

california  
**educator**

JUNE / JULY 2021 VOLUME 25 ISSUE 6



*the* **UNION  
RENAISSANCE**

A new day  
for educator  
activism PAGE 26

**Who's Your  
Unsung Hero?**  
PAGE 16



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WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

MAGAZINE

DIGITAL

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

MEMBER BENEFITS

MY UNSUNG HERO

Teachers name lesser-known historical figures who influenced them and now live on in classroom lessons. **PAGE 16**

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Be true, be brave, be proud. **PAGE 8**     [cta.org](https://cta.org)

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CTA PRESIDENTS CONFERENCE

Essential learning for leaders. **PAGE 9** [cta.org/conferences](https://cta.org/conferences)

CTA SUMMER INSTITUTE

Unparalleled professional development, skills-building, plus networking with peers and leaders. Virtual and free. **PAGE 9**     [cta.org/conferences](https://cta.org/conferences)

ISTE LIVE 2021

CTA member Leticia Citizen is a featured voice at this "technology in education" virtual conference, July 26-30. [conference.iste.org/2021](https://conference.iste.org/2021)

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Photos: Top, Mi Pham; inset, Stavrialena Gontzou; both Unsplash.



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Educators organize to build back better as the labor movement is reborn across the country

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How the pandemic made educators better, stronger, kinder



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Cover illustration by Bob Venables. This page, clockwise from top left: Coalition of Educators for Change's Victoria Albaracin and Paola Zamudio; San Benito High science and math teacher Isabel Garcia; childhood photo of CTA member Mary Levi (lower right) with her unsung hero, her grandfather Fred Kabotie (center), along with her brother, her grandmother, and Dr. Harold Colton.





**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](https://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](mailto:Editor@cta.org); [#WeAreCTA](https://twitter.com/WeAreCTA)



## THE RENAISSANCE OF ROSIE

**WHAT DO YOU GET** when you cross Rosie the Riveter's grit and persistence with Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*? Why, our cover, of course. The artwork is the perfect illustration for our feature "The Union Renaissance" (page 26). The story explores how California educators are organizing for better as the labor movement is reborn nationwide.

### What's on Your Mind?

As you finally(!) have a short break to step back and reflect on an extraordinarily challenging 15 months, we want to know: What are your most pressing thoughts about your students, schools, education? As you get ready to go back to school, what do you need to be the best educator possible? Tell us at [editor@cta.org](mailto:editor@cta.org).



### Kudos to Educators

Kate LaBarbera (Union District Education Association) tweeted about Laurie Roberts (United Teachers of Richmond), who was featured in "Filling Gaps and Healing Hearts" in our April/May issue.



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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](mailto: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](http://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.

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# Extraordinary Accomplishment

**WHAT AN EXTRAORDINARY** school year we have had. We've shown up for students and each other in ways we never even knew existed. What you have accomplished during the pandemic, and especially this school year, is nothing short of astounding. You took students traumatized by disaster and loss, and cheered them across the finish line.

I'm so proud of you all. After the physical closure of nearly all California schools, educators rose to the occasion and, with the assistance of peers, experts and CTA resources, made the rapid transition to remote teaching and learning. We accomplished this while juggling our own families' needs and challenges. Many of us carried on for our students while at the same time dealing with devastating personal losses caused by the pandemic. So many CTA members went above and beyond, giving time to food banks and programs distributing meals to students and their families.

After the initial disruption of the pandemic last spring, we hit the ground running in the fall, ready for whatever challenges the new school year might bring. So many of you were able to do all that *and* actively engage in the ongoing fight for equity and social justice.

Many of you are concluding this year back in your physical classrooms or school worksites; some of you have been there since the fall. CTA has fought tirelessly to help ensure that you and your students are teaching and learning under the safest possible circumstances, and we will continue to do so, along with your local chapter, during the coming school year. That said, we are also advocating for remote learning and other alternatives for families and students with special circumstances and needs — and yes, for some of you!

While most of us may be ready for a return to “normal,” it's important to recognize that normal wasn't necessarily working for all students. It's my hope that we will take the lessons learned during this pandemic, especially around issues of equity, and work to ensure that every child has the opportunity to learn and succeed.

We also know that some students are going to need additional supports when they return in the fall, and connections with students and families will be key. CTA worked with a coalition of education, parent and community groups to develop a restorative restart approach focused on the whole student.



Elizabeth Douglas Photography

***“Let's take the best of what we were doing before and combine that with what we've learned over the past year.”***

I encourage you to look at [reimaginecaschools.org](https://reimaginecaschools.org). Let's take the best of what we were doing before and combine that with what we've learned over the past year.

School districts should have the resources to make that happen. The revised state budget proposal spends a record amount on K-12 and community colleges, and the governor is also pushing for universal TK. While this is welcome news, even record spending doesn't push California to the national average in per-pupil funding, and much of this year's wind-fall is spent in one-time dollars. Our state is the fifth-largest economy in the world. We can and must do better.

Many of you will continue working over the summer, or your calendar may already be filling up with the CTA and NEA events we'll be holding over the next two months. But whether you're planning a traditional summer vacation or not, I hope all of you get a chance for some well-earned rest. You deserve it, and your students will be better off when we return to the 2021-22 school year energized and up to new challenges and opportunities.

Have a great summer, everyone.

**E. Toby Boyd**

CTA PRESIDENT  
[@etobyboyd](https://twitter.com/etobyboyd)



# Emerging Victorious



**I**T ALMOST CONJURES up a movie poster: Tested and forged by the pandemic, educators have emerged better, stronger, kinder. As well as becoming more inventive and learning new ways of teaching, they are now more flexible and empathetic.

“Maybe because I’ve become a student again, I see things with a fresh eye. I have become more patient with students that struggle,” says Amy Rangel in “**Silver Linings**” (page 21), about the positive outcomes of the past year. Nicole Carrasco says, “I am able to be a more compassionate educator without compromising the quality of my classes. I have given myself permission to put my students and their well-being first.”

