

california educator

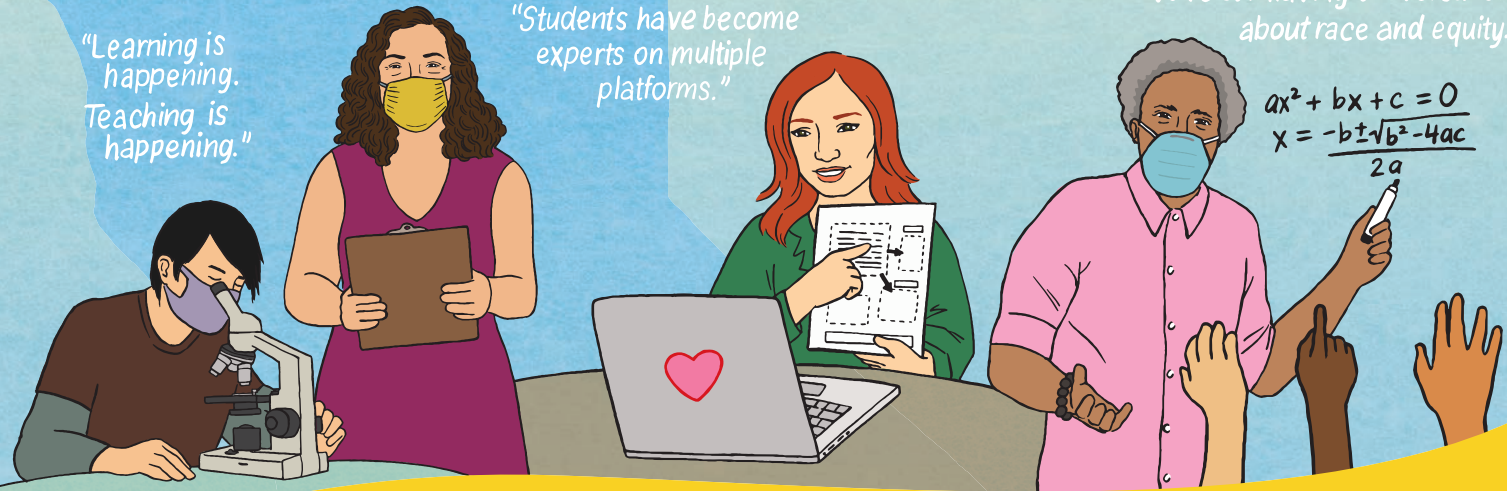
APRIL / MAY 2021 VOLUME 25 ISSUE 5

"Learning is happening. Teaching is happening."

"Students have become experts on multiple platforms."

"We're still having conversations about race and equity."

$$ax^2 + bx + c = 0$$
$$x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$$



filling Gaps and Healing hearts

Educators tackle students' academic, emotional needs

PAGE 22

"How do we empower students? By being present."

"Our lessons make students feel seen and valued."



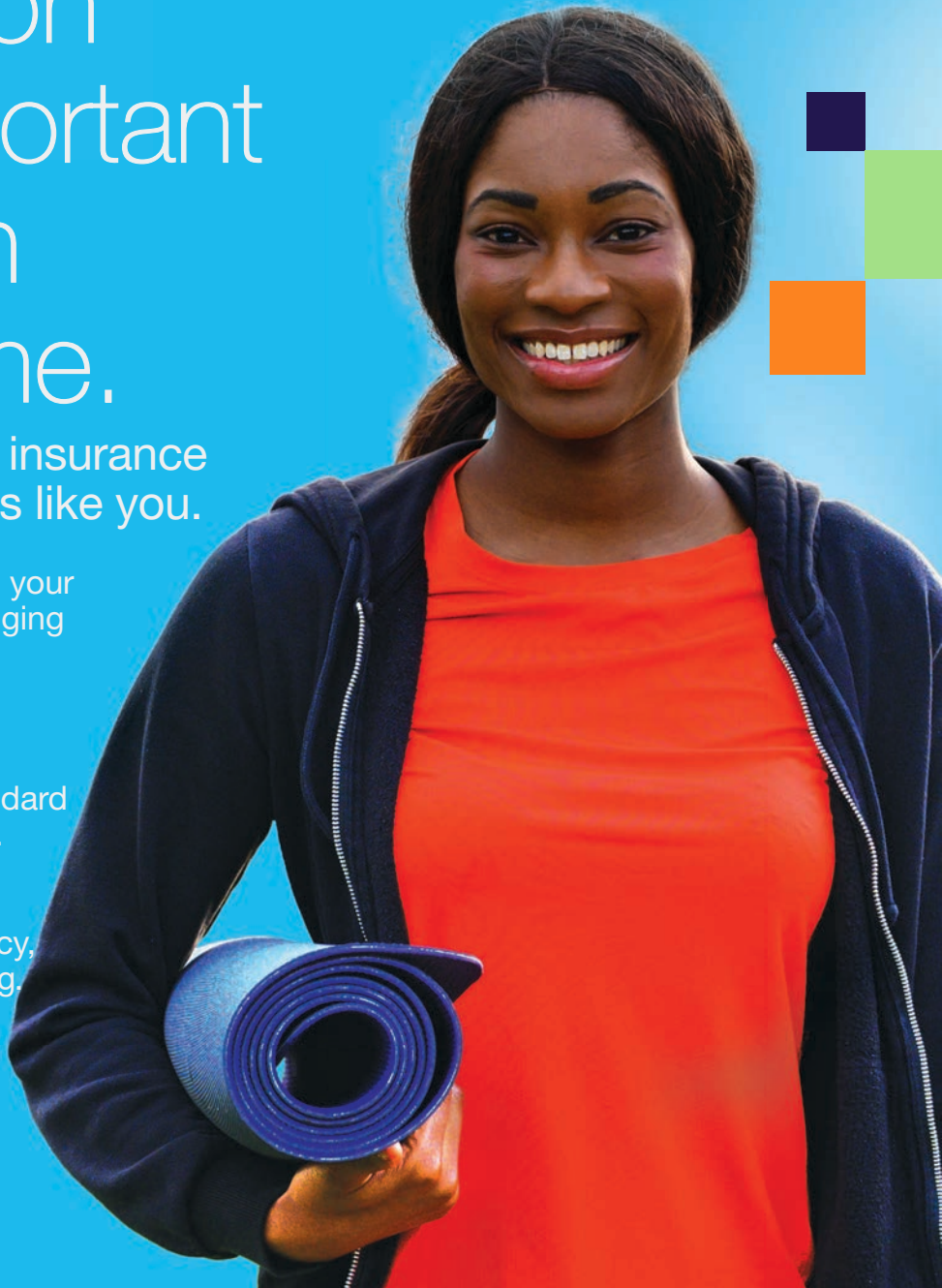
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#WeAreCTA

OUR VOICE, OUR UNION, OUR PROFESSION

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

MAGAZINE

ESP OF THE YEAR

Meet Potter Valley's Maggie Peacock-Butler. **PAGE 47**

BEING ASIAN: IT'S COMPLEX

A veteran educator looks at current events and her own life experiences. **PAGE 20**

AWARDEE BOOSTS MORALE

Winning Teacher of the Year helped school heal. **PAGE 48**

SHOW OF GRATITUDE

Vacaville chapter engages both members and community. **PAGE 54**

LIT FROM WITHIN

Members create! **PAGE 60**

DIGITAL

#STOPASIANHATE

Educators rise to support AAPI community. **PAGE 36**
cta.org/educator



GET STUDENTS OUTSIDE

Five free apps let kids get creative and learn in the great outdoors. **PAGE 43**
cta.org/educator

INDISPENSABLE ACCESSORY

The Schoolbelt is an educator must-have. **PAGE 58** [f](https://www.facebook.com/schoolbelt) [ig](https://www.instagram.com/schoolbelt)
schoolbelt.net

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CCA SPRING CONFERENCE

The conference highlights membership and WHO ("We Honor Ours") award winners. A virtual event, April 23-25.
[f](https://www.facebook.com/cta4us) [t](https://twitter.com/cta4us) [ig](https://www.instagram.com/cta4us) cca4us.org

SPECIAL ED CONFERENCE

Don't miss CTA's inaugural Special Education Conference, April 30-May 2. **PAGE 9**
cta.org/conferences

SCHOLARSHIPS & GRANTS

CTA's LGBTQ+ Safety in Schools Program in Honor of Guy DeRosa offers funds for projects and study. **PAGE 9**
cta.org/scholarships

MEMBER BENEFITS

VACATION PLANNING

With safety measures, you can venture out. Find great discounts on rental cars, theme parks and more.
CTAMemberBenefits.org

RETIREMENT PLANNING

It's never too early or too late to take advantage of CTA's Retirement Savings Plan, exclusively for educators.
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GROW YOUR MONEY!

Use our calculators to see how to maximize your funds.
CTAinvest.org/tools

Photo: Joe Brusky/Overpass Light Brigade

▼ **FILLING GAPS & HEALING HEARTS**

How educators are addressing students' academic, emotional needs as pandemic enters year two

22



28

▲ **WHAT ABOUT YOU?**

Ways to keep sane and positive during a difficult time



32

▲ **PARITY FOR PART-TIMERS**

Adjunct community college faculty face big challenges



44

DEPARTMENTS

In the Know

- 8 Calendar
- 10 News & Notes
- 13 Quotes & Numbers
- 14 Returning to School Safely

Spotlight

- 17 **FEATURED ARTIST:** Audrey Chan
- 18 **PROFILE:** Heather Calomese
- 20 **YOUR VOICE:** Dina Tsuyuki

Advocacy

- 32 **PARITY:** The plight of part-time community college faculty
- 35 **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:** Budget bill provides \$4.6 billion to schools
- 36 **RACIAL JUSTICE:** Stop violence against Asia Americans
- 38 **TESTING:** State Board gives schools more testing options
- 40 **ETHNIC STUDIES:** CTA's concerns about adopted model curriculum
- 41 **BARGAINING:** Statewide roundup

Teaching & Learning

- 43 **TECH TIPS:** Apps for outdoors
- 44 **PUPPETS:** Students learn to tell stories and share feelings

CTA & You

- 47 **HONORED:** ESP of the Year Maggie Peacock-Butler
- 48 **HONORED:** National Teacher of the Year nominee Jim Klipfel
- 50 **HONORED:** CTA Human Rights Award winners
- 54 **MEMBER ENGAGEMENT:** Vacaville welcomes back educators
- 56 **VACCINE:** More doses of hope
- 57 **SERVICE:** Andrew Williams builds desks for students
- 58 **SCHOOLBELT:** Utility accessory
- 60 **LIT FROM WITHIN:** Works by our members

Cover illustration by Audrey Chan. This page, clockwise from top left: Illustration by Audrey Chan; speech and language therapist Laura García López; puppet by Elizabeth Choy; Community College Association member Chris Holland working her second job.



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



WOMEN EDUCATORS' TOUGH CHOICES

Thank you for publishing “Women Educators Caught in a Bind” (February/March). The article did a great job of highlighting all the many struggles that women educators are facing during this pandemic. Mostly I was impressed that you took the time to write and include this article, since the problems women face are often left out of the spotlight. Thank you for not overlooking this important issue!

LIZ MILLER
San Leandro Teachers Association

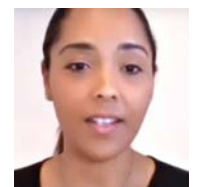


New Board Certified Teachers

On March 18, CTA Instruction and Professional Development and the National Board Resource Center at Stanford University celebrated the 173 California educators who recently became National Board Certified Teachers and the 136 who renewed their NBCT status this year. This is particularly remarkable considering how challenging the past year has been. Los Angeles Unified School District, which had the second-most new NBCTs in the nation with 84, led the nation with the most new teachers of color earning Board certification, with 49.

Those interested in certification should join CTA's informational session on April 28, 4-5 p.m.; register at bit.ly/nbinfoession1. Details about CTA's Summer Springboard, which offers guidance in the NBC process and will be held July 12 and 19, will come soon.

Sara Robinson talks safety.



TV Spots Highlight Safe Return to School

Parents and educators come together around returning to school safely in CTA TV spots airing in late March and early April. The spots feature members Deisy Bates, Sara Robinson, Matthew Schneck and Marisa Villegas reiterating how much they want to be back in the classroom — but with proper safety measures. Parents stress the importance of reaching underserved communities with accurate info. See the ads at CTA's YouTube channel (youtube.com/CaliforniaTeachers). And for what you need to know as you return to in-person instruction, see page 14.

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youtube.com/californiateachers

[@WeAreCTA](https://instagram.com/WeAreCTA)

[WeAreCTA](https://pinterest.com/WeAreCTA)

For our full social media directory, see cta.org/social. [#OurVoiceOurUnion](https://twitter.com/OurVoiceOurUnion) [#WeAreCTA](https://twitter.com/WeAreCTA)

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MISSION STATEMENT

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

EDITORIAL INFORMATION

California Educator is published for the information and edification of CTA members. The editorial philosophy is governed by the policies of CTA. Articles and advertising reflect that philosophy. Letters to the editor may be sent to editor@cta.org.

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CTA/NEA membership dues for the fiscal year (Sept. 1, 2020, to Aug. 31, 2021) are \$937, including a \$20 refundable contribution (see cta.org/contribution for details). \$22.09 of CTA annual dues is designated for CTA/ABC political activities to support state and local candidates and/or initiatives, and \$15.00 of CTA annual dues is designated for independent expenditures, totaling \$37.09 not deductible for income tax purposes. Please consult your tax adviser.

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

CALIFORNIA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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² Single family/owner-occupied condos, homes and second homes in California only. The Movable[®] option is available on 5/5, 7/23 & 10/10 fixed adjustable mortgage loans. Other restrictions may apply. Membership required. Subject to final approval.



Our Home Should Be Safe

HOME SHOULD ALWAYS be a safe place, but it hasn't been lately for nearly 21 million Asian Americans facing a rising tide of racism.

In the past year, Asian Americans reported nearly 4,000 hate incidents nationwide, with more than 1,500 occurring here in California. This has created a climate where many of our Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) friends, colleagues and family are fearful to go outside and potentially become the target of hate-fueled violence.

These fears were terrifyingly realized in March when eight people — including six Asian women — were murdered in a racist rampage in Atlanta. We call out these vile acts of racism, and we condemn the violence against our AAPI community. We mourn with our AAPI family, and we commit to support you in the continued fight against racism and white supremacy. We stand with you.

Anti-Asian hate has always existed, but only recently has America started paying attention. Despite helping build California and our nation since the 1850s, Asian Americans have long faced racism, discrimination and even internment. The recent rise in racist rhetoric has led to the explosion of hate nationwide, targeting the AAPI community and other people of color.

I can only imagine how our Asian American students feel.

As a Black man in America, I know the pain of being hated for who I am and how I look. We all deserve the right to live, work and breathe peacefully in our neighborhoods. We must continue the fight against racism in our communities — rising in solidarity like #BlackLivesMatter, La Causa, the Native rights movement, and countless other struggles against white supremacy in our history.

In this fight to build a safe and just America, our words, actions and persistence matter. We have a duty to continue the work that others before us started, in our schools and communities — and we will not relent.

As we return to in-person schooling, we must commit to creating safe, supportive environments, bringing awareness to these important issues, and letting our students and families know we stand with the AAPI community and all people fighting hate — because America should be a safe home for all of us.

E. Toby Boyd

CTA PRESIDENT

@etobyboyd



“In this fight to build a safe and just America, our words, actions and persistence matter.”

Advocacy at Work

CTA's work and your advocacy to open schools when safe, and our combined efforts to demand educators be prioritized for vaccinations, have made a difference. To date, more than 200,000 educators (and more each day!) have been vaccinated already. Congratulations!



What We Tell Our Children

LIKE SO MANY of you, I've been shocked and sickened by the continued rise in hateful, violent acts against Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities in California and across the country. I've struggled to know the right thing to say to my Asian American teen daughters, who are just beginning to navigate the larger world.

What we tell our children and what we do now are critical if we are to truly address this and broader issues of racial and social justice. After the tumultuous, horrific events of the past year, there's no excuse for complacency and silence. In our story **"Educators Rise to Support AAPI Community"** (page 36), Student CTA member Amy Lo urges: "Join an anti-hate organization, reach out to people who need support, donate your money and time — do whatever you can, but do something!"

It's clear that taking action is essential. But it's also clear that the past year has taken a big toll, and dealing with our mental health is necessary as well. Educators, in particular, must put on a brave face for students and hide any inner turmoil. Our story **"What About You?"** (page 28) looks at the unique challenges you face and insights from your peers on how to keep sane and positive.

Your optimism is on full display in **"Filling Gaps and Healing Hearts"** (page 22). As we enter year two of the pandemic, educators are tackling students' needs academically and emotionally to make sure they're seen, heard, and back on track to succeed.

Look no further than the work of Maggie Peacock-Butler, **CTA's 2021 Education Support Professional of the Year** (page 47). With bits of wisdom like "If you say you can't, you have to follow up with that three-letter word: yet," the speech-language pathology assistant instills confidence and encourages the best in her students.

Elizabeth Choy also builds student confidence — through puppetry (**"Puppet Power,"** page 44). By making and operating puppets, young people can learn to better express themselves and convey their emotions. Jim Klipfel (**"Teacher of the Year,"** page 48) helped students and staff grieve and move forward at his high school after fatal campus



Jason Leung/Unsplash

If you see something, say something

There is no room for bystanders in this fight. Speak out against racist acts when they happen, report anti-Asian hate incidents to local authorities, and file a report at StopAAPIHate.org.

shootings in November 2019; the school closed again during the pandemic, and Klipfel once more rose to the challenge to help heal hearts and cultivate minds.

Speaking of which, this year's theme for **California Day of the Teacher** and **CTA ESP Day** is "Healing Hearts and Cultivating Minds." We can't think of a better description of what educators do, every day. Read about the poster by artist Audrey Chan on page 17.

You bring optimism and light to our world. Happy spring!

Katharine Fong

EDITOR IN CHIEF

editor@cta.org

EDUCATORS

Create Your Professional Growth Path

CHOOSE FROM HUNDREDS OF CONVENIENT COURSES OFFERED
IN VARIOUS FORMATS TO ENHANCE YOUR TEACHING SKILLS

FEATURED COURSES

USD's Annual Spring/Summer Curriculum Design Courses are Back!

Strengthen Your Curriculum to Improve Learning with 6, 4 or 2-Unit Options

These courses are designed for educators in the K-12 classroom who would like to prepare new curriculum or revise existing curriculum that will result in motivated student learning. Participants will choose an instructor who they will work with throughout the course to create a coursework plan which will detail the curriculum they would like to design or revise. The coursework plan can include the introduction of new materials, design lessons, implementing new resources, converting curriculum to the online/remote modality, or implementing a new strategy that motivates student learning.

CHOOSE ONE COURSE:

EDU-X740P6 | Innovative Curriculum for Motivated Learning
6 units | Enrollment open now through Jun 28

EDU-X740P4 | Innovative Curriculum for Motivated Learning
4 units | Enrollment open now through Jul 12

EDU-X740P2 | Innovative Curriculum for Motivated Learning
2 unit | Enrollment open now through Jul 20

Courses are now open. Completed course work must be submitted no later than Aug 23, 2021.

