

FEATURE » PAGE 13

CLICKERS

TECHNOLOGY AND STUDENT LEARNING

OPINION » PAGE 16

DRESS CODE FOR TEACHERS?

2 MEMBERS SHARE THEIR VIEWS

PLUS »

YOUR COMMENTS ON CURSIVE

7

MEMBER BENEFITS REPORT

40

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

46

California EDUCATOR

Get Grants!
PAGE 26

CAMPAIGN

PREPPING FOR PROPOSITIONS 30 AND 32

PAGE 28

DRESSING FOR SUCCESS

ON A BUDGET PAGE 17

September 2012 Volume 17 Issue 1

KEEPING PARENTS IN THE LOOP

PAGE 9





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TOP TEN

To Do List
in this Issue

- 1 Join CTA Online (page 5)
- 2 Write a letter (page 7)
- 3 Ask parents what they want (page 12)
- 4 Discover clickers (page 13)
- 5 Apply for a grant (page 26)
- 6 Learn about Prop. 30 (page 28)
- 7 Understand Prop. 32 (page 30)
- 8 See a solar suitcase (page 42)
- 9 Mark your calendar (page 44)
- 10 Solve the crossword (page 46)

FRONT

- 5 What's New Online
- 6 Ask Dean
Editor's Note
- 7 Your Letters
- 9 Parents as Partners
- 13 Classroom Technology
- 16 Dress Code Discussion
- 17 Outfits on a Budget

MIDDLE

- 22 Movie Review
- 23 Teacher Evaluation
- 25 Your Voice in CTA
- 26 Get Grant\$
- 28 Yes on Proposition 30
- 30 No on Proposition 32
- 34 Contracts Made Easy

BACK

- 36 Photos of Last Summer
- 37 Miramonte Teachers Cleared
- 40 Member Benefits Report
- 42 Alan Jensen
- 44 CTA Calendar
- 46 Crossword Puzzle



CLAD Through CTEL Program

UC San Diego Extension offers a Commission-approved CLAD Through CTEL program for teachers with a valid California teaching credential who are required to earn a California English Learner Authorization. We are now accepting candidates that would also like to earn this Authorization through a combination of exam scores and coursework, in addition to coursework only candidates.

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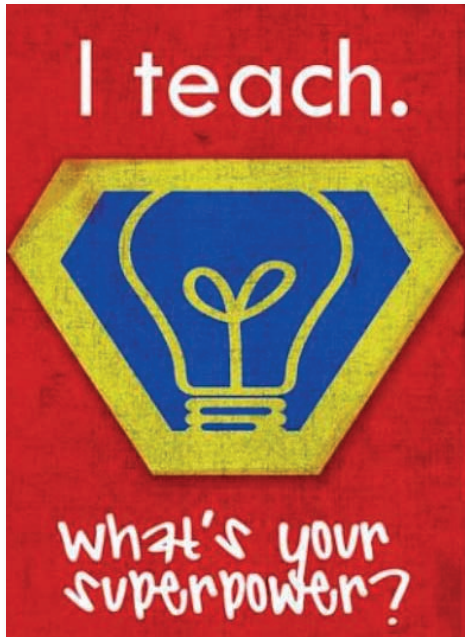


TOP TWEET

@kenmlibby

Teacher union leaders to lawmakers: Education reform should happen with us, not to us.

MOST POPULAR FACEBOOK POST



365 likes 17 comments 547 shares

MORE TOP TWEETS

@thenerdyteacher

I teach a literature class. Students need to read at home and come to class ready to discuss. At the HS level, I do not think that is crazy.

@ctaIPDspEd

Great video on how to empower yourself using your union to advocate for #spced <http://ow.ly/cFEpQ>

FAVORITE COMMENTS

Alejandro Anguiano

10:26 am | 15 Aug

Our school year started mid-July. We are still trying to bring back all of our teachers that were laid off...

Janice Allen

6:18 pm | 10 Aug

Remember that everything in your classroom is legislated. That's why it's important to stay informed and involved.

Don Rowan

8:05 pm | 6 Aug

What happened to archery, building and launching rockets and trebuchets [to teach physics]? Get those kids outside and away from mundane activities on the computer.

CAMPAIGN 2012 NEWS




At a press event in mid-August, the governor joined local educators, including San Juan Teachers Association President Shannan Brown, to kick off the Prop. 30 campaign. www.cta.org/YesProp30

Your child's education begins at home.

Al trabajar unidos, los padres y los maestros les dan a los niños

La Asociación de Maestros de California y La Asociación de Padres y Maestros de California se han unido para ofrecerles algunas sugerencias que pueden contribuir a que sus hijos tengan éxito en la escuela.

1. Pregunte. Pregúntele a sus hijos lo que estudiaron hoy en la clase... ¿qué les mostró...




RESOURCES IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES

In the annual Family Involvement campaign, CTA and the California State PTA offer tips in multiple languages for parents to help their children succeed in school. www.cta.org/family

DO YOU KNOW YOUR WEINGARTEN RIGHTS?

If an employee has a reasonable belief that discipline or adverse consequences may result from what he or she says, the employee has the right to request union representation. www.cta.org/Weingarten



VIRAL VIDEO

Mieliwocki at RA: National Teacher of the Year Rebecca Mieliwocki tells educators at the NEA Convention: "It's this voice [of teachers] that's been missing from all the highly charged conversations in education." www.cta.org/rebeccaatneara



So what's up with Finland?

As you and millions of California students started the school year I headed back to school, too—in Finland. I accepted an invitation from the Education Funder Strategy Group and the Stuart Foundation to join other educators and policymakers on a learning trip to Helsinki.

Each day of my trip, August 19–25, I was immersed in Finland's public school system, which is widely recognized as one of the top-performing education systems in the world.

After nearly a week there, I can tell you I was impressed. It's a teacher's dream. What does Finland have that we don't? A number of things, but first and foremost, there appears to be complete support for education—and educators—from the government, families and the business community. In this environment the students and the teachers thrive.

I blogged about my daily visits to every new school I visited on the new CTA blog (Read full posts of President Vogel's experience at blog.cta.org). I'd like to share some of my observations:

August 21: I visited Kungsgards Daghem, a preschool and kindergarten taught in both Finnish and German. All children receive pre-primary education free of charge during the year before their compulsory education begins. Child care is available for all children, beginning at age 1, with the state covering up to 85 percent of the cost. The lead teacher said, "Our primary responsibility is to learn what the children can do and help them to grow, as opposed to finding out what they can't do and remediating." Each child has an individual learning plan developed jointly by the teacher and the parents.



CTA President **Dean E. Vogel**

August 22: The Albert Edelfeldtin Koulu Comprehensive School serves grades 1-9 and includes a special education unit. The assistant principal, who also has her own fifth-grade class, introduced the five major goals of the school that the faculty reflect upon as they plan their work: Fairness, Tolerance and Individuality, Sense of Community, Appreciation of Learning and Working, and Responsibility. It was obvious that everyone in the school—faculty, support staff, and students—strives to exemplify these qualities.

August 23: I spent the morning at Helsing Gymnasium. I continue to be amazed and impressed by the ability of most students here to manage their own behavior, direct their own learning, and gather and utilize the resources necessary to complete work and projects. Much can be learned from the premise that students on the path to self-actualization, routinely engaged in developmentally appropriate material and encouraged to work collaboratively with their peers and teachers, can and will exceed expectations. I believe that California educators and support staff believe it wholeheartedly. The challenge for all of us, of course, is to help those actively engaged in education reform to develop the same sensibilities.

I see what happens when educators have a voice in acquiring the resources and support required for student success. As I come back home and prepare for the November election, I realize why it is so important to vote. If we want a voice in how our schools operate, we vote **NO ON 32**. If we want resources for our classroom, we vote **YES ON PROP 30**.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

We're breaking the rules!

It's a new year and a new *Educator*. The changes you're seeing in this magazine are based on CTA member input (enjoy the crossword on page 46) and in the next few issues we'll be experimenting with your suggestions. Members will have another opportunity to suggest changes to this, your magazine, during online focus groups next month—stay tuned for details. Our articles are based on your suggestions, too.

Last summer's point/counterpoint on "Should students still be learning cursive?" prompted an extraordinary number of letters to this editor, starting on page 7. We are printing as many as we have space for. Can't wait to hear what you think of our "Should we have a dress code?" article (page 16).

Together, parents and teachers help youngsters succeed and stay in school. Hear great examples of communicating with parents from your colleagues (page 9). Who says back-to-school clothes are just for kids? Meet CTA members who, with our fashionista, considered their budgets, teaching styles and body types to dress for success (page 17).

This issue is full of news, resources, tips and suggestions you'll want and need to know now and in the coming months. We hope you'll find the information useful. If you have suggestions, please share. We look forward to hearing from you!

Next month:
2012 Election Guide

Cynthia Menzel cmenzel@cta.org
Editor in Chief

LETTERS AND COMMENTS

Here's what you think!



Your letters are welcome! There is a 250-word limit. Signed letters with the writer's name, address and daytime telephone number will be considered for publication. All letters will be edited. Write to editor@cta.org.

IF I COULD SIGN MY NAME I WOULD

I found the articles on cursive writing in the summer issue very interesting. As a newly retired elementary school teacher, I understand the need for efficiency in education and the pressures on teachers to teach overwhelming curriculums, and also that technology is the "future" in many ways.

However, I agree that penmanship is an art form. When I reread the beautiful love letters written to my mother by my father during World War II, a part of their appeal is not only what he said, but how he physically wrote them in his beautiful cursive script. I have a file of old family recipes written on index cards as a wedding gift, and each card is a "picture" of that person that brings back memories of them (along with their delicious cooking suggestions).

I loved learning to type in school, and I enjoy using the computer and e-mail, and trying to learn about the new technological opportunities that are available today. However, eliminating cursive writing in schools is like eliminating art in schools. It is indeed confining students to a narrower educational experience and view of the world. If I could sign my name for you, I would!

—Nancy L. Brucker
CTA/NEA-Retired

WOODING REQUIRES CURSIVE

I'm savvy in the computer culture. Writing a document for business or scientific purposes in cursive makes no sense at all — the idea is to communicate accurately and clearly, and not try to impress someone with your penmanship.

Consider: Would you write a poem for your girlfriend (or boyfriend) on the computer with Times New Roman, or would you write it with a pen? The ladies I've wooed would much prefer the latter.

One might also argue that learning to read music is now obsolete because there's so much digital music out there at the touch of a button. That would be a horrible mistake. Music, poetry, graphic arts, calligraphy — these are a few of the things that keep us human. A few graduates can make a living in the arts, but we can all appreciate the arts, and fine art is what makes life worth living.

—William A. Barrett
CFA, San Jose State University

A CURSIVE SONNET

Cursive is a sign of civilization;
Printing takes us back to primitive times.
If we want mass-product education,
Make our students' hands mere digital mimes.
When man's ten fingers curled around a pen,
He found a way from flickering brain
To permanent food for future men
To feed their minds and ponder once again.
The loops and swirls once made by
Roman, Greek
And Arab live on to dignify their thought.
If we too in our century seek
To transcend time, we all of us ought
To train our fingers in the cursive mode
Before they start to stab computer code

—Michael Duffett
San Joaquin Delta College
Teachers Association

STUDENTS BEG FOR CURSIVE

I am a high school special education teacher who teaches students with severe emotional and behavioral disorders and on many occasions I have written on the Smart Board in my classroom, in cursive, only to hear several students call out, "I can't read cursive!"

I ask, "What are you going to do when you need to sign documents, your driver's license, checks, applications? Are you going to print your name? Do you have any idea that when they ask for a signature, it means in cursive?"

Not teaching cursive is shortchanging students. My students begged me to teach them cursive. So I spend 15 minutes a day teaching them what they should have been taught in fourth grade. Most don't even know how to properly hold a pencil, so they all write with the little pencil grips of beginners. It is funny to see them bring up their papers and proudly show me their carefully crafted alphabet.

My high school students have asked me why they weren't taught this in elementary school. I have no answer for them.

—Katherine Nell McNeil
Lakeside Union Teachers Association

QUESTIONED CURSIVE AND BLENDED PHONICS

I, too, wrestled with the rationale of teaching my fourth-graders cursive. It was useful for signature writing, and students need to be able to read cursive, not so much to read primary source documents, but because there are still teachers my students might meet in middle school and high school who would write whiteboard notes or personal notes to their students in cursive.

