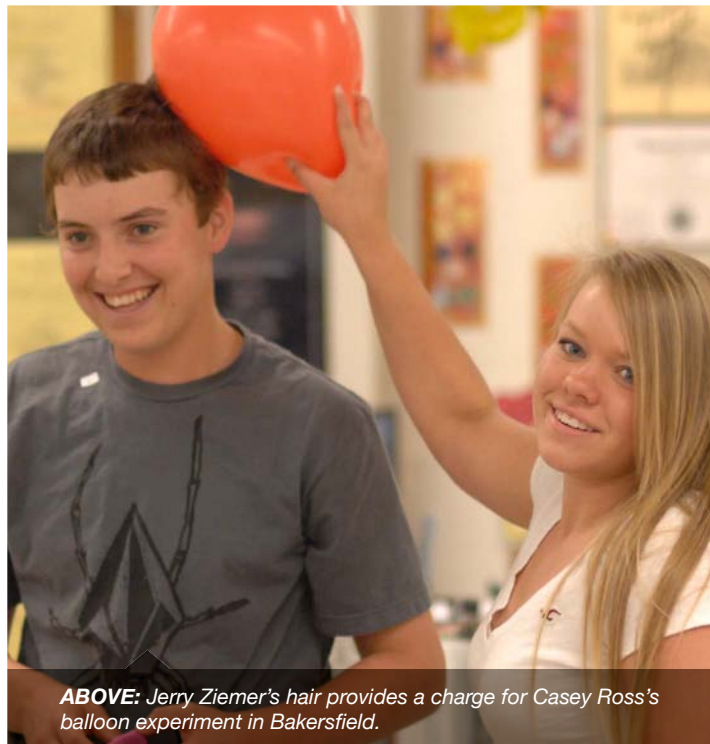
SECONDARY SCHOOLS LACK LABS AND MATERIALS »

Teams of students in Teresa Casallas' freshman science class at West High School in Bakersfield dash to work stations, where they perform quickie experiments for "The Amazing Science Race." They string beads and yarn together to show the visible light spectrum. They rub balloons to create static electricity and make ribbons float in the air above them. They use Play-Doh to create models of volcanoes. They cut out pictures of Earth's continents and glue them together to create Pangaea, the supercontinent that existed about 250 million years ago. Every team wants to finish first and be declared the winner.

"I try my best to make science fun and an everyday part of their lives," says Casallas, a member of the Kern High School Teachers Association and Teacher of the Year for Kern County in 2009. "I think kids can relate to what I'm doing. Science should be hands-on, and I let them get down and dirty with science. I don't think it should be all about reading and memorizing facts."

She creates activities like "The Amazing Science Race" (based on the reality TV show "The Amazing Race") as an alternative to teaching science out of a textbook. Since her district has scant money for science, she pays for these homemade labs out of pocket. There is no way she could afford money for real lab equipment, but her classroom — a former art room — isn't equipped for science labs anyway.

Most science teachers at West High School don't have sinks in their rooms. Casallas recalls students in her biology class having to trek to the bathrooms for running water when doing a lab on DNA synthesis. It was "quite an adventure" in teaching under adverse conditions, she says.



ABOVE: Jerry Ziemer's hair provides a charge for Casey Ross's balloon experiment in Bakersfield.

Science classrooms are indeed not up to snuff overall. According to a policy brief by California Science Education Initiative (CSEI), there is no guarantee that students will work with modern science equipment or any laboratory equipment at all, and the state hasn't provided guidance as to what equipment or materials should be used to provide hands-on learning experiences considered vital in science education. With no minimum level of laboratory experience, equipment or materials established, school districts "can 'certify' they are providing sufficient science instructional materials when in fact their students are provided with a clearly inferior science education."

There are "big equity issues" when it comes to science education. The CSEI policy brief describes a school near Sacramento where students have state-of-the-art science classrooms and engage in labs using modern equipment of the same type used in industry and university labs. This unnamed school is compared with another school a few miles away, where classrooms lack lab benches, sinks and other materials normally found in science classrooms, and equipment is aging and in poor condition. In this school, students engage in "paper" labs, where they are asked to predict the outcomes of experiments they are unable to perform.

Kevork Madooglu, a teacher at John Burroughs High School in Burbank for 16 years, finds it increasingly difficult to teach AP physics and chemistry with aging equipment that's badly in need of repair. He points out hot plates and electric balances that are unusable, because there's no money for repairs or replacement.

"Last year, our entire budget for equipment and supplies was \$2,000 for 14 teachers," says Madooglu, a member of the Burbank Teachers Association. "It's definitely not enough; we need twice that amount to continue the way we have been teaching." Science teachers at the school signed a petition challenging the amount and won an increase — to \$4,500 — but this year the amount they're expected to share is down to \$1,000. "We're protesting again, but we can't do this every year," says Madooglu.

"Budget cuts have impacted the way I teach," he says. "I have been doing fewer labs with my students, so it's less interesting and less hands-on. I'm doing more demonstrations for them if they can't do the experiments themselves."

It shouldn't be like that, says Madooglu, who emigrated from Turkey partly because he was impressed with America's enthusiasm for science during the Space Race era. "In the '60s and '70s, science was promoted and kids were encouraged in every possible way to go into science. That's not happening anymore. It's been pushed to the back burner in every possible way."



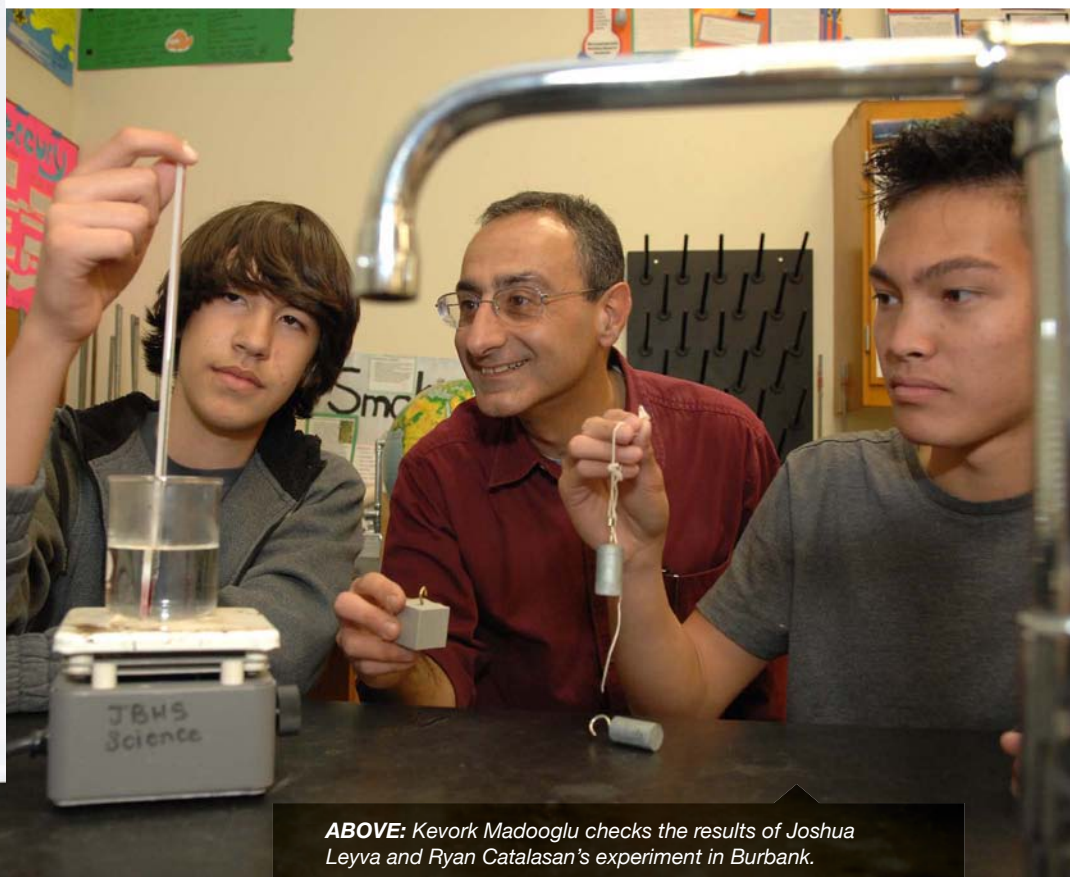
A BUDGET-MINDED CHEMISTRY TEACHER'S SUPPLY REQUEST

ITEM:	PRICE:
2L hydrochloric acid (conc)	\$ 80.00
50g copper chloride	\$ 6.33
100g sodium chloride	\$ 0.78
150g calcium chloride	\$ 11.85
500 mL acetic acid (conc)	\$ 15.30
25g silver nitrate	\$ 82.99
5g magnesium	\$ 3.97
15g zinc	\$ 5.85
Total	\$ 207.07

MINIMAL COST PER STUDENT LAB TEAM

Microscope	\$ 385.00
Electric hotplate	\$ 263.00
Electronic balance	\$ 196.00
Total per team:	\$ 844.00
Total per class of 10 teams:	\$ 8440.00

Equipment does not need to be replaced every year and can be shared by teachers unless there's a scheduling issue. It used to be that students would work in teams of two; now, with 30 to 40 students per lab, teams are often double the size.



ABOVE: Kevork Madooglu checks the results of Joshua Leyva and Ryan Catalasan's experiment in Burbank.

**SCIENCE EDUCATION HAS BEEN
PUSHED TO THE BACK BURNER
IN EVERY POSSIBLE WAY.**

**KEVORK MADOOGLU,
BURBANK TEACHERS ASSOCIATION**

Madooglu believes students should view science as though they are detectives figuring out how to solve a mystery. "I tell them they should be like the scientists on 'CSI,' trying to solve a problem and explain why something is happening, which leads to solving the next puzzle. When science is taught this way, it's exciting and stimulates the mind."

Unfortunately, he says, science has become less about solving mysteries and more about memorizing facts for tests, which is turning students off to science.



THE TRUTH ABOUT SCIENCE TESTS »

Because of the way science is treated, it's not surprising that California's students score among the lowest in National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests given to fourth-, eighth- and 12th-graders nationwide. Other factors may also be involved. The *San Francisco Chronicle* and other sources have pointed out that 51 percent of the California students who take the test are Latino, compared with 22 percent nationally. Also, in California English learners aren't exempt from taking the test as they are in some other states.