It’s heartening to hear good things that have come of a difficult time, and how the challenges strengthened many educators individually and collectively.

Collective strength, as in unions, has been in the spotlight this past year, too. A recent article in *The Nation* noted how educator unions won significant safety protections during the pandemic: “Expanding on recent waves of activism, teachers were able to band together and compel school districts to adopt protocols for masks, ventilation, testing and even vaccination.” Such protections also extended to our students and communities.

Pandemic concerns and the need for more representation in decision-making have spurred a rebirth in unionizing, as you can read in “**The Union Renaissance**”

(page 26). “The pandemic really showed that the teachers didn’t have a voice in our organization,” says teacher Carol King, a member of the newly formed High Tech Education Collective. “Our hope is that a union can get us closer to bringing equity to life.”

Equity is a big driver in our feature “**My Unsung Hero**” (page 16), where several members name the lesser-known historical figures who inspire them and figure in their lessons. Among those hailed are a Native American artist and activist (and grandfather of a CTA member), a Mexican American Robin Hood, and a Black woman who revolutionized technology and worked at NASA during the Jim Crow era. These are people who may not be included in textbooks, but made an impact and live on through educators’ teachings.

Equity is also what prompted Melissa Baldwin to create an “a-g” class on women and gender studies at her high school, one of the few in the state (“**Setting Course**,” page 40). Baldwin, who wanted female and LGBTQ+ students to feel safe and connected on campus, eagerly shares how she navigated the process.

Sharing and caring. They’re what unions and educators do well, together.

**Katharine Fong**

EDITOR IN CHIEF

[editor@cta.org](mailto:editor@cta.org)

## ***Pass the PRO Act***

Tell your senators to vote YES on the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act. The act would empower workers to organize and bargain, hold corporations accountable for union-busting, and repeal “right to work” laws. Stronger unions mean higher wages, safer working conditions, and dignity for those who work. Go to [bit.ly/3vVKS4m](https://bit.ly/3vVKS4m).





# EDUCATORS

## Create Your Professional Growth Path

Choose from hundreds of convenient courses offered in various formats to enhance your teaching skills. Check out USD's featured courses below.

### Innovative Curriculum for Motivated Learning

UNITS: 2, 4, 6 Available  
PRICE: Varies by Units

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. *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).*

### Google Tools for Collaborative Teaching

UNITS: 3 | PRICE: \$489

Technology is playing a major role in the world of education, now so more than ever. Whether you're an online teacher or are working in-person, being able to effectively utilize Google education tools can make all the difference for the success of you and your students. In this course, Google Tools for Collaborative Teaching, you will get an introduction to the most popular Google education tools, while designing lessons and units for students aligned with Common Core State Standards and International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Technology Standards.

### Teaching Positive Social Skills to Students

UNITS: 3 | PRICE: \$489

Studies indicate the development of social and emotional skills can positively affect student achievement and success in school and later in life. This course examines the research and best practices for teaching students positive social skills. Participants will develop a toolkit of resources for teaching and promoting the development of students' self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.

### RESET: Resiliency, Compassion, and Innovation for a Transformative New School Year

UNITS: 3 | PRICE: \$349

Reset: Resiliency, Compassion and Innovation for a Transformative New School Year is designed to meet educators where they are as they transition back to a face-to-face classroom, hybrid, or virtual learning environment this fall. Major topics addressed will include SEL (social emotional learning), trauma-informed instruction, educator *resiliency, advance and improve student learning*, and an innovator's mindset shift rebuilding our education system together and with an emphasis on grace and a willingness to try new strategies in the classroom.



View our course offerings now!

Visit [SanDiego.edu/EducatorsPrograms](https://www.sandiego.edu/EducatorsPrograms)

*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.*

June / July 2021

# CALENDAR



## ◀ NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards

**TUNE IN TO** NEA's virtual event honoring the 2021 Human and Civil Rights Award winners, drawn from educators and activists across the country. Festivities begin June 29, 5 p.m. PDT, prior to the start of NEA's annual Representative Assembly (RA), which runs June 30–July 3. (See next page.)

## June Is Pride Month

**THOUGH JUNE IS** when many schools end the year, take advantage of classroom time you have to teach students about equality, LGBTQ+ history, activism and activists. The Anti-Defamation League ([adl.org](http://adl.org)) offers lesson plans for grades 4-12 and book recommendations. GLSEN ([glsen.org](http://glsen.org)) has lesson plans and extensive resource guides for educators. Search for CTA's LGBTQ+ Pride Month page at [cta.org](http://cta.org) and NEA's guidance on supporting LGBTQ+ youth at [nea.org](http://nea.org).

## California MTSS Professional Learning Institute ▶

"Know Me, Include Me" is the theme of this year's California MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support) virtual conference, July 20–22, for classroom educators, administrators, counselors, psychologists, county office of education leaders, and community organizations working to create inclusive and equitable learning environments.

Speakers include Tyrone C. Howard, professor in UCLA's Graduate School of Education and Information Studies and inaugural director of UCLA's Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families. Howard is also director of UCLA's Black Male Institute, and a native and former classroom teacher of Compton. Register at [camtsspli.ocde.us](http://camtsspli.ocde.us).



**ISTE Live 21 "Designing a New Learning Landscape."** The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) holds its virtual conference June 26–30. On tap: hundreds of presentations and learning experiences by educators and other innovators, and on-demand content available to you for six months afterward. ▶ [conference.iste.org/2021](http://conference.iste.org/2021)





## CTA Summer Conferences

**CTA's summer conferences**, with their plethora of professional development and leadership opportunities, continue to be virtual — out of an abundance of caution during the pandemic, but also to allow as many educators as possible to attend, no matter where they are. **Bonus for members:** The conferences are free, and university credit and professional growth hours are available! Register at [cta.org/conferences](https://cta.org/conferences).