Neither of these two purposes seemed urgent enough to dedicate a great amount of instructional time to mastering the skill.

Three years ago I began using Donald Potter's "Blend Phonics" in voluntary "lunch bunch" groups for those students who lacked adequate phonics/phonemic development. I used cursive blend phonics for students who had atrocious spelling, had difficulty sounding out words, and who struggled with letter and number reversals. Doing phonics instruction in cursive is successful at training left-to-right tracking skills needed for reading English because of the connectedness of the letters and the directionality of the words.

Consider this: Students make many handwriting errors in cursive, but it's almost impossible for them to reverse (flip) the letters. My own experience seems to support the value of learning phonics in cursive. I am pleased enough with the progress my lunch bunch students have made that I continue to give up many hours of my own lunch time to offer this when the need arises.

—Lorna Johnston
Mother Lode Teachers Association
(Placerville)

CORRELATE TYPING AND WRITING

Over the past 20 years of university teaching, I have seen a clear correlation between students' abilities to write quickly and legibly and their ability to earn good grades on typed as well as handwritten assignments.

Students who write slowly or illegibly cannot take good notes in class. They thus have thinner resources to draw upon for exams, papers and discussion. Some cursive skeptics will say that they can take notes faster on a keyboard, but alas, this is not a good substitute, because brain research has shown typists do not process or retain what they hear as thoroughly as those who take written notes.

The only conceivable debate here is how to best teach students to write legibly, fluidly, quickly and painlessly.

—Sarah S. Elkind
CFA, San Diego State University

CURSIVE AND OUR CULTURE

Handwriting that leads to cursive writing is the basis for learning important aspects of design and spatial learning. So much of our culture is based on line, shape and spatial relationships; elements of art that are a big part of communication, a basic part of human culture.

Both educators made some valid points in their arguments, but so much is learned by doing, that is the process of writing. Graphic designers who created the fonts (in this article) understand the art elements needed to create letter forms. These same elements are used to create logos and other designs that one can

LETTERS AND COMMENTS (continued)

recognize the instant they gaze upon them.

I use technology for writing quickly; it's easy for me to express my thought while writing this response. When a teacher of younger students doesn't take the time for students to write in Danielian and then in cursive, the students miss out on learning design elements, and they spend less time developing the ability to focus in a way that is meditative, when all their mental and physical energy is quietly spent on acquiring a skill.

Think about how important that is. This is how they are when they work at a computer, focused on that screen. However, working at the computer is more passive, when students are engaged in writing they are using more of their brain, because they are using are coordination of visual and motor skills.

—**Rebecca Arce Gray**
San Diego Education Association

PARENTS THINK IT'S GREAT

Whatever grade I taught — first through eighth, elementary or middle school — for my "sponge activity" on their way into class my students would pick up their cursive sheet (manuscript for first- and second-graders) for the day and copy it carefully, along with two grammar sentences to be corrected on the back.

Trust me, the calm and concentration as they worked gave them time to settle down and gave me time to handle roll and other brief and necessary business. By the end of the year, the improvement was obvious even to them, and they took great pride in their handwriting.

We had handwriting tests with small prizes awarded twice a year. No one got less than a C, and quite often the most at-risk kids in the class had developed the best handwriting! Another plus: Parents thought it was great!

—**Joan Walter**
CTA/NEA-Retired

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

I think the comment about calligraphy being unnecessary denigrates the rich history vital to so many countries and religions around the world, some of which even believe it is sacred.

The author disregards all scientific research on the topic of cursive writing. Cursive can help students' literacy skills (James). The facts indicate that cursive is associated with higher academic achievement, including better test scores.

Another idea that wasn't explored was the use of handwriting instruction for assisting all students, especially those with disabilities. Cursive "hones dexterity [and] fluidity" (New York Times) and helps "dyslexic children in learning to read" (Huffington Post). Cursive can be difficult to teach, and it requires students to have patience, practice, and develop self-discipline, which is exactly why schools — especially those with disadvantaged populations — need to teach it. We need to maintain

high expectations for all students and teach concepts that are most beneficial to students.

—**Celina Collins**
CTA/NEA-Jurupa

CURSIVE IS PATRIOTIC!

Cursive penmanship is an art form that is an extension of the writer and has historical significance going back to the Magna Carta and Declaration of Independence. Can you imagine if history-making documents were generated on the computer in your choice of font instead of in the bold, declarative cursive of a patriot? Cursive writing evokes greatness or importance, and printing implies simplicity and insignificance.

Due to the emphasis on standardized testing and score-keeping, classroom teachers have very little discretionary time to teach the fine art of cursive writing. My school, San Joaquin Elementary, participates in a monthly "Golden Pencil" handwriting contest, and students are recognized for excellence in this neglected subject. It is apparent that if a teacher is able to carve out some time to practice this skill with students, the students respond with some impressive manuscripts.

—**Anne Hughes**
Saddleback Valley Educators Association

CURSIVE IN COLLEGE

As a biology professor at CSU Sacramento, I deal with the consequences of what teachers in elementary and high school teach. I do not particularly care whether a student writes in cursive or prints, but I have a hard time believing the assertion that students take longer to write in cursive than when printing.

That speed is going to be critical when they get to university. While some professors have succumbed to the lure of multiple-guess exams, many of us have not. We expect carefully articulated answers written rapidly and clearly, and if a student takes too long, they are simply not going to finish the exam.

Furthermore, I cannot grade what I cannot read. So, whatever you teach your students, be sure that they can do it quickly and legibly.

—**Ronald M. Coleman**
CFA, CSU Sacramento

DISENCHANTED FORMER TEACHER

I absolutely agree with CTA President Dean E. Vogel's editorial "A visionary framework" in the June/July *Educator*, especially his opinion about the current teacher evaluation system: "It's not fair, it's not accurate, and it's the lazy way out."

For the second time in as many districts, after receiving stellar evaluations the first time in each district, I received unsatisfactory evaluations as I neared the end of my probationary status, and was told each time that I am "not a good fit."

Assuming both districts are correct, which

I adamantly oppose, I wonder what the real reason for the reversals are. I suspect it is because I am older than what is considered desirable (58) and I am at the top of the pay scale for what would have been my seventh year (2012-13). Let's not forget that districts don't need a reason to get rid of experienced teachers.

An equitable evaluation system would not allow this to happen.

I am far from perfect, some of my methods and beliefs may be outdated, but I am a good teacher, who has decided to call it quits. Not because of teacher burnout, but because of an unfair, dysfunctional system, and I am tired of spineless administrators who lack forthrightness.

—**Robert Lynch**
Former teacher in Pasadena Unified School District and Amador County Office of Education

ESP ARE CULTURALLY COMPETENT, TOO

The article "Are you a culturally competent teacher?" was well-done and timely except for one glaring omission, education support professionals (ESP).

The article could have been more inclusive and truly reflected a student's day at school. ESP collectively have as much contact with students, deal with the same issues, and need the tools to handle them. Educating students from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds occurs in the school office, on the playground, in the cafeteria, on the school bus, in the quad at lunch... I could go on all day.

Among the 5,000-plus ESP members of CTA, I know there are many great ESP educators who could share stories of respecting culture and ethnicity to provide an environment where all students feel welcomed and valued.

—**Jolene E. Tripp**
President, Redlands Education Support Professionals Association

JAPANESE AMERICAN INTERNMENT

I read the article in the June/July issue that focused on teaching about the Japanese American internment during World War II. Sacramento has brought public attention to this time in history.

Mary Tsukamoto was instrumental in setting up a program in 1983 titled "Time of Remembrance" in which fifth-grade classes throughout the Elk Grove School District are taught about this wrong that was committed. There is now a permanent exhibit in the California Museum in Sacramento dedicated to the Japanese internment. Our classes study the history, read a book titled *Journey to Topaz*, and go on a field trip to the museum, where they are given a private talk with camp survivors. It is an amazing program, and the students love it.

—**Marie Wenger**
Elk Grove Education Association



PARENTS AND
TEACHERS SHARE THE
RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE
SUCCESS OF STUDENTS.

Parents like **Jacqueline DaVolio**, pictured here with her daughter Jessica, believe working with teachers is important through high school.

Keeping parents in the loop

helps students succeed

By **Sherry Posnick-Goodwin**
Photos by **Scott Buschman**

Michelle Wright was very surprised when her AP U.S. history teacher telephoned her parents at the beginning of the school year just to say hello. She was shocked when he called them a few months later to say she wasn't doing her best.

"He told them that I was slacking off and needed to work harder," says the high school junior. "So I did. My grade went from a B minus to a B plus. I was surprised when he called, but I think it shows how much he cares."



Richard Neffson

Richard Neffson, her teacher at Rancho Cotate High School, believes parent-teacher communication helps students succeed at any age, though it may be more important with teens.

"I call parents early in the year to introduce myself, and parents appreciate that," says Neffson, Rohnert Park Cotati Educators Association. "The first contact is always positive. Then I build on that to keep parents updated, whether it's good or bad. Most express appreciation when I let them know how their son or daughter is doing. I send out letters, e-mails, and copies of actual assignments that are due. I also have parent conferences when necessary."



Susan Esquivel greets parent Marta Iglesias-Xamani and her son David Marselli.

When teachers and parents work together, students earn better grades and are less likely to drop out, reports the National Education Association. Good communication between home and school is essential to helping students succeed, say researchers from Iowa State University, yet strategies for establishing communication are overlooked in teacher training. Perhaps it should be emphasized, since 20 percent of new teachers identify parent relationships as causing “significant stress,” according to a MetLife survey.

Good communication from the beginning

“Parents are the first teachers for children, so it’s important for teachers to have a positive relationship with them,” says Thomas Prather, a fourth-grade teacher at Grant Elementary School in Richmond. “The only link between home and school is the parent. Without that, you’ve got two worlds unconnected with each other.”

Nothing is worse than angry parents, and many CTA members are determined to start the new school year on the right foot

by improving their communication skills. Parents surveyed said they prefer Internet communication such as e-mail, an online parent portal, or e-newsletters. However, this may not work in low socioeconomic areas where families lack Internet access.

Prather tells parents how important they are at a Back to School Night and explains exactly what his expectations are for students when it comes to class work, homework and behavior. He also calls parents during the first week of school — usually before problems arise — to set a positive tone.

“I tell them their child had a good day. They may be used to teachers calling them to say their child had a bad day. It’s a good way to start the school year. It builds trust and camaraderie between parent and teacher. And it makes it easier when I call next time, if there are problems.”

Parents are encouraged to discuss their concerns with him before or after school. Those who check in regularly have students who perform better and sometimes offer to volunteer in the classroom, says the United Teachers of Richmond member.

Teachers may have the best intentions, but the wrong tone can set parents on edge, adds Prather. Instead of saying, for example, that Johnny is misbehaving, it might work better to ask a parent, “What can we do, working together, to get Johnny back on track?”

Connecting with parents of tweens and teens

There is typically a communication drop-off in secondary school, say teachers. Parents may feel the child is “too old” for them to stay in touch with a teacher; they are “too busy,” or it’s not as important.

Nothing could be further from the truth, says Anita Williams, a sixth-grade math, science and AVID teacher at Painted Hills Middle School in Desert Hot Springs.

“I am the mother of twin middle school girls and a ninth-grader, so I know it’s important for teachers and parents to stay connected in middle school. Kids are going through hormonal changes, identity changes and looking for a best friend. So teachers and parents need to talk.”

At Back to School Night she tells par-



Sandi Mangan and **Thomas Prather** believe engaging parents requires consistency and finding new ways to reach out to them.

TIPS FOR TALKING WITH PARENTS



PARENTS ARE SELDOM ON THE DEFENSIVE WHEN STUDENTS TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR OWN LEARNING.

—Sandi Mangan

ents she is their “eyes and ears” and that if something is off-kilter, she will inform them immediately. She explains that as a parent, she understands their concerns firsthand. The Palm Springs Teachers Association member has an “open-door policy” where parents are welcome to observe at any time — as long as they are not disruptive.

“Every week, parents get a progress report, and students need to get it signed and back to me, because it counts as a homework grade,” she says.

Williams sends newsletters to parents. Some don’t speak English, so she uses online translation programs or asks students to translate. Her district has an automated phone system that allows her to individualize messages, such as “Your child was misbehaving today” or “Your child

made a good choice.” But when she has time, a personal call works best.