Casallas wasn't surprised by NAEP scores revealed in January. Ninth-graders, she says, enter her classroom totally lacking in the fundamentals of science. "The majority are unprepared. They don't know the difference between an atom and a cell. They don't understand water is not a living thing."

George Cachianes, who teaches biotech at Lincoln High School in San Francisco, agrees that high school students are unprepared. He has to "start from scratch" and assume they have no prior scientific knowledge, even when it comes to understanding the metric system.

"Yet if you get students engaged, you can quickly make up the deficiencies," says Cachianes, a member of United Educators of San Francisco. "You have to give them a chance to do something interesting and apply that knowledge."

Cachianes, a researcher for 15 years at a biotech company and at the university level before becoming a teacher, does just that. His students work on cutting and recombining DNA, transforming cells by injecting them with foreign DNA, and using National Institutes of Health

databases to compare DNA sequences taken from their bodies with those of others. His students have entered science competitions and sometimes beaten out students from Ivy League universities.

But that type of knowledge isn't measured on standardized tests, says Cachianes. He believes that state and national tests don't measure what students really know and fail to measure creativity, problem-solving and critical-thinking skills that are key factors in science.

"Tests fail to measure much of anything," he says. "I hear about kids bubbling in Christmas tree patterns and not taking the test very seriously at all, because it's boring and unengaging."

While there is a great deal of hand-wringing in the education community over poor science test scores, science is in a Catch-22 situation: Science scores don't count much on California's Academic Performance Index (API). And since science doesn't count much, science is not emphasized much. For years students weren't

tested at all in science, and they now take the science CSTs (California Standards Tests) in grades 5 and 8 and high school. Science doesn't count at all in the AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) requirements of No Child Left Behind.

"When you have science counting 5 or 6 percent, and English and math with a 20 or 30 percent weight, which subject do you emphasize?" asks Tim Williamson. "You emphasize the subjects where you can be most penalized for not doing well, and that's math and language arts."

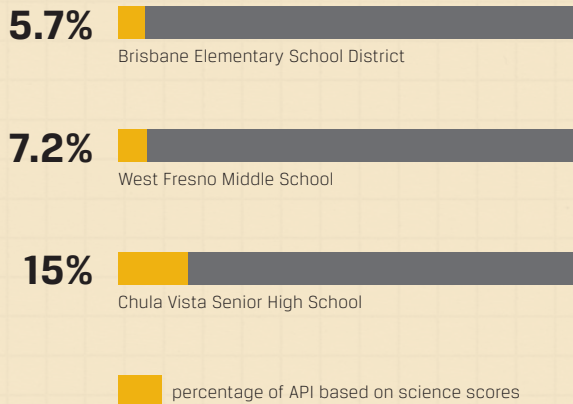


George Cachianes.
Biotech teacher in San Francisco

**SCIENCE IS IN A CATCH-22:
SINCE IT DOESN'T COUNT
MUCH IN API SCORES, SCIENCE
IS NOT EMPHASIZED MUCH.**

» SCIENCE SCORES DON'T COUNT FOR MUCH ON API

A complex formula is used to determine how much science test scores are weighted in a school's API ranking, and it depends on how many students take the test and what courses they have taken. Scores on science tests are weighted more in the API ranking as grade levels increase. Here is a sampling of fairly typical weights:



THE FUTURE OF SCIENCE? »

America has always prided itself on being No. 1 in science, but it is slipping. In the 2007 TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) test, students from Singapore took first or second place in all science categories, and the U.S. ranked 11th. President Obama has complained about the U.S. lagging in science education, and has said that improving science education is a top priority. A report from the National Research Council recommends science learning be tested as frequently and taught as vigorously as math to ensure a high status in U.S. classrooms.

Teresa Casallas worries that K-12 science instruction is no longer offering a bridge to university-level classes, and that students from low-income backgrounds won't see science as a career pathway and will instead view science as "something for old white guys in lab coats." Career opportunities abound in the fields of medicine, technology and science, and qualified people are being recruited for jobs from other countries such as India, she says.

"Science is expensive to teach, but creates the wealth of our society and is worth the investment," notes the CSEI policy brief. "Science is increasingly the standard by which we will be measured as a society. Between climate change and global competition, California can only hope to remain a leader if we are successful in creating a population of scientifically literate and upwardly mobile people. We must innovate, invent and create our way into future prosperity. These are the processes carried out by scientists and engineers who are, only sometimes, being nurtured in K-12 science classrooms today." 🎓



ABOVE: A goldfish poses for Audrey Lee and Chinatsu Iijima in Bakersfield.

Cancer Prevention

Story and photo by Dina Martin



JERILYN (JERI) HARRIS WAS given six months to live when, as a teen-ager, she was diagnosed with stage IV melanoma. “It was a bad one,” the now-retired Ukiah High School biology teacher recalls, and back then, the treatment was not nearly what it is today. Yet somehow Harris was, and is, a survivor.

She was 17 when she noticed the mole on her arm. It was black and ugly, and looked a bit like a cauliflower, and Harris wanted the unsightly thing removed. Once her family doctor looked at it, he wanted it removed, too, immediately. Within the week, Harris underwent an eight-hour surgery to remove the cancer, which had already spread to the lymph nodes in her chest and underarm. Even after the surgery, she was given only a 5 percent chance of survival.

The most serious type of skin cancer, melanoma develops in the cells that produce melanin, the pigment that gives skin its color. Although the exact cause is still unknown, exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from sunlight or tanning lamps increases the risk of developing melanoma. Other factors, such as genetic makeup, likely play a role. Harris, a sun-loving Southern Californian of English-Irish descent, had all the risk factors. Today, Harris slathers on the sunscreen, but back then it was all about baking on the beach with baby oil.

Despite the odds, Harris got out of the hospital a month later, just in time to attend

TO REDUCE THE RISK OF DEVELOPING MELANOMA, THE NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE MAKES THESE RECOMMENDATIONS:



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



Avoid the tanning booth.



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



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

her senior prom. She graduated with her class and started at UCLA that fall. She also went on to marry, have children, divorce, enjoy a stellar teaching career, become the interim director of teacher education for the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Education, and serve as chair of the State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS). She's an avid gardener, and best of all, a grandmother.

"The cancer never returned," she says. "Sometimes I think: My kids wouldn't be here if I hadn't lived past 17. I'm grateful for that."

It was that early cancer scare that led Harris to participate in the California Teachers Study, a longitudinal study by the Cancer Prevention Institute of California (CPIC) and other California universities that has tracked cancer occurrence and the health of more than 133,000 female teachers.

Since its beginning in 1995, the California Teachers Study has collected data from an extensive questionnaire mailed to female CalSTRS members on lifestyle, medical history, and women's health. 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. The teachers have cumulatively filled out about 4.5 million pages of questions, provided around 10,000 biospecimens, and participated in approximately 3,000 interviews.

Originally focused on breast cancer, the ongoing health study may lead to important breakthroughs in the treatment and prevention of melanoma and other cancers as well. In the meantime, it is increasing the body of knowledge about how to prevent cancer.


"That California teachers are saintly is no news to those of us with kids in school

here, but I hope people recognize the major contributions that teachers are making to science," says CPIC researcher Christina Clarke, one of the leaders of the study. "By participating in the California Teachers Study over the years, these women have helped us build a world-class database for understanding the causes of cancer."

"I'm encouraged that so much research is now being done in preventing and reducing the risks of cancer," Harris says. "I was lucky, but no one is safe from melanoma."

Dr. Clarke adds: "It's women who participate in research, like Jeri, who will ultimately help us to unlock the secrets of cancer prevention so future generations can benefit."

Cases of melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, are on the increase in all age, sex and socioeconomic groups. In 2011, an estimated 70,230 cases of melanoma are anticipated nationwide, 5,475 in California. This year, 8,790 people are expected to die from it, according to the National Cancer Institute.

With melanoma and other cancers, prevention is the key. That's the message of the Cancer Prevention Institute's latest campaign, Get in Front, which is aimed at stopping cancer before it starts. 

MORE INFO

For more information about the California Teachers Study, visit www.calteachersstudy.org.

PROMOTING PREVENTION



Get In Front is a broad-based movement of Californians who aren't willing to wait until they have cancer before they

do something about cancer. The chance of getting cancer at some time in your life is about 1 in 3 if you're female and about 1 in 2 if you're male. If you are a female teacher, your risk for some cancers, such as breast cancer, is higher than average.

The research scientists at the Cancer Prevention Institute of California have dedicated their careers to improving your odds. They study the environmental, occupational, dietary, genetic and socioeconomic factors that influence cancer risk. What they discover advances the Three P's of prevention: changes to Public health policy, improvements in Provider/patient relations, and ways the Personal choices you make day to day can reduce your chances of getting cancer.

Get In Front is a campaign of the Cancer Prevention Institute of California. It envisions a future of reduced risk for cancer, resulting in healthier lives and families. Get In Front is aimed at stopping cancer before it starts rather than chasing the disease from behind after people get sick. Think of cancer research as a team effort — cure research is the defense, and prevention research is the offense.

We're asking you to become part of the Get In Front movement. Cancer prevention research will affect more lives than any other approach to cancer. Help us change the game for a healthy California.

MORE INFO

Please visit www.getinfront.org to find out simple actions you can take right now to change your cancer risk. And please "like" us on Facebook — www.facebook.com/getinfront.



Wear sunglasses that have UV-absorbing lenses.



Wear a hat that shades all parts of your face, not just your eyes, but also nose, ears and neck.



Place play equipment (slides, pools, swings, etc.) in full shade or at least afternoon shade to protect children.



What do CTA’s youngest leaders have to say? **PLENTY.** And we have plenty of reason to listen. They hold key leadership positions within CTA – and also hold the key to this association’s future as a huge wave of educators approach retirement. They offer new perspectives at a time when schools and unions are under attack. They also feel under attack themselves as budget cuts cause school districts to issue pink slips to those new to the profession. They are committed to our union, but they tend to look at things, well, differently.