**Presidents Conference** (2021 Home Edition!), July 12–16, is geared for local chapter leaders. It will provide new and returning presidents training designed to enhance your skills as leaders and help build systems of success for your chapters. [#CTAPC](#)

**Summer Institute** (2021 Home Edition!), July 26–29, focuses on preparing you and your chapter for the challenges that lie ahead. [#CTASI](#)

This year, CTA's premier training conference will have a special emphasis on the unique issues we face as we return to classrooms for the new school year. Tracks and session topics include:

- **Communications:** Storytelling and strategy; tools for branding, advocacy, member engagement.
- **Community Engagement and Coalition Building:** Tools to deepen relationships, build power and take collective action to foster student success.
- **Economic Justice:** Become knowledgeable and persuasive advocates for economic justice and the education profession.

- **Emerging Leaders:** Information, resources and skills needed to become effective organizers.
- **Bargaining Skills:** Learn the basics, with a focus on current bargaining issues during the pandemic.
- **Instruction and Professional Development:** Focus on educator and student trauma and self-care; how to develop classroom environments and instructional practices that allow students to thrive and persevere.
- **Member Benefits:** Build skills to engage members in new ways; tools and resources to help your local stay on track.
- **Member Organizing:** Skills and best practices to recruit, engage and organize members.
- **School Finance:** Learn to analyze district finances, and how to use this knowledge for negotiations.

### PBL World 2021

**JUNE 21–24 CONFERENCE**

**Virtual.** “Racial Equity at the Center.” PBL World, sponsored by the nonprofit Buck Institute for Education, is the premier conference for Project Based Learning. ► [pblworld.org](https://pblworld.org)

### ASCD Annual Conference

**JUNE 23–25 CONFERENCE**

**Virtual.** Choose from hundreds of concurrent sessions about virtually every education topic. Connect with fellow educators who are committed to serving students and changing our education landscape for the better. ► [events.ascd.org/annual-conference](https://events.ascd.org/annual-conference)

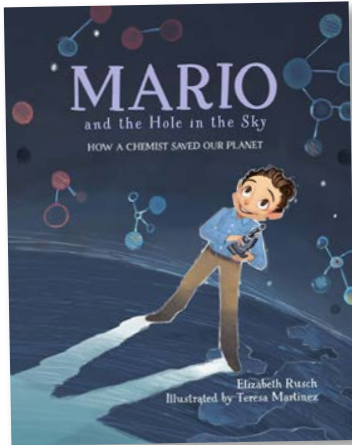
### NEA Representative Assembly

**JUNE 30–JULY 3 CONVENTION**

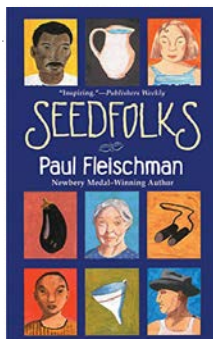
**Virtual.** NEA's annual RA is the world's largest democratic deliberative body with about 7,000 delegates. CTA members will help set policy and chart the direction of NEA business. Delegates to this year's meeting will use a virtual platform that allows for debate, voting on business items, and all other RA business. ► [nea.org/ra](https://nea.org/ra)

# HOT READS

**SET UP YOUR** students for summer reading with books that will captivate and educate. CTA's California Reads offers an annual list of teacher-vetted books for the classroom or individual reading at [cta.org/californiareads](http://cta.org/californiareads). Among the 2021 recommendations:



▲ In ***Mario and the Hole in the Sky: How a Chemist Saved Our Planet*** by Elizabeth Rusch, illustrated by Teresa Martinez (grades 1-2), young Mario Molina examines everything under a microscope. He continues studying chemistry as an adult — and discovers that CFCs, used in millions of refrigerators and spray cans, are destroying the earth's protective ozone layer. Mario's warnings face vitriolic criticism before he is finally taken seriously. The true story of the Nobel Prize-winning Mexican American chemist who indeed saved the planet. In English and Spanish.

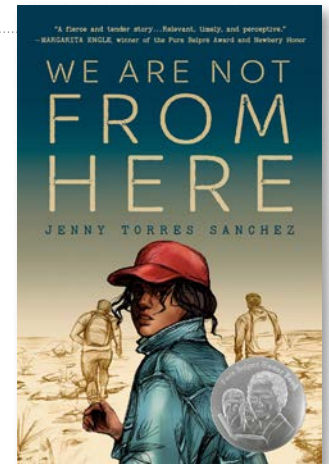


▲ In a Cleveland neighborhood, a Vietnamese girl plants six lima beans in a vacant lot while a Romanian woman watches suspiciously. A school janitor gets involved, then a Guatemalan family. Then muscle-bound Curtis, trying to win back Lateesha. Then pregnant Maricela, and Amir from India. In ***Seedfolks*** by Paul Fleischman, illustrated by Judy Pedersen (grades 6-8), 13 speakers bring to life a community garden — and a community. The book has been used to teach tolerance, read in ESL classes, promoted by urban gardeners, and performed in schools and on stages worldwide.

▶ ***Watch Us Rise*** by Renée Watson and Ellen Hagan (grades 9-12) tells how best friends Jasmine and Chelsea, sick of how women are treated even at their progressive NYC high school, start a Women's Rights Club. Posts of their poems, essays and videos, and Jasmine's response to racial microaggressions she experiences go viral. But when online trolls get out of control, the principal shuts the club down. Jasmine and Chelsea are unwilling to be silenced and risk all so their voices, and those of other young women, are heard. An inspiration to budding poets, feminists and activists everywhere.



▶ ***We Are Not From Here*** by Jenny Torres Sanchez (grades 9-12) describes three Guatemalan friends who are threatened by dangers even as they're surrounded by the love of family. The teens have no choice but to flee their homeland. Crossing through Mexico, they follow the route of La Bestia, the notorious train system that might deliver them to a better life in the U.S. — if they survive the journey. Described as a riveting but devastating read, the story is relevant and timely.