“When I call to address an upset parent, I introduce myself in a bubbly voice,” says Williams. “It’s hard to be upset with a person who is cheery. I say I am calling to address their concerns because, unfortunately, there has been miscommunication or a misunderstanding.”

Parents such as Millie Mendez appreciate her efforts.

“Ms. Williams is very connected to us, and that’s important,” says Mendez. “Whenever I have a question she will send an e-mail back right away. She lets me know if Rebecca is falling behind, which is great, because I’m working two jobs.”

Math teacher Jacqueline Da Volio worried that she might receive lots of angry e-mails when she decided to post student grades online at Rosemont Middle School,

but found instead that parents were thrilled to have instant information at their fingertips.

“Now they are completely in the loop,” says the Glendale Teachers Association member. “I used to get lots of e-mails asking ‘How is my child doing?’ but those have dramatically decreased now that they have access to information 24 hours a day.”

She has a master list of parent e-mail addresses and sends “alerts” about test dates, assignments and events. She also sends home postcards filled with “good news” about students.

“One student told me, ‘I can’t hide anything from my mom.’ Everything’s out in the open,” she laughs. “Let’s face it, middle school kids rarely share what’s going on in the classroom. As a parent, I totally get that.”

Parents are welcome!

SUSAN ESQUIVEL is the first person parents see when they walk into the school. Her smile conveys that they are indeed welcome. The administrative assistant at Daves Avenue Elementary School in Los Gatos is behind the counter in the school office, the “front line” for greeting parents and visitors.

“We are pleasant and happy they are there, and it makes parents feel comfortable,” says the Los Gatos Unified Classified Employees Association member. “They know we are taking care of their little sweethearts during the day, and we let them know their children are safe.”

Often parents may be stressed because they arrive in the office to take home a sick child or are rushing to drop off

a forgotten lunch bag. It helps to be calm and reassuring, give parents the correct answers as soon as possible, and let them know things will be OK, says Esquivel.

“Our job is to answer the phones and try to never let it go to voice mail. We make parents feel welcome and at ease, and sometimes help children with a bloody nose or asthma attack,” she says. “There’s a lot to do, but kindness and a giving attitude make a huge difference. We smile at them and they smile right back. It makes the day start off well.”

Tips for better communication with parents

What do parents want? Homework and grading policies, what their child is expected to learn during the year and to be notified if grades are slipping, according to recent polls. Most of all, they want a relationship with the teacher. Colleagues suggest these tips.



Anita Williams, center, talks with parents Milly Melendez, left, and Heather Merryman before students arrive in class.

- 1 Contact parents early on — before there is bad news.
- 2 Focus on a child's strengths, since parents see themselves in their child and may become defensive.
- 3 Respect parents' schedules. Many work long hours and cannot communicate or meet with teachers during regular hours.
- 4 Stress collaboration instead of criticism. Say "How can we work together to improve Mary's study habits?" instead of "I'd like to talk to you about Mary's poor study habits."
- 5 Ask parents if there is anything you should know about the student that may affect their school work.
- 6 Send a monthly or bimonthly newsletter or e-newsletter to parents.
- 7 Post grades online.
- 8 Create a parent e-mail list for updates and assignments.
- 9 Emphasize that you and the parents are partners working together on behalf of the student.

FIND OUT MORE

Find more tips on communicating with parents, including resources in multiple languages, at cta.org/family.

Read the results of the *Parenting* magazine/NEA survey at nea.org/interact.

Students can facilitate parent-teacher dialogue

Having students take charge during parent-teacher conferences makes it easier to communicate with parents, says Sandi Mangan, an environmental technology teacher at La Quinta Middle School in Desert Hot Springs.

"We have student-led conferences where students talk to their parents. The teacher is a facilitator, and the parent can't talk until the student is done. The student will tell their parent what they need to do bet-

ter, study skills they should be using, and things their parents can do to help them to be more successful at school."

Parents, she says, are seldom on the defensive when students take responsibility for their own learning. Sometimes parents discover they can make positive changes by doing little things, such as giving their children a quiet place to study or having them spend less time baby-sitting their siblings.

"It improves communication between parent and teacher — and also between parent and child," says the Desert Sands

Teachers Association member. "It opens up the conversation, and sometimes at a later time, parents want to continue the conversation. Parents realize the student needs their help, the teacher needs their help, and that teachers aren't the big bad wolf they thought we were. It's a win-win situation for everyone." 🎓

CLASSROOM TOOL 'CLICKS' WITH STUDENTS

OR IS IT THE ULTIMATE
IN INSTANT GRATIFICATION?

By **Sherry Posnick-Goodwin**

Photos by **Scott Buschman**

CAR NUMBER 38, otherwise known as high school student David Kim, leaves his classmates in the dust, and he basks in a moment of glory before the bell rings with a victory salute.

He and his classmates have just been given a quiz using “clickers.” Students answer multiple-choice questions by holding up remotes and clicking at the large screen at the front of the classroom. Each student is represented on the screen by a racecar, and the car with the fastest correct answers wins. The screen shows the percentage of students who got the answers right, as well as those who answered correctly the fastest, even by a hundredth of a second.

While Kim has chosen to reveal his identity, other students are happy to remain an anonymous number on the screen. Math teacher Sierra Vasquez can see their names on her laptop, pinpoint

those who are struggling, and provide them with help at a later time.

“Clickers bring a sense of excitement to the lesson, especially with competition,” Kim says.

Clickers — a “student response system” — are increasingly popular with teachers looking to promote active learning. Teachers can post a true-false or multiple-choice quiz and within seconds, students’ responses are logged, their scores tabulated and grades assigned on a screen. Teachers see immediately what

percent of the class understands the lesson, and students know immediately where they need to improve. More publishers are gearing textbooks to provide tests for classes with clickers, because they are so popular with the MTV generation, reports The Associated Press.

“Clickers really engage students,” says Vasquez, Glendale Teachers Association. “Students think they are having so much fun playing a game when really they are learning. It’s much better than



Sierra Vasquez

Students use “clickers”
to respond to questions.



Jack West helps his science students point their “clickers” at a receiver.



waiting for them to do homework and finding out the next day where they are having trouble. I like that students can participate in a risk-free environment.”

Students become more responsible for their own learning with clickers, says Karen Taylor, who teaches students with mild to moderate learning disabilities at Monte Vista Middle School in Tracy.

“It creates metacognitive learning in the classroom,” says the Tracy Education Association member. “I love that they get so involved in the learning process. And when I look at the graph of how many students got the answer right and how many got it wrong, it gives me an idea of how to guide my teaching the rest of the week, because I know if they are getting it or not.”

“Clickers are fun — kind of like texting, but in a different way,” explains student Juan Ulloa.

Taylor appreciates that the program allows her to create a grade book for tracking student progress and save on paper by conducting clicker tests. The only downside is the price; it cost \$2,000 for a set for her

small class of about 15 students, which her school site council donated.

Sequoia High School physics teachers Jack West and Ben Canning in Redwood City, and J. Bryan Henderson, a doctoral student at Stanford University, spent three years studying the use of clickers with peer instruction in the science classroom. They concluded that the interactive technology could create social learning opportunities.



Karen Taylor

Using handheld devices, students anonymously answered multiple-choice questions projected at the front of the room. After giving their answers, students were asked to discuss the questions with their peers, which resulted in “convergence” on the best answer with little additional information provided by the teachers.

“Clickers focused the classroom activity on student-to-student interactions, and from this social learning the students appeared to make progress their own,” says Henderson. “Even more encouraging

was that these classrooms often performed at statistically higher levels on a common international physics assessment than classrooms not utilizing this technique, even when the teacher was the same.”



TIPS FOR USING CLICKERS

- ✓ Keep the number of answer choices to five or fewer.
- ✓ Do not make questions overly complex.
- ✓ Allow time for discussion between questions.
- ✓ Increase responsiveness by giving students a time limit.
- ✓ Do not overuse the system at risk of losing student engagement.

From Margie Martyn, “Clickers in the Classroom: An Active Learning Approach,” EDUCAUSE Quarterly

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POINT/COUNTERPOINT:

Should there be a dress code for teachers?



Yes!



AIMEE DOWNER is an English teacher at Raymond Cree Middle School and a member of the Palm Springs Teachers Association. She is an advocate of dress codes for teachers.

I taught in a suburban area of Atlanta, Georgia, and there was a strict dress code for teachers at my high school. I actually got sent home to change on two occasions. Once, I was wearing a blouse that didn't have a collar. On the second occasion, I was wearing a school shirt, but it wasn't

a collared golf shirt. I lived 40 miles away, so it was a long drive.

I guess you could say it was an extreme dress code. Women had to wear pantyhose, and men had to wear a tie and were not allowed to have facial hair or wear an earring. It was very conservative compared to what we have in Southern California.

A collared shirt might be a bit ridiculous, but there needs to be some standards. For example, we should demonstrate modesty by avoiding clothing that is too tight, too short or too low-cut.

Having an enforced dress code made our environment more professional. In my view, teachers were treated professionally and respected more because we looked professional. I have a master's degree and I want to be taken seriously. If I don't dress like the professional that I am and dress casually, my tone, in turn, becomes more casual, and this can affect the classroom. However, if there are "casual days," it's important to participate, but within reason.

I find the discipline in California schools is not as tight as where I came from. I have to wonder if the more casual approach to dress code for teachers – and students – might account for this somewhat.

You shouldn't arrive at school dressed like you are going to the grocery store on the weekend or out on a hot date. Common sense should rule the day, but sometimes it doesn't. In our district there was a teacher who habitually showed her thong and another who regularly wore flip-flops and shorts to work.

I think teachers are models for young men and women, and we have to set a good example.

No!



BILL McCONNELL is an English teacher at Ontario High School and a member of Associated Chaffey Teachers. He does not believe in dress codes for teachers.

We are professionals, and we don't need somebody telling us what we need to wear to work. We understand that we shouldn't show up for work in sweat pants. We are adults and can make our own decisions. It works, for the most part.

I dress in clothes that are practical for my job. I don't need to wear a pair of \$100 slacks to teach. It's more practical and ef-

ficient to teach in blue jeans with a button-down shirt or a polo shirt.

In many of the facilities where we teach, our rooms remain dirty despite the best efforts of our janitors. Why should I wear a shirt and tie to go into a room covered with dust and cobwebs? Most of us have white boards. The dust from the dry erase markers can stain our clothes, because once the dust settles into the tray it can get on everything.

Teachers stand on their feet about six hours a day. Dress shoes don't have the support provided by athletic shoes. From a comfort perspective, I'd rather wear a pair of tennis shoes. I'm less likely to sit behind my desk and more likely to move around the classroom if I have comfortable shoes on.

We live in an era where teachers are under attack about how much money we make. If we are expected to spend a portion of our income on fancy clothes that might otherwise go to rent or food or basic needs, it would be ridiculous. Most teachers spend \$400 to \$600 out of their own pocket for classroom supplies that the school doesn't pay for.

I think administrators might pick on certain people if a dress code was in place, because it's easy to pick on someone based on how they look. It hasn't happened at my school, but I could see it happening.

Students know who the teacher is, and I'm always dressed appropriately. I hope my actions and words to students are what make me a role model, rather than whether I happen to be wearing a polo shirt instead of a shirt and a tie.



Dress for success...

on a budget!

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin
Photos by Scott Buschman

Can you look and feel great for \$200 or less? We challenged fashionista Orene Kearn, who successfully found outfits — and accessories — to fit the individual personalities, teaching styles and body types of four CTA members.

“To start with, I asked them their likes, dislikes, interests and teaching approach,” says Kearn, a certified image consultant (www.orene.net). “I wanted them to take away more than just an outfit from this experience. I wanted them to take away knowledge about the kinds of styles that work well for each one of them. I wanted them to feel good about themselves, and I wanted their outside to match how wonderful they are on the inside. I think that was accomplished.”

So do we, and here’s a look at the Fab Four in their outfits, most of which were purchased on sale.

Fauntleroy dishes on fashion and fit:

The most important thing I learned...

is that skinny jeans don't make everyone look skinny. I've been wearing the wrong jeans all my life.

My new jeans...

are boot-cut — straight-legged, dark denim and tapered for a slimming look. I'm throwing out my old ones.