► **HERE’S WHAT FIVE OF THEM HAD TO SAY.**

By **Sherry Posnick-Goodwin**

PHOTOGRAPHY
Scott Buschman

Stephen McMahon, 35

HIGH SCHOOL MATH/LEADERSHIP TEACHER
 FULL-TIME PRESIDENT, **SAN JOSE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION**

Many younger teachers went through the school system under No Child Left Behind, and they think school is supposed to be all about testing. Older teachers came from a very different system without testing. I had some experience as a student when NCLB was just beginning, and I can help to bridge the gap between what public schools looked like before NCLB and what they look like now. I have the ability to talk to both groups of people when it comes to an internal debate about what our schools should look like. When you have a membership that has differing values, you have to be able to talk to each other first before you can reach an agreement on how to move forward.

Lately, there has been a lot of discussion about seniority and benefits. You have association leaders at the end of their careers, and they see issues from that perspective. I’m newer to the profession and have another perspective about health benefits and the seniority process. I can bridge that gap.

Veteran teachers aren’t concerned about being laid off, and younger teachers are. Some veteran teachers feel safe, and younger teachers don’t. Younger teachers don’t think seniority should be as prominent as it is, because they think that no matter how hard they work, they’re going to lose their jobs. On the flip side, senior teachers don’t want to be moved out just because they’re older. You have to find a middle ground and say that if you’re doing excellent work you shouldn’t be laid off in your third year, and if you have 30 years of experience, you shouldn’t be laid off because you’re older.

As a younger leader, I’m able to have these conversations in a different way. In the past, you may have had younger teachers looking at older leaders and saying, “They are only thinking about themselves.” But I remind them that we’re going to be 30-year employees someday, and when they hear that perspective, they listen more. Again, it’s all about promoting dialogue.

We need younger teachers speaking up. We need them to be passionate about public education. Nobody can be an advocate by staying silent.



Alexis Weiner, 30

ENGLISH TEACHER, JOHN BURROUGHS HIGH SCHOOL
ORGANIZING CHAIR AND SITE REP, BURBANK TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

➔ I frequently hear members say “What is the union doing?” or “What are you — the union reps and leadership — doing?” instead of asking “What are we doing?” This us-and-them mentality is why it’s important that younger teachers become involved in their local associations. Some of us take things for granted, because when we came into the profession, there were full benefits and pay scales in place. It can be difficult to put ourselves in the position of veterans who fought for these things. There can be a disconnect between generations of teachers, because if you haven’t lived without these benefits, the threat of losing them doesn’t carry the same weight. But now we are seeing a regression in the things we fought for, and we need to stand together to protect what we still have. Last year, after four years in the district, I was laid off along with around 10 percent of our members until we agreed to furlough days, a raise in class sizes, and modifications to health care benefits.

Involvement is not just working within the union or looking out for our own needs; it goes hand in hand with looking out for our students. In order to best serve them, we need to negotiate certain items like class size. Yes, it’s beneficial to us as teachers to have fewer students, but it’s also beneficial to students who need personal attention, or need questions answered, or need to create a bond with a teacher in order to feel part of the school community. To be the most effective teachers we can be, we need to participate in our local associations, CTA and NEA.

I would like to see more young leaders take an active role in CTA. In today’s economic climate, we are afraid of losing our jobs because we have been threatened so many times. Sometimes this fear makes us feel isolated or that we’re the only ones feeling this way. We need to come out of our classrooms, talk about our experiences and concerns, and come together so we can realize the commonality of what we share.



Andy Montoya, 35

MATH TEACHER, LADERA VISTA JUNIOR HIGH
PRESIDENT, NORTH ORANGE COUNTY UNITED TEACHERS

➔ I’m a member of the Generation CTA Caucus. For those who are wondering, Generation CTA is a mindset, not an age. It’s a mindset about the future — and the future of our union. Members of Generation CTA believe that newer teachers need more involvement and more of a voice in such matters as teacher evaluation, test scores and NCLB.

So many times we hear it said that you can’t fire a teacher, and that teachers unions are a stumbling block. But we want to work with districts to come up with solutions. We have some solutions, but nobody is asking us. The public says unions won’t say yes to anything, but nobody has asked us. For example, some of us think evaluations should be done by a committee of our peers.

Generation CTA wants younger members to know they need to be more involved. We tell them about the value of the association. Some newer members don’t see the benefits of their union and just see it as \$100 that comes out of their paycheck once a month. We say, “You need to see what we do and you will have a voice, too.”

We want to let younger teachers know that politics isn’t scary, and that they shouldn’t be afraid to talk to their congressman or Assembly member. I tell them “You can do it” and urge them to come on Lobby Day for a congressional visit so they can become an advocate and get involved.

Being in a union isn’t just for people with 20 years’ experience. It’s a place for everyone; it’s a voice for everyone. Just search for “Generation CTA” on Facebook to get involved.





Celiza Almarz De Hernandez, 33

OFFICE MANAGER, HIGHLAND GROVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER, REDLANDS EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION (RESPA)

As a younger member of RESPA, I'm a little bit more open to thinking outside the box. I bring a fresh approach. I have helped RESPA use social networking to get members involved. I helped us get on Facebook and revamp our website because it wasn't attracting people. Young leaders have great ideas about doing things differently. For example, in the past we had a member appreciation dinner that was a formal sit-down dinner. Last year we had a barbecue open to families in the park, and it was extremely successful.

When I started working for my district seven years ago, I was automatically part of a union, but knew nothing about it until I started having issues with an administrator who was picking on me. My site rep found me crying in the hallway, explained her role and brought the president in. I learned that belonging to a union meant that someone would come to my defense and make sure I wasn't getting bullied.

One day my site rep stepped down and asked me to take over. I started going to meetings, and someone mentioned our chapter needed a newsletter editor. I threw my hand in the air and offered to help. I went to the CTA Summer Institute to learn how to do newsletters. Then my president sent me to the CTA Leadership Academy. I was asked to apply for the NEA Leaders for Tomorrow program and didn't realize at first I was competing with other ESP employees across the country. I was one of 20 selected out of hundreds of applicants.

That experience was transforming! I did a lot of introspective work on finding out who I am as a person so I could be the leader that I need to be. Just because I'm ESP, it doesn't mean I can't play a leadership role.

When other young people see me as a site rep, they can relate. I encourage them to step up and get involved. The sooner the better! Other members can benefit from our fresh point of view.



Beckah O'Haver, 26

STUDENT, CSU SACRAMENTO
VICE PRESIDENT, STUDENT CTA

One of the most difficult things for me is all the negativity that you hear from people right now. You hear that there's not going to be any jobs, or that first-year teachers give up, or that it's not the right profession for you.

One of the things that SCTA worked on this year was combating that negative dialogue and looking for ways to inspire the members we still have. We said, "Look, things are rough out there, and it will always be rough no matter where we go. But there's still hope and opportunity out there, and we don't want to give up on the teaching profession." I didn't go into the profession because it would be a job; for me, it's a passion.

For some young leaders today, it feels as though we don't always get listened to, even though we have a lot of different and innova-

tive ideas. You hear the stereotype that the younger generation tends to be about "me, me, me." But in SCTA, we are thinking about the long term, and some of us have children. I have a son who is 15 months old, and I'm worried about his prospects with so many cuts in public education funding.

I would like to see more mentorship by older leaders, bridging the gap between regular CTA and Student CTA. It would give younger leaders more buy-in and older leaders some dynamic ideas.

SCTA is my best friend. Whenever I feel stuck or can't go any further, I have my friends there to help me. When money is tight, I can look for scholarship possibilities, and when I'm confronted with a problem, I can usually find the answers through my SCTA connection.

How can I motivate my students to love science?

The Science of A-ha!

Today's Young Minds Drive Tomorrow's Innovation

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- ✦ Up to \$240,000 in savings bonds is awarded each year, plus expense-paid trips to Washington, DC for national winning students and their parents. Schools, coaches, and mentors win too!
- ✦ Your students can reach that incredible "A-ha!" moment - when all their real-world learning comes together in problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, and recognition.

Visit www.exploravision.org/californiaeducator for details.

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Through Toshiba's shared mission partnership with NSTA, the Toshiba/NSTA ExploraVision competition makes a vital contribution to the educational community.



President Vogel on the issues

- ▶ **Testing:** “High-stakes testing is driven by monetary interests, and it should not be the vehicle that drives pedagogy. We’re on the wrong track, and there’s no other way to say it. High-stakes testing has narrowed curriculum to a few core subjects, when we need a comprehensive curriculum to compete in a global economy.”
- ▶ **Tax fairness:** “For too long, California has relied on mostly short-term solutions to our budget problems, and short-term solutions haven’t done us any long-term favors. The health of California’s public schools depends on stable tax revenues. It’s time to demand action to restore fairness to the system and make sure everyone is paying their fair share.”
- ▶ **State budget:** “While we were able to stabilize funding for K-12 schools, this is a difficult budget containing painful cuts to higher education, health care, public safety and other programs.”

Meet Dean Vogel

CTA’s new president is a team-builder

DEAN VOGEL’S OLDEST daughter had a serious expression on her face when, on her 18th birthday, she said, “Dad, I have something important to tell you.” Like any father, he gulped and prepared for the worst. “I registered to vote,” she told him. “And I registered Republican.”

“I’m so proud you registered to vote!” he said, hugging her. “That’s wonderful!”

Now the mother of seven, she is still a Republican, and so is her husband. After years of avoiding political discussions, his son-in-law looked Vogel in the eye one day and said, “I can’t stand it anymore; I have to talk politics to you. You are the kind of man I want to be. How in the world could you be a Democrat?”

Laughing, Vogel says the story illustrates what he brings to the table as the new president of CTA — the ability to accept differing points of view and not make politics personal. When members disagree with him at CTA conferences, he thanks them for hav-

ing the courage to stand up for their convictions and look him in the eye while doing so. “I guess you could say that this is what makes me tick.”

As CTA members, educators learn to focus more on the issues in a debate than on the political persuasion of the debaters, says Vogel. “When there are troubles, it’s easy to play the blame game. Right now we are in a very harsh environment with one side pitted against the other. But there is hope.”