All courses are taught in flexible and convenient Online Self-Paced format *with set start and end dates, and available in various unit options (6, 4, or 2 units).

Prior district approval is highly recommended and the responsibility of the student if using course units towards salary advancement, credential renewing, and/or recertification. Not all courses may qualify in your local school district.

VARIOUS FORMATS

Independent Study:

These courses offer flexibility and the ability to complete a course faster or slower than a traditional live course. Our courses deliver the same high-quality content and expert instruction as traditional, "face-to-face" courses.

Online Self-Paced:

Offering you the perfect blend of accessibility, convenience and flexibility for you to control your learning pace. You will use course textbooks, manuals, assignments, digital tools, and exams to learn and earn credit.

Online Fixed-Date:

This format offers a convenient, yet rigorous style of learning that allows you to structure your education to suit your schedule. Online courses have fixed start and finish dates, ut as an online student, you will have access to your digital classroom at any time.

Classroom:

These courses are offered in a traditional classroom where you can connect with your instructor and classmates in a live setting. This learning environment facilitates communication on a given subject in real time, enables immediate feedback, and fosters interaction with the instructor and like-minded classmates.



View our course offerings now!

Visit SanDiego.edu/EducatorsPrograms

April / May 2021

CALENDAR

Elena Mozvilo/Unsplash



Restore Our Earth

THIS YEAR, it's Earth Week; the theme is "Restore Our Earth." Educators and students can get involved in three parallel climate action summits on April 20 and 21 ahead of the Biden administration's global leaders' climate summit on Earth Day, April 22.

The events, organized by EarthDay.org, Education International, Hip Hop Caucus and Earth Uprising, include a global youth climate summit, an environmental and racial justice summit, and an education summit. Earth Day Live, on April 22, brings together activists, educators, researchers, musicians, artists and more. Details, along with classroom resources and lesson plans, are at earthday.org.



culturela.org

MAY: Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

THE RECENT RISE

in high-profile attacks against Asian Americans has thrown the spotlight on the racism and discrimination experienced by a population often overlooked in social justice discussions. CTA condemns these racist, hateful acts of violence and stands in solidarity with the AAPI community. See ways to get involved and take action on page 36.

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are the fastest-growing racial and ethnic group in the country, consisting of 20 million people with roots in more than 20 countries, and 30 ethnic groups who speak more than 300 languages and dialects. Learn more at cta.org/awareness-events; find classroom resources at adl.org (search Asian Pacific American Heritage Month) and lesson plans at PBSLearningMedia.org.



APRIL: School Library Month

Help make reading a priority in students' lives. Visit the American Association of School Librarians at ala.org/aasl for ideas and resources. And check out books recommended by CTA's California Reads (page 10).

CTA SPECIAL ED CONFERENCE

CTA's first-ever Special Education Conference (2021 Home Edition!) is virtual and free, April 30–May 2, with professional growth hours available at no cost. The theme: “**Kaleidoscope.**” Check out the program — with sessions of interest to both special educators and general educators — and sign up at cta.org/conferences. Read about keynote speaker Heather Calomese, director of the Special Education Division at the California Department of Education, on page 18.



CALMI Labor Management Convening

APRIL 22 WEBINAR

Virtual. California Labor Management Initiative, a project of Californians Dedicated to Education Foundation, convenes labor-management teams from school districts across the state to promote labor-management collaboration. In this convening, participants will explore the basic research on labor-management collaboration, an overview of the three CA LMI frameworks (coherence, three frames of unionism, and boundaries of a school system), and focus on building trust and structures for collaboration.

► cdfoundation.org/clmi

CCA Spring Conference

APRIL 23–25 CONFERENCE

Virtual. The Community College Association's spring conference highlights membership and features the presentation of CCA's WHO (We Honor Ours) Awards. ► cta.org/conferences

Día (Children's Day)

APRIL 30 EVENT

Hundreds of public and school libraries celebrate El Día de los Niños/El Día de los Libros (Children's Day/Book Day), commonly known as Día. This national library program fosters literacy for all children from all backgrounds.

► dia.ala.org

National Teacher Day

MAY 4 EVENT

National Teacher Day is on Tuesday of National Teacher Appreciation Week (May 3–7).

► nea.org/resource-library/celebrate-national-teacher-day



School Nurse Day

MAY 12 EVENT

Since 1972, National School Nurse Day has honored school nurses on the Wednesday of National Nurse Week (May 6–12). This year, not coincidentally, it falls on May 12, Florence Nightingale's 201st birthday.

► schoolnurseday.org

California Day of the Teacher

MAY 12 EVENT

“Cultivating Minds and Healing Hearts.” Check out resources on our website and celebrate your school's educators in style. ► cta.org/dayoftheteacher

ESP Week

MAY 16–22 EVENT

Celebrate the vital contributions of education support professionals during ESP Week (officially observed by the state as Classified School Employee Week). ► cta.org/espday

LGBTQ+ Safety in Schools Grants and Scholarships

MAY 17 APPLICATION DEADLINE

The LGBTQ+ Safety in Schools Program in Honor of Guy DeRosa offers scholarships up to \$2,500 to self-described LGBTQ+ educators, and grants up to \$2,500 for groups and projects promoting understanding and respect for LGBTQ+ persons.

► cta.org/scholarships

CTA ESP Day

MAY 18 EVENT

Education support professionals make up one-third of the entire education workforce, and our schools could not run without them. CTA ESP Day celebrates the work of ESPs in our schools to make sure they know how much we appreciate them! ► cta.org/espday

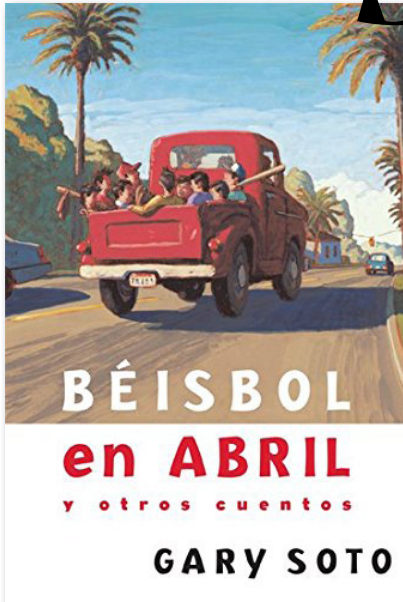
CAASA Conference

MAY 26–28 CONFERENCE

Virtual. “Achieving an Equity-Driven Education.” California Association of African-American Superintendents and Administrators' annual professional development summit. Speakers include U.S. Representative Barbara Lee, Secretary of State Shirley Weber, State Board of Education President Linda Darling-Hammond, and Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond. CTA is a sponsor of this event.

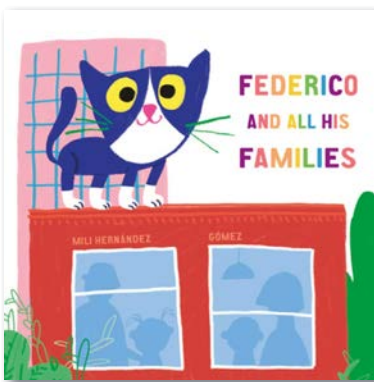
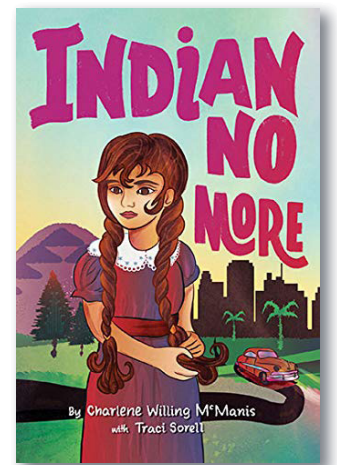
► caasa.org

Spring Reads



← **IT'S APRIL**, which means baseball. Catch the fever with *Béisbol en Abril y Otros Cuentos* ("Baseball in April and Other Stories") by Gary Soto (grades 6-8). The collection of short stories, available in English and Spanish editions, tells of the small events of daily life that reveal big themes of love and friendship, youth and growing up, success and failure. The smart, tough, vulnerable kids in these stories are Latino, but their dreams and desires belong to all of us.

In *Indian No More* by Charlene Willing McManis and Traci Sorell (grades 3-5), 10-year-old Regina Petit's family has always been Umpqua and lived on tribal land in Oregon. But in 1957 when the federal government enacts a law that says her tribe no longer exists, she becomes "Indian no more" overnight. Her family relocates to Los Angeles, where Regina is confronted with the viciousness of racism. A story of identity, community and family.



← In *Federico and All His Families* by Mili Hernández and illustrated by Gómez (pre-K, kindergarten), Federico the cat makes daily visits to Tadeo and his grandparents, Anna and her two moms, Virginia with her mom and dad, Paula and her two dads... All are different, all are loved by Federico — unconditionally.

These books are from California Reads, CTA's annual list of teacher-recommended books to help educators instill in students a love of reading. Find the full list at cta.org/californiareads.



Better Hearing & Speech Month ▶ **MAY 15** Better Hearing & Speech Month. Classroom activities, handouts and posters are available at teacherspayteachers.com, including some that are free. Check out the event at asha.org/bhsm, and while you're there, search for "Tips for Helping Students With Hearing Loss" for timely advice.



California Day of the Teacher, May 12, and ESP Day, May 18

California Day of the Teacher and CTA's ESP Day are on May 12 and 18, respectively. Our 2021 theme: "Cultivating Minds and Healing Hearts." See a draft of the special poster celebrating both days on page 17, where you'll also find links to ways to show your appreciation, and learn about artist Audrey Chan.

Note: May 12 is also School Nurse Day!

Aaron Burden/Unsplash



Honor Our Fallen

Use the Memorial Day holiday on May 31 as an opportunity to talk with students about those who have died while serving in the U.S. armed forces and their legacies. Find their history at [history.com](https://www.history.com), and lesson plans and classroom activities at [readwritethink.org](https://www.readwritethink.org).

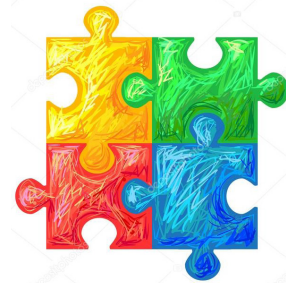
New Mental Health & Well-being Resource

The trauma associated with the pandemic and other events of the past year runs deep. With your well-being and mental health in mind, CTA has just launched a new Wellness Center. Multiple resources and tips, including links to our Mindful Mondays series, can help you cope with the mental and physical stresses of your classroom/school and life. Check it out at cta.org/wellnesscenter. And read our story on a few ways educators are staying healthy and positive on page 28.



INSIDE CALIFORNIA EDUCATION

Season 4 of the public television series has started, with stories from all over the state covering K-12 and community college issues, challenges and successes. Tune in on your public TV station or [insidecaled.org](https://www.insidecaled.org).



Autism Awareness Month: April

It's a time to increase understanding and acceptance of people with autism, help foster greater support and inspire a kinder, more inclusive world. Find information and resources at [autismspeaks.org](https://www.autismspeaks.org).

State's Per-Pupil Funding Inches Up

California ranks 38th in per-pupil funding, according to *Education Week's* Quality Counts 2020 report, based on 2017 data (the most recent available) adjusted for regional cost-of-living differences. That is \$2,434 below the national average, and far below what the top 10 states spend. Nevertheless, it's a gain over the previous year's ranking of 39, and the best ranking for the Golden State in 10 years. New figures will be available this summer.

State	Per-pupil expenditures (PPE), adjusted for regional cost differences (2017)	Rank
Vermont	\$22,506	1
New York	\$20,082	2
Connecticut	\$18,668	3
Alaska	\$18,493	4
Wyoming	\$18,221	5
New Jersey	\$17,707	6
Maine	\$17,464	7
District of Columbia	\$17,437	8
New Hampshire	\$17,057	9
Pennsylvania	\$16,506	10
National Average	\$13,301	
California	\$10,867	38



STAND! THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

Celebrate **International Workers' Day**, May 1, by watching *Stand!* on video on demand. The movie musical, set in 1919, is based on the Winnipeg general strike, and tells the story of an immigrant Romeo and Juliet battling for love and a better life in a time of social upheaval. A movement develops where they and other workers leave their jobs in protest, highlighting the value of fighting for human rights and social justice.

Stand! is union-made and deals with union issues that continue to be relevant and timely. What more do you need to know? Watch the trailer at stand-movie.com.

GET YOUR GUIDE

CTA's Instruction and Professional Development Department has created a new guide, "An Overview: Distance and Hybrid Teaching Practices." Find a practical, classroom-level review of distance and hybrid instructional practices for all educators, plus many useful resources. Download your copy at cta.org/ipd.



Quotes & Numbers

Compiled by **Julian Peeples**



2,400 to 1

Student-to-school-nurse ratio in California in 2018-19 (the most recent data available), according to KidsData.

\$15.3 BILLION

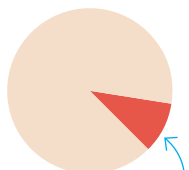
Amount California K-12 schools will receive as part of the American Rescue Plan COVID-19 relief package.

3.58 MILLION

COVID-19 cases in California, as of April 6.

58,541

COVID-19 deaths statewide, as of April 6.



10%

Percentage of the state's COVID-19 vaccine doses set aside for educators by Gov. Gavin Newsom in February.

“AS EDUCATORS, OUR JOB IS TO EDUCATE AND TEACH THE TRUTH — ALL OF OUR TRUTHS. THAT’S WHY WE HAVE FOUGHT SO HARD FOR ETHNIC STUDIES, SO THAT THESE TRUTHS AREN’T JUST CONSIDERED TO A DAY OR A WEEK OR A MONTH.”

—CTA President **E. Toby Boyd**, addressing the Equity and Human Rights Conference in February.

“We have an unprecedented opportunity to create the public schools all students — Black and white, Native and newcomer, Hispanic and Asian alike — need and deserve. Our work is not over.”

—NEA President **Becky Pringle**, upon President Biden’s signing of the American Rescue Plan into law.

“The Department of Education needs to recognize the trauma this pandemic has inflicted on our students and waive standardized testing for this academic year. Then, we must provide parents and teachers with resources to support our students as they resume in-person learning.”

—U.S. representative and former middle school principal **Jamaal Bowman**.

“This pandemic has taken the heaviest toll on students of color, low-income families, English learners, students in rural communities, and students with disabilities. I am committed to rolling up my sleeves and addressing this head-on because America’s students deserve nothing less.”

—**Miguel Cardona**, newly confirmed U.S. secretary of education.

“YOU CANNOT BE PART OF THE SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT IF YOU DO NOT SUPPORT THE RIGHTS OF WORKERS!”

—**Dolores Huerta**, legendary organizer and activist, at an event supporting California Charter Educators United.



Parents Say Keep Our Kids and Educators Safe

MANY EDUCATORS HAVE already been teaching in person for some time, and others are set to ease back into it this spring. A complete return to in-person instruction brings up many questions for educators and parents about safety.

CTA has been advocating for multilayered coronavirus health and safety measures, vaccines for educators, and the necessary funding to return to in-person instruction ([#OnlyWhenItsSafe](#)).

In the State Capitol and school districts throughout California, educators and their local associations continue to be a voice of reason defending community health, as some elected officials and small but very vocal groups clamor for schools to physically reopen, no matter the danger.

Despite the focus of news reports on these voices, a recent poll commissioned by CTA found that two-thirds of parents are satisfied with their child's education this school year and 75 percent believe that student and educator safety is more important than returning to in-person instruction as soon as possible. This is particularly true among respondents of color, whose communities have been hit harder by the pandemic.

As students return to classrooms, we need to uphold parents' trust by ensuring school districts follow the health guidelines to keep school communities safe.

Enforcement of state and county health regulations and our collectively bargained agreements is the next step to ensuring the safety of our communities. See page 16 for how to report safety violations.

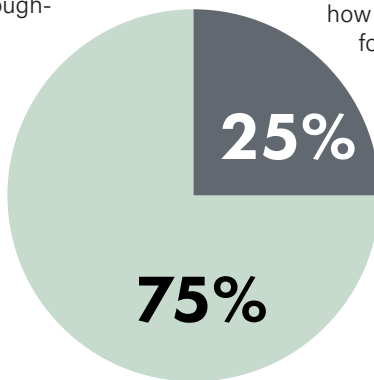
Opening and keeping our schools open for in-person instruction amid an ongoing pandemic will take all of us collaborating to protect our students, families and communities. Including students, educators, school staff, caregivers and families, more than half of California's 40 million residents are impacted by public schools. We are truly [#InThisTogether](#).

It will take the power of our solidarity and unity to overcome the coronavirus and fight racism.

SURVEY TAKEAWAYS

During March 9-16, Hart Research Associates interviewed 1,839 registered voters (including 661 public school parents) in California about their views on whether, when, and how the state's public schools should be reopened for in-school instruction. (For details about the survey, which was commissioned by CTA, see cta.org/covid-19.)

CTA and Hart Research held a virtual press conference on March 25 to announce survey results. The event included parents and educator Matthew Schneck speaking on behalf of students. Key findings:



75 percent of parents prioritize keeping students as safe as possible, as opposed to getting them back in classrooms as soon as possible.

- Majorities of voters (62 percent) and parents (70 percent) approve of the decisions their school district has made about whether, when, and how schools should reopen for in-person instruction, and 65 percent of parents are satisfied with their child's education in the current school year.

"While you hear the negative parents more frequently, they are the exception and not the rule," said Hart Research President Geoffrey Garin at the press conference.

- By large margins, voters (72 percent) and parents (75 percent) believe that the more important consideration in reopening schools should be keeping students, staff and families as safe as possible, as opposed to getting students back into classrooms as soon as possible.
- While a plurality of parents of color say schools are reopening at about the right pace, 40 percent of them think schools are opening too quickly, and only 17 percent say schools are opening too slowly. And while a majority of white parents say they are comfortable sending their own child to school for in-person instruction at this time, fewer than half of parents of color feel that way.

Continued on Page 16

Make Our Air Safe

All children should breathe clean air at school, especially in communities already hard-hit by COVID-19. Distancing is just one part of the safety equation. Check out our guide below. Find a PDF version to print out at cta.org/covid-19.

Limiting Our COVID-19 Exposure in Our Shared Air Space

HOW LONG

The time spent indoors with other people. We can reduce risk by reducing the amount of time people spend together indoors. In schools this can be accomplished by shorter days or hybrid models. This is why government health officials recommend limiting personal social gatherings with those from other households to less than two hours. Less time is less risk; longer time together increases risk.

HOW CLOSE

How close you are to other people. We can reduce this risk factor by increasing the distance everyone in the room is from each other. This is why public health agencies like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the California Department of Public Health continue to recommend social distancing when outside your home. Increasing the space between people can mean fewer people fit together in the indoor space — this mathematically reduces how much of the virus we might be exposed to. Smaller groups are less risky than larger groups. This is why CDPH officials and other experts on school safety have emphasized the importance of small, stable groups to prevent transmission and outbreaks.

HOW MUCH

How much of the virus people in the indoor space are exposed to. We can reduce the concentration of the virus people in the room may be exposed to in many ways, such as by wearing masks and improving ventilation and air filtration. If people are close together for long periods of time, reducing the virus's concentration becomes absolutely essential.