I'm going to wear this outfit...

on the first day of school, when I tell students my expectations of them and explain my grading system and classroom management style.

Teacher fashion is a balancing act...

between looking hip and looking appropriate. I think this outfit is both.

The clothes...

Macy's: pants (\$104) by Not Your Daughter's Jeans; top (\$13) by Style Company; jacket (\$79) by Bar III.



Chantaine Fauntleroy

BRET HARTE MIDDLE SCHOOL, [Hayward Education Association](#)

Previous page:

Makeup artist Valerie McKnight (left) and Image Consultant Orene Kearn (seated) offer advice to teachers **Julie Chavez, Dan Liner, Chantaine Fauntleroy** and **Angela Data**.

Sure, she's a bit of a "drill sergeant," but her PE classes have 50 students, so she runs a tight ship. "I'm always blowing the whistle," Chantaine Fauntleroy admits. "But I'm also fun-loving and caring, and I am definitely approachable." Typical work attire is a sweatshirt or a T-shirt with jeans or sweat pants. Her biggest challenge in clothes shopping: She is petite on top and larger on the bottom, so none of her jeans fit right. They are fine in the waist and saggy on the bottom or vice versa. The solution: Not Your Daughter's Jeans, a bit pricey, but perfect for her physique. Having found the right jeans, says Fauntleroy, was a "miracle" and "life-changing." A colorful green top with ruffles on the shoulder provides balance. The green jacket, cropped at the waist, upgrades casual to business casual.



Liner talks teacher clothes:

It can be a challenge shopping...

since teachers are very conscious of cost. We are not well-paid professionals, even though we are very highly trained professionals.

In the classroom...

you shouldn't wear white. It's just not sensible. Sometimes you have to decide if your clothes can take paint, ink, markers or glue.

I learned from this experience that...

some of the nicer stores like Macy's have good value — especially when they have a sale.

I also learned...

being a model is work, too! But it was great to shop with someone who does it for a living.

I think this outfit...

makes me look professional. When I wear this, people are going to know I mean business.

The clothes...

Macy's: shirt (\$31.99) and pants (\$44) by Calvin Klein; shoes (\$44) by Dress Shoes for Men; belt (\$25.50) by Perry Ellis.



Dan Liner

BRITTAN ACRES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, [San Carlos Teachers Association](#)

"I like learning to be fun — but structured — with lots of movement and physical activity," says Dan Liner, a second-grade teacher and the outgoing president of the San Carlos Teachers Association. "My usual work wardrobe is kind of casual; I wear short-sleeved collared shirts and dress jeans — not faded — and athletic shoes. I do a lot of yard duty, and it's not a glamorous setting." Liner was looking for something more professional that he could wear for Back-to-School Night or to Open House, and chose a navy shirt with fine black pinstripes and gray slacks with black loafers. "It's kind of classic, a clean and crisp look, which suits me," he says. "I can wear this for school events attended by parents, as well as to school board meetings where the union is represented."

Data goes grown-up:

I never would have thought...

that taupe pants and a navy jacket would go together. But Orene said it would look good, so I went for it. It makes me want to change things up colorwise.

I like this look because...

it's easy and comfortable. It's professional and also fun; I love the polka dots and jewelry! I feel like I'm not too much out of my comfort zone, but it's different enough to be a change.

It's challenging to dress for the classroom...

because you can't help kids tie their shoes or sit on the carpet with them if you are wearing a short skirt. You are always bending over and have to watch that cleavage doesn't show.

One thing I learned...

is that I shouldn't wear big shirts. My body is a kind of an hourglass shape and I have wide shoulders, so things should be tighter in the center for a more flattering look.

I'm going to wear this outfit...

for parent-teacher conferences. I'm hoping, in these clothes, nobody will ask me how old I am.

The clothes...

Marshalls: jacket (\$24.99); white shirt (\$9.99); pants (\$19.99) by Missy; shoes (\$39.99) by Tahari. Target: bracelet (\$14.99); necklace (\$24.99).



Angela Data

POMEROY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, [United Teachers of Santa Clara](#)

“How old are you?” is a question this first-grade teacher is constantly asked by people who think she looks much too young to be a teacher. Angela Data takes it in stride, even though she’s been teaching six years. Through this CTA project, she discovered her clothing makes her look like a teenager; she usually wears slacks and a V-neck shirt. She describes her teaching style as “fun, inventive and always trying new things,” and this attitude is reflected in her outfit selection, which is classic, professional, comfortable and whimsical — a white T-shirt with a classic navy blazer with wide polka-dot cuffs just for fun. She also got a navy shirt for mix ’n match. “This will make a more professional impression on parents — and I can also sit down on the carpet and move around with the kids,” she says.

Chavez discovers her professional side:

One of the things I realized...

is that I can be myself and not compromise who I am — and I can still dress professionally.

I also learned...

that sometimes it pays to invest in a few quality pieces, like this jacket, which goes with everything.

I never would have...

selected this outfit for myself. I usually wear longer, looser tops. But the diagonal pattern is very flattering and offers coverage without adding volume.

I'm going to wear my new outfit on...

the first day of school. I can hardly wait.

When I wear this outfit, my students will...

see me as the professional that I am. They'll see a change in me. I have a new perspective now.

The clothes...

Macy's: shirt (\$42) and pants (\$44.98) by Alfani; jacket (\$79.60) by INC.

Five fashion tips for teachers

- ▶ A slight flare or boot-cut pant leg flatters, elongates and visually slims your legs.
- ▶ If you are curvy with a rounder waist, look for diagonal lines in your top, which can help you look slimmer.
- ▶ Put light, bright and/or shiny colors on areas you want to draw attention to, highlighting your best features.
- ▶ A well-fitting jacket camouflages a multitude of figure flaws, looks professional and is very versatile.
- ▶ For men, wear your pants at your natural waist, even if you are a bit rounder in the tummy, and avoid wearing pants below your stomach, which may mean having to go up a size and getting a slimmer leg.

Orene Kearn, image consultant



Julie Chavez

CESAR CHAVEZ ELEMENTARY, [United Educators of San Francisco](#)

A special education teacher for K-5 students with mild to moderate disabilities, Julie Chavez is a nurturer by nature, who gives students encouragement and praise to boost their confidence. Putting others first means this teacher doesn't always take time for herself. She typically shows up for work in jeans, a T-shirt and tennis shoes. She was a little nervous about finding plus-size fashions that would be comfortable, flattering and stylish, and was pleasantly surprised that the diagonal, tiered, form-fitting top was more flattering than the tunic-style blouses she usually wears. The cutaway jacket offers a dressier look. The black pants, she says, are stretchy and as comfortable as jeans.

'WON'T BACK DOWN' FICTIONALIZES AND GLORIFIES PARENT TRIGGER LAWS

Propaganda at the movies?

By Frank Wells

"INSPIRED BY ACTUAL EVENTS" states the promotional trailer for 20th Century Fox/Walden Media's film *Won't Back Down*, which opens nationwide Sept. 28. But how closely does the film follow the events its producers claim inspired it?

Produced by the group that made the controversial documentary *Waiting for Superman*, this film tells the story of a mother (Maggie Gyllenhaal) and a teacher (Viola Davis) who team up to take over a struggling inner-city school. Set in Pennsylvania, the film centers on a fictional law modeled on California's "parent trigger" legislation.

In Compton and Adelanto, the only places where there have been attempts to invoke the parent trigger law, the supposedly grassroots parent effort was agitated, organized and largely paid for by Parent Revolution, a Los Angeles-based group dedicated to the proliferation of parent trigger laws throughout the nation. Parent claims of misrepresentation by some pro-trigger organizers and petition signature gatherers led many parents to rescind their signatures.

The real trigger-targeted schools were already making school improvement efforts, had new principals in place, and in some cases were showing remarkable test score gains. In contrast, the film presents an entrenched, failing, status quo system and a teacher who disciplines a slow learner by locking her in a custodial supply closet.

Lori Yuan, a concerned parent who helped lead the trigger opposition in Adelanto, is disheartened that Hollywood distorts and glamorizes a law that has wreaked havoc in both places it's been invoked. "Real change involves parents and all stakeholders working together and exploring all the options for improving a school. It shouldn't be a one-sided petition effort organized by people with a national political agenda who don't even live in the community."

CTA supports recognizing great teachers and is dedicated to increasing parental involvement in our schools, but Walden Media and the Walton family (which helped fund Parent Revolution and co-sponsored a benefit concert to publicize the movie) are vocal supporters of vouchers and charters, and are known for their anti-union views.

In the film, Academy Award winner Holly Hunter plays a local teachers union leader opposing the school takeover. "When did Norma Rae get to be the bad guy?" her character muses. Well, she didn't, and certainly not in the actual events that led to this movie.

Won't Back Down may or may not be an absorbing film drama (at press time CTA had not seen a final cut of the film). But its skewed dramatization of real parent trigger events threatens to make it a propaganda piece for yet another harmful and divisive attack on public schools.

UPDATE:

The Adelanto school board 'Won't Back Down'

The Adelanto parent trigger saga ended with the local school board rejecting parents' call to transform a school into a charter. Instead, the board voted to improve the school by forming a community advisory council, using the Alternative Governance Model, to oversee improvements such as an extended school day, new curriculum, and more technology. Read more at www.cta.org.

Every child deserves a quality education regardless of zip code

As school starts, we know we will continue to have to find a way to do more with even less than last year.

We have to fund programs and priorities that help level the playing field for kids who aren't from affluent areas. Only by working together can we improve our public schools. That means voting for measures like Prop 30, which provides millions in school funding, and leaning on legislators to put the necessary resources behind our students.

We all—parents, educators, elected officials, community leaders—share the responsibility for the success of students. We must all ask ourselves what we can do in our respective roles to make our schools better for kids and help to ensure their success.

Here are some tips for parents, from parents, to help their child succeed:

- ▶ Create a home environment that encourages learning and schoolwork. Establish a daily routine of mealtimes with time for homework, chores and bedtime.
- ▶ Model the habits of a lifelong learner. Let your child see you reading, writing and using technology.
- ▶ Work with your local teachers union to become an advocate. Sign up to speak to the school board about resources your child's school and schools in general need to be successful.

Unions, parents and communities are working throughout the country to create positive, sustainable change in our public schools in order to increase student achievement. Great examples and tips can be seen on CTA's website in our "Quality Education Investment Act" and "Parents and Community" sections.





CTA member
Laura Williams talks with
Oscar Sanchez in Riverside.

TEACHER EVALUATION: WE LEAD THE CHANGE WE WANT TO SEE

By Eric C. Heins, CTA Vice President

NO ONE KNOWS BETTER what good teaching is than a teacher. CTA's Teacher Evaluation Framework is the first step for us, as professionals, to take back our profession.

The framework refocuses evaluation on what it should be — improving our instructional practice, thereby improving student achievement. That's what it's all about.

I'm a music teacher. When my principal evaluated me, there were only three criteria she was looking for: Are the kids engaged? (Yes, they were, because they were singing.) Are they all happy? Did I send anyone to the office as a discipline problem? If those were taken care of, I was an excellent, effective teacher. I could have been singing with them all day long and that would have been fine with her, because she had no musical background.

That didn't help me as a teacher. What I wanted her to do was to help me become a better music teacher. CTA's evaluation framework lays out a way for that to happen. Here's how.

First, it separates out the summative, high-stakes decision-making around our job, meaning the "Will I get permanent status? What does the boss think?" type of decisions.

Then we focus on the formative side of evaluation: improving instruction. I can invite colleagues into my room to observe me. I can meet with them regularly and share things like, "This lesson didn't work very well, how do you suggest I do it differently? What are my strengths?" I can have those kinds of discussions with people who know what I'm talking about — who know about my subject area, my expertise.

Our current evaluation system doesn't separate out the formative and summative sides. Too often it's the music teachers and special education teachers, the counselors and the librarians, who

Being proactive: Taking the lead on teacher evaluation

Most agree that the current teacher evaluation system in California is not focused on student achievement. A new Assembly bill (AB 5) seeks to create a teacher evaluation system based on best practices, one that uses multiple measures to define teacher effectiveness — moving us beyond the approach of just using test scores to define educational success.

This new system is rigorous, but it's fair and focuses on improved teaching and learning. It also provides guidelines for local school districts to meet when bargaining their new evaluation tools.