The battle for equitable school funding will continue, he adds, because additional revenues and a fair tax structure are needed to create a better future for students and California. As the son of a farmhand and a waitress, Vogel observes that he might not have had access to higher education if he were growing up in California today. His father quit school in the eighth grade to work on the farm and help take care of his family. His mother, a high school graduate, worked two jobs and took care of three children. “Like lots of poor

folks, we didn’t really feel poor. My parents did a good job of providing for us.”

His father, a promising baseball player before a tractor accident injured his hand, taught his son how to play ball. Vogel learned the dynamics of being a team player and developed a “cannon arm” as a catcher. He played baseball at Mount San Antonio Junior College and worked in a semipro league before transferring to California Polytechnic State University. He fully expected to be drafted into the big leagues. But then, like his father, he broke his left hand and ended a promising career.

Once he couldn’t play, he threw himself into academics, immersing himself in the social sciences, opening his eyes to social injustice in the world and the struggles of ethnic minorities. Cal Poly political science professors took him under their wing and engaged him in political discussions. Their encouragement was a big influence in his life. They helped him learn the primary

ingredient in helping students succeed: “It’s all about relationships.”

Volunteering in his first wife’s elementary school classroom convinced him he was meant to be a teacher. After earning his bachelor’s degree from Cal Poly, he went to UC Davis for an elementary teaching credential and ended up teaching kindergarten in the Vacaville Unified School District in Solano County. Parents would often share parenting concerns and personal problems with him. “They were always asking me for advice, and I was just a kindergarten teacher without an advanced degree. Everyone kept telling me I should be a counselor, so I went back to school.”

After earning his pupil personnel services credential and a master’s degree in education/group dynamics at CSU Sacramento, he returned to Vacaville as a school counselor and helped to develop a community counseling center on an elementary school campus. During the day, it helped students with conflict resolution, grief and loss issues, and drug prevention. In the evening, it helped parents with their problems and provided family conflict resolution.

His colleagues’ need for elementary release prep time sparked his involvement in the teachers union. Realizing the organization’s potential as a vehicle for addressing the need for change at the district level, Vogel became active in his local chapter and went on to serve three years as Vacaville Teachers Association president. In 1996, he was elected to the CTA Board of Directors.

As a teacher and counselor, Vogel looked for ways to engage students and help them achieve their potential. As a union leader, he looks at ways to engage members and reveal their leadership potential. “If we are going to be a team, we have to come together. Some of our leaders don’t even know they are leaders yet — they haven’t met each other yet. In this organization we must help leaders find each other so they work together.”

“Engaging our members means reaching out to them on many levels,” adds Vogel. “It means meeting with them one-on-one. It means connecting with them in new ways, like social media. It means telling them who we are, what we do, and how their involvement is absolutely essential.”

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin



New!

Introducing the Clear Credential Program (Single and Multiple Subject)

The UC San Diego Extension SB 2042 Clear Credential program is designed for public, charter and private school teachers who are employed in a school or district that does not have an Induction program.

After completing the program, students can initiate the formal recommendation to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

The new UC San Diego Extension Clear Credential Program is:

- completely online.
- designed to meet the new standards defined by the CCTC.
- one of the first programs to be made available under the new CCTC standards.
- specifically designed to be **completed within one year**.
- available to teachers employed outside of California.

To view credential requirements, program FAQ and download an application please visit our Clear Credential program page at extension.ucsd.edu/clearcredential.

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

- New courses begin every month
- Most programs can be completed online within one year
- Interactive, Research-Based Programs with Practical Classroom Application

Programs include:

- CLAD Through CTETL
- CCTC-Approved Reading Certificate
- Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- College Counseling
- Gifted and Talented Education (GATE)
- Teaching Adult Learners
- Teaching Online
- Professional Development/ Salary Point Coursework

For more information, please contact
Morgan Appel, Director of Education at: (858) 534-9273 or mappel@ucsd.edu

extension.ucsd.edu/education

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Explaining the value of 'Getting Back to Schools'

Statewide media ads feature real educators

LAST YEAR THERE was a lot of discussion among members of CTA's Communications Committee about the need for a positive, value-based message to counter all the attacks on unions and public educators, says committee chair Katie Young, a member of the Modesto Teachers Association. "The guidance that came from those great conversations helped create this year's back-to-school campaign."

Building on that input as well as marketing research, CTA has launched a back-to-school campaign that is designed to remind people of the value of public education and how everyone has an obligation to make sure neighborhood schools are the best that they can be.

The stars in the ads are all educators — and one parent — most of whom were "discovered" in the Communications Track at this year's Summer Institute, says CTA President Dean E. Vogel. "We felt it was important to put members on the front line of this campaign."

This effort is "aimed at showing our educators and what they do, using their voices and also continuing to remind people of the importance and value of public educa-

tion," says CTA Associate Executive Director Rebecca Zoglman. "We did a play on words, using the phrase: 'Let's all get back to schools.' While it coincides with the new school year, we are really using the term to mean, 'As Californians, let's get back to focusing on and investing in public education.'"

The ads, which show how protecting teachers' jobs now helps students land good jobs in the future and how all students deserve the chance for a well-rounded education, are a reminder of why California must rebuild schools after years of funding cuts.

"A brighter future for California starts right here in classrooms like mine," says a teacher in one 30-second television ad.

"I believe in quality schools and colleges that prepare our kids for good-paying jobs," another teacher says into the camera. Schools are where "dreams of innovations that could change the world become real," adds another educator.

A school bus driver declares, "I believe strong public schools and colleges make our communities even stronger."

"Join us," says Vogel, concluding the spot in unison with several teachers: "Let's all get back to schools."

Radio ads are running for three weeks on 91 stations statewide in English and Spanish, as well as on several Asian-language stations. Print ads were created in nine languages and will run in more than 55 newspapers, including Native American and other ethnic publications. The Web ads will run on targeted news, family/parent and teacher-focused websites.

The three 30-second television ads, which were timed to avoid getting lost in the clutter of big retailer advertising over the Labor Day weekend, started after the holiday and will run for three weeks. Outdoor advertising includes billboards in Humboldt County, Sacramento, Fresno, Los Angeles, Bakersfield, Victorville and San Diego, as well as ads on mass transit shelters in San Francisco.

MORE INFO

To see or hear all the campaign's components and get additional resources to encourage family involvement, visit the CTA website (www.cta.org/backtoschool2011).

FROM THE TV SPOT: "A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR CALIFORNIA"

CTA members star in this year's Let's Get Back to Schools campaign

Are they actors? Or are they the real thing? The CTA members do such a professional job, it's hard to tell. There are seven classroom teachers, two college professors and one bus driver appearing in CTA's advertising campaign.

TRACY BENNETT
3rd Grade Teacher
Lucille J. Smith Elementary School

MONICA RICE
6th Grade Teacher
Mountain View Middle School

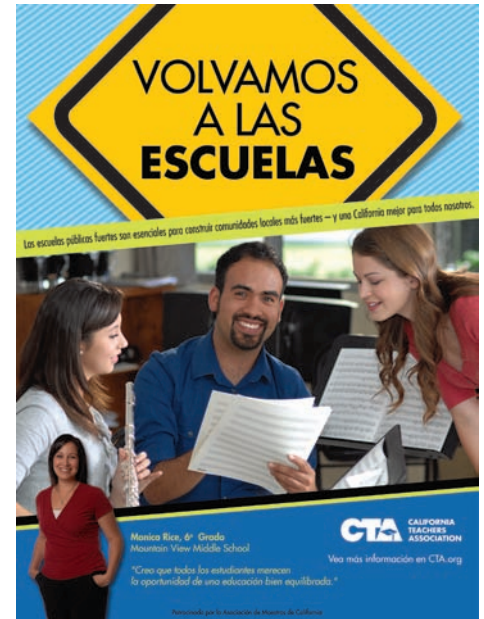
DOREEN MCGUIRE-GRIGG
Bus Driver
Terrace Middle School

CECIL CANTON
Professor
Sacramento State



LEFT: CTA's three 30-second TV spots give the public a glance at what goes on inside our schools and explain the real value of public education. The 60-second radio ads are running on 91 stations statewide, including English, Spanish, and Asian-language stations.

BELOW: Outdoor advertising includes billboards in Humboldt County, Sacramento, Fresno, Los Angeles, Bakersfield, Victorville and San Diego, as well as signs in mass transit shelters in San Francisco.



ABOVE: Print ads in 55 publications, most of them ethnic papers, reach out to parents in nine languages.

STARTS RIGHT HERE IN CLASSROOMS LIKE MINE.™

ALBERTO NODAL
3rd Grade Teacher
Colonial Acres Elementary School

MICHELLE ARIFUKU
1st Grade Teacher
Anna M. Hause Elementary School

WENDY RUSH
7th Grade Teacher
La Quinta Middle School



BERNADETTE BEST-GREEN
5th Grade Teacher
Carroll Elementary School

SUSAN GREEN
Professor
Chico State

NOAH KING
3rd Grade Teacher
Marilyn Avenue Elementary School

► VISIT WWW.CTA.ORG/PROFESSIONAL-DEVELOPMENT TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT CTA CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS AND TRAININGS.

At CTA summer conferences State leaders vow to stabilize school funding for coming year

MOBILIZING FOR FIGHTS that lie ahead, an estimated 1,700 educators attending CTA's two summer training conferences reacted enthusiastically to vows by Gov. Jerry Brown and state Senate Democratic leader Darrell Steinberg to protect public schools and the newly signed CTA-backed law that stabilizes education funding for the coming year.

Both leaders joined CTA President Dean E. Vogel in underscoring the importance of Assembly Bill 114, the vital education budget trailer bill Brown signed June 30 to offer a reprieve to schools from endless state budget cuts. Among other things, the bill prohibits any last-minute teacher layoffs in August and guarantees that school districts will get the same funding as last fiscal year, allowing them to rehire many laid-off educators.

Speaking July 22 at the 57th annual CTA Presidents Conference in Pacific Grove, Brown delivered a firm message to school district officials who have criticized the new law and publicly doubted AB 114 funding. "When we say the money is coming, you [can] assume it's coming."