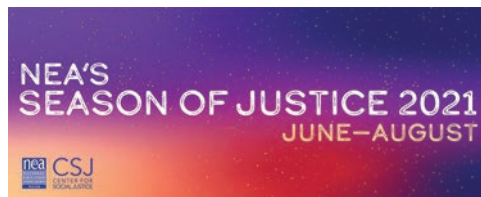
# SUMMER JUSTICE ▶

The **Season of Justice 2021**, a series of virtual engagements from June through August, is underway. Presented by NEA's Center for Social Justice, events are designed to deepen knowledge, build connections and engage the collective in meaningful conversations on racial and social justice. See more at [neadjustice.org/seasonofjustice](https://neadjustice.org/seasonofjustice).

Last year's **Summer Justice Series** from NEA featured workshops and meetups focused on art, music and poetry as advocacy tools. This year's lineup:

- Week of July 26: Transforming Policing Policies for Safe and Just Communities
- Week of Aug. 2: Healthy and Strong Communities and Schools
- Week of Aug. 9: Empowering Communities and Schools
- Week of Aug. 16: Ensuring the Right to Vote for Black, Brown, Native and AAPI Voters

Visit [neadjustice.org/seasonofjustice](https://neadjustice.org/seasonofjustice) for details.



CDC/Unsplash



## ◀ Vaccinations for Young Teens

**THERE ARE ALMOST** 17 million adolescents ages 12-15 in the United States, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF), which analyzed 2019 American Community Survey data to help inform COVID-19 vaccination efforts to reach this population. The distribution of these adolescents by race/ethnicity:

|               | Total      | White | Black | Hispanic | Asian | Other* |
|---------------|------------|-------|-------|----------|-------|--------|
| United States | 16,862,000 | 50.5% | 13.4% | 25.4%    | 4.8%  | 5.8%   |
| California    | 2,062,000  | 25.1% | 4.8%  | 52.4%    | 11.5% | 6.2%   |

\*Due to insufficient data, American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, and multiracial people are included in Other. Hispanic people may be of any race but are categorized as Hispanic; other groups are all non-Hispanic adolescents.

KFF reports that while children are less likely to experience severe COVID-19 disease compared to adults, a small subset may develop serious illness leading to hospitalization and even death. The risk is higher among Black and Hispanic adolescents compared to their white counterparts. Since children can transmit to others, vaccinating those under age 16 is important for achieving herd immunity to curb the pandemic.

For the latest on vaccinations for students, go to [schools.covid19.ca.gov](https://schools.covid19.ca.gov). Educators can find resources and tools at [toolkit.covid19.ca.gov/partners](https://toolkit.covid19.ca.gov/partners). And read our Q&A with Dr. Naomi Bardach, who leads the Safe Schools for All Team for the California Health and Human Services Agency, on vaccines for ages 12-15 (page 13).

# Quotes & Numbers

Compiled by Julian Peeples

# 92%

Percentage of educators who said teaching is more stressful now than prior to the pandemic in a recent EdWeek Research Center survey.



**“TEACHING IS HEART WORK. IT’S A WORK OF THE HEART. IT’S ABOUT CONNECTING AND MAKING RELATIONSHIPS.”**

—Juliana Urtubey,  
Nevada special educator and 2021 National Teacher of the Year.

# 30 million



Number of children in the U.S. who relied on free or reduced-price school meals in 2019, according to the summary of the proposed Universal School Meals Program Act, which would provide four free meals a day to all school children.



# 115 million

Amount proposed by Gov. Gavin Newsom to expand zero-textbook-cost degrees across the state’s community college system, noting during his May Revise budget announcement that the “racket that is the textbook industry is abusive to common sense.”

**“FOR SO LONG, TEACHERS HAVE BEEN UNDERVALUED. HOPEFULLY, NOW, AFTER THIS PANDEMIC, ALL OF AMERICA HAS SEEN WHAT TEACHERS HAVE DONE.”**

—President Joe Biden,  
acknowledging National Teacher Appreciation Week in May.

# 700

Number of food pantries on college campuses (up from just 88 a decade ago), according to the College and University Food Bank Alliance, underscoring the growing hunger problem on campuses.

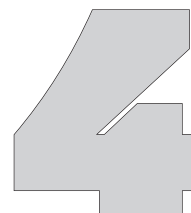
# 3,677,235

Cases of COVID-19 in California as of May 28, along with 61,855 deaths.

“

*We need to do more to care for our teachers. And we need to have their backs, because they have our children’s backs.”*

—Gov. Gavin Newsom during his announcement of the May Revise budget, which includes a record \$93.7 billion in funding for public education (see story, page 33).



Number of states (Idaho, Iowa, Oklahoma, Tennessee) that have placed legal limits on how educators can teach about racism, sexism and other controversial issues.



**“We’re here to talk about student debt, how it was intentionally created, and how it worsens and widens the racial wealth gap. ... We can create a powerful movement that can help more Americans move from simply surviving to thriving.”**

—NEA Vice President Princess Moss, opening an NEA webinar on student debt cancellation.



# A Shot in the Arm

## Naomi Bardach explains why kids ages 12-15 can and should get vaccinated

**ON MAY 12**, California children ages 12-15 became eligible for vaccinations against the coronavirus, following FDA authorization and studies showing the Pfizer vaccine's efficacy in that age group. Dr. Naomi Bardach leads the Safe Schools for All Team for the California Health and Human Services Agency and is overseeing the rollout. She shared what her team has planned.

### **Vaccination will not be required to return to school, but do you recommend that 12- to 15-year-olds get their shots now?**

We're encouraging them to get vaccinated this summer for the safety of all students and to help end the pandemic.

### **Will you have guidance for educators and schools that they can relay to parents and guardians?**

Yes, we'll have informational materials and messaging about how the vaccine is effective and safe for parents, educators and teens. For the latest on vaccinations for students, go to [schools.covid19.ca.gov](https://schools.covid19.ca.gov). Educators can also find resources and tools at [toolkit.covid19.ca.gov/partners](https://toolkit.covid19.ca.gov/partners).

### **Will students and educators still need to wear masks and other PPE, and socially distance in classrooms and other spaces on campus?**

We are actively discussing this within our state and with others nationally. We know that elementary school students and younger will represent the largest group of unvaccinated people at the start of the new school year, so the guidance will reflect the understanding that many schools will have a mixed population of vaccinated and unvaccinated students.