CTA supported AB 5 because it is based on CTA's Teacher Evaluation Principles and CTA's Teacher Evaluation Framework, two documents developed by members and approved by State Council). Read more: www.cta.org/evaluationframework.

At press time, CTA is working with legislators on amendments and is expecting a vote soon. See details online.

are left out of meaningful evaluations. So whatever you're doing professionally as an educator, this allows you to set up a framework to get better at what you do.

Leading the way locally

Formative evaluation is about growing in the profession with like professionals. Research on CTA's Quality Education Investment Act program (QEIA) shows how important collaboration is when it comes to improving instruction and improving student achievement.

Now, what works in the Central Valley may not work in the Bay Area. So the details of what this looks like must be locally

bargained, as they were in the past. Where CTA fits in is to talk about the supports teachers should have. Perhaps it's through mentoring or a peer program. But again, what that actually looks like will be locally bargained. Because who knows my job better than someone else who does it? It certainly is not a legislator in Sacramento. Everyone's been through fourth grade, but that doesn't mean they know how to teach it.

The evaluation framework grew out of CTA's work on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act several years ago, because the federal government was starting to get involved in teacher evaluation. When legislators want to do something in education right, they come to us. We were prepared.

CTA committees involving academic freedom, professional rights and responsibilities, assessment and testing, special education, and negotiations, plus local presidents, support staff and higher education members — together we came to a consensus on evaluation and created 17 principles of a quality evaluation system. The CTA Teacher Evaluation Framework, which was unanimously approved by State Council, was built on those 17 principles.

LaCretia is more than a test score

There are more than 400,000 teachers in California, and before we label someone we have to look at the responsibility of the system.

If I'm a kindergarten teacher and I have 35 kids in my classroom, I'm alone all day long and all they hand me is a scripted curriculum and no support — that won't work. Teaching is so much more complex than that.

We're not working on machines. There so many factors that impact how a student learns, and the teacher is the most important. But educational leaders play an important role in how they provide resources, as do parents in making sure students have the support, nourishment and sleep they need.

My student, LaCretia, came to me the morning after her family had been evicted. She told me about the motel maid who brought her breakfast. The next day she was taken from my classroom by child services. A few weeks later a social worker delivered a paper Thanksgiving turkey because LaCretia insisted her assignment be turned in.

LaCretia is one of my heroes. Here's a girl who was evicted, taken from her family because of drug abuse — but she wanted to turn in her assignment. She's the reason I fight as hard as I do for students — and why we talk about what a good teacher is, about supports for improving instruction.

If you measure my effectiveness on her test scores, we both might fail. And that's just not right.

CTA Vice President Eric C. Heins chaired the CTA Teacher Evaluation Framework Committee.



What are the next steps?

After teacher evaluation, the next step in this process is to focus on induction. "I came from the 'sink or swim' type of induction," said CTA Vice President Eric C. Heins. "My support came from my master's program. There was no mechanism for collaboration during the workday." Supports like mentoring really work. It's expensive, but it gets results, especially when new teachers are put into struggling environments.

Teacher preparation is next. There is a move to affix test scores to teacher prep programs, and "nothing could be more ridiculous," he said. "Look at the research — look at what works for current professionals."

There are those who are trying to control our profession. We spend a lot of our time defending our profession from, frankly, stupid stuff. It's harmful, sometimes it's designed to diminish us, and it has nothing to do with students or what we do. It's because we do advocate for our students and our profession."

"We have a responsibility to talk about it," Heins added. "We are succeeding despite the attacks and the budget cuts. Students are learning and succeeding — don't let anyone tell you differently."

Hear Eric discuss CTA's Teacher Evaluation Framework at www.cta.org/erictalksteacherevaluation.

A promotional graphic for the PBS film 'The Dust Bowl' by Ken Burns. The background is a light olive green. At the top left is the PBS logo (a black circle with a white head profile) and the text 'PBS'. Below this is a DVD case for the film. The DVD cover features a black and white photograph of a farm being hit by a massive dust storm. The text on the DVD cover reads 'THE DUST BOWL' in large white letters, and 'A FILM BY KEN BURNS' below it. A yellow starburst graphic in the bottom right corner of the DVD cover says 'COMING THIS FALL!'. To the right of the DVD case, there is a block of text: 'Ken Burns: The Dust Bowl chronicles the worst man-made ecological disaster in American history. Vivid interviews with twenty-six survivors, combined with dramatic photographs and seldom seen movie footage, bring to life stories of incredible human suffering and equally incredible human perseverance.' At the bottom of the graphic, there is a white box with black text: 'To purchase this and other educational resources, visit shopPBS.org/teachershop or other authorized distributor sites.' In the bottom right corner of the white box is the copyright notice '© 2012 PBS'.

YOUR VOICE. OUR UNION. OUR FUTURE.

What do you want your CTA to look like in five years? CTA is embarking on a strategic planning process to answer that question for current and future members.

Every "sacred cow" will be scrutinized, says the CTA Board member representing higher education, Theresa Montaño, of the first meeting of the CTA Strategic Planning Committee on Aug. 18. "People were very honest about the changes and directions our organization should move, because it's not just CTA, it's about public education and the role CTA plays in saving public education in California."

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT CTA, IT'S ABOUT PUBLIC EDUCATION AND THE ROLE CTA PLAYS IN SAVING PUBLIC EDUCATION.

"It's time to look at what we do and how we do it," says CTA President Dean Vogel. "It's time to hold on to what's working and not be afraid to cast away what's not — even if it means doing things differently than we've always done them."

CCTA hired the Labor Education Research Center at the University of Oregon to help facilitate this planning process. They are recognized for their expertise in strategic planning and for

their work with labor unions across the country. Expect to hear more about CTA's strategic plan.

"Be prepared to be asked to participate because everyone has a role in this, especially if you want a strong union that will help you in your classroom and help you advocate for our students," says CTA Board member and elementary teacher Elana Davidson.

The process will create more effective relationships with community allies, refine CTA's public image, set priorities, and focus resources, in line with the theme: "Your Voice. Our Union. Our Future."

The first meeting did NOT include the "usual suspects," says CTA Board member and bilingual education teacher David Goldberg. "Many rank and file members representing every level of our organization were there, plus people who are committed to doing the work. Substantive change takes focused and strategic work."

"I ask you to be part of this conversation," Vogel says. "Building this strategic plan is our opportunity to embrace new ideas, engage new members, and build the CTA we all want, the CTA our members want, for our future."

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APPLY!

CTA's teacher-driven grants improve student learning

HAVE YOU SEEN one of your students struggling and known exactly what needed to be done? Do you have innovative ideas to improve student achievement in your school? Then apply for a grant from CTA's Institute for Teaching (IFT).

Funded by voluntary contributions from CTA members, the program promotes and supports strength-based, teacher-driven change. Applying for the grant is simple and there are no strings attached, say grant committee members. Just do what you say you are going to do in your grant.

The grant evaluation committee members are Liane Cisowski, Mt. Diablo Education Association; Dave Orphal, Oakland Education Association; Cynthia Soares, Gridley Teachers Association; Barry Wissman, Palm Springs Teachers Association; and retired CTA staffer Kelly Horner.

They say the IFT Grant Program demonstrates CTA's commitment to support teachers and support staff in their day-to-day work with students in their classrooms and their school communities.

Check out www.teacherdrivenchange.org for details. Their best advice: Write grants with a "strength-based" approach. Here's more advice on grant writing.

KELLY HORNER ANSWERS:

How are grants reviewed?

Know that each application is scored and discussed by the evaluation team to ensure that we each understand the intent of the applicants. At least two members of the team visit the sites of the grant recipients and report back to the IFT Board; the feedback we receive reinforces our goal that the process is simple, input is welcome, and inquiries are quickly answered.

How much can be applied for?

Educator grants are up to \$5,000. Chapter grants are up to \$20,000. I am amazed at the significant, positive impact the grants have on students and teachers. Each grant has been unique and creative, evidence of the time and energy the recipients put into creating a positive learning environment for their students.

Anything to add?

Meeting these teachers and seeing and learning about the differences they are making in their students' lives, and their own, has made a difference in my life. I wish everyone could visit these classrooms and talk with the teachers and have the opportunity to thank each of them for dedicating their lives to teaching.



Kelly Horner



Grant aligns curriculum, produces better thinkers

If you want to make your students better thinkers by vertically aligning curriculum skills in grades 9-12 social sciences, what do you do? If you're Kory Bootsma, you apply for an NEA Foundation Grant.

She teaches at Rancho Verde High in Moreno Valley. The grant funded the Val Verde Teachers Association member's Advanced Placement Vertical and Collaboration Program. "By creating curriculum that is both vertically and horizontally aligned, students understand that the skills they learn from grade to grade and class to class are cross-curricular in nature, ensuring that they apply knowledge and skills learned from all curricular areas to the subject being taught," Bootsma says.

Vertical alignment of curriculum skills in the social sciences includes essay formats and structures, as well as interpretations of



Rancho Verde High School teachers show how curriculum aligns in their classes. Top row: Mike Presser, Teresa Adams, Kory Bootsma, Steve Tremble. Bottom row: Kristi Coulter, Aimee Habicht, Bill Gerdes, John Rockwell. Photo by AP student Isaiah Duffy

primary source documents. As students progress from one grade to the next, they already have basic skills covered, allowing more time for critical thinking.

"Social science teachers work collaboratively with English-language arts teachers

in the 10th and 11th grades in a double-sized classroom," says Bootsma. "This allows for English skill-based strategies to be used with historical documents and expository texts, showing students that skills are used in multiple disciplines."

Azusa Pacific University SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

BARRY WISSMAN ANSWERS:

What is a strength-based approach?

The grant proposals must be strength-based, built upon identified strengths at the school site. During the grant writing process, stay far away from deficit-model language, i.e., this problem will be fixed with this proposal. Deficit-model writing can be difficult to avoid, but keep the proposal focused on strength-based thinking.

Grant writers should do some legwork first. Identify those school site strengths, develop a team to implement the grant, and recognize stakeholders who will lead to successful implementation. The IFT website is an invaluable resource on strength-based resources.

Be ready to hit the ground running when your grant is funded.

Your role in reading the grants?

I interpret grant proposals from a strength-based approach. I score grant proposals on how well they meet the seven criteria delineated in the grant application: Future oriented, school-family relations, school-wide relations, student centered, work oriented, results oriented, and student relations.

How do CTA grants promote teaching and learning?

Instead of trying to fix a particular problem, the goal is to see what is working and to expand upon that. Our members are the experts at what will work at their schools, and the IFT grant allows them the freedom to do what they know will work.

Any other advice?

Apply! Develop a strength-based proposal and submit it. This is CTA dues money put to a wonderful use: supporting teaching and learning.



Barry Wissman



Ken LaVigne, M.A. '86
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NEA GRANT DEADLINE IS OCT. 15

Collaborative (social sciences and English-language arts) and vertical (social sciences) teams met and set goals for this school year.

Bootsma recommends colleagues apply for an IFT or NEA Foundation grant "if you have a different perspective on how to motivate students within the classroom while focusing on the state standards."

"My advice is to completely think through your program and logistics to ensure you have a strong structure and foundation when writing your grant," she added. "Have others read your proposal to ensure that you have answered all the questions and have a strong argument and unique perspective."

Find NEA Foundation grant details at www.neafoundation.org.



PREVENT MORE CUTS — YES ON PROP. 30

By **Dina Martin**

Photos by **Dina Martin** and **Mike Myslinski**

IN THE FIRST OF SEVERAL news conferences, Gov. Jerry Brown last month joined educators, parents, school employees and a group of students in front of New Technology High School in Sacramento to urge voters to support Proposition 30 and prevent \$6 billion in new budget cuts to education.

“If we cannot pass Prop. 30, we are taking a half billion out of our colleges and universities and five and a half billion out of our schools. It doesn’t make sense,” Brown said.

Proposition 30, the Schools and Local Public Safety Protection Act, prevents deep school cuts and provides billions in new funding by asking the wealthiest in California to pay their fair share to keep classrooms open and police on the street. All tax increases are temporary, and all money goes into a special account that the Legislature can’t touch, requiring annual audits with strict

accountability. If Prop. 30 fails, public schools and colleges will be cut by another \$6 billion this year. That’s the equivalent of cutting three weeks of instruction off the school year.

School districts around the state have already endured deep cuts, noted Shannan Brown, a California Teacher of the Year in 2011 and president of the San Juan Teachers Association.