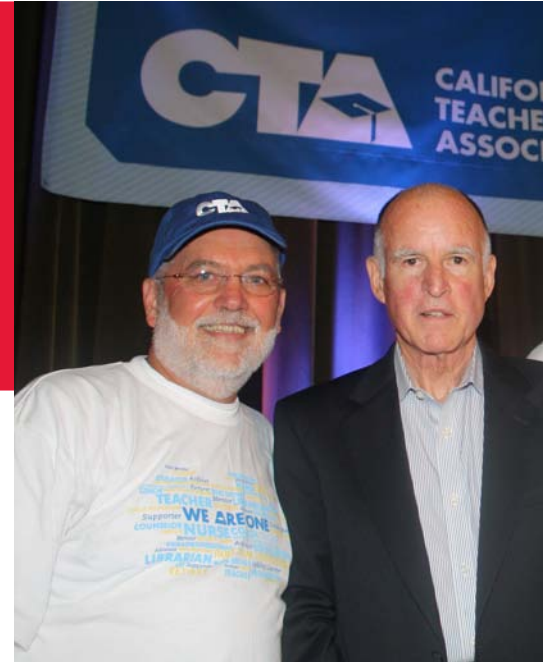
He said school districts should not ignore the mandates of the legislation, and more dis-

tricts should read his AB 114 signing letter to understand that they do have some flexibility. (The signing letter says school boards can make reductions due to "cost increases, loss of federal funds, enrollment declines or other factors." It also warns that districts must "adhere to the level of state funding provided in the budget and not assume a different, or lower, state funding level.")

Brown criticized Republican legislators for not agreeing to extend some temporary taxes before they expired July 1, costing the state billions in revenue and hurting critical public services. Protecting schools must be a top priority, he said. "I think we need a reawakened understanding that a good society, with kids well educated, is in our interest."

He praised the life skills that schools teach to kids, including how to play together. "A lot of people never did learn to play together. And a lot of them are in the Legislature."

Brown said he supports testing, but wants to invest more in schools to develop more critical minds. "I also would like students, 20 years later, to still be reading, to still be thinking, to still be evaluating, because they had a great education."



Senate President Pro Tem Steinberg closed the weeklong Summer Institute on Aug. 5, telling the audience of 1,100 educators that CTA members should "take a little credit where credit is due" for fighting so hard all year to protect education funding.

Steinberg, who defended his support for AB 114 in the media this summer, said he was baffled by the "unfathomable" sniping about the law, especially when school administrators rose up to criticize it. Calling the law "the right thing to do," he said the legislation to keep education funding at last year's levels is needed, especially after some 30,000 educators have been laid off in recent years.

Keeping education funding flat and avoiding more classroom cuts in a year when the state budget deficit soared to \$26.5 bil-

Candid photos from Summer Institute

In early August, more than 1,000 CTA members attended this year's Summer Institute on the UCLA campus. State Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg (pictured in first photo with President Vogel) addressed participants at the closing assembly.

PHOTOGRAPHY
Bill Guy and Mike Myslinski





Gov. Jerry Brown stands with CTA leaders President Dean E. Vogel, Vice President Eric C. Heins, Secretary-Treasurer Mikki Cichocki and Executive Director Carolyn Doggett at the CTA Presidents Conference (left). 'We Are One' was the message at both conferences as demonstrated at the Summer Institute by Solano Beach teachers Tarri Baldwin and Tiffany Farnsworth (right).

lion was no small feat, he noted. The passage of AB 114 should have meant that “school administrators and the education community would say thank you for the rabbit you pulled out of a hat.”

He vowed to make reinvesting in public education a top priority in the three and a half years he has left in the Legislature so that the state can “begin again to make California schools the pride of the nation.”

President Vogel added, “In the past three years, \$20 billion has been cut from public education. If temporary tax extensions had passed, AB 114 would not have been necessary.” Enforcing AB 114 will require a lot of vigilance, and there will be other political battles as well.

He called for unity in his addresses at the Presidents Conference and Summer Institute

at UCLA. Teachers in the audience waved “We Are One” posters as he spoke.

The coming election cycle will be difficult, he warned, with another “paycheck deception” initiative attempting to silence the political voice of educators. He went into detail about CTA’s push for tax fairness to find new funding for schools and essential services, a campaign that’s outlined at www.cta.org/taxfairness. “If we’re going to take back our state and protect our democracy, I think what we’ve really got to do is make people understand what’s happening. ... There are 300,000 of us, and we are in every single community all across this state.”

CTA members were inspired by the summer speeches and the cutting-edge trainings.

Darla Bramlette attended Summer Institute with 11 members of her Panama-Buena

Vista Teachers Association from Bakersfield, a group that took part in trainings for emerging union leaders, on school finance and on national Common Core standards.

“I was very impressed by Mr. Steinberg — he was up-front,” said Bramlette, the NEA director for Tulare and Kern counties and the High Desert. “And all the members were very impressed by what they saw during the week.”

At the Presidents Conference, Beaumont Teachers Association President Jody Behrens from Riverside County found the media relations training helpful and the speech by Jerry Brown inspiring, even though she is a Republican. “Had I known what the governor was going to do for us, I would have voted for him.”

By Mike Myslinski



ACTION



NEA RA highlights

Vice President Joe Biden made an appearance at the NEA Representative Assembly in Chicago to make sure educators know that the Obama administration “stands for education and it stands with labor.”

“One thing you should not have any doubt in your mind about is that Barack Obama is on your side,” Biden told some 12,600 participants, 1,200 of whom were voting delegates representing CTA members. “We will fight alongside you.”

Biden said Obama believes it’s “your fundamental right to collectively bargain, not just about your wages and benefits, but about the environment in which you work: the size of your classrooms, the mix of special education students in the classroom, the competency of the administrators in your schools, after-school programs. It’s about working conditions, but unlike almost any other organization, your fight is our children’s fight. Your fight is about our children. Your fight is about giving them the best chance.”

During the four-day policy-making session, delegates voted to:

Recommend President Obama for a second term in office.

Increase NEA’s crisis fund to help affiliates combat anti-union and anti-public education movements at the local and state level.

Adopt guidelines for an evaluation and accountability system that focuses on enhancing the practice of teaching instead of identifying teachers for dismissal.

MORE INFO

For more information on the annual meeting, visit www.nea.org/ra.

Chapter leaders are making plans for the new school year

WE CAUGHT UP with a few chapter leaders at Presidents Conference. Here’s what they are planning for the new year.



Lyn Schrader, *Barstow Education Association vice president*

I would like us to work on increasing face-to-face communication among chapter members, the school board, the administration and the community. We have already started working together very effectively. We will continue to invite board members and administrators to CTA functions (luring them with food) so they don’t receive only one-sided information. The information CTA provides is more accurate than the information issued by the state, and those outside of CTA need to hear what we have to say.



La Nita Dominique, *Adelanto District Teachers Association organizing chair*

We need to educate our community about the important issues public education is facing and how important these issues are for the children. There’s a lot of misinformation and misconceptions about many issues, especially when it comes to teacher evaluations and funding – and our own people need to come together so we can educate the community. If we promote unity among our members, we can begin working toward other common goals.



Dixie Johansen, *Ravenswood Teachers Association/Service Center vice chair*

I want every one of our members to become more politically astute. We are getting attacked on pensions, tenure, evaluations and our whole way of life. I want everyone to wake up and smell the disaster! Hopefully, more members can come to our Service Center meetings.



Jessica Leishman, *Lakeport Unified Classified Employees Association co-president*

I am hoping for more member involvement. People are drained because of the economy, and we need to pull them back in. We have a new co-president and new vice president who can provide some new energy. We plan on being more visible. We want to work more closely with our local teachers, the Lakeport Teachers Association. When we stand together, we are more powerful in our community.



Arturo Balce, *Sweetwater Counseling and Guidance Association president*

I want our members to work toward going back to a ratio of 367 students per counselor for students in grades 7-12. Fewer students per counselor means more counselor support. Our current ratio is 400 to 1, and we just found out our budget will be the same as last year. As the new president, I would like to see more face-to-face communication, as well as getting started on using social networking.



John Fincher, *Citrus College Faculty Association president*

We would like to maintain the status quo. We have three local board members up for election this year, and we need to protect them. If we lose one of those seats, our chapter will probably suffer. We are in a unique situation – we want to protect our college president, while most want to get rid of theirs. Our president is very open to faculty recommendations and has demonstrated ethical practices.

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin

California Dream Act helps undocumented students get financial aid for college

UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS will have an easier time gaining access to higher education institutions following the passage this summer of the California Dream Act, two bills that will allow them to apply for financial aid funded by the private and public sectors.

"I absolutely feel this is significant," says Theresa Montaño, professor of education and Chicano studies at CSU Northridge and a CTA Board member representing higher education. "I can't tell you how many students I have who fall into this category. They are great students, they are working their way through school — sometimes with three to four jobs — but they can't get financial aid. This allows them to come out of the shadows."

The first part of the two-part legislation, AB 130 by Assembly Member Gil Cedillo (D-Los Angeles), is limited to private scholarship funds. Nevertheless, its passage in July boosted the morale for immigrant rights advocates who have pushed for more recogni-

tion of California residents who were brought here illegally as children. It allows undocumented students who qualify for in-state tuition to apply for \$88 million in private scholarships administered by UC, CSU, and the community college system.

At press time, the second part of the legislation, AB 131, had been passed by the Legislature and was heading to the governor's desk for approval. That bill is much broader, and would allow those students to receive state-funded scholarships and grants, including Cal Grants, which provide up to \$12,192. The Legislature approved amendments sought by the governor that address the bill's cost by narrowing eligibility and delaying implementation until 2013.

Previously, the California Dream Act was introduced as one bill, and was vetoed several times by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. Dividing the bill into two parts allowed Gov. Brown to sign AB 130 without the political outcry of

opponents who argued the state can't afford to educate undocumented students.

Yet many educators maintain the state cannot afford not to provide access to education for undocumented students. Eileen Tejada, an instructor at Napa Valley College and the daughter of immigrants, described education as a "human right" at a news conference sponsored by the Napa Valley Dream Act Coalition.

Tejada said the California Dream Act is about giving every California student equal access to higher education. "We don't need to build more prisons. What we need to do is open more doors to education."