The goal is to support safe, full in-person instruction for all students in the coming year. Schools are workplaces as well as educational settings, and Cal/OSHA regulations oversee workplaces, so the guidance will align with the Cal/OSHA standards.

### **What about students with special needs — is it more important for them to be vaccinated?**

We know that students and children who are at higher risk of having more severe disease with COVID tend to be those who have medical problems that they were born with or that are severe. So we know it will be important and beneficial for these children to get the vaccine — in discussion with their regular doctors.

### **Will vaccinated students still get regular testing?**

The science suggests moving away from ongoing screening testing for all vaccinated people. But these discussions are underway.

### **Is there a plan to set up vaccination clinics in underserved communities?**

Right now, in 13 counties most disproportionately affected by COVID-19, we are already working with schools to set up sites and making sure local health jurisdictions and health officers are in partnership with those schools and communities. We have heard from people that having trusted sites including schools, which are a convenient place where you can bring your whole family, is great for vaccinations. [Note: Los Angeles Unified School District began offering vaccinations for ages 12-15 on school sites in late May.]

The state and the governor's office



**“We have heard from people that having trusted sites including schools, which are a convenient place where you can bring your whole family, is great for vaccinations.”**

are very mindful about this important equity piece around vaccinations, that communities disproportionately impacted by COVID get easy access to the vaccines and are supported to do it.

### **Do 12- to 15-year-olds need parent/guardian consent before getting the vaccine?**

Yes, those younger than 18 need consent unless they are emancipated minors. Each place might be a little different about how they do consent. California has guidance that says you can do in-person consent, fill out a written consent form, or do a phone call or even a video platform like FaceTime — and an older kid can go with that piece of paper and another trusted adult to get a shot. But each local place might have different requirements.

### **The Pfizer Study**

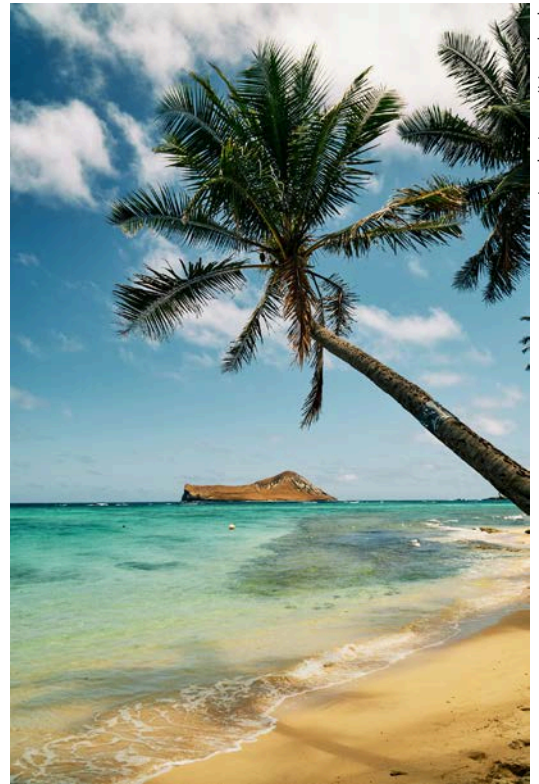
More than 2,200 participants ages 12-15 participated in Pfizer's Phase 3 clinical trial in the U.S. About half got the real vaccine; others received placebos. The shot was found to be 100 percent effective against getting COVID-19.

# On the Road Again

After a year of no travel, a few members tell us their summer plans

"Aloha! We are FINALLY going to take my stepdaughter on her well-earned graduation 2020 trip. It may be a year late, but we are thrilled to be going to **Hawaii** as a family. We can't wait to hit the sand and enjoy some shaved ice along the way."

—JOY SCHNAPPER, president,  
Capistrano Unified Education Association



Justin Lam/Unsplash

Kait Herzog/Unsplash



"I will be traveling to see a baseball game in **Colorado** and then packing up the car and heading to **Portland** to visit family. After the year we all have had, I can't wait to get out and enjoy the summer!"

—VALORIE LUKE, president,  
Antioch Education Association



Zack Spear/Unsplash

Visit Tuolumne County



"I will be going to a cabin owned by my in-laws up in **Pincrest, California**. I am excited to relax and spend some much-needed time away from technology. We do not have internet or cable in the cabin. Time to unplug and enjoy life!"

—NANCIELE MASSONE,  
Stockton Teachers Association





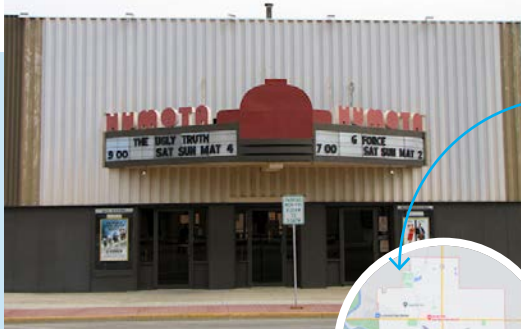
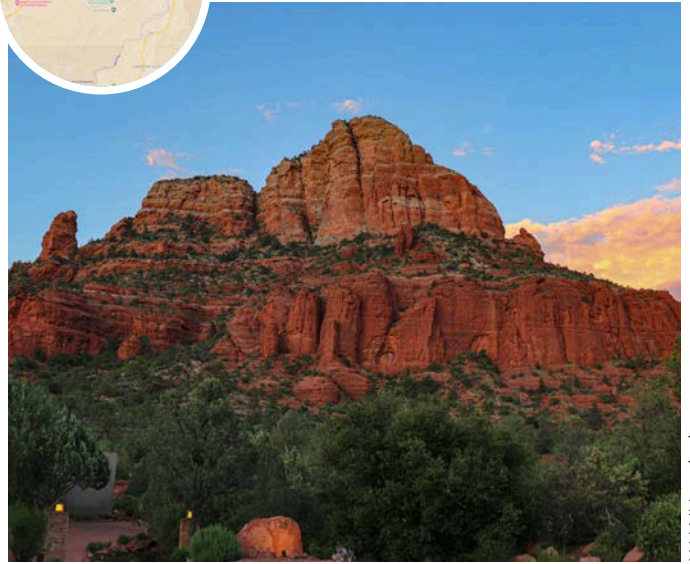
"I am going to **Chicago** and driving around the Great Lakes, on my way to my cousin's wedding in upstate New York. Chicago has been on my wish list for a long time, and I can't wait to explore a new city. I am very excited to get back out on the road."