WAYS TO REDUCE EXPOSURE TO COVID-19 IN SHARED SPACES

Improved ventilation and air filtration

Regular asymptomatic testing for students and staff so infectious cases can be identified quickly and isolated early

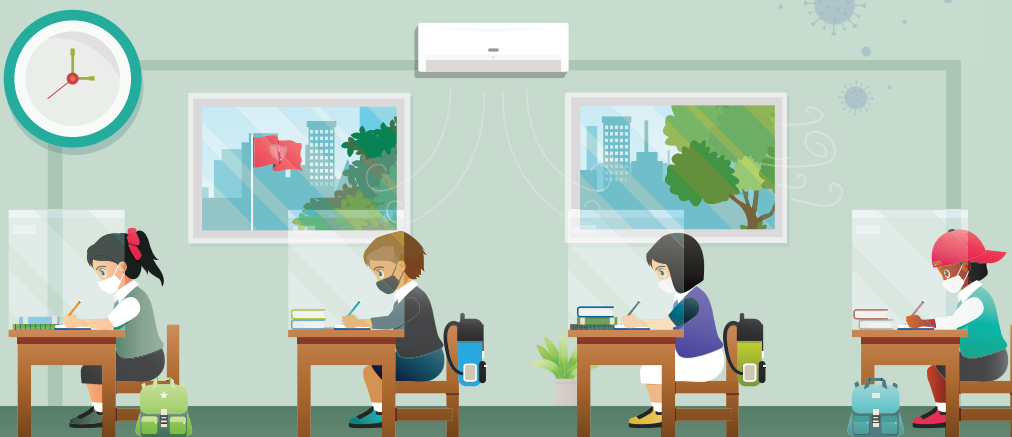
Vaccination opportunities for school communities, including parents and guardians

High-quality masks with a good fit provided to students and staff and properly worn

Keeping community COVID-19 rates low

Fewer people together in a shared space

Distance is just one part of the safety equation. It cannot be considered in isolation.



Report a Safety Violation



Use the QR code above to go directly to the Cal/OSHA online form to file a complaint. Details below.

You can report safety violations at your school through your CTA site rep or safety rep, who will follow up to make sure unsafe situations are addressed and take it to chapter leadership if necessary. They will also enter the case into the CTA Safety Violation Database.

You can also:

- Call the COVID-19 School Hotline at 833-422-4255 (Mon-Fri 8 a.m.–8 p.m., Sat-Sun 8 a.m.–5 p.m.) or go to caschoolsopening.powerappsportals.us (under the tab “Comments and Concerns”) to report a violation.
- File a complaint with Cal/OSHA at dir.ca.gov/dosh/complaint.htm (any images that show student or staff faces should be blurred before uploading).

Your CTA primary contact staff is available for assistance. For the latest information on the coronavirus, vaccines and more go to cta.org/COVID-19.

Continued from Page 14

“Parents of color are more likely to be cautious about schools opening too quickly, not too slowly,” Garin said. “Only 22 percent of Black parents feel comfortable sending their child to school for in-person instruction.”

- By 57 percent to 35 percent, parents say they are more worried about their children being infected at school or infecting family members than about their children falling behind academically if only offered remote learning. When schools do reopen, half of parents (51 percent) will opt to keep their child participating in remote learning from home.

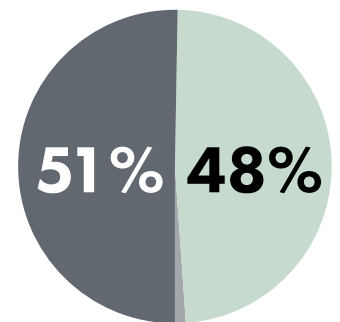
Said Garin, “Parents of color tend to be more concerned — they live in communities that have been affected by virus.”

“There will absolutely be parents — and I’ve spoken to them — who will not feel comfortable sending their kids to school in the fall, so there will have to be options for them,” said Matthew Schneck, a high school teacher and member of San Diego Education Association, at the press event.

- Large majorities of voters (78 percent) and parents (76 percent) think schools need to make major modifications to reopen for in-person instruction. What’s more, 71 percent of voters and 63 percent of parents say schools should reopen for in-person instruction only after teachers have had the chance to be vaccinated.



High school teacher Matthew Schneck at the press conference.



Parents are evenly divided about whether they’ll send their children back to schools when they reopen.

Top 5 Points From CDPH

ON MARCH 20, the California Department of Public Health issued a revision to its COVID-19 guidance for in-person instruction in schools. Key points:

- **Maximize space between seating and desks.** Distance teachers and other staff at least 6 feet away from students and other staff desks. Maintaining a minimum of 3 feet between student chairs is strongly recommended.
- **Use of a hybrid model is permitted; full reopening not required.** “In-person instruction” is defined as a school giving “all students in at least one grade the option to return for at least part of the school week.”
- **Reopening allowed when adjusted case rate < 25.** Schools may open for all grades in the purple tier when the adjusted case rate is less than 25 per 100,000 people per day, but they are not required to do so.
- **COVID safety plan.** Schools must complete and post a COVID-19 Safety Plan to their website prior to reopening for in-person instruction.
- **Enforcement.** Safety concerns should be reported immediately to your chapter leadership.



Q&A

Audrey Chan on the Intersection of Art and Social Justice

The artist and educator, who is creating this year's Day of the Teacher/ESP Day poster (see draft, inset), has worked on several high-profile artworks and murals in Los Angeles, where she lives.

When did you know you wanted to be an artist?

I've known that I was an artist since I first started to draw as a toddler. Art is where I found my confidence, joy and sense of self. I knew that I wanted to pursue a life as an artist around first grade, as soon as I started learning about artists' lives and biographies. Over the years, I've been lucky to have supportive parents and teachers who encouraged me to pursue a professional career as an artist.

Was there a special teacher who was influential for you?

My art teacher throughout elementary school was the inspiring and hilarious Ms. A. I remember the time spent in her art room exploring materials as being my favorite part of the school day. In college, I considered pursuing a career in government instead of art. My mentor, Randall Exon, told me that my art would be my contribution to society. I've held that guidance close to my heart and I'm still trying to live up to it.

There is a social justice focus to your projects. Why is that important to you?

My passions for art and social change have been inseparable since I was young. I experienced incidents of racism from classmates that opened my eyes to discrimination. As I learned more about American history,

I connected with the stories of people who faced bias and marginalization and was inspired by the work of individuals and movements to make society more just and equitable.

What role do you think art plays in social justice?

All forms of art have the power to appeal to our deepest sense of empathy and to communicate the complexity and nuance of human experience. When art and social justice come together, especially in the form of storytelling and narrative change, that power is multiplied and hopefully encourages people to see their own role in their communities and to not turn away from injustice.

Talk about how you brought this year's theme to life.

The theme "Cultivating Minds and Healing Hearts" brought to mind the image of a field of California poppies to represent the nurturing role of educators and education support professionals in students' lives, growing



their capacity for knowledge and empathy. It has been an incredibly challenging year, and I wanted to create vignettes of healing and connection among the golden blooms. I deeply respect the work of California's educators and ESPs, so it's truly an honor to create advocacy-based artwork with CTA.

Look for this year's poster at cta.org/dayoftheteacher and cta.org/espday. You'll also find ways to celebrate educators on their special days: May 12 (Day of the Teacher) and May 18 (ESP Day).

Promise and Opportunity

Heather Calomese takes on special education in California

HEATHER CALOMESE hopes to be residing in California by late spring. The state's director of the Special Education Division at the California Department of Education (CDE), appointed in mid-August, "got caught in the COVID tangle" and has not been able to move from Chicago just yet.

In the meantime, she spends her days on calls and web conferences with CDE colleagues and partners, listening and learning. Her goal: to improve equity and outcomes for California's 800,000 special education students.

"I'm building my context for special education and education in general across California," she says, noting that while her previous job in Illinois and her current job have similarities, there are nuances in state laws, policies and procedures, and California is considerably bigger.

Of course, she's witnessed the challenges California special educators have dealt with this academic year. "Teaching is a human-centered, interactive experience, especially special education, and it's difficult to engage students over a virtual platform," says Calomese, who taught special ed for almost a decade in Chicago and Iowa. "The pandemic has highlighted areas we still need to pay attention to, work toward, and collectively problem-solve. But I see areas of promise and opportunity."

Calomese will be a keynote speaker at CTA's first-ever Special Education Conference, April 30–May 2 (see box).

She is quick to praise special educators' adaptability during the pandemic. "We've seen their creativity in doing whatever it takes to support students and families." Examples include "getting around barriers of accommodations and modifications; really looking at what are multimodal ways to get information to students, how we embed some of the different modalities that students need into a virtual setting; the use of additional technology; making engagement a little more dynamic while they're in a virtual setting"

Now that schools are returning to in-person instruction, the mental health of special educators and students is at the forefront for her. "Everybody has gone through a traumatic year, so transitioning back to in-person settings is not just 'plug the machine back in and go.' We have to create spaces to learn, process and heal."

Calomese sees her role, and that of her division, as ensuring that local educational agencies have what they need to implement the core of IDEA (the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). "CDE can't mandate what programs look like — that's left to districts — but we can be thought partners and problem solvers, and provide additional guidance and best practices."

She is passionate about equity and social justice in special ed, and seeks to address "the systemic inequities and ways in which our systems don't provide for students with disabilities, and how we can shift these systems." She has denounced the miscategorization of English learners, students of color and others as special ed students, and has stressed the importance of special ed students learning with general population students to encourage engagement and acceptance in both groups.

Calomese is also concerned about the special educator pipeline. "What are ways we can support folks who are just entering? It's critical to partner with higher education to ensure we attract and retain a thriving workforce with multiple pathways to leadership positions in the field."

Teacher workload "is a huge issue," she says. "We must continue to look for ways to reduce the administrative burden on special ed teachers. These are the things that keep me up at night when you think about why teachers transition out. What are the right solutions, and how do we go about doing that?"

Despite the critical issues before her, Calomese is confident that special ed in California is on solid ground. "Special educators will always rise and have always risen to the occasion. It is humbling and inspiring in how they show up and get it done." ■



Heather Calomese

CTA Special Education Conference

CTA's inaugural Special Education Conference

(2021 Home Edition!), April 30–May 2, is a virtual event for both special educators and general educators. Workshops focus on core topics including instruction, identification, IEPs and behavior. The theme is "Kaleidoscope." Free to members; register at cta.org/conferences.

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Race, Religion and Politics

The complexities of being Asian

By **Dina Tsuyuki**

AS I WATCH the news and see segments about violence targeted at Asian Americans, I am in tears, as I too am Asian. I feel sadness in my heart; however, in reality, this is what a person like me has felt throughout a lifetime of growing up in America. As a fourth-generation Japanese American, I know the sting of inequality.

The recent shootings in Atlanta resulted in the deaths of eight people, including six of Asian descent. Local and federal authorities are still investigating whether this was a hate crime — a travesty, considering the shooter targeted these massage parlors and knew they primarily employed Asian women. Less than 10 days later, another mass shooting occurred, and the Atlanta deaths were no longer in the public eye. Do we matter?

All four of my grandparents were in the Tule Lake internment camps during World War II. My grandmother instilled in me that not everything is equal. Being a young bride looking forward to all that life had to offer, Grandma Helen had so much taken away — a house, her and her husband's life savings, and everything she owned packed in a small suitcase as she departed to the unknown, which would be the next four years of her life. Three of her four children would be born at the camps, and it will always sting for them to write "Tule Lake" as their birthplace.

Growing up Japanese American was still a challenge in the 1970s. In the small agricultural town in which I lived, there was no shedding the features that make me uniquely Asian, and I always felt I was judged by my outward appearance. Being different forces you to keep quiet, to be shy, and I lived my entire childhood that way — not wanting to stand out. Who would have thought I would become a high school English teacher?

As a kid I never felt that I was on an equal playing field. Not only did my appearance make me different, but my religion did

as well. I never wanted to let people know that I was Buddhist, as many parents of schoolmates didn't welcome someone who did not believe in God. For this reason, religion is a topic I seldom discuss. As a child this was difficult to compartmentalize. I remember thinking: It wasn't that I didn't believe in God, it was just that I was Buddhist.



Dina Tsuyuki

I remember the teasing on the playground. Boys always called me "Dina Cheena." Discrimination on the playground was a part of growing up, but experiencing it from adults was also demoralizing. Not making sports teams or being chosen for extracurricular activities as a teenager further brought me face to face with the inequalities in a small town.

Moving to Southern California for college opened up opportunities for me to feel accepted. I was finally able to be me. However, there were still remarks about ethnicity, and the bias about speaking perfect English. I can remember a college professor asking a student who spoke Hawaiian Pidgin English to leave class, stating, "There is no place for that here."

In addition, much of the English curriculum in college was based on stories from the Bible, which also left me at a disadvantage. I remember a professor saying, "If you don't know the Bible, you shouldn't be an English major." This brought me back to the uneasiness that I felt about being Buddhist and thinking, "Damn it for throwing a wrench into my potential as an English teacher." Somehow, I managed to muddle through the course, but it ingrained in me a feeling that I might not be a legitimate English teacher due to my religion.

After years of living in Southern California, I remember landing my first teaching job. The department chair's first remark was, "That's odd that someone like you is an English teacher." I had the nerve to reply, "It is the only language I speak." An

English teacher should know that you can't judge a book by its cover!

There is no escaping it; my features are something that will always be a part of me. A close teacher friend once stated that he loves how Armenian students are so proud of their culture. I agreed, but embarrassedly thought to myself that I was not proud to be Japanese American because it kept me from being "equal." This saddened me and made me feel like less of a person due to the discrimination I experienced throughout life, but it also was a harsh reality for me.

As a teenager in the 1980s, Ronald Reagan was my president. He signed my Physical Fitness Certificate, he contributed to bringing down the Berlin Wall, and he issued redress money to interned Japanese Americans. I do not like to publicize my political views, but I am a Republican. In early 2021 and over the past four years I've been saddened that being a Republican

"After I landed my first teaching job, the department chair's first remark was, 'That's odd that someone like you is an English teacher.' I had the nerve to reply, 'It is the only language I speak.'"

has taken on a different cast. Now it's a negative thing to be patriotic, and waving a flag is linked to extreme groups. I was disheartened when the former president referred to COVID-19 as the "Chinese Virus." Once again, I am feeling that "someone like me" does not belong, in this case as a Republican.

Thinking back to kindergarten, I remember learning all the songs about patriotism and the lyrics: *This land is your land, this land is my land, this land was made for you and me.* I was hopeful then as a young girl entering school, and in the almost 50 years since, I thought we would have made more progress in America. ■

Dina Tsuyuki has been a high school English teacher in Southern California for 27 years. A member of Whittier Secondary Education Association, she and her husband raised twin daughters who are now in college.

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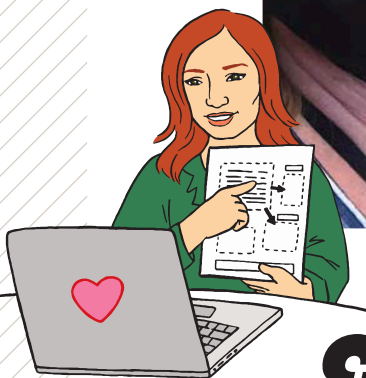
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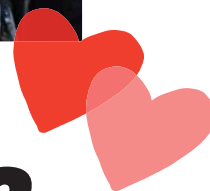
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JoDee Bonales in her fifth grade classroom. "We're focusing on what is most important for students to be prepared for next year."



Filling Gaps & Healing Hearts



How educators are addressing students' academic, emotional needs as pandemic enters year two

Story by **Julian Peeples** Illustrations by **Audrey Chan**

"THE PANDEMIC JUST exposed the gaps that have always been there," says Terra Doby, a Richmond kindergarten teacher who is working in a new after-school tutoring intervention program for second through eighth grade. "I hope this is the beginning of the work our community and our students need."

Throughout California and across the country, educators are stepping up to safely support students, their families and one another through the pandemic, working harder than ever to show that even though most classrooms are closed, the care and compassion have never stopped. Lauded as heroic during the initial months of distance learning, educators' efforts have been overshadowed in recent months by growing concern about the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 and widespread lack of in-person



"[Intensive tutoring] empowers students. That's what keeps them coming back every day."

—Terra Doby,
United Teachers of
Richmond

instruction for a year now. Education "experts" have expressed this in a woefully oversimplified and deficiency-based term: "learning loss."

Concerns about learning loss lead the nightly news today, with some politicians and parent groups weaponizing it to force teachers to return to schools before it is safe to do so.

Despite this narrative, educators have been focusing on supporting their students' unique needs since the beginning of crisis distance learning. They've been working together to make connections, meet students where they are, make sure they feel seen and heard, and help them along their academic paths. It's a part of the story that often gets left out when discussing studies about learning loss that are based on assessments we don't use in California, have insufficient sample sizes, or aren't representative of student populations and experiences.



“We try to keep up with what educators need, which are skills that help them help their students.”

—Laurie Roberts, ed tech coach and member, *United Teachers of Richmond*

“Learning loss is a calculation masquerading as a concept — a shallow, naive, ridiculous concept,” wrote math educator John Ewing in *Forbes*.

There’s no disagreement that every single student is being impacted by COVID-19 and there are resources available, so what can educators do to help mitigate those impacts? As part of last year’s COVID relief bill for schools (SB 98), all school districts were required to create Learning Continuity Plans outlining how they intend to support every student. This year’s school reopening legislation (SB 86) includes \$4.6 billion for districts to address “learning loss related to COVID-19 school closures.” The approaches vary across the state, but the caring, expertise and dedication of educators are constant and inspiring, and the efforts are making a difference.

An oft-cited McKinsey & Co. study from late last year warning that students are between five and nine months behind on average in math due to the pandemic recommends numerous solutions to support students, including high-intensity tutoring, acceleration academies, and reimagining curriculum, teaching, and technological and



“We tap into different learning needs and include lessons that make students feel seen and valued.”

—Gabriela Orozco Gonzalez, *Montebello Teachers Association*

supporting infrastructures — strategies CTA educators across the state are already leading.

“Learning is happening. Teaching is happening,” says CTA President E. Toby Boyd. “Let’s talk about resilience and recovery support for students that need extra help, and the educators who are leading those efforts!”

CURRICULUM REVIEW, SUMMER SCHOOL

“It’s hard to determine where kids are, and there are holes all over the place,” says JoDee Bonales, a fifth grade teacher and president of Ceres Unified Teachers Association. “We’re trying to get a stable environment and then focus on what is most important for them to be prepared for next year.”

When school wound down in crisis distance learning last year, Ceres Unified School District teachers came together to discuss the next school year’s curriculum and potential changes needed. The approach was complicated by changing health conditions, which meant Ceres schools opened the year in distance learning and then shifted to a hybrid model in November.