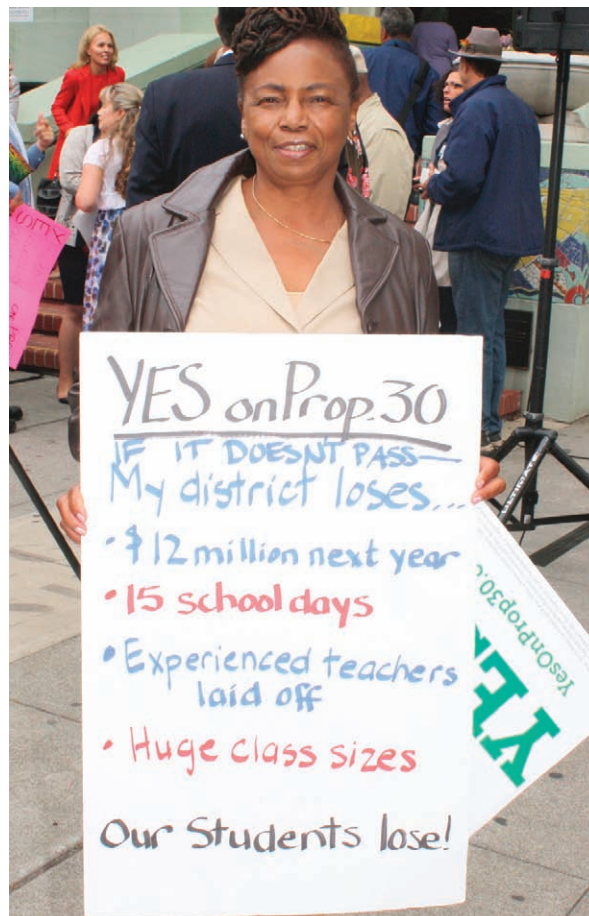
“Over the last year, in my school district alone, budget cuts have resulted in hundreds of layoff notices to teachers, dramatic increases in class size for kindergarten through third grade from 20 to 31 students, and a loss of counselors, nurses and librarians,” she said. “And can you even imagine a caseload of 3,000 to 1? Our nurses can, because that’s what they work with every day.”

She explained that San Juan teachers are already taking two furlough days to help the district remain financially solvent, and will have 11 more added if Prop. 30 isn’t passed in November. “This is instruction time our students will never get back, and this will be happening all over the state.”



Above: Pink-slippped New Haven Unified teacher **Quien Tran Bullard**, with her baby daughter Madison, was pleased by the support shown during a Prop 30 news conference at San Francisco’s James Lick Middle School.

Right: **Diane Brown**, United Teachers of Richmond, urges you to vote yes on Proposition 30!



For details visit www.cta.org/campaign2012.



Far left: California already ranks 47th in the nation in per-pupil spending, Governor Jerry Brown told news media.

Left: News events pointing out need for Proposition 30 included supporting parents, educators and community members.

Community colleges also face a loss of \$3.7 million if Prop. 30 fails to pass. In addition, money expected to come in from the dissolution of state redevelopment agencies is not likely to arrive this year.

“Over the past few years, I have seen dedicated, passionate community college instructors disappear from our campuses because of budget cuts,” said Linda Sneed, an English instructor at Cosumnes River College. “Students trying to earn their associate’s degree or complete their first two years of a four-year bachelor’s degree at our colleges have been effectively shut out of our system.”

Under Prop. 30, only the highest earners, couples making more than \$500,000, pay more income tax. A quarter cent increase in the sales tax rate will still result in consumers paying less sales tax than they did in past years, before a 1 cent surcharge expired July 1, 2011. The income tax increase will expire in seven years, and the sales tax rate increase expires in four years.

The governor is hopeful that California’s highest-income earners will support the initiative.

“I’ve gone throughout California and asked people: If I could give you a salary next year of \$1 million, would you be willing to pay another \$4,500 in taxes?” he said. “I’ve not met one person who would turn down that deal.”

In vintage Brown style, he invoked the Gospel of Luke: “To those who much has been given, much will be required.” He added that the state’s highest earners “now have an opportunity to give back.”

As governor, Brown said, he wants to make sure the voters understand the stakes. “The people will decide, and whatever they decide, I will carry out. But my preference, my strong recommendation, is yes on 30 for California.”

“This is the most critical issue on the ballot this November, other than the presidency itself,” he added, “because it’s about the future, it’s about our kids, and it’s about whether California, as a democracy, can make a public decision for our schools and take this responsibility that, for at least the better part of a decade, has been shirked.”

Why Prop. 30 is a better fit for California public schools

With two funding initiatives on the November ballot, voters might be easily confused, especially when one – Molly Munger’s initiative, Proposition 38 – refers to a tax for education and early childhood programs.

CTA, however, is a strong supporter of Proposition 30, the Schools and Local Public Safety Protection Act of 2012. Here’s why.

CTA supports Prop. 30 because it’s the only initiative that begins to pay off California’s massive debt to education and will provide

funding needed to support schools and public safety services. It is also the only initiative to prevent an additional \$6 billion in cuts to schools and colleges this year.

“Although the Munger initiative is well-intentioned, it is just too narrowly focused and leaves out higher education and other essential services,” says CTA President Dean E. Vogel. “Moreover, funds raised through the Munger initiative cannot be used to fund existing teachers, education support professionals

and other school staff. It doesn’t go far enough in solving our problems.”

In addition, the Munger initiative would raise taxes for all income levels for almost all Californians, significantly affecting the middle class. Prop. 30 implements a small tax increase on families with incomes over \$500,000, marking a first step in requiring wealthy Californians to pay their fair share.



Morgan Smith, Little Lake Education Association in Norwalk, wants people to see his opposition to Prop. 32.

facturing, retail, construction, health care and other industries. These Californians are workers, parents and community leaders who support adequate school funding, fair wages and benefits, workplace safety, and smaller class sizes in our public schools.

They stand for better health care for children and senior citizens, and safe communities with adequate police and fire protection.

They're people like Trudy Schaffer, senior program director for the League of Women Voters of California and former chairperson of the state's Fair Political Practices Commission.

Exposing Prop. 32 is a top priority for the nonpartisan league's 65 local and regional offices, Schaffer says. "It tries to look like reform, but in fact it's unfair and unbalanced. It's not fair to shut down the voice of any segment of society."

She spoke out at the No on 32 campaign kickoff news conference July 23 in Sacramento, along with

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

Firefighters are turning up the heat

The 30,000 members of California Professional Firefighters in 180 local, state and county affiliates are mobilizing. Their ability to fight for better response times and against budget cutbacks and fire station closures is at stake, among other public safety issues.

"We're all in," says Carroll Wills, the communications director for the union. "We are able to bring our bodies — our boots on the ground."

California Professional Firefighters President Lou Paulson says, "This is a fight we can't afford to lose."

"We've fought this fight before, but the stakes have never been so high. If we give up our right to speak up and speak out, everything we've earned is at risk," Paulson adds. "Worse, millions of everyday Californians will be subject to the whims of the super-rich special interests that are exempt from Prop. 32."

Also in CTA's corner is the California State Building and Construction Trades

Council, which represents about 350,000 workers in 186 local unions and regional councils in private-sector building trades. Council President Bob

Balgenorth blogged recently that the wealthy interests have learned from their mistakes in 1998 and 2005, when their similar ballot measures to silence workers were rejected by California voters.

"So now in 2012, they've gotten sneakier," Balgenorth wrote. "They claim that Proposition 32 bans contributions from both unions and corporations. Sound fair? It isn't, because it exempts their secret super PACs, which can raise unlimited amounts of money from corporate interests."

Another driving force in the coalition is the California Labor Federation (CLF), the umbrella group for all organized AFL-CIO labor in the state. The CLF is mobilizing more than 40,000 volunteers to contact voters at worksites, on the phone, at the door and online about the dangers of Prop. 32.

"Prop. 32 isn't at all what it seems. It's nothing more than a deceptive attack on

THE GROWING NO ON PROP. 32 COALITION

Story and photos by **Mike Myslinski**

"WE ARE NOT ALONE."

That's one key message that CTA President Dean Vogel shared this summer as CTA mobilized to defeat Proposition 32 — the latest ballot measure that threatens to silence our political voice. CTA members are part of a growing coalition fighting the Special Exemptions Act, and the groundswell is about defending our communities, our classrooms and the middle class.

The 325,000 members of CTA are in good company in this fight. The coalition includes 90 labor, social justice, government reform, public safety and other groups (see the full list at www.stopspecial exemptions.org).

The campaign to defeat Prop. 32 represents more than 2 million teachers, firefighters, police officers, nurses, school support employees, and workers in manu-

a Davis fire captain and Auburn teacher Lysa Sassman, among others. The next day, the president of the Monterey Peninsula League of Women Voters, Beverly Bean, joined a CTA news conference with President Vogel and local teachers in Pacific Grove to denounce the measure during the CTA Presidents Conference. Bean said Prop. 32 is "really designed by special interests to help themselves and harm their opponents."

Joining CTA in opposing Prop. 32 are education groups such as the California Federation of Teachers, the California School Employees Association, the Association of California School Administrators, the California Faculty Association, and the Community College League of California, along with other labor organizations such as the California Labor Federation, the Service Employees International Union, Communication Workers of America, and the

Top: News media interview CTA Board member **Mary Rose Ortega** about why she's voting NO on Prop 32 during the CTA Presidents Conference.

Below: **Barbara Hirst**, Pacific Grove Teachers Association, joined other teachers in wearing tape across their mouths to dramatize how Prop. 32 would silence the political voices of educators and the middle class.

THE *SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE* SAID ANALYSTS FOUND THAT PROP. 32 LOOPHOLES WILL "ALLOW CORPORATE INTERESTS TO CONTINUE DOLING OUT CAMPAIGN DONATIONS" WHILE UNIONS ARE SILENCED.

workers funded by corporate special interests and billionaires," says CLF Executive Secretary-Treasurer Art Pulaski.

"This measure won't solve Sacramento's problems. By rigging the system to benefit the very wealthy and corporate CEOs, Prop. 32 would actually weaken our democracy and threaten middle-class priorities. Once voters learn the truth, they'll reject this cynical attempt to give more power to the already powerful."

How much more influence does Prop. 32 give billionaires? Unlimited.

It amounts to a "bill of rights for billionaires," warned John Logan, a professor and director of Labor and Employment Relations at San Francisco State University.

Prop. 32 would be a "devastating hit on labor," said Jaime Regalado, a professor emeritus of political science at California State University-Los Angeles, in a July *San Francisco Chronicle* report on its investigation of Prop. 32. The paper said analysts found that Prop. 32 loopholes will "allow corporate interests to continue doling out campaign donations" while unions are silenced.

This unbalanced measure is highly deceptive because it bans unions and corporations from using payroll-deducted contributions for politics, when research shows few companies do so now — they just use profits, without asking anybody for permission.

Exemptions for real estate trusts, hedge funds, limited partnerships and many kinds of companies mean the millionaires and billionaires behind Prop. 32 would still have extraordinary lobbying clout, and could still give unlimited money to the super PACs that fund candidates and undermine our democracy.

Unions would be banned from giving money to candidates, even for local school board races.