The California Dream Act, unlike the federal Dream Act, does not create a pathway to citizenship for these students, but supporters are ever hopeful, says Montaño. "It's a baby step toward the federal Dream Act."

By Dina Martin

A COMMITMENT TO CARING

50
YEARS

For half a century,
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CTC appointments ensure voices of practitioners will be heard

CTA MEMBERS Kathy Harris and Alicia Hinde and four other educators, including nationally recognized teacher development expert Linda Darling-Hammond, have been appointed by Gov. Jerry Brown to serve on the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC). According to Gov. Brown, the appointments fulfill a vow to bring new leadership to a board whose teacher disciplinary practices were criticized by a state audit last April.

Kathy Harris, former vice president of the Piner-Olivet Educators Association, and Alicia Hinde, president of the Cambrian District Teachers, were recommended by CTA. Gov. Brown's other appointees are Erick Casallas, an academic coach at Myra Noble Elementary School in Bakersfield and a member of the Bakersfield Elementary Teachers Association; Eddie Cuevas, a government and economics teacher at West Adams Preparatory School in Los Angeles; and Louise Stymeist, a coordinator of career technical programs for the Sacramento City Unified School District.

Linda Darling-Hammond served as the executive director of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future from 1994 to 2001 and is now professor of education at Stanford University. She has founded the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute, and the School Redesign Network.

Harris, a classroom teacher since 1986, served as the regional director of the California Reading and Literature Project at Sonoma State University from 1998 to 2009, and specializes in the areas of reading, reading readiness, assessment, English language development, and school reform and leadership. She is a member of the Common Core State Standards Development Team, the California Academic Contents Standards Commission, and the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Plan State Team.

Hinde has taught in the Cambrian district since 2001, working with English learners, students from abusive households, GATE students and students with disabilities. A CTA State Council representative and member of the CTA Credentials and Professional Development Committee, she is also a Silicon Valley Math Initiative lead and a district professional development curriculum trainer.

"Harris' years of experience as a CTA liaison to the commission positions her well to do the very difficult work of monitoring and sustaining effective credentialing activity," says CTA President Dean Vogel. "Likewise, Hinde's perspective as an exemplary classroom teacher and an active association leader brings the voice of the practitioner to the forefront of the debate."

"After having served as a liaison to the CTC for a number of years through several different leadership transitions, I'm delighted to be among what will now be a full complement of teacher appointees," says Harris. "As we move into this huge issue of teacher discipline, it is vital that practitioner voices be heard at the table."

Hinde says her aim "is to bring an educator's voice and perspective to the commission to help ensure integrity and confidence in the teaching profession — an especially critical goal in a time when teachers are repeatedly used as scapegoats for what is wrong with the education system. Our students deserve a top-notch education, and as part of the commission, I expect top-notch results. It's time to raise the bar."

Casallas, Kern County's Teacher of the Year for 2011, hopes the CTC "can restore the respect that the teaching profession deserves."

The CTC was created by the Ryan Act, which CTA sponsored in 1970. It is the oldest of the autonomous state standards boards in the nation. Its main purpose is to oversee professional educator preparation, licensing and credentialing, enforcement of professional practices, and the discipline of credential holders in California public schools.

The appointments were made in the face of a report by state auditor Elaine Howle, who found examples of "significantly delayed processing of alleged misconduct," which "potentially allowed educators of questionable character to retain a credential." The report also found a backlog of prosecution and arrest reports that had not been processed as well as reports of nepotism in hiring. Recent analysis showed that the commission had made progress in all but one of the audit's recommendations.

By **Bill Guy**

Do You Have Questions About Effective School Leadership?



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SOS draws big response in state, national rallies

WHETHER THEY TRAVELED to Washington, D.C., or to the state Capitol, CTA and Student CTA members found plenty of like minds at the Save Our Schools March and National Call to Action on July 30. Education supporters throughout the U.S. joined together in publicly protesting federal education policies that they feel are destroying schools with drill-and-kill instruction, ruining the morale of both students and teachers.

It's just the beginning of an effort to raise public awareness of how federal policies are hurting schools, says Oakland Education Association member Anthony Cody, a blogger for *Education Week*, who served on the SOS Organizing Committee.

Despite the distance to Washington, there was a strong showing from California of teachers who "plunked down their own money" and got on a plane to attend the history-making event. He described the spirit in Washington as a "mixture of defiance and

determination" to change the future of education. Teachers, he says, have been blamed for problems in public education that are beyond their control, and the SOS March was a way of fighting back against continued attacks on public schools and NCLB policies that punish schools instead of helping them.

"There was a lot of excitement about pushing back these phony reforms that are really hurting our schools," says Cody. "And there was a fresh interest on the part of the media to see a grassroots effort where ordinary teachers and parents are taking it upon themselves to get organized and do something about what is happening. Of course, we got extra coverage with the presence of Matt Damon, who made a very inspiring speech."

Damon, a well-known actor, was one of dozens of speakers at the event, including education experts Linda Darling-Hammond, Jonathan Kozol and Diane Ravitch. According to the *Washington Post*, 8,000 teachers,



Molly Servatius (left) from San Francisco and Amy Louise Glanzman from San Jose were among the California contingent at the Save Our Schools March in Washington, D.C.

parents, administrators, school board members and other education activists stood for hours in higher than 90-degree temperatures near the White House to protest the testing mania, then marched to the White House to let President Obama know they were disappointed in his education policies.

continued on page 36 ▶

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ACTION

► continued from page 35

SOS rallies

For those unable to make the trek to D.C., a parallel rally in Sacramento was sponsored by California Save Our Schools activists and organized by Student CTA.

“A lot of us here in California didn’t have the means to get to Washington, so we brainstormed and ended up creating our own rally,” says organizer Amy Mayfield, president of the Student CTA chapter at CSU Chico. “It was fantastic! The people who came were excited and full of energy, and we appreciated having them there.”

“We definitely felt a kinship with those who were in Washington,” adds Mayfield. “We are all fighting the same battle. It’s time legislators stopped pushing their bottom line and began listening to ours. If we don’t speak up for our classrooms, who will? We need to start demanding change in our classroom.”

Of the hundreds attending the Sacramento rally, about half were teachers and half were students. Among attendees were Assembly Member Roger Dickinson (D-Sacramento) and CTA Board member Toby Boyd.

“My hat goes off to Student CTA and the members who put their hearts and a great deal of enthusiasm into this,” says Boyd, who addressed the crowd. “It was really nice to have something on the West Coast to represent teachers and students. We may not have had Matt Damon, but we had representation from our members. And hopefully what happened will be used as a springboard to continue fighting for schools.”

Cody says SOS March organizers plan to build on the momentum, and are working on a “transition process” to turn it into a movement with representatives from different constituencies throughout the U.S.

Visit www.saveourschoolsmarch.org to stay informed about the next steps.

By **Sherry Posnick-Goodwin**

Mapping new political lines

Redistricting could bring more funding to schools

THE CALIFORNIA CITIZENS Redistricting Commission has released final maps of new legislative and congressional districts, which will be used for the next 10 years, commencing with the 2012 elections.

Districts are redrawn every 10 years to reflect the latest census figures. In the past the new lines have been drawn by the Legislature, but with the passage of Propositions 11 and 20, a citizens’ commission was established to draw the new lines this year. The resulting changes — which affect the shape and the voter base in every Assembly, Senate and congressional district in the state — have the potential to help public education. With a bit of hard work by CTA members before and during the 2012 primary and general elections, a new crop of elected officials committed to securing desperately needed revenues for schools could be put in office.

Constrained by constitutional provisions and court decisions, the commission was charged with drawing districts that fairly represent minority groups, include communities of interest, and connect geographically. The final maps they have created could be challenged in the courts or subjected to referenda, but language in the initiatives creating the commission and expanding its duties requires that any such challenges must be handled expeditiously so that new maps can be used for the 2012 elections.

Redistricting could have significant implications for the state budget process. If the results of the 2012 elections create a new supermajority in the Legislature, it might be possible to raise new state revenues on a simple majority vote. Current law allows the Legislature to approve a state budget on a simple majority vote, but raising new state revenues still requires a two-thirds supermajority of both houses of the Legislature. During the 2011 budget stalemate, the state was held in the grip of a small group of anti-tax lawmakers whose votes were needed

to approve any new revenues or change in the tax structure. As a result, the governor and legislators were forced to balance the state budget with massive cuts and deferrals. Although they tried hard to spare education, school funding has been cut by more than \$18 billion over the past three years. To restore funding for schools and to boost appropriations to the level they were during Gov. Reagan’s term, Californians will need to elect more centrist lawmakers willing to support revenue increases and tax fairness.

Redistricting could have significant implications for the state budget process.

Schools could also benefit if more pro-education members of Congress were elected as a result of redistricting. Positive changes could be made in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which has still not been reauthorized; the federal tax structure could be changed to provide more federal funding for schools; and special interests

could be called upon to pay their fair share for public services. More pro-education members of Congress could also speed up the ongoing efforts to eliminate provisions in the Social Security law that penalize public employees, including educators in California. Many lose Social Security benefits they earned before going into education or benefits earned by non-teaching spouses.

Story by **Len Feldman**



MORE INFO

For more information about the maps, visit the Citizens Redistricting Commission website: wedrawthelines.ca.gov/maps-final-drafts.

Seizure bill goes to governor over educators' objections

CTA AND ORGANIZATIONS representing medical and school personnel are urging Gov. Jerry Brown to veto a CTA-opposed measure that would put the physical health of students with epilepsy at risk.

Senate Bill 161 by Sen. Robert Huff (R-Diamond Bar) would provide for the rectal administration by unlicensed, nonmedical school employees of the drug Diastat to students experiencing seizures.

Over the objections of educators, educational support personnel, nurses, and others committed to the health and safety of students, SB 161 has cleared both houses of the Legislature and now awaits the governor's decision.

Educators have been concerned about the danger posed to students by having teachers, other certificated personnel or educa-

tion support professionals administer the drug. They feel it is unrealistic to assume that unlicensed, nonmedical school employees

Educators should not be put in this position.

will receive sufficient training to distinguish between different types of seizures and recognize whether or not the seizure can be safely treated with Diastat. Inappropriate administration is not harmless; it can result in serious consequences such as respiratory depression.