Bonales says educators met with their colleagues who teach the grades above and below theirs to determine areas students needed more work on, with a keen eye on concepts that are foundational to further learning, such as in math. While reading skills can be taught in other content areas, many math standards require deliberate



Vertical Conversations for 2020-21 Curriculum Planning

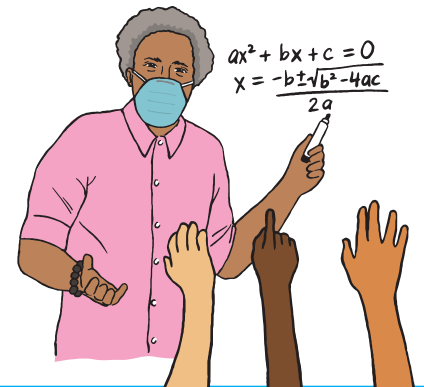
Step 1	Current grade level/course teachers document unmet learning goals for each class.
Step 2	Vertical conversations between current and subsequent grade level/course teachers to identify a core set of learning areas and skills that should be revisited in 2020-21.
Step 3	Teachers plan for how to incorporate identified gaps into the 2020-21 curriculum.

Source: Ceres Unified School District



“What are the most essential essentials? Districts need to let teachers make decisions that are best for their students.”

—**JoDee Bonales**,
president of Ceres Unified Teachers Association



attention to ensure students are able to move on to more complex lessons.

“We talked about what didn’t get taught last year. All of our sites came together, and it was done by the teachers,” says Bonales of the 730-member local association. “What are the most essential essentials and how can we focus on them? Districts need to allow teachers to make the decisions that are best for their students.”

The approach attracted attention as far away as Ohio, where the Cleveland Metropolitan Schools Learning Loss Toolkit includes the Ceres approach as a case study.

“Teachers are the most knowledgeable of the specific competencies, topics, and skills that students may not have received or mastered ... due to school closures,” the report reads.

Students are excited to be back in classrooms together as a community, Bonales says, and educators are hard at work figuring out how to best support their social and emotional needs, so they can learn the academic fundamentals they need to progress. Bonales adds that some

students are excelling in the distance environment, and educators need to be mindful of supporting their learning as well.

“Some of my students are thriving, and I don’t want to hold them back,” she says. “The gap is wider than before.”

In the effort to fill that gap, the district is stepping up summer school this year, negotiating increased pay for educators to ensure students have familiar, knowledgeable and experienced support they need.

“The district came to us as a local and said, ‘We want our teachers to teach summer school,’” Bonales says. “I signed up to do it myself.”



Patty Domingo

with students who need reading support and with her kindergartners. She participates in the Program for Academic Success, a West Contra Costa Unified School District tutoring program

TUTORING: STUDENTS ARE SEEN AND HEARD

United Teachers of Richmond (UTR) member Terra Doby remembers struggling with reading as a young child and how it affected her. She says the experience informs and empowers her work



“If we can’t address race and equity issues with each other, how can we help our students?”

—Asedo Wilson,
United Teachers of Richmond



“We’ll need time to fill the gaps, but the kids are very resilient.”

—Yesenia Guerrero,
Lennox Teachers Association

that supports approximately 60 African American students experiencing difficulty with reading literacy.

Four days a week, Doby works with five second grade students for an hour — a setting that affords the kind of engagement they need to best learn.

“I noticed students were longing for interaction. They were feeling unseen,” says Doby. “Working in small groups is great because they feel seen and heard.”

A January report by the Learning Policy Institute explores the use of high-quality tutoring as an effective intervention strategy to support students during the pandemic, finding that successful tutoring has four main characteristics:

- It employs credentialed educators.
- It is provided at least three days a week for at least 30 minutes, as part of the regular school day, in groups of five or fewer.
- It invests in staff capacity building.
- It builds relationships between students and teachers.

“While much of what has been lost during this pandemic cannot be replaced, a well-designed, well-funded tutoring initiative is one way we can increase instructional time for students and provide instructional support for teachers,” the report reads.

Since Doby works with a vulnerable population of students, she says it’s unclear whether their needs are caused by the pandemic or if it exposed pre-pandemic learning gaps associated with inequality. Either way, Doby’s attention to their social and emotional needs, daily affirmations to support their confidence and self-esteem, and ongoing skills practice to support their reading are making a difference — and they’re having a lot of fun, too.

“They’re eating it up! I’m seeing lots of growth!” says Doby, who drops off materials at her students’ homes, including valentines for all her kindergartners. “It empowers them, and that’s what keeps them coming back every day. Just because you’re a reluctant or non-fluent reader doesn’t mean you can’t learn and grow.”

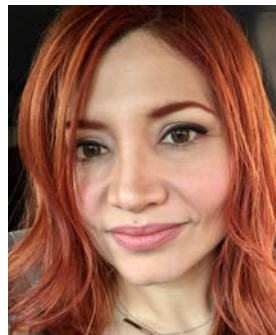
Doby is one of 10 UTR educators employed by the district for the targeted program, which pays market-rate wages for experienced teachers — a fact that shows the district is invested in the goal of providing resources to students, Doby says.

“This investment will help students grow and thrive.”

EDUCATORS TEACHING EDUCATORS

During the winter surge, Los Angeles County was the global epicenter for COVID-19 spread, with underresourced, primarily Black and brown communities disproportionately impacted. With more than 1.2 million cases and 23,000 deaths countywide, the virus has touched many students and educators alike.

“We’re surviving together as a community. We’ve lost a lot,” says Montebello Teachers Association (MTA) member Gabriela Orozco Gonzalez, who not only has eight students who lost a close relative to COVID, but whose own father died from the virus. “We’re in a unique situation as a community. How do we empower students and parents? By being present.”



Myra Pasquier

In Montebello, the path to this support began a few years ago when MTA became the first local association to win contractually protected teacher voice on what kind of professional development educators need to best support Montebello students. Pre-pandemic, teachers teaching teachers had a huge impact, and during distance learning, perhaps even more. The result is a virtual academy coming this summer modeled after CTA’s Good Teaching Conference.

“Teachers in Montebello are looking at education in a unique way, tapping into different learning needs and including lessons that make students feel seen and valued,” Gonzalez says. “How can we tie this into everything we’re doing to target their needs and fill the gap? How can I build community?”

The response was massive, not only from educators who want to attend, but also those who want to lead sessions, with submissions ranging from supporting students during distance learning to educational technology and virtual field trips. ➔

Gonzalez says the teaching environment has spurred interest in creative approaches to engagement, with educators taking risks to be lifelong learners for their students.

“We all became first-year teachers again because of the pandemic,” says Patty Domingo, MTA member and Teacher on Special Assignment for the district’s Teacher Induction Program. “It pushed us to adapt.”

Teacher and MTA member Myra Pasquier says their approach to professional development is about building community among educators working together to support one another and focus on the unique needs of their students.

“It’s been learning together. We have to find ways for them to collaborate with each other,” Pasquier says of MTA’s 1,200 educators. “It’s been difficult, but I know when we go back it will be different because of what we’ve learned.”

In Richmond, UTR educators are also harnessing the power

of professional development to support students through unfamiliar times. Laurie Roberts, a teacher on special assignment, educational technology coach and UTR member, began holding learning sessions on instructional technology for educators last year, as well as office hours to support their new needs. This



Continued on Page 55

“LEARNING LOSS”? NO, SAY EDUCATORS

“Students aren’t losing anything. They’re learning differently. They’re learning a lot of different skills. It’s not traditional, but they are definitely learning.”

—**Yesenia Guerrero**, *Lennox Teachers Association*

“I hate the term, because you learn even when you’re not in class. If you’re going to call it ‘learning loss,’ then it was happening when we were in person.”

—**Asedo Wilson**, *United Teachers of Richmond*

“I understand there are students who aren’t able to process this way, so I’m OK with the term, but it negates all the hard work educators are doing. When I hear ‘learning loss,’ it feels like it’s our fault.”

—**Terra Doby**, *United Teachers of Richmond*



“I think it’s part of the top-down structure of education where corporations determine what students should know, instead of people who have connections with them.”

—**Doug Patzkowski**, *Montebello Teachers Association*

“‘Learning loss’ puts such a bitter taste in everyone’s mouths and has a negative connotation. We don’t know they have learning loss. It might be curriculum loss.”

—**Kirsten Barnes**, *Hanford Secondary Educators Association*

“Our students are learning so many other skills during this time. Their academic tech skills have been growing so much. This year, they’ve become experts on multiple platforms.”

—**Myra Pasquier**, *Montebello Teachers Association*

Brokers of Hope

Counselors an essential part of student achievement

By Julian Peebles

“I DON’T THINK everyone understood how crucial social-emotional learning was to achievement,” says alternative education school counselor Elvia Estrella in Sweetwater Union High School District. “We push academics, but we forget about the students behind the academics. Our kids are going through the same things we are, and we need to be more empathetic.”

Estrella and school counselors across the state are addressing a major part of the pandemic learning effort — supporting the emotional needs of students who have experienced trauma, providing vital resources, and showing them someone cares. Much of their time in distance learning has been spent attempting to track down students who disappear suddenly, dropping off virtual classrooms when a crisis hits home.

Estrella says calls with students routinely include tears and stories about sick or passed relatives, and even health problems of their own — one high school student had been sick in bed with COVID-19 for three weeks, while another ended a lengthy video conversation by revealing he had been considering suicide.

“I’m doing more therapy remotely during the pandemic than I ever did in person as a social worker,” says Estrella, a member of Sweetwater Counseling and Guidance Association. “As school counselors, we’re brokers of hope. We need to understand as we move out of the pandemic that students are still going to have trauma. We will support them through it and let them know they’re not alone — we’ll get through this together.”

In the Central Valley, Hanford West High School counselor Kirsten Barnes has been back in a hybrid model with two cohorts since November, but it’s no easier for her to track down students, and she’s especially reluctant to pull them out of class when they only get an hour in person with each teacher a week.



Kelly Sikkema/Unsplash

“It’s been hard because normally when I get a student ghosting me, I can find them,” says Barnes, a member of Hanford Secondary Educators Association. “I’ve never met some of my students in person or even seen their faces.”

For students Barnes has interacted with, she’s noticed a lot more patience and empathy since the return to school. Conversations that previously started with personal issues now begin with inquiries about Barnes and her family’s health. A 15-year-old girl who recently shared that she had lost grandparents to COVID and that her parents were experiencing financial problems showed striking resilience in her perspective.

“But I guess we have to be thankful for what we have,” Barnes recounts the girl saying, her voice breaking slightly. “That right there is why I come to work every day.”

Barnes says, educators need to be mindful that students bring two backpacks to school every day: one with books and supplies, and one with their emotions and trauma. Schools need to support their social and emotional needs first to be able to help with academic needs.

“We can’t just open school like usual. We need to find out where they are,” she says. “And it’s hard to meet students where they are, because there’s no common understanding of what that means. I see educators struggling because everyone is blaming the teachers for everything.”

Estrella says we could all be more graceful, with students, educators and ourselves, to build the relationships and trust needed to help students and communities.

“We’re all coming back with trauma, and if we don’t build trauma-sensitive schools, we’re going to miss the important work,” says Estrella. “We have resilient kids. We need to understand their stories and create a system that helps them learn.” ■



Elvia Estrella



Kirsten Barnes

Laura García López says taking time to replenish yourself helps with your mental health. “If you can’t take care of your mental health, you can’t take care of your students.”



What About You?

Educators’ mental health challenges during a pandemic — and how to boost your morale

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin

For Kristen Acosta, virtual instruction and online staff meetings have begun to blur; every day seems like Groundhog Day. At times she feels melancholy. “Being in crisis mode for a full year wears on you,” says the sixth grade teacher at Merlinda Elementary School in West Covina. “I miss my teacher friends, and I’m tired of teaching to a bunch of black squares because students don’t turn on their cameras. I’m stressed out. My blood pressure has risen.”

Adrienne Solorio, a resource teacher at Center Elementary School in Fairfield, has experienced migraines and anxiety. She stopped visiting social media sites, where people berate teachers for not returning to in-person learning, using terms like “lazy” and “selfish.” Meanwhile, the single mom works 12-hour days teaching from home and cares for her 7-year-old son.

Mary Wiegmann, president of Romoland Teachers Association, has been teaching a fourth



Kristen Acosta

“I have learned to worry about only the things I can control.”

—Kristen Acosta, Teachers Association of West Covina

and fifth grade combination hybrid class since August at Romoland Elementary School. Transitioning to different types of instruction — and meeting the needs of her stressed-out members — has given her anxiety and sleepless nights.

WHETHER WORKING REMOTELY, teaching in socially distanced classrooms, or combining online and in-person learning, educators are experiencing stress as never before.

EdWeek Research Center’s survey from November shows that teacher morale has plummeted during the pandemic. Of 817 teachers surveyed, three-quarters say their morale is lower than it was pre-pandemic. The survey says teachers are trying to be strong for their students and shielding them from their feelings of stress and burnout.

Educators say they are working harder than ever before — averaging eight hours a

Riding horses helps Mary Wiegmann relieve some of her stress as she juggles teaching and leadership during the pandemic.

“In times of stress, I list all the things that went wrong. Next, I list all the things I’m thankful for. I usually remember far more wonderful things than negative.”

—Mary Wiegmann,
Romoland Teachers Association president



week longer during the pandemic, reports EdSource.

“Most nights I am working until my eyes don’t function,” says Solorio, a member of the Travis Unified Teachers Association. “Back in December I was having a hard time breathing. I thought I had COVID. I went to the doctor and found instead I was having a panic attack.”

Working in survival mode

Acosta, a member of the Teachers Association of West Covina, says she is sometimes online from 7 in the morning until 5 at night, plus she is supervising her 15-year-old who is home doing online school.

“It’s a roller coaster of emotions. I’m questioning my every move. Nobody has written a handbook on this, and I haven’t taken courses on how to teach remotely. I’m trying to engage kids on the computer. And now we’re being told there will be standardized testing”

She finally decided to make time for herself and go for walks in the morning before she begins teaching from home. At midday she makes a point of going outside for a few minutes of sunshine.

“I have learned to worry about only the things I can control,” she says. “I tell my students that we are always faced with adversity, and how we react to that adversity builds character.”

Teachers say that as the pandemic continues, students are less engaged in learning, which makes them feel anxious and worried.

“There was a big push in the beginning of the year for students to have their cameras and microphones on,” says Perry Shields, a drama and film appreciation teacher at Oscar de la Hoya Ánimo Charter High School in Los Angeles. “But there’s so much activity going on at home with noise and parents and siblings walking around, it’s not possible. Students, understandably, didn’t want to broadcast their homelife. But it’s very difficult for me to gauge their understanding.”



Adrienne
Solorio

Shields tends to be his own worst critic and focus on what he is doing wrong. Lately, the Asociación de Maestros Unidos member reminds himself that he’s doing the best he can under extremely challenging circumstances. And he’s given up junk food and is eating healthier to stay more positive.

As challenges have increased for families struggling with income loss, illness and emotional problems, some teachers have felt overwhelmed.

“It’s been hard for me to absorb what these families are going through in this crisis,” says Laura García López, a speech and language therapist for the preschool program at Love Elementary in Alameda. “My families are having very hard times, and I’ve been absorbing some of their sadness. I have learned that I don’t always have to offer them a solution. Sometimes you have to just be a really good listener. I tell them that we will get through this together.”



Perry Shields cut out junk food and eats healthy to help stay positive.



STAY SANE AND POSITIVE

PHYLLIS HALL, a psychologist and counselor at Long Beach City College, encourages educators to remind themselves of some important facts if they are feeling blue. The Long Beach City College Faculty Association member suggests the following:

- Remember we do amazing work. We transform lives. We educate people from all walks of life and help them find success. That is a talent not everyone has.
- Keep in mind that this, too, shall pass. While the pandemic has lingered, it won't last forever.
- Set reasonable expectations for yourself and others. Remind yourself that there are things outside of your control and that you are doing your best in difficult times.
- Set aside a cheerful, dedicated workspace if you are working from home.
- Seek support from your peers. Reach out with calls, emails or Zoom — even though we're all Zoomed out! Don't isolate yourself.
- Do things that make you happy. Exercise. Enjoy the sunshine and get some vitamin D. Stretch. Go for walks. Meditate. Do yoga. And don't forget to breathe.

Boundaries and emotions

García López, a member of Alameda Education Association, is trying to regulate her emotions by thinking things through before taking action.

"In the beginning of the pandemic, things were happening so fast I felt I was jumping around like Whac-A-Mole and putting out fires," she says. "Now, I am trying to take a more pragmatic approach. I think about how I want to respond to a stressful situation, rather than just impulsively react to it."

She's also reaching out to groups of like-minded educators for support and setting boundaries, such as having a separate workspace at home and walking away from it at the end the workday.

"Sometimes we feel we can't say no. Or we feel that we should work nonstop and be martyrs and think something is wrong with us if we don't work 12- or 14-hour days. If there's one thing I've learned in the pandemic, it's that if you don't take time to replenish yourself, you can't take care of your mental health. And if you can't take care of your mental health, you can't take care of your students."



Juggling takes a toll

For CTA leaders in a pandemic, it's very stressful. They are not only teaching in new ways, but also making decisions that won't please everybody. Wiegmann, president of the Romoland Teachers Association, is stretched thin. Numerous meetings were held to negotiate the return to school in March for hybrid instruction — how to implement safety measures, such as dividing students into cohorts, arranging classrooms to provide for social distancing, and putting plastic partitions between students.

"I have just one day a week release time to handle RTA business, but during the pandemic it has required much more than that. I make time to listen and connect with my members. Each one is unique, and no two teachers are dealing with the exact same things in a pandemic. It's a lot of responsibility. I want our association to make the right decisions for our entire membership, not only for this year but for years to come."

Wiegmann relieves stress by talking with family and friends and riding her horses. She also tries to focus on the positive rather than the negative when she is feeling overwhelmed.

"In times of stress, I list all the things that went wrong. Next, I list all the things I'm thankful for. I usually remember far more wonderful things that have happened than negative."

"I've learned I don't always have to offer a solution. Sometimes you have to just be a really good listener."

—**Laura García López**,
Alameda Education Association

“New habits and new friends have helped me to get through this — as well as not responding to parents and administrators 24/7.”

—Mary Garrison, Association of Colton Educators

Backlash hurts morale

When the pandemic first hit, teachers were hailed as heroes. Parents declared they never knew teachers worked so hard and called them miracle workers.

But over time admiration has waned, say teachers. Parents have become frustrated with online learning — as well as with hybrid scheduling where students are in the classroom on a part-time basis — because it interferes with parents’ schedules. Some teachers feel as though they are working under a microscope, with parents listening to them and interrupting to ask questions or make comments.

Mary Garrison, resource specialist at Cooley Ranch Elementary School and a member of the Association of Colton Educators executive board, has seen community members blast educators on social media. As a parent of a child in the school district, she is part of the parent Facebook group, but is now taking a break from it for the sake of her mental health.

“It’s not safe for me to have 10 people from different households over, but they think I should be in a classroom with 30 kids from different households,” she observes. “They are angry because they want their kids back in school and for things to go back to the way they were before the pandemic.”

Garrison copes with the stress of the political divide — and her greatly increased workload — by focusing on what she can control: her health.

“When the pandemic started, I was 30 pounds heavier and on blood pressure medication. I started exercising on my stationary bike and making better food choices. I joined a movie club where a group of friends watch movies over Zoom every week and then socialize. I created a group chat on an app where teachers can help each other and be a team. New habits and new friends have helped me to get through this — as well as not responding to parents and administrators 24/7.”

Putting things in perspective

Byron Greenberg, a clinical psychologist who works with CTA’s Survive and Thrive program to help educators experiencing burnout, advises teachers not to take things personally.