—PAMELA TARANGO, *Bakersfield Elementary Teachers Association*

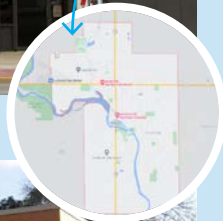


"My first family getaway will be to the majestic red rock of **Sedona, Arizona** — a gem in the middle of the desert with beautiful green spaces and a natural creek. We plan to relax and explore new hiking trails, vortex meditation sites, and take a dive in Oak Creek."

—CLAUDIA SILVA,  
*United Teachers Los Angeles*



"Iowa! The lovely thriving metropolis of **Humboldt, Iowa** (population 4,583), to see my aunt and uncle who survived COVID in their 80s. They are the closest thing I have left to parents. I'll eat lots of sweet corn and local rhubarb pie and see recent but not new films at the Humota Theater — which comes with not-fresh Jujubes and amazing local popcorn and corn-fed dairy cow butter. I'll ride around and appreciate all the cousins' new trucks, and hang out for a night at Sather-Odgaard VFW Post #5240 listening to my fellow vets.



"I'll have coffee at the local Dairy Queen, where my Great-Uncle Harry bought me coffee and helped convince me to be a teacher in 1992. The story goes the man bought up failing farms during the Depression, then sold them back for the same low price to the original owners when they could get back on their feet. He understood the value of every person in that town and worked hard to make things better for everyone. He's the reason I'm in the union. He lived his commitment to making a difference every day. I'm pretty sure it was the local rhubarb pie and coffee that fueled him to change the world."

—DAN NELSON, *president, Ventura Unified Education Association*



NASA, restored by Adam Cuerden



## MY UNSUNG

# HERO

**Valerie Thomas** is a Black woman who revolutionized technology. She invented and patented the illusion transmitter, the first mechanism to create the appearance of a 3D image using concave mirrors and rays of light. Her work is what led to the 3D movies we are watching in theaters today.

She worked at NASA during Jim Crow. She developed real-time computer data systems to support satellite operation control centers and oversaw the creation of the Landsat program, which expanded upon the works of other NASA scientists to view Earth from space. She was overlooked in the movie *Hidden Figures*.

She was born in Maryland in 1943. At age 8, she read *The Boy's First Book on Electronics*. But her parents and the all-girls school she attended did not encourage her interest in math and science.

At Morgan State University she was one of two women majoring in physics. She graduated with highest honors in 1964 and went to work for NASA. She started to experiment with flat and concave mirrors and discovered that while flat

*“She is a role model for young Black women. She encourages girls to enroll in STEM classes.”*



### WALTER FORD

WORLD GEOGRAPHY TEACHER,  
CHINO HILLS HIGH SCHOOL  
Association of Chino Teachers

mirrors produce a reflection of an object that seems to be behind the glass, concave mirrors reflect objects so they appear to be in front of the glass, producing a 3D effect.

She is a role model for young Black women. She gives back to the community by speaking to students of all ages. She encourages girls to enroll in STEM classes. She recently came to the public's attention when Chance the Rapper tweeted about her. She retired in 1995 and still lives in Maryland.



# Lesser-known historical figures who inspired our educators and changed America

As told to **Sherry Posnick-Goodwin**

**M**artin Luther King Jr. Rosa Parks. Pocahontas. Cesar Chavez. These historical figures are included in textbooks, but countless other unsung heroes of color — especially women — are overlooked and ignored.

As educators strive to offer a broader and more inclusive look at our past, many are highlighting diverse people who helped shape our world. This provides students a deeper understanding of events that transformed this country and allows students of color, especially, to realize that people who look like them played a significant role in American history.

We asked educators to share their favorite unsung heroes and why they chose them. Some selected individuals from early times; others picked modern-day people who have inspired them.

Fred Kabotie with Eleanor Roosevelt.



## MARY LEVI

FOURTH GRADE TEACHER, SYCAMORE ELEMENTARY

*Upland Teachers Association*

**Fred Kabotie** was born in 1900 and was the first Native American to receive a Guggenheim Fellowship for the arts. You may have seen his murals in Bright Angel Lodge at the Grand Canyon, or his paintings in the Smithsonian and the Guggenheim Museum.

At age 9, the U.S. Cavalry took him away from the Hopi reservation in Arizona to a boarding school in New Mexico. He was not allowed to speak Hopi or practice his religion. While away, he lost his mother and sister to smallpox, and his father and uncles were sent to Alcatraz and imprisoned.

At school Kabotie picked up sticks of charcoal and drew on sand, rocks or paper, depicting Hopi ceremonies. The superintendent's wife encouraged him and gave him paint. Eventually he returned to the reservation and sold his work. His friend Bill Belknap, an author and photographer who was interested in Native Americans, sent one of his paintings to the Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. Kabotie received a fellowship and money from



Mary Levi

***“He taught me songs, traditions and stories. And he taught the Hopi people resilience.”***

the foundation, which he used to learn and teach silversmithing. He developed and taught the Hopi the overlay jewelry technique, so they could sell jewelry and earn a living.

Kabotie encouraged his tribe to make connections outside of the reservation while maintaining their religion, culture and art. He strove for social justice and healing. He was part of the development of the Hopi cultural center and museum, which helped visitors understand the Hopi culture and provided employment for Hopi.

Fred Kabotie was my grandfather. Before he died in 1985, he taught me songs, traditions and stories. And he taught the Hopi people resilience.