There are no funds identified in SB 161 for training unlicensed, nonmedical "volunteers" on or off the job. Neither is there funding to keep volunteers on the job in the event of an epileptic seizure that occurs at the end of a contract day; the volunteer

could be required to remain with the student for as long as four hours after the administration of Diastat. This bill puts unlicensed, nonmedical employees in the position of making medical assessments, distinguishing between seizure types, monitoring breathing and deciding when a child can go back to class after receiving Diastat.

Teachers, custodians, secretaries and bus drivers should not be put in this position, say educators, nor are they qualified to make medical assessments. SB 161 undermines existing protections for both students and school employees without ensuring that every child receives the necessary medical services and care students have a right to expect.

Story by **Len Feldman** and **Toni Trigueiro**

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Pension Truth Squad hits the road to dispel myths about public pensions

WITH ATTACKS AGAINST public pensions escalating, a cadre of retired CTA members is joining forces with Pension Truth Squads that have been barnstorming the state.

Retired teachers in San Francisco, Sacramento, Fresno, Chico, San Luis Obispo, Riverside and Palm Springs have shared their stories and brought the truth to the public about their retirement plans. They are not alone in fighting back. They join a coalition

If anyone thinks that a teacher or a school secretary or a custodian or a government worker is living high on the hog, they don't know what they're talking about.

—Sandra Mack

tion of retired school employees, firefighters, police and other public employees who are out to set the record straight on public employee retirement.

They are making it known that their pensions are modest — not the six-figure incomes that those who would undo the public employee pension system suggest.

“We would like to dispel some of the myths about public employee pensions,” said Alen Ritchie, a retired Redlands music teacher, who spoke at an event in Riverside in May. “Teachers do not go into the profession for money, but we do deserve a livable retirement.”

The Pension Truth Squad events were launched in San Francisco in April by Californians for Retirement Security and have continued through the summer, garnering the attention of the news media statewide.

“After 38 years of teaching Spanish, I received a pension, for which I’m grateful. But that does not make me wealthy,” said Sandra Mack, a retired member of United Educators of San Francisco. “If anyone thinks that a teacher or a school secretary or a custodian or a government worker is living high on the hog, they don’t know what they’re talking about.”

California public employees’ contributions to their pensions have climbed from 5 percent to 7 percent and now to 10 percent, and their average public pension is \$26,000. Many, including teachers, do not receive Social Security benefits. The average public teacher’s pension in California is \$33,000 a year after 27 years of service.

“Our retirement benefits support the local economy,” said Tim Jenkins, a San Diego elementary teacher for three decades, who participated in a Pension Truth Squad news conference in May. “Teachers’ retirement benefits pumped more than \$740 million into the San Diego area economy in the 2009-10 fiscal year. These are dollars that support our local businesses and create jobs.”

The Truth Squads have also called attention to the out-of-state billionaires and right-wing

extremists with Tea Party ties who are driving the assault on California’s middle class. Instead of ballot box proposals that would force public workers into risky 401(k) retirement plans, decisions regarding public pensions should be made at the bargaining table, the coalition maintains.

“Now that I’ve retired, I’m grateful for my teacher’s pension, which I spent 47 years contributing to,” said Carol Roberson, a retired member of the Fresno Teachers Association, who spoke at an event in Fresno in July. “I’m not some fat cat or Wall Street banker, but I do have some peace of mind knowing my retirement is secure. And by the way, that’s without the benefit of Social Security, since teachers in California are not permitted to receive Social Security.”

The California State Teachers’ Retirement System, with a portfolio valued at \$154.2 billion, is the largest teacher pension fund in the United States. CalSTRS administers a hybrid retirement system, consisting of a traditional defined benefit, cash balance and defined contribution plans, as well as disability and survivor benefits. CalSTRS serves California’s 852,000 public school educators and their families from the state’s 1,600 school districts, county offices of education and community college districts.

Also included in Californians for Retirement Security are state employees such as education support professionals who are members of the Public Employees’ Retirement System (CalPERS). The systems operate differently and have some separate issues, but together they make a strong case for preserving a secure retirement.



CTA recommendations for CalSTRS election



CTA recommends three candidates to fill seats on the California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS) board. They are Phyllis Hall (left) and incumbents Dana Dillon (center) and Harry Keiley (right). Ballots will be mailed Oct. 1 and will be accepted until Nov. 30.

Retired Chico middle school teacher John Watson said during a June news conference, "The fact that teachers, firefighters and other public servants have secure pension plans is not the problem. The problem is that other workers do not. Instead of attacking teachers and public servants over our modest retirement benefits, we should be focusing our discussion on ways to create better retirement options for everyone."

Retired teachers are not the only CTA members who should be concerned. Public employee pensions have taken the stage front and center in California and throughout the United States over the past year. Although there are no state pension reform initiatives threatened imminently, the issue is not likely to blow over soon. At least one pension reformer, former Schwarzenegger adviser Dan Pellissier, is "guaranteeing" a measure for the November 2012 ballot.

By Dina Martin

EDITOR'S NOTE: At press time, Secretary of State Deborah Bowen gave the go-ahead for signature-gathering to begin on three anti-union initiatives. One would increase the retirement age for public employees to 65, one would increase the income tax on pensions in excess of \$100,000 to 15 percent and higher, and another would eliminate bargaining rights for public employee unions altogether.

FIVE MYTHS

Five myths about teachers' retirement

- MYTH:** The retirement fund is a taxpayer giveaway.
FACT: Over the life of their careers, teachers contribute 8 percent of their monthly pay to their retirement. Employers kick in another 8.25 percent of monthly pay, the state contributes just over 2 percent and the returns garnered by CalSTRS investments do the rest.
- MYTH:** Teachers retire too early and into a life of luxury.
FACT: The average benefit payment is \$3,300 per month while the number of years a teacher works for those benefits averages 27.
- MYTH:** Teachers engage in pension 'spiking.'
FACT: CalSTRS is vigilant in preventing spiking. All extra compensation for teachers over and above their normal salary gets put into a separate account that cannot be used toward their final retirement salary.
- MYTH:** The CalSTRS system is headed toward insolvency.
FACT: While it is true that CalSTRS has a \$40 billion shortfall, this is not an amount that is paid overnight. Just like a mortgage, this is an amount that will need to be closed over 30 years, not in the first month's payment. Even under current economic conditions, CalSTRS has sufficient assets and projected contributions to pay benefits until 2044.
- MYTH:** Our state would be better off financially without having to contribute to teachers' retirement benefits.
FACT: The state benefits economically from teachers' retirement benefits. In fact, \$4.5 billion in value is added to the state's economy each year from generated business activity from retirement benefits. Entire counties depend on that retirement income.

MORE INFO

More resources can be found on CTA's website at www.cta.org/retirement or the Californians for Retirement Security website, letstalkpensions.com and Facebook page, www.facebook.com/LetsTalkPensions.

TAKING A STAND

Who's behind paycheck play?

Just follow the money.

The trail reveals the top donors who are bankrolling the latest “paycheck deception” initiative to be **a wealthy lot of millionaires, bankers, a pro-voucher venture capitalist, and real estate developers**, all looking to invest in silencing the political voices of working California people.

With some audacity, they call their political action committee “Californians Against Special Interests.” The campaign has raised and **spent at least \$1.2 million as of late August**, according to the secretary of state’s campaign finance website.

The website shows that **Lewis Uhler is back**. The campaign has paid \$35,000 for consulting services to a committee run by the archconservative Republican architect of Prop. 75, the paycheck initiative soundly defeated by voters in 2005.

Some top donors so far:

\$225,000 in-kind contribution from the Citizen Power Campaign, formed for the 2010 attempt at a paycheck deception initiative.

\$200,000 from Ed Bloomfield Jr., Manhattan Beach real estate developer.

\$160,000 from Larry Smith, a real estate investor.

\$100,000 from Frank Baxter, former CEO of the investment banking firm Jefferies & Company.

\$100,000 from Tim Draper, the Menlo Park-based venture capitalist who funded Prop. 38, a school voucher initiative, defeated in 2000 with CTA leading the opposition.

\$100,000 from Bradley Wayne Hughes Jr., son of the billionaire founder of Public Storage.

\$76,442 from Lincoln Club of Orange County political action committee, which provided “significant seed money” for the two prior California “paycheck protection” initiatives, both of which failed.

\$50,000 from Richard Riordan, former mayor of Los Angeles.

\$50,000 from Protect Prop. 13 group, part of Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association.

\$40,000 from the Lincoln Club of San Diego.

Misleading paycheck initiative seeks to silence the working class

AT A TIME when it’s critical that CTA members’ voices be heard in Sacramento, wealthy developers and venture capitalists are bankrolling a devious new “paycheck deception” initiative that would silence the voices of all California union workers and strengthen the clout of big corporations.

By early September, the campaign behind this new attack on middle-class workers was on the verge of collecting enough signatures to put the initiative on the ballot next year. The measure singles out public- and private-sector unions for unfair restraints on political spending while providing loopholes for big businesses, warns CTA President Dean E. Vogel.

“California voters already rejected two of these ‘paycheck deception’ attacks in the past 13 years because they know a scam when they see one,” says Vogel. “Wall Street already outspends unions by huge margins, and this initiative would make the imbalance worse in our state. We can’t create a better future for our students and our state by silencing the voices of California’s working class — especially teachers, firefighters, police and nurses.”

Corporations nationwide have outspent unions on politics about 15-to-1 over the past 11 years, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. It is ironic that the new ballot measure is called the “Stop Special Interest Money Now Act.”

The initiative is clearly not what it seems, says Vogel. “It singles out middle-class workers for unfair treatment and does nothing to stop corporate CEOs from contributing to political campaigns. It creates more problems than it solves.”

The dangers of this kind of initiative are real, agrees Bay Area high school teacher Tim Sbranti. He chairs CTA State Council’s Political Involvement Committee, which has been tracking this ballot measure.

“It would be devastating for public education in California,” says Sbranti, a past president of the Dublin Teachers Association in Alameda County. “It would devastate our ability to fight for our students and our schools.”

Working with coalitions, CTA helped defeat similar measures in 1998 and 2005, but it takes solidarity and community outreach, says Sbranti. “We have to mobilize. We have to be ready to fight. When we fight together, we win.”