“Anger is precipitated by frustrations. COVID has undone a lot of expectations and produced a significant amount of anger. As teachers, you know your goals are positive and you are not perfect but doing your best. Parents aren’t really angry at teachers; they’re just *angry*. It’s not a personal thing or a slight on you personally. Don’t let this impact your self-esteem.”



During the pandemic Mary Garrison has lost 30 pounds by exercising and making better food choices.

Greenberg also suggests that educators who are experiencing anxiety, stress, depression or other mental health issues take advantage of their district’s Employee Assistance Program and seek professional help from a therapist.

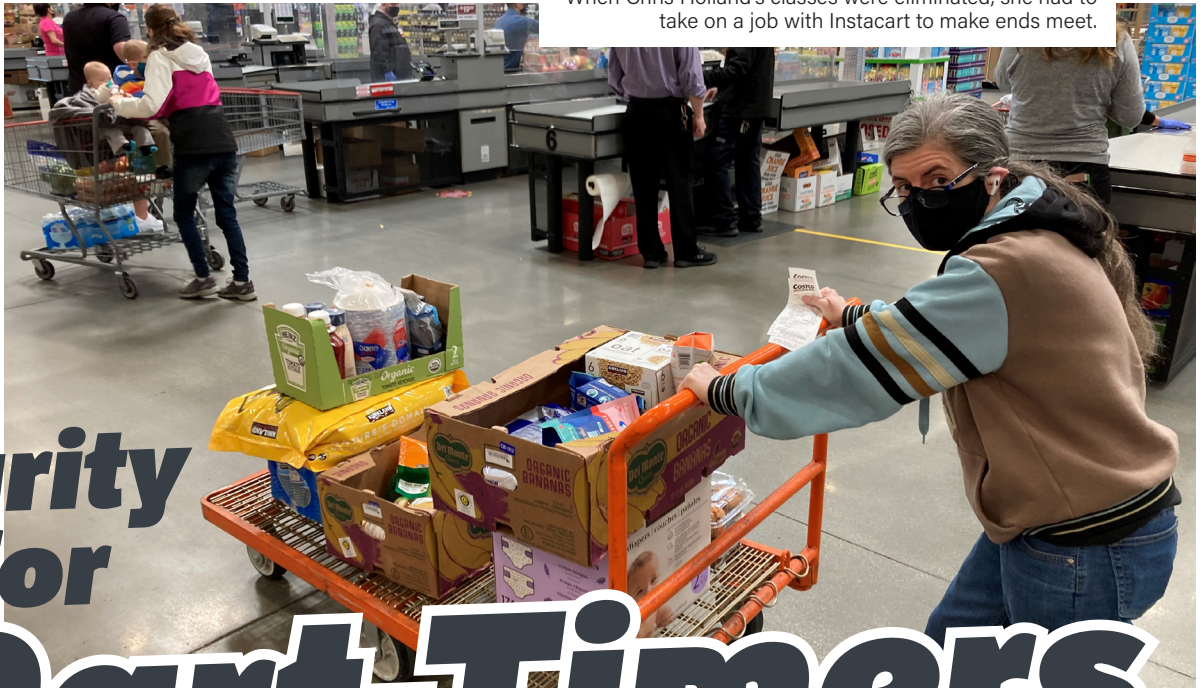
“There is a tremendous amount of self-sacrifice in teaching, but I implore teachers to take care of themselves,” he says. “You cannot pour from an empty cup, so please make sure to invest some of your energy in your mental, physical and spiritual well-being.” ■



CTA’S NEW WELLNESS CENTER!

WITH YOUR WELL-BEING and mental health in mind, CTA has just launched a new Wellness Center. Multiple resources and tips especially for educators can help you cope with the mental and physical stresses of both the classroom/school and life during a pandemic. Check it out at cta.org/wellnesscenter.

When Chris Holland's classes were eliminated, she had to take on a job with Instacart to make ends meet.



Parity for Part-Timers

Adjunct community college faculty face big challenges

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin

CHRIS HOLLAND has been teaching communication studies part time in Bakersfield College for a decade, hoping it might lead to a full-time tenured position. Recently, classes that she was scheduled to teach were eliminated, leaving her with just three units. So Holland, who is a professor and has a master's degree, works for Instacart to pay the bills.

Community college part-timers like Holland are known as adjunct faculty. The Community College Association (CCA) members struggle to survive in regular times, but life in a pandemic has become even more stressful, as some colleges have cut classes and side jobs have dried up. Before the pandemic, many adjuncts spent hours driving from college to college as "freeway flyers," but most work online now.

Adjuncts are paid much less than what full-time faculty make, and by law must have the same minimum



"We are afraid to speak up, because we are at-will employees."

—Chris Holland, Kern CCD/CCA

qualifications. The salary gap varies from campus to campus; some adjuncts make half the salary of full-time instructors.

Noushin Seddighzadeh, a part-time math teacher at five campuses — including Saddleback, Orange Coast and Santa Ana colleges — has a master's degree in math and finance. But she makes so little money from all her part-time jobs that she can't support her children without driving for Amazon delivering groceries.

Chantel Perales has a teaching load of 18 units this semester between her classes at Los Rios CCD (Community College District), Contra Costa CCD, and San Joaquin Delta College. The English professor has a master's degree but makes half of a full-time professor's salary at the colleges where she teaches. Survival, she says, is a struggle.

Some adjuncts, like Holland and Seddighzadeh, can't afford health insurance. When Holland was injured in a

motorcycle accident, she used the insurance settlement to pay her hospital bills.

Seddighzadeh and her children use the emergency room when ill. Perales has a high deductible and pays for all her prescriptions out of pocket.

Dana DeMercurio, an adjunct professor who teaches communication studies at four campuses — Folsom Lake, Sierra and San Joaquin Delta colleges plus a school in Michigan — says the amount she pays for health care is based on her workload. When her courses are cut and her income goes down, the amount increases.

When DeMercurio shares that she works at four colleges and teaches 27 units, people assume that she makes a good living. They are surprised to learn that despite the prestige of being a college professor, she barely makes ends meet.

“It’s a real burnout,” says DeMercurio, who has a master’s degree and is a member of San Joaquin Delta College Teachers Association (SJDCTA). “We have to work many more hours than a full-time employee to make enough money just to have a normal life.”

The situation is an issue of fairness and compassion, says CTA President E. Toby Boyd. “CTA works on behalf of all educators to ensure they are supported professionally and treated with dignity. Adjunct professors should not be living in poverty or barely scraping by because of unfair pay systems. That’s why CTA and CCA are co-sponsoring Assembly Bill 1269.” (See sidebar, page 34.)

Why are adjunct faculty underpaid?

Community colleges made a conscious choice to hire more part-time than full-time employees to deliver high-quality, low-cost instruction. Hiring lots of part-time educators saves money, because colleges can pay them less in salary and benefits.

“Prior to Prop. 13, almost all of the community college faculty was full time,” recalls CCA President Eric Kaljumägi, a mathematics professor at Mt. San Antonio College. “At that time, funding for colleges was cut. Now you have tens of thousands of part-time instructors. At my school, our part-time English faculty peaked at 100, which could probably be filled by 45 full-time positions.”

As at-will employees, adjuncts can be let go without cause. When enrollment drops, their classes may be reassigned to

other faculty, leaving them scrambling. Some adjuncts say they feel like second-class citizens and their full-time colleagues are unaware of the challenges they face. While some individuals teach part time as a second job or for supplemental family income, most rely on part-time teaching as their primary income and career.

Many adjuncts have their eye on tenure, desperately hoping one of their schools will hire from within when there’s an opening. But there’s no guarantee; by law, colleges must conduct a broad search when full-time positions open.

For Seddighzadeh, a member of the South Orange CCD Faculty Association, it’s a painful reality that after 12 years of being an adjunct professor, she has no seniority at any of the campuses where she teaches.

“I apply and apply at colleges, but it’s very tough to get a full-time position,” she says. “But to pay the bills, I need a real job.”

Recently, her course load was cut drastically, and classes that she expected to teach were suddenly reassigned. To make ends meet, she gave up her apartment and now rents a room where she stays with her children.

“There’s a lot of poverty among part-time faculty,” shares Perales, an SJDCTA member. “We

have yard sales. One professor I know sold her mattress to pay the rent.”

Why adjuncts stay in the game

Ask adjuncts why they stay in a job where they are so underpaid and most will say it’s for the love of teaching and being able to help students achieve their dreams.

“Oh my gosh, I love my job,” says Krista Warren Yagubyan, president of MiraCosta College Academic Associate Faculty in Oceanside. “I love my students and love teaching them important skills.”

Warren Yagubyan teaches life skills and employment readiness to students with disabilities, which is considered adult education. She was named Part-Time Faculty of the Year in 2018 by the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges. It’s ironic, she says, that she received her award the same year her teaching load was cut.

“The dean of my department asked me to hire new people to teach adults with disabilities and then cut my hours and told me to go find other work. The department chair offered me block scheduling so I could work



“We work many more hours than a full-time employee to make enough money just to have a normal life.”

—Dana DeMercurio,
San Joaquin Delta College
Teachers Association



Noushin Seddighzadeh



at other colleges on different days.”

During the pandemic, she says, adjuncts at her campus were the first to lose their jobs when enrollment dropped by 8 percent.

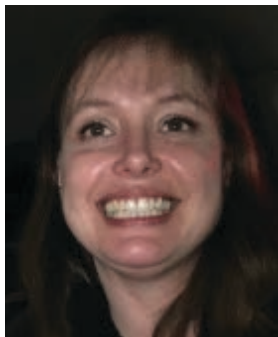
Holland, a Kern CCD/CCA member who teaches public speaking and debate, says her love of teaching keeps her going.

“I’m very passionate about education. Education has opened doors for me and my students. I love hearing students formulate arguments they will use in the outside world. But it’s frustrating that I can’t devote more energy to teaching, because I have to spend time working other jobs, like Instacart, to supplement my income.

“I tell myself this is temporary. But I have been teaching here 10 years waiting for a full-time position. I deserve to get paid at the same rate as my full-time colleagues. We have the same training. And we are union members who have a voice at the bargaining table. But sometimes we are afraid to speak up, because we are at-will employees. We don’t want our classes taken away.”



Krista Warren Yagubyan



Chantel Perales

A matter of equity

There’s hope with Assembly Bill 1269, which is sponsored by CCA and addresses the pay inequities adjunct faculty face (see sidebar).

For Warren Yagubyan, it’s about respect. She notes that on MiraCosta’s salary schedule, a 20-year adjunct faculty member makes less than a first-year, full-time employee.

“Why are people getting paid such different amounts for doing the same work?” she asks. “We are being held to the same professional standards as our full-time colleagues, but we don’t have health benefits or retirement.”

She prefers to be called an associate professor instead of an adjunct, noting that the dictionary defines “adjunct” as “a thing added to something else as a supplementary rather than an essential part.” Part-time professors are very essential to providing students with a good education and should be considered necessary and valued, she asserts.

She finds it ironic that community colleges host weighty discussions about equity issues, but such discussions only apply to students.

“I want to remind everyone that inequities exist within the community college system for those who teach,” she says. “It’s time to address the inequities within our own ranks, too.” ■

Take Action: Support AB 1269

ASSEMBLY BILL 1269, by Cristina Garcia (D-Bell Gardens), seeks pay equity for adjunct faculty in the state’s community college system. Sign the CTA petition in support at cta.org/our-advocacy/action-center.

Sponsored by the Community College Association and CTA, the bill would require the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office to conduct a comprehensive study of part-time faculty by 2023. The study would identify policies and offer fiscal recommendations for achieving a pathway to parity for adjunct faculty by 2027. As part of the study, the Chancellor’s Office would convene a workgroup that would include community college union representatives. This legislation is being co-sponsored with the California Federation of Teachers.

CCA President Eric Kaljumägi observes that creating a “compensation schedule” to achieve parity between part-time and full-time faculty within six years is nothing new; it revamps 1999 legislation that was approved but never implemented. He says the goal is having 75 percent of community college classes taught by full-time instructors.

“Our problem is that we have an underclass of faculty that are the primary employees of the community college system,” he says. “I have no idea how we can maintain a diverse and high-quality workforce if we treat people this badly.”

Legislative Update

By Julian Peeples

Budget Bill Provides \$4.6 Billion to Schools

IN EARLY MARCH, lawmakers overwhelmingly approved and Gov. Gavin Newsom signed AB 86, providing \$4.6 billion in funding to support student learning and an additional \$2 billion to incentivize school districts to begin in-person instruction by April 1. The bill also requires 10 percent of all COVID-19 vaccine doses to be set aside for school staff.

The \$4.6 billion will allow school districts to dedicate the time and resources to equitably support the social and emotional needs of students and target a whole-child recovery, CTA President E. Toby Boyd says. However, he's disappointed that lawmakers have again moved the goalposts for community case rates, relaxing standards and changing guidance, which triggers confusion and fear when our communities are already worried about the safety of their families. Further, the lack of ongoing asymptomatic testing outside the purple tier, as well as serious equity concerns about the \$2 billion incentive plan, leaves much to be desired.

"Implementation and enforcement of these regulations and safety guidelines at the local level and statewide will be the next step and the responsibility of all of us," says Boyd.

Assembly Member Santiago Proposes Millionaires Tax

RECOGNIZING THE NEED for additional revenue post-pandemic and with the Legislative Analyst's Office predicting a \$20 billion budget deficit, Assembly Member Miguel Santiago (D-Los Angeles) is proposing an income tax on those with a personal income of over \$1 million a year. The tax would affect about 70,000 Californians and would not apply to any making less.

Co-authored by Assembly Members Lorena Gonzalez (D-San Diego), Ash Kalra (D-San Jose) and Alex Lee (D-San Jose), AB 1253 would generate billions through a progressive tax increase on the rich to help address the anticipated deficit and build back California more equitably.

CTA President Boyd says it's embarrassing that with the fifth-largest economy in the world, California continues to lag below the national average in per-pupil spending (see story, page 12). "This bill brings resources to our students and the classroom for years to come," Boyd says.

Also in the legislative process, a wealth tax on the ultra-rich, AB 310 (Lee), which would increase tax rates at \$50 million and \$1 billion in earnings. CTA supports the bill.

"This bill brings resources to our students and the classroom for years to come."

—CTA President **E. Toby Boyd**

CTA Supports Bill Reinstating School Nurse Consultant

RETURNING TO CLASSROOMS during the pandemic takes resources, school health expertise and coordination between agencies, which is why CTA is supporting AB 285 by Assembly Member Chris Holden (D-Pasadena), which will reinstate a state school nurse consultant position in the California Department of Education to help orchestrate reopening schools by ensuring children are healthy and safe. The position has been vacant since 2012, despite the California School Nurses Organization's work to get it reinstated.

During COVID-19 and beyond, it's critical to have a school nurse consultant with the education, experience and expertise to guide school districts, state agencies, parents and communities in addressing the health and safety issues affecting students. The consultant will work with school nurses statewide to promote quality school nursing services and school health programs at a time when the need is great. School nurses are positioned to identify existing and emergent mental health issues and refer and case-manage students with local resources. According to 2018 data, there is one school nurse for every 2,400 California students, which places many children at risk for health crises.



Joe Brusky/Overpass Light Brigade

Educators Rise to Support AAPI Community

The time is now to #StopAsianHate

By Julian Peoples

AS OUR NATION grieves the murder of eight people, including six Asian women, on March 16 at three metropolitan Atlanta health spas, educators are rising to support the Asian American community, #StopAsianHate, and fight white supremacy and misogyny.

The killings are among the latest incidents in a rising tide of hate and violence directed at the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. A report released in mid-March by Stop AAPI Hate showed about 3,800 reported hate incidents — nearly half in California — between March 19, 2020, and Feb. 28 of this year, ranging from verbal abuse to physical assault and refusing service for being Asian.

“As the child and grandchild of proud Asian American immigrants, I am heartbroken by the racism and violence directed toward the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities in recent months — things that have always existed but have only now generated nationwide attention,” says CTA Board member Telly Tse. “These acts are grim reminders of the urgency of all of us standing together against hate, racism and violence.”

“Racism and violence toward the AAPI communities have always existed but have only now generated nationwide attention.”

—CTA Board member **Telly Tse**

“While there are no words to express the sorrow we feel by the pain and loss in our Asian American communities here in California and across this nation, we stand in strong solidarity condemning these racist, hateful acts of violence deeply rooted in white supremacy,” says CTA President E. Toby Boyd. “Today, we say to all who hear this: Not one more life!”

NEA President Becky Pringle says we all need to be united. “When our livelihoods, our safety and our security are threatened, we must come together to address hate and violence. All of us are safer when we address hate and bias, and recognize when we work across racial differences, we are stronger.”

Despite having to fight long-standing battles against racism, hate, discrimination and even internment, Asian Americans have played vitally important roles in building our state and nation. The recent rise of hateful rhetoric coupled with former President Trump’s labeling of COVID-19 as the “China Virus” has contributed to an America where last summer 3-in-10 Asian Americans reported having experienced racial slurs or racist jokes since the start of the

“Join an anti-hate organization, reach out to people who need support, donate your money and time — do whatever you can, but do something!”

—Amy Lo, Student CTA



GET INVOLVED AND TAKE ACTION

- If you see something, say something. Report it at [StopAAPIHate.org](https://stopaapihate.org).
- Share CTA's Pacific Asian American Caucus statement (cta.org/paacstatement).
- Learn about and support the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (napawf.org).
- Learn about and support AAPI organizations like Asian Americans Advancing Justice (advancingjustice-aaajc.org).
- Have courageous conversations with your family and friends about violence against Asian Americans and how you can fight against stereotypes and racism.
- Research [#StopAsianHate](https://twitter.com/StopAsianHate) and [#StopAAPIHate](https://twitter.com/StopAAPIHate) on social media and follow AAPI activists.

“As educators, we can lead the way by teaching and celebrating AAPI history and culture, bringing awareness to these incidents, and letting your students, families and communities know you stand with the AAPI community,” says CTA Board member Telly Tse.



Telly Tse

pandemic, according to the Pew Research Center.

Fifth grade educator Chau Bao Nguyen says the constant threat of racism and misogyny means taking additional precautions and being mindful of her own safety whenever she leaves her home.

“Unfortunately, this is a part of living in our society. I have to be aware and alert as a petite Asian-looking woman,” says Nguyen, an Associated Chino

Teachers member. “It’s a stressful way to live, with the chronic anxiety from simply going to the store, work or school to fearing for your life.”

Student CTA member Amy Lo says she found it particularly disturbing to see many try to explain away the Atlanta murders as something other than racism, in the days that followed the tragedy. The aspiring educator says we need to do better at addressing the root cause of why white supremacy-fueled hate incidents happen so frequently in America — and taking action.

“We can all do something to fight against this,” says Lo. “Join an anti-hate organization, reach out to people who need support, donate your money and time — do whatever you can, but do something!”

Nguyen says that when educators learn the tools to take action against racism, hate and violence, and teach them to students, our communities become safer and more harmonious. “When hate arises, we have tools to handle it, so it doesn’t turn into violence. Join your equity and human rights committee through the union. Start one and create a support network for educators. For every child who learns the tools, one more person is safer and freer to be themselves.”

The CTA Pacific Asian American Caucus released a statement calling on all educators to raise awareness, join the fight and make a clear declaration against anti-Asian sentiments, violence and racism everywhere.