Eddric Le/Wikimedia Commons

## MICHELLE BAN

SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER, ROSEMEAD HIGH SCHOOL  
El Monte Union Educators Association

**Ronald Takaki** was a pioneer in bringing up race in American history when it was so often ignored or pushed aside. He was a professor, scholar and author.

Originally from Hawaii, he helped found the first-ever ethnic studies department at UCLA. He taught the first Black history class there. People walked in expecting a Black professor and said, "Whoa, it's an Asian dude." The shock and awe were real conversation starters. Later, at UC Berkeley, he created the first ethnic studies Ph.D. program in the country.

He wanted to tell the narrative of different ethnic groups instead of just the white narrative. He is remembered for challenging his students with this question: *How do you know what you know?*

His work addressed the stereotype of Asian Americans as the model minority who are successful and well-adjusted



Michelle Ban

***"His works make me feel I am indeed a part of the history of this country."***



compared to other minorities. It's a stereotype because many Asian Americans live in poverty and struggle. He believed the myth was wrongly used to justify not helping minority groups facing socio-economic challenges.

His books include *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* and *Strangers From a Different Shore: A History of Asian*

*Americans*. He died in 2009, at the age of 70.

Growing up as an Asian American woman, I didn't see my story in many textbooks. But his works make me feel that I am indeed a part of the history of this country.

## SERGIO DE ALBA

R.M. MIANO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
Los Banos Teachers Association

**Dolores Huerta**, age 91, embraces the ideals that make America a success and serves as an inspiration for countless people, including myself. Huerta provides a model of the impact we can make when setting our minds to correct any disparity.

Including Huerta in history lessons gives students an example of what can be achieved with dedication and perseverance. As the co-founder of the United Farm Workers (UFW), she worked diligently advocating for farmworkers' rights. From improving working conditions to fighting for a livable wage, Huerta is an American hero who has fundamentally changed the lives of some of the most disenfranchised in our populace.

For me, her impact was felt directly. As farmworkers, my parents benefited from the efforts of the UFW, Cesar Chavez and Huerta.



Sergio de Alba

***"As a teen, I joined my parents in the fields. I saw firsthand the difference Huerta had made."***



If students learned of the inequalities these workers faced, they would think differently of the farmworkers who pick the fruits and vegetables that feed our country.

As a teenager, I joined my parents in the fields. I saw firsthand the difference Huerta had made. More than a drink of water or the availability of a bathroom, it was a sense of humanity that she helped to provide, an idea that farmworkers are more than laborers — they are human beings.

When we include individuals from all cultures that have contributed to our great nation's history, it empowers us all and makes America a better country.



## OCTAVIO BARAJAS

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ETHNIC STUDIES  
College of the Sequoias Teachers Association

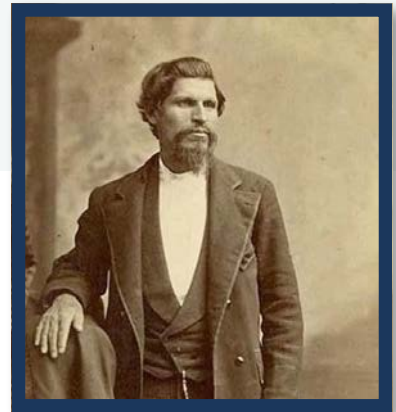
**Tiburcio Vásquez** was a “social bandit,” which means he was considered an outlaw by the law, and a hero to the populace. He was a kind of Robin Hood. He was born in Monterey, California, in 1835. He was highly educated and spoke fluent English and Spanish. He wrote letters with beautiful penmanship in both languages when California was becoming more Anglo-dominated. The Gold Rush was a very unsettling time for Chicanos because they were marginalized and criminalized, which continues today.

He was at a party with many Californios and Anglos when a fight broke out. A sheriff came in to break up the fight and was killed. Tiburcio didn’t shoot the sheriff, but he was a suspect. He fled to the foothills and became a fugitive. He stole horses and robbed stagecoaches to survive. Mexican families in California offered him fresh horses, and he



Tiburcio Vásquez

*“Studying this man humanizes the conflicts during this period. My students identify with this story.”*



would give them a bag of gold coins.

When he was arrested and hung on March 19, 1875, it was a sad day for Mexicans in California.

Studying this man humanizes the conflicts during this period and provides students with a fuller understanding of what Mexicans experienced during the early days of California. My students identify with this story. It shows how institutional racism operated then — and helps provide understanding of how the criminalization and stereotypes of the Chicano population continue to this day.

## NICOLE CICCARELLI

TEACHER, LAKE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL  
Garden Grove Education Association

**Mary Ann Shadd Cary** was an educator, abolitionist, editor, attorney and feminist. She was born a free woman in 1823 in the slave state of Delaware and made incredible sacrifices for the freedom of others before her death in 1893.

She helped fugitive slaves escape to Canada with the Underground Railroad. After the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, her family moved to Canada. She returned to the U.S. during the Civil War and recruited Black soldiers for the Union.

Cary broke barriers with many firsts. She was acclaimed as the first Black woman on the American continent to establish and edit a weekly newspaper. She became the first woman student at Howard University Law School and the second African American to earn a law degree. She was the first Black



Nicole Ciccarelli

*“It’s important to educate students about her strength and courage to inspire them to follow her activism.”*



woman to vote in a national election.

She joined the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), working alongside Susan B. Anthony, testifying before the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives. She spoke at the 1878 NWSA convention.

I believe that students should learn about Cary so they can truly see how much a woman of color helped with the women’s suffrage movement and other social movements. It’s important to educate our students about her strength and courage to inspire them to follow her activism. It shows how they can make a difference, too.



## EVAN WADE

HISTORY PROFESSOR

San Joaquin Delta College Teachers Association

**Mary McLeod Bethune** was one of the most underappreciated heroes in U.S. history. Most textbooks don't include her, but she was a profound race leader and women's rights champion.