The initiative backers call it “paycheck protection” because it would ban corporations and both public and private labor unions from using automatic payroll deductions for political fund-raising. It would also ban corporate and union contributions to candidates.

But this is specifically designed to unfairly impact labor unions, not corporations. Corporations can tap vast profits, rather than their employees, for political funding.

This measure is unnecessary because union members already have the right under California law to request that their dues not be used for political purposes. CTA members can opt out of paying dues to the ABC Committee, CTA’s political action committee, which funds CTA’s campaigns.

CTA has a democratic process in place to decide whether to engage in political activities. The final decisions on campaign spending represent the will of the majority.

This process involves the nearly 800 democratically elected teacher delegates to the CTA State Council voting to make final decisions on all political expenditures. Educators like Lysa Sassman, vice president of the Auburn Union Teachers Association, validate this system and what it’s accomplished over the years.

“I trust the spending process that we have in place at CTA because I have a say in it and I trust the leadership of CTA. The leaders can be trusted to make the decisions based on what’s best for our students and our members,” says Sassman. “The people behind this initiative have no right to interfere with my union. Members decide what CTA’s political priorities are. We are the bosses of our union. Educators run CTA.”

The AFL-CIO warns that paycheck deception initiatives are partly in retaliation for unions’ exposing the right-wing, anti-

Paycheck scheme a two-time loser

California voters have twice rejected “paycheck deception” initiatives in recent years. Unfortunately, it took costly statewide campaigns by coalitions of labor unions and the strong participation of CTA members to educate voters about the misleading measures.

» **In November 2005**, Prop. 75 singled out only public employees as its target and was heavily promoted by then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger as part of his slate of initiatives targeting educators and the rights of all government employees. It lost with a 53.5 percent no vote.

» **In June 1998**, Prop. 226 targeted all California union workers as does the new initiative. Supported by then-Gov. Pete Wilson, it lost at the polls with a 53.3 percent no vote.

union corporate agenda in the U.S. Polls show union members overwhelmingly want their unions involved in politics to counter the influence of Wall Street.

What kinds of political gains has CTA made for education over the decades?

CTA has a proud record of using political clout to protect students, improve schools and colleges, and enhance the teaching profession.

Educators’ ability to lead labor’s fight to defeat conservative billionaire Meg Whitman and elect Jerry Brown governor last year could have been curtailed if this paycheck measure were the law at the time. So would the campaign to elect Tom Torlakson as state superintendent of public instruction.

CTA led the fight to pass the landmark Proposition 98 in 1988, which guarantees minimum funding levels for schools. The union also sponsored the 1996 legislation that created the state’s class size reduction program, and the 2006 Quality Education Investment Act, which brings an extra \$3 billion in resources to 500 at-risk schools over an eight-year period.

From 2000 to 2009, CTA beat back a school voucher initiative and won passage of three statewide school bonds totaling \$35.7 billion. State Council approved a \$60 million CTA war chest to successfully oppose then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger’s three well-funded initiatives in 2005, including his paycheck deception effort. These measures would have cut school funding, destroyed teachers’ due process rights, and silenced the political voices of all public employees in the state.

“We are proud of the way we use our voice in Sacramento to help our students and schools, and we will not let wealthy interests silence our voices with this initiative,” says Vogel.

“This measure is misleading and full of unintended consequences that would hurt us all. It clearly singles out union members for unfair treatment while giving big corporations a free pass to reap even more profits and pay even less in taxes. We know a dangerous scheme when we see one. So do the voters.”

Story by Mike Myslinski

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TAKING A STAND

'Parent trigger' law gets new regulations

CTA still has serious concerns

IN JULY, the State Board of Education (SBE) unanimously approved final regulations governing California's controversial "parent trigger" law, legislation that allows petitions signed by a majority of parents at one of the state's lowest-performing schools to trigger interventions such as school closure, a change in school personnel, or conversion to a charter.

The new regulations replace overly vague temporary ones that had led to severe problems and even abuse, such as when a group of charter organizers called Parent Revolution attempted to orchestrate a takeover at McKinley Elementary School in Compton in December. The new regulations are an improvement upon the preceding ones, but CTA still has serious concerns about them.

The hastily written parent trigger law was authored by Sen. Gloria Romero and adopted in January 2010. Bill sponsors thought the law would earn extra credit in

the Race to the Top competition, but they were wrong. It was never considered.

The law caps the number of eligible schools at 75, and so far McKinley is the only school where the parent trigger has been pulled. After the McKinley petitions were submitted, many parents leveled charges of intimidation and misrepresentation against Parent Revolution. Some said organizers misidentified themselves as local parents or said that signing the petition would "beautify the school." The organizers and some parents responded with countercharges against McKinley staff members.

Largely lost in all this uproar was the fact that McKinley had already been making dramatic progress the prior two years under CTA's Quality Education Improvement Act (QEIA), information Parent Revolution organizers did not share with parents. In May, a Los Angeles Superior Court judge declared the McKinley par-

ent trigger petitions invalid for technical reasons, shattering Parent Revolution's poorly chosen showcase and forcing them to regroup.

Part of the Wild West atmosphere that permeated the first attempt at using the parent trigger law stemmed from the vagueness of the legislation itself and the lack of clear guidelines for its implementation. As the SBE prepared to act on replacing temporary guidelines with final ones, Parent Revolution bused dozens of supportive Los Angeles area parents to Sacramento to testify or simply sit in the audience wearing Parent Revolution T-shirts.

Parent Revolution also unsuccessfully challenged the right of board member Patricia Rucker, a CTA legislative advocate, to vote on the new regulations, claiming a conflict of interest. The state's Fair Political Practices Commission found no merit in the complaint.

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Testifying before the SBE with a different viewpoint from that of Parent Revolution were several Compton, Los Angeles and Inglewood area parents who urged members to balance support for parents with acknowledgment of the realities of the classroom.

Part of the Wild West atmosphere that permeated the first attempt at using the parent trigger stemmed from the vagueness of the law itself.

One issue of contention was the ability of the state board to adopt regulations that supersede current charter school law. Daly Jordan-Koch, Pixie Hayward-Schickele, Sandra Thornton and Larry Carlin, serving as CTA liaisons to the SBE, all urged the board to keep teachers as partners in the process of converting existing underperforming schools to charters, and reminded them that regulations must not sidestep legislation that requires teacher signatures on charter conversion petitions. "There was no legislative intent to set aside the charter school law, and we are asking you to follow that law," Hayward-Schickele told the board.

The adopted final regulations reject that notion and appear to be in conflict with existing legislation. CTA legal counsel has submitted public comment challenging the SBE's authority to pre-empt current law through its own regulations. CTA has also urged the board to restore a requirement for an open public meeting for parents in the affected school to discuss all options.

While the new regulations are certainly better than the prior temporary ones, CTA still has serious concerns about some aspects of them and about the law. "Even if you support the parent trigger concept, which we believe is deeply flawed, the law itself was very poorly written and has already led to a great deal of needless confusion and disruption," says Hayward-Schickele.

Story by Frank Wells

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2009 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, 2009, through Aug. 31, 2010. 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, 2010, were \$33,765,920.

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, 2010, the premiums paid under such “experience-rated” contracts were \$33,765,920 and the total of all benefit claims paid under these experience-rated contracts during the plan year was \$25,085,337.

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 \$67,367,512 as of Aug. 31, 2010, compared to \$64,274,558 as of Sept. 1, 2009. During the plan year the plan experienced an increase in its net assets of \$3,092,954. This increase 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 \$39,407,328 including employee contributions of \$33,711,715, realized gains of \$939,837 from the sale of assets, and earnings from investments of \$4,755,776.

Plan expenses were \$36,314,374. These expenses included \$1,732,101 in administrative expenses and \$34,582,273 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 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.

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Sandrini
Dances



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World Record Time

Carrie Swidecki demonstrates her record-winning style for her second-grade class at Sandrini Elementary School in Bakersfield.



The 'exergaming' champ

One teacher's weight loss effort leads to Guinness World Record

CARRIE SWIDECKI TOOK up Dance Dance Revolution 10 years ago as a fun way to exercise. Since then, she's lost 75 pounds, has introduced the video "exergame" to her second-graders at Sandrini Elementary School in Bakersfield, and this July broke the Guinness world record for playing DDR with a time of 15 hours, 17 minutes and 44 seconds.

That's beating the previous record of 13 hours, 33 minutes and 56 seconds. You do the math.

Swidecki's feat, which required dancing a sequence of steps displayed on a video screen in time to music, took place July 27 in Charleston, W.Va., in conjunction with a regional tournament and the inaugural Childhood Obesity Prevention Summit sponsored by Konami, the maker of the popular game.

The honor is the culmination of a long journey for Swidecki. As a student at UC Santa Barbara, she had subsisted on high-

fat, low-cost meals to stay within her budget. Within six years, she weighed 210 pounds.

Her "aha!" moment came the first time she tried DDR at a local arcade. Although she thought no one was watching her, a young boy walking by chided, "You suck."

Swidecki recalls: "That's when I told myself, 'I'm going to do this!'"

Within two years, she started participating in local tournaments. After winning several national contests, Swidecki was challenged by Konami to attempt to break the world record.

For that, Swidecki started cross-training with power walking seven miles a day, running, and working out at the local arcade. Once school was out, she hired a running coach and did six workouts a day, six days a week. After training for six months, Swidecki was able to show the kids at the tournament just how it's done. She also found time during the marathon to talk up the ben-

efits of exergaming as a fun and healthy alternative to conventional forms of exercise.

When she returned to school, Swidecki was treated as a local hero. "The kids were all running up to me to tell me they saw me on TV."

Of course, Swidecki's students have themselves become enthusiasts for the video game. Many of them play it at home, and they are working out new moves at school as well, with a system Swidecki obtained for her classroom through a DonorsChoose grant.

Parents commend the Panama-Buena Vista Teachers Association member for being able to incorporate the "healthy" aspects of video gaming into the classroom.

Although a new school year is beginning, Swidecki isn't about to hang up her dancing shoes. Now she's looking to set a new record.

Story by **Dina Martin**

PHOTOGRAPHY
Doug Kessler



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