Amy Lo

“Our community should know that we, as educators and a cornerstone of our society, are all in this together, and that we will not tolerate any violence, hostility, derogatory or negative attitudes toward our AAPI students, families, staff, or administration,” the statement reads. “We must not only be committed to being anti-racist in our roles as educators, but we must call out racism and hate and stand up to them when we are confronted with them!”

Caucus Chair Ken Tang says fighting white supremacy means speaking out, showing solidarity and being a part of the solution.

“We need to work together. When you hear something, say something,” says Tang. “We all need to do our part in checking our own biases and being better. We need to stop being divided. We need to be united.” ■

CTA Wins Testing Flexibility

State Board gives schools options beyond summative tests By Julian Peeples

AMID THE CONTINUING campaign to suspend statewide standardized assessments, which would be cruel to students and of little use to educators and schools, the State Board of Education (SBE) voted on March 16 to give school districts additional testing options this spring.

The decision by the SBE to allow school districts the flexibility to use either state Smarter Balanced tests in English language arts and mathematics or standards-aligned local assessments to gauge student learning came in response to growing calls from educators, parents and school administrators for more options. More than 70,000 CTA members and other concerned Californians signed CTA's petition calling for a waiver of testing, and nearly 6,000 emails were sent directly to the SBE. The SBE had previously decided to maximize flexibilities offered by the U.S. Department of Education (ED), such as allowing remote administration of the tests, reducing the length of the tests and extending the testing window until summer, and on March 16 voted unanimously to seek further flexibility to account for the impact of COVID-19 on California students, families and schools.

"The board's action, coupled with our previous request for flexibility, will give local educators and state policymakers important data on student progress while recognizing the realities of a very challenging year," says SBE President Linda Darling-Hammond.

The SBE is seeking to allow school districts the flexibility to use the best assessment tools available in their local contexts this spring. According to the California Department of Education, giving school districts this flexibility will help lessen concerns about students participating in extensive testing before they have a chance to re-adjust to in-person learning.

Newly confirmed Education Secretary Miguel Cardona indicated that ED would not approve blanket requests for waivers, reversing course from last year's decision allowing states to suspend testing. According to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), all states that receive federal funds for students from low-income families and English learners must assess learning progress annually.

Amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, CTA President E. Toby Boyd says, educators need to focus on teaching, not testing.

"Under the best circumstances, test scores alone fail to tell us how a child is doing and where they need improvement," Boyd says. "We

need to focus our time and energy on meeting the challenges of the distance learning environment, narrowing the digital divide, and fulfilling the needs of all students — not forcing tests on our kids during a health crisis."

"We need to focus on meeting the challenges of distance learning, the digital divide, and fulfilling the needs of all students — not forcing tests on our kids during a health crisis."

—CTA President **E. Toby Boyd**

#CancelTheTests NEA is calling for standardized tests to be canceled nationwide during the pandemic. "Students are navigating the most difficult year of learning in modern history. The last thing they need is ... a stressful test that will not be an effective barometer of their needs and accomplishments," says NEA's letter to the U.S. Department of Education. Add your name in support at nea.org/timetolearn.

CTA's Advocacy Campaign 2020-21

OCTOBER 2020:

CTA State Council calls for a suspension of state testing.

NOVEMBER 2020:

CTA calls on SBE to seek a testing waiver.

DECEMBER 2020:

CTA creates petition calling for state testing waiver.

JANUARY 2021:

- Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos resigns.
- CTA again calls on SBE to seek a testing waiver.
- NEA issues letter to Education Secretary-nominee Miguel Cardona.

FEBRUARY 2021:

- CTA sends letters to SBE and ED expressing concerns.
- ED sends letter to all states rejecting blanket waivers but offering "significant flexibility" on testing.
- CTA sends amended letter to SBE, urging state to apply for a waiver.
- CTA petition reaches 40,000 signatures.
- SBE directs staff to prepare application to ED for maximum flexibility, and to draft proposal allowing use of local assessments.

MARCH 2021:

- Miguel Cardona is sworn in as new secretary of education.
- Congressional Democrats call on Biden administration to suspend testing.
- CTA and partners send letter to SBE urging flexibility to use local assessments, and also meet with SBE members to lobby for use of local assessments.
- CTA petition reaches 60,000 signatures; educators send almost 6,000 emails directly to SBE members.
- SBE votes unanimously to apply for federal waiver, approves expanded testing flexibility so school districts can use local assessments in lieu of administering state tests.
- CTA petition reaches 70,000 signatures as California awaits official Cardona decision.

Opting Out Families can opt out their students from standardized assessments. California Education Code 60615 allows parents/guardians to submit written requests to school officials to excuse students from state-mandated tests. Visit cta.org/optout for more and for educators' rights regarding testing.

Read, Empower, Act, Discover (R.E.A.D.) Series

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Pursuing Meaningful, Effective Ethnic Studies

State approves model curriculum despite educators' concerns By Julian Peeples

AFTER EIGHT HOURS of testimony and discussion in March, the State Board of Education (SBE) approved the first Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) in the nation despite concerns of educators that left CTA unable to support the curriculum's approval.

The approval caps a four-year process that saw multiple drafts and revisions of the curriculum, resulting in guidance that practitioners say is insufficient for educators to develop an ethnic studies curriculum, especially if they have never taught an ethnic studies course.

"The ESMC needs to be one that teachers can use meaningfully, intentionally and effectively," CTA's SBE liaison Angela Der Ramos said at the meeting. "There are still many gaps in the document including dilution of content, limited portrayal of events in history, inequitable representation of the four ethnic groups, and lack of coherence for a TK-12 curriculum."

According to the California Department of Education, the ESMC is aimed at empowering students by illuminating the often-untold struggles and contributions of Native Americans, African Americans, Latino/a/x Americans and Asian Americans in California. The document includes University of California and California State University-approved ethnic studies course outlines and lessons to help school districts build courses to meet local student needs. The adopted ESMC is a sample curriculum and does not change curriculum currently being taught.

Although unable to endorse the ESMC, CTA strongly supports ethnic studies and is co-sponsoring a current bill, AB 101, authored by Assembly Member Jose Medina (D-Riverside), that would make completion of an ethnic studies course mandatory for high school graduation (see box).

Medina, a former Chicano studies teacher, says it has been more than 50 years since ethnic studies was established as an academic discipline, and that despite decades of scholarship and activism, ethnic studies has not been integrated into K-12 classrooms. As a result, many students graduate high school without exposure to a culturally comprehensive education and lack understanding of our country's diverse and complex history.

CTA believes participation in ethnic studies has positive effects for all students. Providing these learning opportunities and engagement with the study of race and equity benefits achievement in other academic areas and promotes a positive identity.

"We have a duty to teach our students about their ancestral legacies and to celebrate them every day," says CTA President E. Toby Boyd. "Culture is essential in the fight for racial justice and equity, and it is the right of our students to have access to a quality ethnic studies curriculum."

Ethnic studies supporters are hoping this is finally the year the high school requirement becomes a reality after numerous disappointments, including Medina's AB 331, which passed the Legislature last year but was vetoed by Gov. Gavin Newsom. ■

"We have a duty to teach our students about their ancestral legacies and to celebrate them every day."

—CTA President **E. Toby Boyd**

Assembly Bill 101 CTA-co-sponsored AB 101 would go into effect for students graduating in the 2029-30 school year and require each high school to offer an ethnic studies course beginning in 2025-26. As of press time, the bill was awaiting a hearing by the Assembly Education Committee. For more, see cta.org/our-advocacy/sponsored-legislation.

Bargaining Roundup

Compiled by **Julian Peeples**

LOS ANGELES:

COVID testing in return agreement

United Teachers Los Angeles reached an agreement with Los Angeles Unified School District that will see preschool and elementary classrooms reopen in mid-April, with secondary students returning to campuses by the end of April.

The agreement provides for a hybrid model combining online and in-person instruction, with students remaining in small, stable cohorts while on campus to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

"The agreement provides for the reopening of schools when Los Angeles County is in the red tier according to the state school guidelines, [and provides] that all staff have access to the COVID vaccine and that schools are kept clean and safe," UTLA President Cecily Myart-Cruz and LAUSD Superintendent Austin Beutner said in a joint statement. "As we have both stated for some time, the right way to reopen schools must include the highest standard of COVID safety in schools, continued reduction of the virus in the communities we serve, and access to vaccinations for school staff. This agreement achieves that shared set of goals. It's our shared commitment to the highest safety standards and spirit of trust and collaboration we will take with us back to schools."

The agreement includes:

- Daily in-person instruction for elementary school students in a hybrid morning/afternoon model, with the option for students to remain in online-only instruction.



- Secondary students will continue with daily online instruction, with the opportunity to return to campus for peer interaction, social-emotional learning, and lessons for college and career exploration.
- Full-day, in-person instruction for preschool students.
- Maintaining current teacher assignments whenever possible.
- All students and staff will be tested for COVID-19 prior to their return to campus, and weekly COVID testing will be provided thereafter.
- Masks and social distancing for students, staff and visitors at schools.
- Schools will be kept clean and safe. LAUSD has already invested more than \$120 million to upgrade air-filtration systems, procure adequate stocks of PPE, and add extra custodial staff.
- Social-emotional supports for all students.
- Additional professional development for teachers.
- Meals will be provided for students at schools, whether they are receiving in-person or online instruction.

MT. DIABLO: **Monster bargaining session**

After 80 hours of bargaining over five days and a monster 19-hour session, **Mt. Diablo Education Association** in Contra Costa County reached an agreement to welcome students back to campuses in a hybrid model in phases, starting with grades PK-2 at the end of March.

In a joint announcement, MDEA President Anita Johnson and MDUSD chief of human resources John Rubio expressed appreciation "for the tremendous amount of work that went into coming to an agreement."

"In the end, the parties agreed to a 61-page document that ensures a return to campus for those who choose it and supports the safety of students and MDEA members," Johnson and Rubio said in a statement. "Both MDEA and the district would like to thank everyone, and we are excited to welcome students back to our campuses."



OAKLAND:

Agreement for equity-based return

After lengthy bargaining, **Oakland Education Association** reached an agreement with Oakland Unified that sets out how educators will return to school campuses for in-person instruction.

The return to classrooms will be phased, with grades PK-2 and priority students at schools starting March 30, and in-person instruction expanding through fifth grade and at least one secondary grade starting April 19.

Campuses will operate at a limited capacity due to public health guidance to maintain physical distance and small, stable cohorts. Families will be able to keep their students in distance learning if they prefer.

The agreement includes important safety measures aligned with public health guidance for staff, students and families, including ventilation, PPE, and testing and contact tracing for students.

"After weeks at the bargaining table, our tentative agreement is one based on science and safety, and that meets the unique needs of our school community. Recognizing that communities of color have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, we agreed on an equity-based model that prioritizes the distribution of resources to those communities," says Chaz Garcia, OEA's second vice president and bargaining chair. "The pandemic has exacerbated a lot of the problems we have been battling with for decades. We knew that disinvesting will only put us back at square one."

CENTRAL:

Standing together for safety

Central Unified Teachers Association in Fresno County reached an agreement on returning to in-person instruction in mid-April that prioritizes safety for students and educators.

The agreement includes comprehensive safety provisions, including all PPE being provided by the district, HVAC filtration, and social distancing requirements. Grades TK-6 will return April 12 (after all CUTA members have had the opportunity to be vaccinated), while grades 7-12 will return no sooner than April 19.

"I can say with confidence we will be returning in the safest environment possible for our students and educators," says CUTA President Judee Martinez.

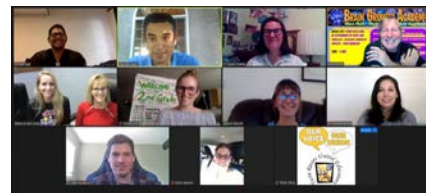


TWIN RIVERS:

Historic safety pact

After nearly six months of negotiations, **Twin Rivers United Educators** in North Sacramento reached an agreement that adequately addresses COVID-19 case rates, safety mitigations and vaccines to return to in-person instruction in early April. The memorandum of understanding includes safety mitigation standards ensuring proper ventilation in every classroom, social distancing, and ongoing free COVID testing.

"Despite buildings being closed for 12 months, educators never stopped teaching and students never stopped learning through a comprehensive distance learning model," says TRUE President Rebecca LeDoux. "As we begin this new phase, educators can safely return to in-person instruction and continue to support our students."



MARYSVILLE:

Marathon hearing leads to agreement

A 30-hour fact-finding hearing in late February ended with an agreement that provides guidelines for **Marysville Unified Teachers Association** educators in Yuba County as Marysville Joint Unified moves from distance learning to in-person instruction.

Teachers, administration and the school board agreed to collaboratively address the challenges with a student-centered focus that honors the contributions and hard work of teachers and all school staff.

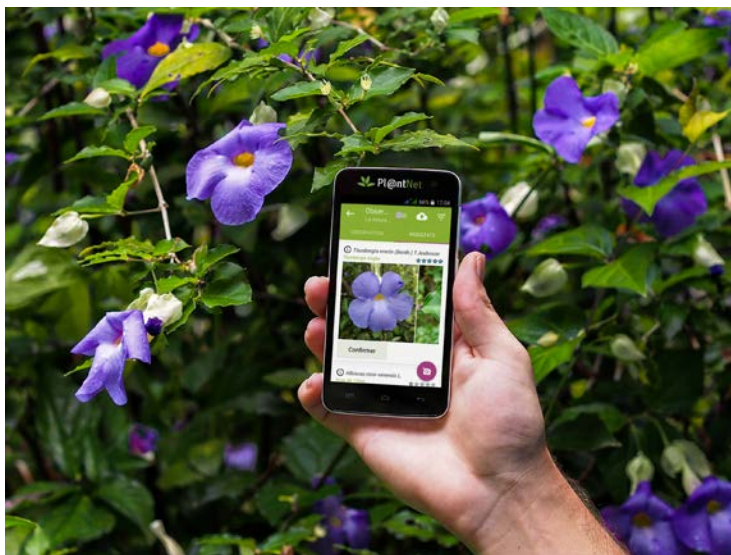


Go Learn Outside!

5 free apps that inspire students to get creative outdoors

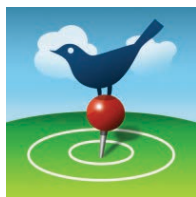
By Terry Ng

GIVE STUDENTS — and yourself — a much-needed break from Zoom sessions. Get everyone outdoors this spring for some educational activities that can also help improve health and well-being. (Please follow COVID-19 guidelines when outdoors with students.) From stargazing to plant identification, these apps will challenge students to learn and develop hands-on skills they can use throughout life.



PlantNet (IOS, ANDROID; AGE 4+)

Identify over 20,000 species of plants simply by photographing them with your smartphone, including flowers, trees, grasses, conifers, ferns, vines, wild salads and cacti.



BirdsEye Bird Finding Guide

(IOS, ANDROID; AGE 4+)

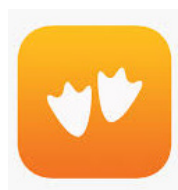
A powerful tool for students to discover the birds around them and find the ones they want to see. Stunning, detailed photographs from top birders, bird photographers and guides help identify the birds.



Nature Cat's Great Outdoors

(IOS, ANDROID; AGE 4+)

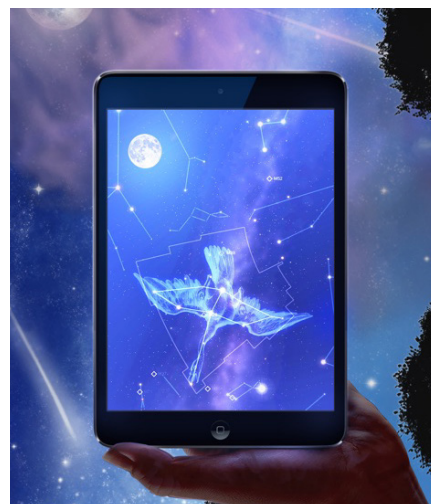
Based on the hit PBS KIDS show, this app is an on-the-go toolset that will inspire your students with over 100 daily adventure prompts, including for sunny, rainy and snowy days. Students use their smartphones to record and share their observations in fun, creative ways.



GooseChase

(IOS, ANDROID; AGE 9+)

Blend the fun of scavenger hunts with mobile tech for a learning experience like no other. Increase students' engagement, collaboration and communication by creating class missions and monitoring their progress from an easy-to-use dashboard.



Star Chart (IOS, ANDROID; AGE 4+)

Using state-of-the-art GPS technology, Star Chart calculates in real time the current location of every star and planet visible from Earth and shows you precisely where they are, even in broad daylight. It's like having a virtual planetarium in your pocket!

A few of Elizabeth Choy's puppet creations, including her alter ego, Bok Choy (right).



Puppet Power

Educator shows students how to build, convey character and story

ELIZABETH CHOY had been a high school teacher for 11 years when a vocal injury rendered her unable to talk for more than 30 minutes at a time. The Fairfield-Suisun Unified Teachers Association member gave up teaching English but continued with her drama classes. She taught herself how to make puppets to use in her lessons.

One day, one of her nonverbal students with special needs began to play with a puppet, opening and closing its mouth. “He started doing this every day,” Choy recalls. “He would mouth words while moving the puppet’s mouth. I would talk to him with another puppet. Eventually he started conversing with me and making eye contact.”

Choy has about five to eight kids with special needs in classes that range in size from 30 to 35. She realized that puppets would



Elizabeth Choy

be helpful for all her students and incorporated making and using puppets into her curriculum. “Students have to develop their puppet’s character from the ground up,” she says, including “how they hold their body and head, their mannerisms and way of talking.”

Performing with puppets lets shy and self-conscious students, as well as those with special needs, feel more relaxed about trying out “silly” voices and actions, Choy says, since everyone is looking at the puppet and not the student.

The puppetry unit of her curriculum runs about eight weeks. Choy created a pattern for students to make their puppets. Advanced students make bigger puppets that are operated by two or three people, encouraging teamwork.

For several years Choy spent between \$300 and \$800 a year out


Choy's students work on their puppets.



“We not only have puppets in education, but a school that teaches puppetry.”

—Elizabeth Choy, Fairfield-Suisun Unified Teachers Association

of her own pocket, since district funding for puppet materials wasn't available. She tried DonorsChoose to help defray costs, then established Bok Choy's Puppets (bokchoypuppets.com), a nonprofit where she makes and sells puppets and donates proceeds to Fairfield High School's theater program.

Eager buyers, some from out of state, have commissioned Choy to make puppets of their dogs or even of themselves. She's currently working on a baby puppet the size of a 3-year-old, at 23 inches tall. It can take her anywhere from two days to two weeks to produce a puppet. Prices depend on complexity and size; she offers fellow teachers an 



Puppets and SEL

By Justine Bruyère

IT IS IMPORTANT for children to share their feelings and express how they are making sense of their environment, particularly in this challenging time. Puppetry can engage elementary students in social-emotional learning and self-expression, invite children into conversations, and create safe spaces. Puppets can mirror student emotions, offer windows into new thoughts, and give students tools to better manage emotions.