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BLOG POST REACTING TO PROP. 32

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Understand your rights and responsibilities

Read your contract so that you know your rights. Study district policies to know other rights. Contact your CTA rep if you have any questions. While specifics differ statewide, your contract will cover teaching and working conditions, including:

- ▶ **Class size** — In some districts, teachers get paid "overages" if they have a certain number of students over the class size limit. It can vary according to subject matter. Teachers in overcrowded classrooms should check to make sure they are being paid extra for taking on extra students.
- ▶ **Prep periods** — Prep periods are supposed to be used to prepare class lessons, grade papers, copy materials, etc. If you are hindered from using your prep period as needed, talk to your site rep. Sometimes the district doesn't hire enough teachers, so in order to decrease class size, prep periods are "sold" and teachers get paid extra to forfeit a prep period and teach another class. It's best to check your contract to see if protocol is being followed.
- ▶ **Salary schedule** — As soon as you complete a college unit, you may be eligible to "step up" on the salary schedule. If you wait, the pay raise may not be retroactive. Turn in your paperwork, even if it's in the middle of the year.
- ▶ **Health care** — Employers have a responsibility to provide access to comprehensive health coverage. Know your rights, what benefits you are eligible for, and the different types of health care plans you may choose from.
- ▶ **Credentialing** — While some districts send notices that it's time to update teaching credentials, it is up to the individual to keep track. Know what credential is needed to keep a certain position in the district. Look in your contract for language that gives those with certain credentials an advantage if there are layoffs. Read your contract to make sure you have taken, or are signed up for, courses that may be necessary for continued employment.
- ▶ **Evaluation** — Many times, staff aren't sure of the evaluation criteria, says Jon Van Drimmelen. Teachers told they need to show improvement should know that the improvement plan needs to be worked out between the teacher and the evaluator, and deemed "reasonable and agreeable" by both parties. Teachers must have input on a plan of action so that it applies directly to the area that needs improvement. It is crucial for teachers to keep track of all communications with evaluators and administrators in case a grievance is filed.
- ▶ **Other duties** — Do you monitor the student lunchroom, supervise the playground at recess, and sponsor after-school clubs or coach as a part of your duties? If so, check whether these additional duties are required and if you are entitled to a stipend. "Make sure you know what your responsibilities are on campus so that you are not being taken advantage of," says Carminda Kho.
- ▶ **Seniority** — Can your grade level, subject matter or school assignment be arbitrarily changed by your administrator? Are teachers in some subject areas such as math and science protected from layoffs? As a temporary teacher, do you have rights if you are abruptly terminated? Again, read your contract to see what provisions your local leaders negotiated to protect your job and whether administrators are violating the terms of that contract.

Read the fine print:

It's not as complicated as you think

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin

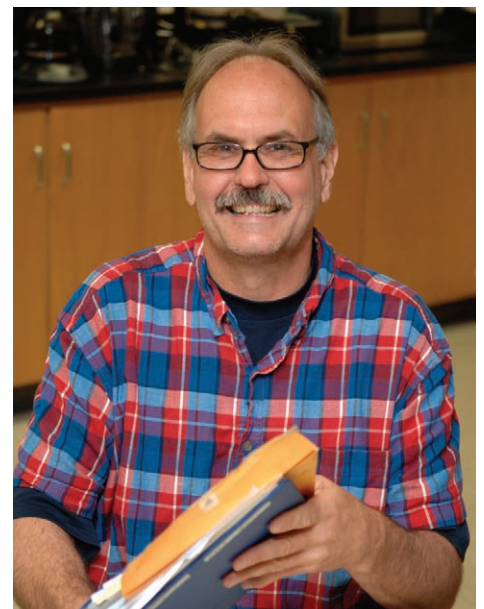
Three years ago, an overhead screen broke loose in Carminda Kho's class and hit her on the head. After the initial pain subsided, she thumbed through her union contract.

She found a provision about contacting her site rep. The rep told her to inform her administrator about the incident and see a physician. It was a wise move, because what she thought was a "small accident" turned out to be a severe injury with delayed pain. She eventually went on disability for several months before returning to the classroom.

If she hadn't looked through her contract, she might not have told anyone about the injury, which she considered, at the time, to be minor. And if she had not reported the incident and seen a physician, there would have been no way to prove the accident was school-related.

Now a site rep at Toll Middle School, the Glendale Teachers Association member advises other teachers about the importance of reading the fine print and understanding their contract.

"When I first started teaching I hadn't read my contract," says Kho. "I didn't know how much money I was making. I didn't know my rights. I told everyone that I wasn't worried about that; I just wanted to teach. But I learned everyone should read their contract so that if something goes wrong, you know what to do."



"Both teachers and administrators should understand their contract," says Jon Van Drimmelen.

At least read the table of contents

“Lots of people never open the contract until they have an issue. It’s true of both sides — administrators and teachers,” says Jon Van Drimmelen, Tracy Education Association.

TEA members receive a hard copy of the contract, but most access it online via the association’s website. Even though members have the contract handy, some go to their peers when they have a problem — and many times their colleagues aren’t familiar with the bargaining agreement, either.

“They get misinformation this way and sometimes get into trouble,” says Van Drimmelen, who is the chapter’s grievance chair and a high school chemistry teacher.

“Go through your contract. Look at the parts that pertain to your grade level, teaching or coaching situation,” he urges. “Some parts may not apply, but at least look through the table of contents.”

Contracts, for example, may put a cap on the number of students in your class or

the amount of time you can take for sick leave or pregnancy, or even dictate when you may be eligible for a pay raise. Your contract stipulates how you are evaluated and who does your evaluation. Contracts also determine “bumping rights” and seniority in case there are layoffs. As a union member, you are entitled under the Weingarten Act to have a union rep with you if you are being reprimanded by an administrator and fear it could jeopardize your job.

Educators tend to be overly trusting at times, and they need to be educated so they won’t be taken advantage of. Reading the contract is not only informative but empowering, since you are no longer guessing what is allowed or not allowed under your bargaining agreement.

“Once you are educated, you can be active at your site and participate in your own union, instead of sitting back and letting someone else do the work for you, thinking it will all work out,” says Kho. “You’ll be glad you did.”



“Don’t be taken advantage of,” says **Carminda Kho**.

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I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER...

Photos by **Bill Guy, Cynthia Menzel and Jonathan Goldman**

It's not that we were spying, because we know most of you were taking training to be better at what you do. We DID get photos of your local leaders doing the same thing. Want to see more photos? Go to www.flickr.com/photos/californiateachers.

Your state and local leaders:

- ▶ Attended the NEA Representative Assembly (RA) to advocate for you at the national level.
- ▶ Networked and learned about CTA resources and services to advocate with you at the state and local levels.
- ▶ Learned new skills, gained knowledge and resources to advocate with you at the school site level.

Are you ready to help advocate for public schools and students? Together, we can!



More than 1,000 locally elected delegates represent you at the NEA Rep Assembly.



Brenda Quispe and **Veronica Romani**, both members of Student CTA, share their views on politics to Desert Sands Teachers Association President **Mona Davidson** during CTA's Summer Institute.



John Dunham, Coast Community College; **Steven Levinson**, CFA; **Wesley Swanson**, San Joaquin Delta, discuss common issues and strategies.



Glenda Esquivel and **Traci Suyeyasu**, San Joaquin County Educators Association, appreciate meeting colleagues who are in the same situation they are during Presidents Conference.

Cleared of ANY wrongdoing, Miramonte teachers return

Story and photo by Frank Wells

School is back in session for Los Angeles' Miramonte Elementary teachers who were cleared of any wrongdoing.

The faculty members were abruptly removed from the school last February, following the arrests of a current and a former teacher charged with lewd conduct against students in what the superintendent called a "confidence-building" measure. The entire staff reported to a not-yet-opened campus while Miramonte students finished the school year with replacement teachers.

"It was difficult, but we got through it. My teacher — she was like a second mother to me," April, a fifth-grader, said of CTA member May Lynn Montano, who is back teaching fourth grade.

Lawsuits

Lawsuits filed against the Los Angeles Unified School District claim current and former LAUSD school administrators ignored student complaints dating back more than a decade about Mark Berndt, who was arrested in January and remains jailed after pleading not guilty to committing lewd acts with 23 youngsters.

The rest of the story: Protecting Your Due Process Rights

CTA won a legislative battle to protect due process rights by defeating Senate Bill 1530. **Despite what you've heard, the bill was not about protecting child molesters. CTA will not tolerate child molesters anywhere in our schools.**

"Teachers care about the safety of their students and would never support a bill that would put them in harm's way," said CTA President Dean Vogel. "SB 1530 didn't make students any safer than the current law. It just stripped away the rights of teachers."

Born out of grandstanding by politicians over what happened at Miramonte Elementary, SB 1530 did nothing to make students any safer. The current dismissal process works, and it keeps both students and teachers safe. Administrators just have to use it correctly. CTA, in fact, offered amendments to streamline the process, but the author of SB 1530, Sen. Alex Padillo, rejected them.



Last spring parents and students protested the removal of all Miramonte teachers saying administrators should have dealt with the problem first.

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2010-11 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, 2010, through Aug. 31, 2011. 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, 2011 were \$33,542,280.

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, 2011, the premiums paid under such “experience-rated” contracts were \$33,542,280 and the total of all benefit claims paid under these contracts during the plan year was \$23,303,749.

The Plan finances, to specified members of CTA, death and dismemberment benefits through the CTA Death and Dismem-

berment 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 \$73,703,479 as of Aug. 31, 2011, compared to \$67,367,512 as of Sept. 1, 2010. During the plan year the plan experienced an increase in its net assets of \$6,335,967. 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 \$42,240,468, including employee contributions of \$33,542,280, realized gains of \$1,896,172 from the sale of assets, and earnings from investments of \$6,802,016.

Plan expenses were \$35,904,501. These expenses included \$1,502,406 in administrative expenses, and \$34,402,095 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; 3) assets held for investment; 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, or call (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. The charge to cover copying costs given above does not apply to the copying of these portions of the report because these portions are furnished without charge.

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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For more information, call **800.522.0406**. To apply online, visit **cta.org/thestandard**.



SPREADING SUNSHINE

one suitcase at a time

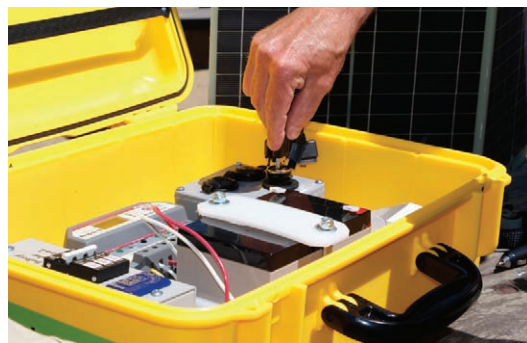
By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin
Photos by Cynthia Menzel

“I WANT MY STUDENTS to see the real connection between what they did and how it impacted the lives of orphans in Third World countries. I want them to know they make a difference.”

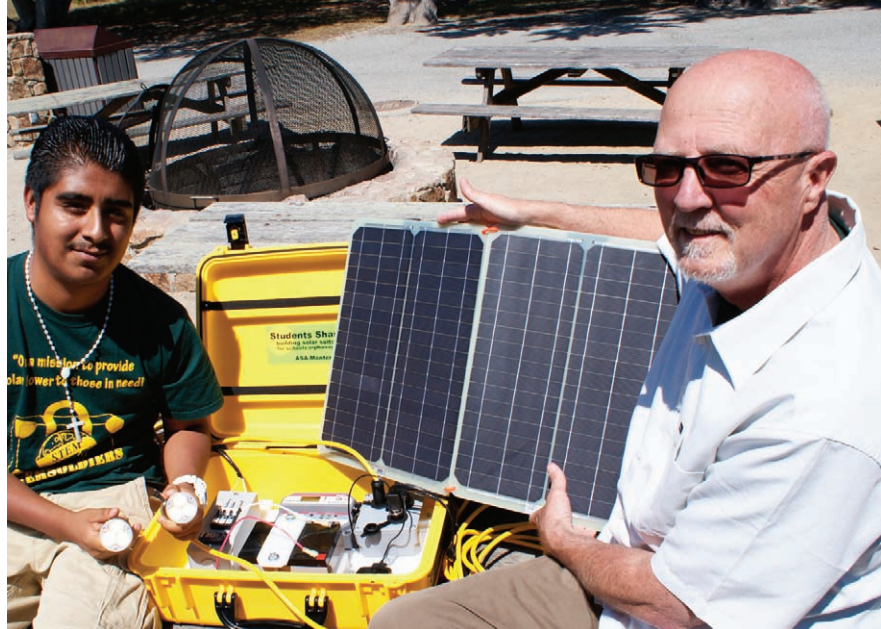
Alan Jensen and his students at Central Coast High School in Monterey made that connection when they brightened the lives of impoverished kids in rural areas of Uganda, Haiti and Sudan that have no electricity. They sent homemade “solar suitcases” that provide light and power.

Jensen’s students at the continuation school for at-risk youth built three 40-watt, waterproof, battery-powered suitcases with solar panels on top. The yellow suitcases have enough juice to light up a room for studying, provide power to a phone or computer, or illuminate an outdoor area to improve security. Jensen, a social studies and economics teacher and Monterey Bay Teachers Association member, says the sun charges the battery during the day, which provides the power at night.

Part of an after-school program for the Green Architecture Solar Technol-



Alan Jensen’s students learned about electricity through hands-on skills like soldering.