If the thought of manipulating a puppet's mouth, arms and body while delivering curriculum is overwhelming, start with a plush toy or a hand puppet with no moving mouth parts. Surprisingly, research has shown that young children's belief in puppets is not typically attached to the teacher's manipulation or even tone of voice, so don't worry about disguising your voice. Instead, keep in mind the character you've created for the puppet — such as its personality, family and hobbies.

Begin with a text that openly shares emotion, such as *Holdin Pott* by Chandra Ghosh Ippen. Once the book has been shared and discussed, bring the puppet on to model honesty and vulnerability. In small groups, try asking questions that center on connecting with the characters, naming feelings, and reflecting and preparing for emotion. Let the puppet share its feelings openly; focus your answers on what children can do to manage anxiety and stress. Example:

Teacher: Have you ever felt like Holdin or other characters from this book? If so, which character? (connecting with the characters)

Puppet: I sometimes feel like Holdin when I watch the news and see my family members are sad.

Teacher: Do you sometimes have big feelings? What feelings do you have? (naming feelings)

Puppet: I feel sad and mad and worried. I don't want people to feel sad. That makes my stomach hurt.

Teacher: What makes you feel better? (reflecting and preparing for emotion)

Puppet: I close my eyes and take deep breaths and I say nice things to myself in my mind.

Teacher: That's good. It's OK to be worried, but it's not good to hold it in. How about we make a list? You can talk to one of your family about it. And sometimes stretching your body helps.

As students share, remember to affirm how they are feeling. Teachers (and puppets) need to create safe spaces for discussion by noting, "Expressing emotions isn't always easy — even for adults."

Sometimes students might ask the puppet questions that require more time to answer. The puppet might respond, "That's something I wonder about, too. Who do you think I could ask?" Students can then help the teacher make a list of people they can talk to: a school counselor, a parent or grandparent, their teachers. Later, when a teacher has consulted available resources and had time to reflect, the puppet can return to the question.

educator's discount.

Choy also donates puppets she and her students have made in class and in Fairfield High's Drama Club to schools throughout her district. "My students can donate their puppet for extra credit," she says. They are particularly popular with elementary teachers and counselors, especially with distance learning. She's hoping to expand the donation program into neighboring districts.

Unfortunately, the pandemic hit Choy and her family hard. Not only did she contract COVID-19 for three debilitating weeks, but her husband did as well, and her grandmother died of it.

"Puppets can give students tools to better manage emotions."

—Justine Bruyère,
Vanderbilt University

Because of distance learning, her puppetry instruction was scaled way back, as supplying students with the necessary materials to work on remotely was too difficult. Her other work, such as directing two school productions a year, has also been affected.

Despite the past year's difficulties, Choy remains excited about what she's been able to do for students and educators.

"We not only have puppets in education, but a school that teaches puppetry," she says. "And I'm happy to provide free donated puppets or inexpensive ones to use in education." ■



Choy has made puppets for those who want a teaching assistant, for example.

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Maggie Peacock-Butler Is CTA's 2021 ESP of the Year

By Julian Peoples

"IF YOU SAY you can't, you have to follow up with that three-letter word: yet," speech-language pathology assistant Magdalene (Maggie) Peacock-Butler regularly tells her students as she helps them better express themselves, become more confident and discover their innate talents. Her passion for supporting students, assisting her fellow Potter Valley Education Support Professionals Association (PVESPA) members and serving her community has earned Peacock-Butler the honor of being named 2021 Paula J. Monroe CTA Education Support Professional of the Year.

"I like to stay in the background, so to be acknowledged for my work is super humbling," Peacock-Butler says.

Working at Potter Valley Community Unified School District for 19 years, Peacock-Butler was a full-inclusion aide before deciding five years ago to earn her speech-language pathology assistant degree. Her compassionate approach and ability to make connections with students and their families has garnered the respect of the school community. PVESPA President Duval "Sam" Phillips says Potter Valley parents and teachers speak of their children's success in speech and can see the impact of her efforts.

"To give them the power to use their words is amazing! My students are so bright and have so much to share," Peacock-Butler says, adding that working in speech-language pathology is where she belongs. "It's just so rewarding. I would even work for free, but don't tell the district!"

Providing speech and language support during distance learning was exceptionally challenging, she says, and she is happy to have recently returned to in-person instruction in two cohorts. She and her students wear special masks that keep their lips visible during their sessions, so students can better learn the tools they need.



"To give my students the power to use their words is amazing! They are so bright and have so much to share."

her students, even long after their time with her — she's helped students with college applications, financial aid paperwork and projects needed for graduation.

While she's often seen as the face of PVESPA, organizing union booths at community events throughout the year, Peacock-Butler says all her fellow ESPs are similarly focused on supporting Potter Valley students. "Every one of our team deserves to be the ESP of the Year."

Peacock-Butler's dedication to her students and union family wouldn't be possible without the support of her husband of 27 years and their two children. She says it's because of them that she's able to help her students succeed and grow, just like every educator in the CTA family.

"Thank you for all you do to prepare the leaders of tomorrow," she says. "Together, we make a difference. With unity brings strength." ■

Watch Peacock-Butler being honored at CTA State Council in April at [youtube.com/CaliforniaTeachers](https://www.youtube.com/CaliforniaTeachers).

In the wake of the Saugus High shooting, Klipfel, who raises Labradors for Guide Dogs of America, brought a dog to campus to help reassure students and staff.

Teacher of the Year

Saugus High teacher's win boosts morale of traumatized community

By **Sherry Posnick-Goodwin**
Photos by **Kim Sanford**



WHEN JIM KLIPFEL was nominated for California Teacher of the Year, he wanted to win for the sake of the Saugus High School community rather than for himself.

“I wanted to bring a smile to Saugus and improve morale,” explains Klipfel, a member of Hart District Teachers Association (HDTA). “Having something that the school could celebrate was very important to me. I didn’t want to let anybody down.”

He didn’t. The social studies teacher and swim coach was not only selected as one of five 2021 California Teachers of the Year but was named California’s nominee for National Teacher of the Year as well.

It was an emotional win for a school community that has suffered enormous trauma. Three months prior to the pandemic, a student shot and killed two classmates and himself, and wounded two others. Klipfel was one of the first arriving on the scene to comfort students.

The Santa Clarita school briefly closed down after the Nov. 14, 2019, tragedy. Staff collaborated during the closure on ways to support students by adapting curriculum, and even created a Wellness Center with a soothing environment for students and staff to seek counseling.

Helping traumatized students

After the school reopened in December 2019, the staff focused on easing students back into routine and letting them know they were loved and supported. Klipfel raises Labradors for Guide Dogs of America and brought a dog on campus to offer comfort.

“The recovery is longer and harder than outsiders realize,” Klipfel observed at that time, noting the pain of having an empty chair in one of his classes. “But the vast majority of students and staff are hardworking and heroic people who accept there is a reason to get up the next day, and they are trying to live every day in a positive manner. The rest need our help.”

Students and staff were continuing their healing process — and then the pandemic hit. The school closed abruptly again, and learning went online. Saying goodbye for the second time in four months was extremely difficult.

When Klipfel learned he had been nominated by his principal to be a Teacher of the Year, his initial reaction was to decline. “If it weren’t for COVID and the shooting, I would have felt much more at ease with the honor of being nominated,” he explains. Klipfel measures personal success not in accolades, but in ways he can help and motivate students. Eventually, he decided to challenge himself in the same way



Jim Klipfel

“The vast majority of students and staff are trying to live every day in a positive manner. The rest need our help.”

The new high school Wellness Center.



he encourages students to venture outside of their comfort zone, and he accepted the nomination. But it was nerve-wracking to film his classes for judges during the pandemic while he was also mastering the art of online teaching, figuring out technology, and helping students deal with depression or anxiety related to the trauma they had suffered.

“There was enormous stress. I didn’t want to mess up or let anyone down.”

Always striving to be better

Klipfel is humble when asked to describe his best qualities, but his colleagues in the social studies department and fellow HDTA members are happy to share what makes him a great teacher.

“Jim is the type of person who makes everyone around them want to be better,” says Nicole Ketaly. “He sets the bar high. He leads by example and with intensity that is rooted in a desire for others to succeed. As a young educator, I am grateful for his leadership and inspired by his passion. He takes time to invest in the younger generation and pass on wisdom gained through both successes and stumbles.”

David Russell says Klipfel is amazing.

“He unrelentingly challenges his students to be the best version of themselves. Jim is willing to help students before, during and after school. He’s the first to get to work and last to leave.”

“In three decades of teaching, I have yet to cross paths with anyone like Jim Klipfel,” says Adam Bratt. “He consistently expects the most from himself before asking for sacrifices from anyone else. He is a true master of his profession, beloved by students, and a Hall of Fame colleague.”

A 30-year teacher, Klipfel earned his bachelor’s degree from UC Davis and his teaching credential from UC Irvine. He presently teaches 11th grade AP U.S. history and coaches swimming at Saugus, where he has also advised the Science Olympiad team, overseen the journalism program, and helped struggling junior high school students with an intervention class.

Klipfel was raised in Nebraska and Southern California and is one of eight children. He had a happy childhood, but it was often “survival of the fittest” with so many siblings. He became a teacher to offer students personalized attention and be the mentor and personal motivator he thinks most young people seek.

Student motivation, confidence

His mission is inspiring teens to acquire dreams, motivation, confidence and skills. If there is one thing he has learned from

recent challenges, it’s that students need adults more than ever.

“The average high school student doesn’t have a clear dream yet,” says Klipfel. “I encourage them to spend 15 to 20 minutes a week looking at rewarding careers, doing personality tests on jobs they are interested in, and then focusing on fields they are passionate about. Once they figure it out, they will find they can’t wait to get up in the morning and go to class. They will be more motivated, happier and successful.”

Personal growth is also important to Klipfel. He is inspired by the Japanese concept of “kaizen,” the focused dedication to improvement. He seeks feedback from students’ evaluations and takes their comments to heart.

He has become more empathetic since the shooting, spending the start of every class discussing a mental health topic.

“Today we discussed how people can choose misery or strength,” he shares. “For example, if a student asked five people to go to the dance and five say no, that student can either grow frustrated and depressed or reflect on ways to grow from

rejection. Another example is if a student gets a poor grade, they can decide to take only easy classes. Or they can try harder. It’s all about making choices that make you stronger.”

Klipfel is glad that he made the choice of entering the Teacher of the Year competition. Not only has it made him more introspective about his own teaching, but it has put a spotlight on the community he loves in Los Angeles County.

“This award is the honor of a lifetime, and something I received during an extremely challenging period of my life,” says Klipfel. “I am fortunate to have a job that I love. And I am extremely grateful to have the support of my wonderful community, inspiring colleagues and amazing students for making this happen. This was really a school and staff of the year honor, not just about me.” ■

Watch Klipfel’s speech as he is honored at CTA State Council in April at youtube.com/CaliforniaTeachers.



CTA Human Rights Award Winners

2021 awardees recognized for work in both classroom and community

EIGHT INSPIRING EDUCATORS are this year's winners of CTA Human Rights Awards. They were recognized during CTA's Equity and Human Rights Conference on Feb. 26 for their outstanding dedication to social justice, and for promoting and protecting human and civil rights.

"This year during a pandemic educators worked harder than ever to teach and care for our students," said CTA President E. Toby Boyd. "They led our children and youth through brutal events across the country that forced us to confront racism and to talk honestly about how to be an ally and what democracy means. Our award winners have done this work while continuing to serve their communities. They are truly an inspiration."

NEA President Becky Pringle praised the honorees' (and CTA's) commitment to social justice in a video presentation. "I am honored to recognize your willingness to do the vital work, have the difficult conversations, and continue to push and pull to break open the doors of racial and social justice for California students and educators," Pringle said.

Also honored this year were the Alhambra Teachers Association and the San Geronio Service Center Council.

To watch video interviews with the award winners, go to [youtube.com/CaliforniaTeachers](https://www.youtube.com/CaliforniaTeachers). To learn more about CTA's work in human rights, visit cta.org/humanrights.

The following are the 2021 CTA Human Rights Award winners (in the order they were recognized at the awards ceremony).



Olubunmi Adeleke

Lake Elsinore Teachers Association

AFRICAN AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD IN HONOR OF LOIS TINSON

WHEN OLUBUNMI ADELEKE saw that African American students at her school felt unseen and unsupported, she started a Black Student Union (BSU) club last year. The response was so great that they had to move the club from her classroom to the library, and two other district high schools were inspired to start a BSU of their own. Adeleke is now working with elementary and middle school teachers to create a BSU at each site.

With her leadership, the BSUs at all three high schools obtained funding, and students were able to attend Black college expos for the first time. Adeleke also took them to local leadership conferences, brought in community leaders as speakers, and forged ties with the African American Parent Advisory Committee. One result of this collaboration was the district's first Black History Month event, put together by BSU students, colleagues and students from elementary and secondary schools.

Adeleke is active with her chapter and as a CTA State Council delegate, and is a past participant in CTA's Ethnic Minority Early Identification and Development (EMEID) program.



Naqiba Gregory

West Sacramento Teachers Association

**AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKA NATIVE HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD
IN HONOR OF JIM CLARK**

NAQIBA GREGORY IS a longtime advocate for Native equity, including equal educational opportunity and educational materials and curriculum; preserving cultural heritage; training and leadership programs; a greater voice in CTA policies and decision-making; public awareness of issues; and creating positive role models.

When she joined the leadership of her local association, she advocated for students and colleagues experiencing bullying, prejudice and discrimination, and brought greater awareness of the challenges that Native students and educators face. She served on the equity teams of both her local and her Service Center Council. She was also selected to participate in CTA's EMEID program.

At the state level, Gregory has helped promote Native representation in CTA and NEA decision-making and policies through her work in the American Indian/Alaska Native Caucus, CTA State Council Civil Rights in Education Committee, Racial Equity Affairs Committee, and NEA Representative Assembly. In 2019, EMEID supported her efforts to create an Exemplary Educator Award event for her local.



Maritza Ávila

Oxnard Educators Association

CÉSAR CHÁVEZ "SÍ SE PUEDE" HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

MARITZA ÁVILA DEMONSTRATES the "Sí se puede" attitude in everything she does. She is focused on empowering her students and giving them a voice within their community. On the CTA César Chávez Memorial Education Awards Committee, she welcomes the opportunity to honor Chávez and his connection to the Oxnard community, where many of her students have similar backgrounds. Her students participate in the district's annual César Chávez speech contest, which helps them understand the cultural and historical context of Chávez's life and mission.

As a member of CTA's California Reads Committee, Ávila helps with the annual, diverse list of recommended books for all grade levels. Her most recent accomplishment is developing an ethnic studies course for her district.

As part of the NEA Hispanic Caucus, Ávila has supported shelters for displaced people in Mexico and rights for DACA students and disadvantaged students of color. She is a member of the Association of Mexican American Educators, which promotes leadership and raises funds for scholarships for high school seniors in Ventura County.



Kien Tang *Garvey Education Association*

PACIFIC ASIAN AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

KENNETH TANG HAS dedicated his career to uplifting others. He is an educator in the Garvey School District, close to where he grew up in Alhambra. Both communities have large Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) populations. An advocate for English learners, he collaborates with his students each year to "adopt" AAPI charity organizations addressing issues such as food insecurity, health and immigration. This work has both benefited the AAPI community and built an entire generation of AAPI activists.

Outside the classroom, Tang has served on the Garvey Education Foundation board and was president of the Garvey Education Association. On his district's Dual Language Committee, he helped advance educational equity by pushing for more bilingual programs.

Tang is chair of CTA's Pacific Asian American Caucus, co-chair of the Racial Equity Affairs Committee, and past senior director of CTA's NEA Board members. In these roles he helped develop conferences that educate members about AAPI history, built relationships with organizations such as the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, and mentored emerging AAPI leaders.

Tang is president of the Alhambra Unified School District Board of Education.



Ronald Phillip Smith

United Teachers Los Angeles

HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD FOR LGBTQ+ ADVOCACY IN HONOR OF NANCY BAILEY

RONALD SMITH'S WORK at his school site and UTLA, as well as his push for LGBTQ-positive policy at the state level, has made a big impact.

As an openly queer and pansexual educator, Smith co-founded the Trans and Queer Racial Educational Justice Coalition, and has helped to unify students, teachers and advocates in the fight for intersectional educational justice.

For the past three years, Smith has served as LGBTQIAP2S+ advocacy coordinator on UTLA's Equity Team. He created Equity Team presentations for members on facilitating brave spaces for conversations about racism, patriarchy, queer phobia and ableism in education; Black Lives Matter at School; and diverting funds from school police to more resources for counselors, social workers and community members on campus.

An educator at Quincy Jones Elementary School, Smith was awarded a grant by CTA's LGBTQ+ Safety in Schools Program in Honor of Guy DeRosa to help create a trans- and queer-affirming advocacy club called Students Advocate For Each Other (S.A.F.E.).

Alhambra Teachers Association

CTA CHAPTER HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

The Alhambra Teachers Association, under the leadership of President Tammy Scorcio, has been extraordinarily active in the community with various initiatives.

In the past year, ATA has led the way in organizing and mobilizing the community in a massive effort to feed over 300 families weekly who deal with food insecurity. ATA's efforts included organizing, collecting, receiving, purchasing, sorting, packing, distributing and delivering food and supplies. This work has improved relations between ATA members and the community.

Since school started in August, ATA has been distributing school supplies to families. In addition, for the past three years, ATA has held California Reads/Read Across America events, and ATA members have given thousands of books to socioeconomically disadvantaged families while building community partnerships with the Asian Youth Center, Foothills Counseling Services, LGBTQ+ advocacy groups, Planned Parenthood, and many others.

The chapter also creates projects to inform membership about the meaning of human and civil rights and how to protect them, and activity to identify and encourage the use of effective teaching materials that reflect the value of diversity.



Margie Granado

Montebello Teachers Association

HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD FOR WOMEN'S ADVOCACY

MARGIE GRANADO, serving her second term on CTA's Board of Directors, is a strong and effective advocate for women and women's rights. She has been a leader in education and for educators for years, with CTA, her chapter and the NEA Board of Directors.

It hasn't been an easy journey. "Over the years I've had to present myself in certain ways, I've been asked to smile, and I have been characterized in unflattering ways," she says. "All the time that these things happened had nothing to do with my leadership.

"So now I use my voice and my position to call it out, so that future and current women leaders don't have to go through what I've gone through."

At CTA, Granado listens, helps solve problems, and speaks up and out when needed. She advocates for women's voices in developing policy and in decision-making. She encourages and supports women of color and new members' participation in the union at all levels. She is the Board liaison to CTA's new Women's Rights Committee and chair of the CTA Board Committee on Training and Development.





Taline K. Arsenian

Glendale Teachers Association

CTA PEACE AND JUSTICE HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

TALINE ARSENIAN HAS served in many capacities to bring awareness and recognition to the Armenian Genocide. As a middle school teacher, she helped create a tolerance committee that promoted universal human rights and genocide awareness. She helped establish a districtwide committee that oversees such events as annual Armenian Genocide assemblies in schools, and facilitated educator collaboration to curate related student programs.

Arsenian worked with the Glendale Unified school board on a resolution recognizing April 24 as a district holiday in remembrance of the Armenian Genocide. She guided the district's training of all secondary social studies teachers in related curriculum and primary source material.

She has played a significant role in developing her district's restorative practices team, which focuses on community building, communication and conflict resolution to build relationships among all students. She also worked to make sure safe space stickers were in all classrooms and created a local event called GlendaleOUT, a collaboration between LGBTQ+ artists and students in the community.

Baylin Dickinson

United Teachers Los Angeles

CTA MEMBER HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

BAYLIN DICKINSON HAS engaged in struggles for intersectional human rights throughout her career as an educator, school leader and union activist. She consistently advocates for members of color to be represented in leadership positions at her local and within CTA and has worked with Student CTA to encourage the next generation.

In response to a co-worker facing discrimination based on sexual orientation, Dickinson organized to bring LGBTQ-affirming professional development to her school. Her advocacy created a workplace in which human rights are now more respected, making the school safer for all.

As human rights advocacy coordinator on UTLA's Equity Team, she promoted human rights within her local and CTA. She led the team's charge to create presentations on courageous conversations about race in response to the continued murders of unarmed Black men by police officers.

As human rights chair, Dickinson promoted anti-racist teaching practices and Black Lives Matter at School. She leads the "Let Young People Vote" campaign at her school and teaches students about voting rights.

San Gorgonio Service Center Council

CTA SERVICE CENTER COUNCIL HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

San Gorgonio Service Center Council, or "San G," fights for social justice and cultural equity in Region IV and beyond through its annual Fall Leadership Conference, with sessions on advocating for social justice, and the Social Justice and Cultural Equity Conference. The latter provides information and guidance on topics such as establishing equity teams in locals, culturally sensitive teaching practices, leader recruitment and development, and practical strategies to examine sensitive topics with members.

San Gorgonio supports local communities by contributing to the Esperanza Project, which promotes wellness among at-risk populations; participating in Pride Weekend; sponsoring toiletry drives; and working with the local NAACP chapter. The SCC also sponsors a student art contest with a different ethnic theme each year, and awards scholarships to winners.

San G includes Student CTA in all its events. It has pledged a portion of its annual budget to Student CTA members, who often come from underrepresented ethnic groups.

San Gorgonio continues to work toward promoting the establishment of equity teams in each of its chapters, and providing seminars and workshops to foster their development and efficacy.



VTA Member Engagement Committee members Jouli Jara, left, and Alyson Brauning in front of El Patron, a local restaurant that participated in VTA's Welcome Back Campaign.



On VTA's Facebook page, Brauning and Jara thank teachers, nurses, school psychologists, counselors and "speechies" for their hard work this year, adding, "You deserve a treat!"



Show of Gratitude

Vacaville chapter's engagement campaign touches members and local businesses

Vacaville Teachers Association takes member engagement seriously. The chapter's latest project, completed in late March, was a Welcome Back Campaign as educators began returning to in-person schooling. The thoughtful initiative sent all 680 of its members gift cards to local businesses — a win-win, and a community engagement effort at the same time.

"I wanted to include a community partnership component to this member engagement campaign," says VTA member engagement chair Alyson Brauning. "Local businesses are opening up, and I felt this was an excellent way to help them and to give our members something they would enjoy."

She points out that VTA already had relationships with local businesses; in the last five or six years they have worked together on special events such as Taco Tuesdays, Day of the Teacher, and Limo Lunches.

As part of the campaign, members also received Calm Strips, described as "textured sensory adhesives" that help with anxiety and fidgeting by "giving you a gentle but textured surface as a stimulus."

Brauning and committee member Jouli Jara thought the reusable strips, which can be placed on laptops, phones, desks, and other spots, could help educators deal with ongoing pandemic stress.

The committee also reached out to the Vacaville Unified School District Technology Department. "Before we kicked off the Welcome Back Campaign, Jouli and I went to the morning meeting of the Tech Department staff and thanked them for their [ongoing] support of VTA members," Brauning says. "We gave each of them a \$10 gift certificate to a local business." She notes that the department's digital education coordinators, as opposed to its regular staff, are VTA members. "The coordinators got the same Welcome Back items as all other VTA members in the mail."

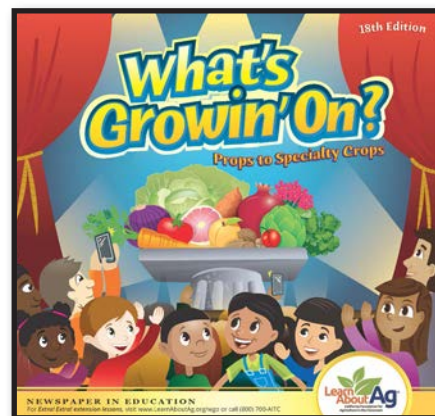
Not surprisingly, VTA members are happy — and

"We have a long history of member engagement — and we're always looking for new ideas!"

—Alyson Brauning, VTA member engagement chair

What's Growin' On? Props to Specialty Crops

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engaged — with their chapter's tokens of gratitude. "I just received this! What a lovely lovely thing to do for us and for our local businesses!" wrote Sarah Frey Lyon on Facebook. "Thank you so much for your thoughtfulness and time in putting this together!"

Brauning, a middle school teacher who is also VTA equity team chair and Redwood Service Center Council chair, says VTA has a line-item budget of \$10,000 a year for member engagement. As well as meeting member needs, the chapter prides itself on the work members do in the community and at school sites.

"We have a long history of member engagement," Brauning says. "And we're always looking for new ideas!" ■

Continued from Page 26

expanded into full-blown edtech trainings and a question that went out to all educators: What kind of professional development do you need right now?

"We decided to engage teachers the same way they engage students — asking them what they want," Roberts says. "We're trying to keep up with what they need, which are skills that will help them help their students."

And the training isn't limited to distance learning and tech. UTR educators are engaged in race and equity professional development on a weekly basis, with the understanding that inequities existing long before the pandemic have been exposed and exacerbated, requiring deliberate and continuous work to undo.

"We're still having conversations about race and equity, because we still have to be on the same page," says Asedo Wilson, educator and UTR member. "If we can't address these issues with each other, how can we help our students?"

UNIQUE NEEDS WILL TAKE TIME

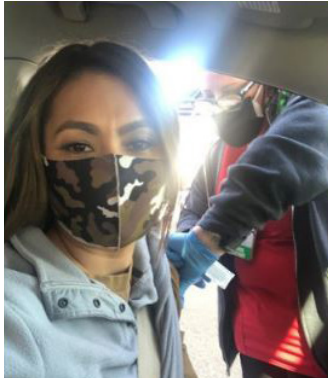
No matter the approach, when school buildings reopen, students will have a variety of unique needs that educators will have to identify and work to support as we all emerge changed from the pandemic. (See story on school counselors, page 27.)

"Teachers and schools are recognizing that we need to assess each student and meet them where they are," says special educator Yesenia Guerrero, a member of Lennox Teachers Association. "We'll need time to fill the gaps, but the kids are very resilient." ■



Celebrating the Dose of Hope

EDUCATORS ARE CONTINUING to get fully vaccinated against COVID-19, and many of you have sent photos of you not wasting your shot, to paraphrase *Hamilton*. You've also explained what this dose of hope means to you. Congratulations! A few photos are below; for the full gallery see cta.org/educator/posts/cause-for-celebration-vaccinations — and join in by sending your selfie to editor@cta.org with "Dose of Hope" in the subject line.



"Feeling safer already!"
—LIZETTE GARCIA,
Central Unified
Teachers Association



"Thrilled to get my shot and be able to see my students in person!"
—HEATHER LICHTMAN,
Duarte Unified
Education Association



"As a proud high school social science educator, it is exciting to contribute to the protection of my family and community."
—ELENA VINCENT,
Central Unified
Teachers Association



"We were able to offer vaccines to all our members prior to returning to hybrid learning. Thank you CTA for your advocacy!"
—RENEA MAGNANI,
Valley of the Moon
Teachers Association



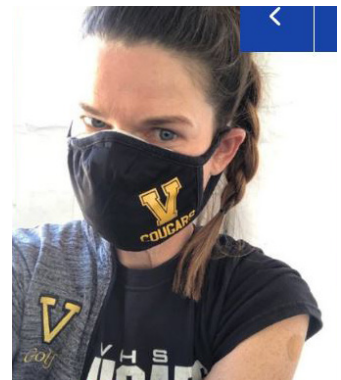
"Coach Carb gets the vaccine barb."
—DERON CARBAJAL,
Central Unified
Teachers Association



"[I teach] students with severe disabilities. I can't wait to see them in person again. Thank you for taking on the challenge to get all educators vaccinated."
—LYNNE ZWICKL, Santa
Ana Educators Association



"My grandfather passed of COVID-19, so my first dose felt like I got to honor him."
—MADDIE ALVENDIA,
Campbell High School
Teachers Association



"I'm not throwing away my shot."
—SIERRA MEYERS,
Ventura Unified
Education Association

Williams built a desk for Nataly, one of his wife's second grade students.



Andrew Williams



“I thought that if she had a quiet place to study, it'd be better.”

A Desk of Their Own

Gilroy teacher makes distance learning a little easier

LAST FALL Andrew Williams overheard his wife Sandra Williams, a second grade teacher, as she worked with her student Nataly in class on Zoom.

“Nataly couldn't pay attention to what Sandra was saying because it was too loud at her home,” Williams recalls. “She was with her siblings and mother at the kitchen table — there was nowhere else to attend class.”

That sparked an idea for Williams, a high school woodworking teacher and Gilroy Teachers Association member. “I thought that if she had a quiet place to study, it'd be better.”

He had recently been in touch with David Gunter, founder of Community Desk Project in New Mexico, who sent him instructions on constructing simple desks. Williams made a wooden desk out of plywood and two-by-fours for Nataly. He knew there were many needy families in his community whose kids could also

use desks for schoolwork and a modicum of privacy and quiet during distance learning, so he made more. He initially used his own money, then set up a GoFundMe page where others could donate to help cover his costs.

“This will give [students] a space they can call their own and where they can keep their computer and supplies for school,” he explains on the page.

Sandra, “the artist in the family,” a 33-year educator and member of Hollister Elementary School Teachers Association, paints the desks in bright colors. As of mid-February, Williams had built and given away more than 30 desks — no small feat, considering he is teaching five classes with 32 students in each class.

Instructing students in woodworking and welding remotely keeps Williams, now in his fifth year as a teacher, busier than ever. All the hours on the computer have been hard for him, though. “My eyes are blurry, my hands and back are hurting, I'm starting to have carpal tunnel,” he says. “I'd rather be working with tools!”

Building desks lets him do exactly that. Local media coverage and social media have helped spread the word, and people have reached out.

A Morgan Hill furniture company that was going out of business donated 60 desks. Williams and the mayor of Hollister, Ignacio Velazquez, stored the desks at a town venue normally used for wedding receptions and other gatherings but shuttered by the pandemic. “I put out a notice on Facebook at noon,” says Williams. “By 12:15 people were lining up. By 1:10 all the desks were gone.”

Williams knows children and youth in his community — and in many communities — will need their own desks at home even after schools return to in-person instruction, so he's hoping for more donations to fund more desks.

And he can't wait to return to school for hands-on work with his students. He laughs as he relates that his department chair is currently making a sign for his classroom: “Williams' woodshop: Beware of loud outbursts and flying tools.” ■

Help Andrew Williams Make More Desks

gofundme.com/f/community-student-desk-project

Indispensable Accessory

The Schoolbelt keeps everything educators need easily accessible

WHEN THE PANDEMIC closed schools in March 2020, kindergarten teacher Connie Valencia, like so many educators, had a tough time dealing with the separation from her students and the sudden stop to teaching and school routine.

The 26-year teaching veteran and member of Hemet Teachers Association found remote teaching from home to be a struggle and sought “an outlet with a purpose.” She had long been thinking of a way she and other educators could keep items they need, from pens to office passes to cellphones, easily accessible all day long, whether in the classroom or schoolyard. And as the pandemic progressed, she knew they would have to be prepared with tools to keep hands clean and surfaces sanitized.

“My greatest joy is hearing the positive feedback that school staff are sharing regarding the Schoolbelt’s impact on their workday.”

So, during the shutdown Valencia created and recently launched the Schoolbelt, a heavy-duty yet lightweight utility apron that keeps everything an educator might need at hand. She crafted the belt through much trial and error, including late-night sketches and sloppy sewing, along with feedback from school workers and assistance from her upholsterer brother. Bringing her product to market tapped into entrepreneurial skills the mother of four didn’t know she had. The belt’s patent is currently pending.

“My greatest joy is hearing the positive feedback that educators and school staff are sharing regarding the Schoolbelt’s impact on their workday,” Valencia says.

She is proud that her invention allows her and her peers to be more organized and efficient while keeping hands free, and helps students and staff stay healthy and safe. She’s also happy that the belt’s sleek design allows wearers to look professional.

The Schoolbelt is made in the U.S. of coated polyester fabric, with nine pockets of varied sizes, a retractable keyring carabiner, and a sturdy mesh pouch that can hold hand sanitizer, a spray bottle or a small water bottle. The basic belt costs \$28.99 and is available at schoolbelt.net. Add-ons include a whistle, mini-clipboard and badge-holder.



Connie Valencia models her creation.

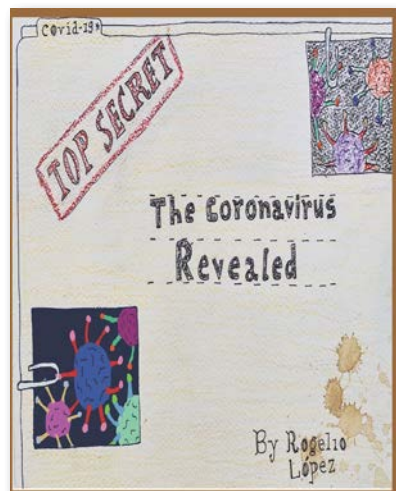


You'll save time with essentials right at hand.

As a way of giving back, Valencia has started “Someone’s Superhero,” where school staff and students can nominate a special individual who has gone the extra mile to impact the lives of others. “One nominated Superhero will be featured monthly on our website and social media page [facebook.com/schoolbelt.ready] and gifted with an honorary Schoolbelt to brighten their workday,” Valencia says. “I am excited to feature our Superheroes’ inspiring stories.” ■



Continued from Page 60

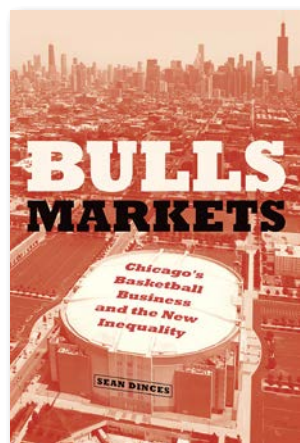
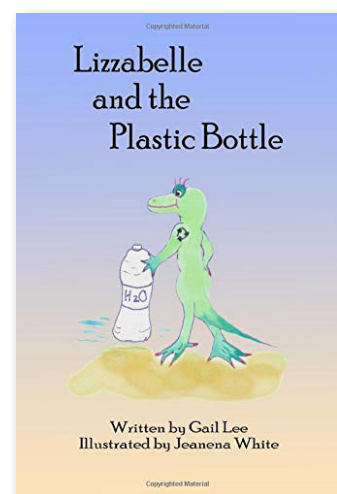


Child-Friendly Look at COVID-19

United Teachers Los Angeles member and 30-year teacher Rogelio López has just published *The Coronavirus Revealed*, geared for children ages 3-4 and up. The book describes in rhyme the onset and fallout of the virus in a way children will easily understand, and offers a bright future. López, an educator at Noble Avenue Elementary, wrote and illustrated both the Spanish and English versions. On Amazon.

Recycling Lizard

CTA/NEA-Retired member Gail Saito (pen name Gail Lee) taught elementary and middle school for more than 30 years in the San Diego area. Her passion to protect the environment led her to write *Lizzabelle and the Plastic Bottle* for children ages 4-8. The story follows Evan as he cleans out the family van, discovers a plastic bottle, and learns about recycling from Lizzabelle, the lizard. At the end are sections on facts about plastic and what you can do to help. On Amazon.



Gentrification of Sports

To basketball fans everywhere, the 1990s were a glorious time for the Chicago Bulls and Michael Jordan. Sean Dinces, Long Beach City College Faculty Association, wrote a book a few years ago that uses the building of the United Center, the Bulls' home arena, as an example of urban development that exacerbates American cities' economic inequality. *Bulls Markets: Chicago's Basketball Business and the New Inequality* is an illuminating text for older students. It shows how promises of private funding and neighborhood revitalization did not come through. Instead, the arena was funded by property tax breaks that average Chicagoans knew nothing about. Winners: the moneyed elite and connected politicians; losers: poorer citizens and sports fans. On Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and the University of Chicago Press Books.

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Lit From Within

Often educators' creativity spills over into a book, blog, app or other work. We're happy to showcase members' talents.

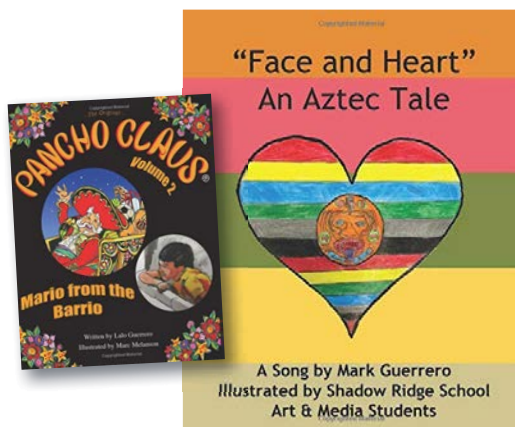
A scene from the trailer of the streamplay.



Lockdown Theatre

Bruce Olav Solheim, Citrus College Faculty Association, wrote *Ali's Bees* in 2017. Ali, whose parents were killed in a terrorist attack in Iraq, has been sent to East Los Angeles to live with his beekeeper grandfather. Ali struggles with grief and post-traumatic stress disorder, but enjoys working with the bees and decides to do his science project on them. His work draws in Lupe, a classmate with problems of her own, and Jenks, a bully who cares for his disabled father. The three form an unlikely connection as they try to overcome their differences and challenges. Available on Amazon.

Solheim, a disabled U.S. Army vet who teaches history and is a former Fulbright scholar, has written a play based on the book and is offering the streamplay (with live, remote actors and 3D virtual-world settings) free to middle and high school students. Check out a prerecorded version seen in February by students in grades 6-8 at Edgewood Academy in La Puente. To view it or the trailer, go to [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and search for "Ali's Bees." To request the streamplay, contact bsolheim@citruscollege.edu or bootstobooks@gmail.com.



Student-Created Books

The motto of Shadow Ridge School in Hesperia is "The Idea Factory," and high school teachers Jim Hoffmann (social studies) and Barbara Jacobs (English), both Hesperia Teachers Association members, provide plenty of opportunities for creativity. Among the various real-world projects, their students helped create two children's books, *Pancho Claus* Vol. 2 and *Face and Heart: An Aztec Tale*. (Hoffmann helped with *Pancho Claus* Vol. 1; both volumes involved the "father of Chicano music" Lalo Guerrero and his son Dan.)

Students formatted *Pancho Claus*, based on the beloved Tex-Mex Santa and born out of the Chicano rights movement, and contributed several images. *Face and Heart* is based on a song by another Guerrero son, Mark, about the ancient Aztec people, who considered children their most precious resource; illustrations were done almost entirely by students. All available on Amazon.

Continued on Page 59

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