Alan Jensen and his student, Ricardo Perez, explain how solar panels charge a battery that powers lights.

ogy department, students at neighboring Marina and Seaside high schools joined the effort.

Jensen got the idea from We Care Solar, wecaresolar.org, a Berkeley nonprofit that builds suitcases serving as power units, which are shipped to developing countries for use with emergency medical devices to save lives and decrease infant mortality. He attended a weeklong seminar in Colorado on how to build solar suitcases, packed up some ideas and headed back to his classroom eager to engage students in hands-on learning and philanthropy.

“We Care Solar provided inspiration and design ideas, but I had to change things to suit our needs,” says Jensen. “Our solar suitcases are geared toward orphanages and schools, not hospitals. I created lesson plans to help students do the work as a class project. Students got a better understanding of electrical wiring and learned hands-on skills like cutting wires and soldering. But the biggest takeaway is the humanitarian component. We are trying to fill a need because there are lots of kids around the world who don’t have power.”

It isn’t easy to build a solar suitcase, says Jensen, who used his more than 20 years of experience as a professional architect and contractor to safely construct the devices.

Forty-five students produced a total of four suitcases last year over a 10-week period. It cost about \$1,400 per

suitcase, and Jensen fronted the money before he was reimbursed by community donations and grant money. His hometown of Pebble Beach donated use of a large ballroom — which usually costs \$5,000 — so that students in his program could have a “graduation” ceremony. The event was attended by Dr. Laura Stachel, founder of We Care Solar.

“The best thing was being able to help a community of people who are less fortunate than us,” says Ricardo Perez, a senior who worked on the project last year. “A lot of people think you wouldn’t do something like that in a continuation school, but yes, we did, because we like helping people. I told my teacher it would be my pleasure to make more suitcases.”

Perez says he learned a lot about electricity, soldering and working as a team. “It was fun to be working with a group of people. There was lots of talking and laughing.”

One suitcase was kept as a “demo” and the rest were delivered overseas by representatives of nonprofit agencies. One went to an orphanage in Uganda; another to an orphanage in Haiti. The third was taken to a remote village in Sudan by an original member of the “Lost Boys,” who survived a brutal war in his country.

Jensen is hoping those who delivered the suitcases will come back to school this year and describe the reaction of those who received the gift of light from students.

Note! See a demo of the solar suitcase at www.cta.org/alanjensen.

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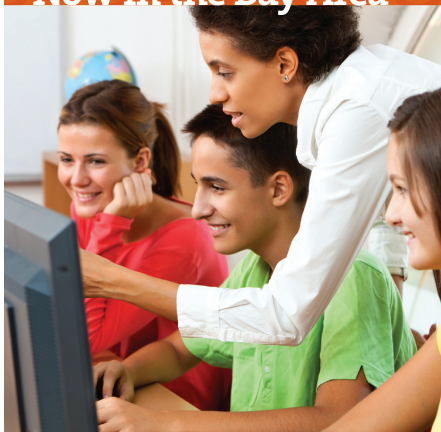
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CALENDAR

UPCOMING EVENTS

OCT. 5-7

Region II Leadership Conference
Reno, NV

OCT. 12-14

CCA Fall Conference
San Jose

OCT. 19-21 — CANCELED

State Council of Education
The October meeting is canceled so delegates can make a difference in the upcoming elections.
Jan. 25-27, 2013
April 5-7, 2013
May 31-June 2, 2013

JAN. 11-13, 2013

GLBT Conference
Palm Springs

JAN. 18-20, 2013

Issues Conference: 150 Years of Unity
Las Vegas, NV

FEB. 1-3, 2013

Region III Leadership Conference
Manhattan Beach

FEB. 1-3, 2013

CCA Winter Conference
Pasadena

FEB. 8-10, 2013

Good Teaching Conference North
San Jose

MARCH 1-3, 2013

Equity and Human Rights Conference
Burlingame

MARCH 22-24, 2013

Good Teaching Conference South
Garden Grove

APRIL 26-28, 2013

CCA Spring Conference and WHO Awards
San Diego

JULY 22-25, 2013

Presidents Conference
Pacific Grove

AUG. 4-8, 2013

Summer Institute
Los Angeles

SEPTEMBER 21 HOLIDAY

International Day of Peace

The International Day of Peace ("Peace Day") was established by a United Nations resolution in 1981. Find out how you and your students can get involved and help create a more peaceful world. Find out more: www.internationaldayofpeace.org

OCTOBER 15 APPLICATION DEADLINE

NEA Foundation grants

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 work that improves academic achievement (see page 26). 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. Find out more: neafoundation.org and www.nea.org/grants/grantsawardsandmore.html



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OCTOBER 5-7 CONFERENCE

Region II Leadership Conference Grand Sierra Resort, Reno, Nevada

The conference enhances the advocacy skills of leaders and members to promote public education. Training sessions include leadership development, and internal and external communications. Find out more: www.cta.org/conferences

NOVEMBER 1 OPT-OUT DEADLINE

Voluntary dues contribution

Thanks to voluntary contributions by CTA members this past year, the CTA Foundation for Teaching and Learning awarded more than \$350,000 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. Find out more: www.cta.org/about-cta/voluntary-contribution

NOVEMBER 11-17 EVENT

American Education Week

Distressed that 25 percent of the country's World War I draftees were illiterate, NEA and the American Legion launched American Education Week in 1921. Find out more: www.nea.org/aew

JANUARY 4 NOMINATION DEADLINE

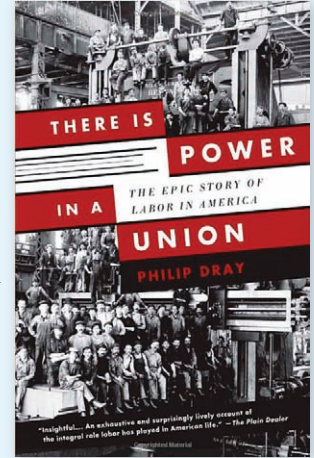
CTA Human Rights Awards

CTA Human Rights Awards are given annually to CTA members, chapters and Service Center Councils to promote programs that advance and protect human and civil rights. Any active CTA member, chapter, caucus or Service Center Council may submit a nomination. The nomination form will be available on the CTA website. Nominations must be submitted by Jan. 4, 2013. Awards will be presented March 2 at the CTA Equity and Human Rights Conference. Find out more: www.cta.org/professional-development/awards

OCTOBER 12-14 CONFERENCE

CCA Fall Conference DoubleTree San Jose Airport, San Jose

The 2012 Community College Association Fall Conference features Philip Dray Doubleday, author of *There is Power in a Union: The Epic Tale of Labor in America*. Workshop topics include preparing for bargaining and bargaining basics, budget analysis, verbal skills, building relationships, strategic planning, bargaining for part-time faculty and evaluating health benefits using CTA software. Find out more: www.cca4me.org



NOVEMBER 6 ELECTION

Presidential election

The stakes have never been higher for public education in California. Support students, schools and communities by voting **Yes on Proposition 30** and **No on Proposition 32**. Find out more: www.cta.org/campaign2012



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WHO'S GAME?

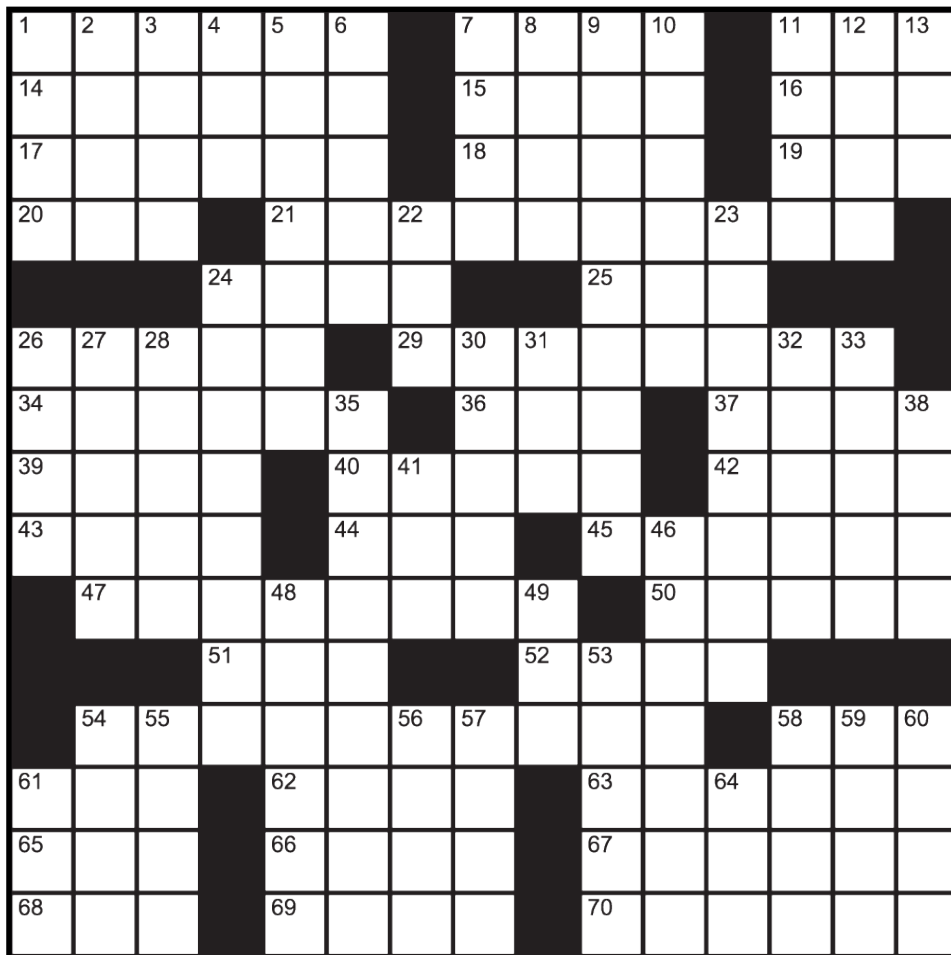
By Craig Hamilton

We hope you'll enjoy solving this crossword based on articles in this magazine. This type of feature was suggested by CTA members. Find the answers to this crossword on page 45. Have fun!

—The *Educator* Team

ACROSS

1. Like the California Senate president
7. Yaks
11. Dept. head
14. Elegant
15. Legal defense org.
16. Charged atom
17. Subsidized
18. English school
19. "60 Minutes" network
20. Speak
21. National Teacher of the Year Rebecca
24. Quarrel
25. Caesar's 650
26. Approximately
29. News reports called Proposition 32 "Citizens United on _____"
34. Somewhat sad
36. The Greatest
37. The _____ (New York nightclub)
39. Laughingstock
40. I'm the one
42. Singer Kristofferson
43. Vice President Heins
44. \$1,000
45. Curses
47. Classroom experts
50. Inert gas
51. Actor Mineo
52. Buddies
54. Image consultant who offers fashion tips for educators
58. It may be Super
61. UA hub in the Bay Area
62. Author of "Metamorphoses"
63. Loss of power
65. No _____, ands or buts
66. Obscene
67. CD player
68. Scouting org.
69. Et _____ (and others)
70. Organic compounds



DOWN

1. Palm Pilots, e.g.
2. Country singer McEntire
3. Maker of skin care products
4. Boy king, for short
5. Prop. 32 _____ super-rich special interests
6. Newspapers, radio and TV
7. Celt
8. Dramatic beginning
9. Gives hair a windswept look
10. U.S. petroleum company
11. Rocker Jagger
12. Asian desert
13. Some CNA members
22. Clark Kent and Ford Prefect, e.g.
23. They're used in a student response system
24. A "solar _____" provides electricity for impoverished orphans
26. Title of a French cleric
27. Utter impulsively
28. Type of belly button
30. Stun gun
31. Kind of tree
32. Hair kerchief
33. Politician Agnew
35. Important
38. Org. like CTA
41. Kind of shirt that might have "No on 32" printed on it
46. They're chopped up in baklava
48. Plant whose seed produces an edible oil
49. Health resort
53. Stood up
54. Whacks
55. Civil rights hero Parks
56. Flightless New Zealand bird
57. Old Norse epic poem
58. Cut back
59. Golden-_____ (elderly person)
60. Corp. bigwigs
61. Sis or bro
64. Vietnamese new year



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