She was born in 1875 in South Carolina to formerly enslaved Africans and was one of 17 children. She founded a college in Daytona, Florida, for Black girls, as they were not allowed to attend white schools. Bethune-Cookman University still exists; it set the standards for today's STEM colleges.

Her college became a registration site for Black voters. When she heard the KKK was coming to burn her school, she faced off with Klansmen in the night and said, "You'll have to kill me first." She survived and so did her school.

In 1935, Bethune founded the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW). It sought to liberate Black women from the trinity of racism, classism and sexism. The NCNW, which still exists, helped organize the 1963 March on Washington, which Bethune did not live to see, as she died in 1955.

Bethune was a leader in Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Black Cabinet." She fought to end job discrimination and the lynching of African Americans. In 1940, she became the NAACP vice president and held that position until her passing. President Truman appointed her as a delegate to the United Nations organizing meeting in 1945.

I love her strength, her brilliance, and her dedication. She made America a better place.



Evan Wade

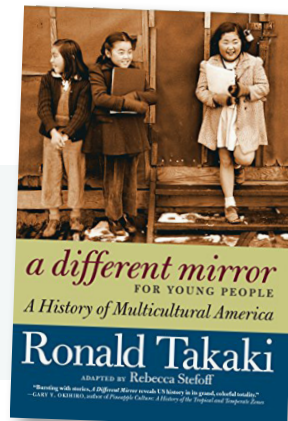
***"I love her strength, her brilliance, and her dedication. She made America a better place."***



Top photo: Mary McLeod Bethune in front of the college she founded. Bottom photo: Bethune's university still stands today.

## WHO'S YOUR HERO?

Have you been inspired by a relatively unknown historical or modern-day hero? Tell us about the person or people you admire most, and why or how you teach your students about their impact. Email [editor@cta.org](mailto:editor@cta.org) with "Heroes" in the subject line.





# SILVER LININGS

How the pandemic made educators **better, stronger and kinder** — skills they will take into the coming year and beyond By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin



▲ Glendale High music teacher Amy Rangel exhorts her students to ever-higher levels. Photo: Kim Sanford

**“Maybe because I’ve become a student again, I see things with a fresh eye. I have become more patient with students that struggle.”**

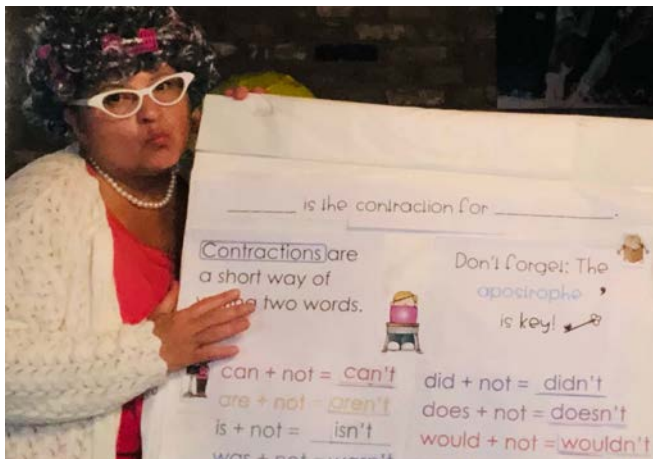
—Amy Rangel, Glendale Teachers Association

Story continues on next page





▼ Maria Parkin as Granny Grammar, complete with wig, glasses and pearls.



**“I forced myself to learn new things and think outside the box. I told myself I had to do it for the kids. And I did.”**

**—Maria Parkin,**  
Teachers Association  
of Paramount

*Ding dong, it's Granny Grammar!*

The doorbell rings on Google Meet, and Granny makes her grand entrance. The first graders listen to Granny's every word.

Their teacher, Maria Parkin, aka “Granny,” says that her new persona is just one of many new tricks to engage students online.

“When the pandemic first hit, I forced myself to learn new things and think outside the box. It was so challenging. I told myself I had to do it for the kids. And I did.”

To grab their attention online, she created Granny Grammar. She changed her shirt and her voice — and dressed up with a wig, glasses and string of pearls. She didn't know how it would go over at first, but students loved it. Thanks to Granny, their phonemic awareness and reading comprehension have soared.

“I had to up the ante during distance learning,” says Parkin, a 16-year teacher and member of the Teachers Association of Paramount. “It was much more engaging for them than worksheets.”

**LEARNING NEW WAYS OF TEACHING**

The pandemic has been difficult, stressful and exhausting. But Parkin, like many school employees, found some positives. She has embraced new styles of teaching that she will continue when in-class instruction resumes this fall. She has become stronger and more confident.

“I will definitely continue asynchronous learning,” she says. “I didn't do that before. But technology is the way to go. Of course, students still need their teacher. But there is so much that students can do online independently.”

Parkin also plans to keep herself connected online with students when they return to in-person learning via Google Jamboard, a collaborative, digital whiteboard where students and teachers can share ideas in real time. She loves that she can see

their work in progress and guide them as they work alone and in groups — and that students can see the work of classmates projected onto a screen at the push of a button.

“Before, it was pretty much paper and pencil,” she says. “Now I have a whole new perspective.”

Jamal Wright, history professor at Bakersfield College, says the pandemic has pushed him to become more technologically savvy, creative and vibrant.

“For me, the silver lining was learning how to create information resources for students, so they knew something about a topic before even coming to class,” says Wright, a member of the Kern Community College District chapter of the Community College Association (Kern CCD/CCA).



Jamal Wright

“I learned how to embed videos in lectures using Canvas. I post lectures with videos that students can watch any time. I engage in ‘flipped learning,’ so students can watch clips of *Gladiator* before I lecture on the Roman Empire. It develops a deeper understanding of the material. I also create quizzes in Canvas to test for understanding and help them retain information.”

Wright uses his new skills to create and upload videos and posts on how to navigate the campus virtually, submit assignments, communicate with instructors, and access resources like the school's food pantry. He never imagined himself doing how-to videos and posting links to essential school services, but he now enjoys it.

Isabel Garcia, a science and math teacher at San Benito High School in Hollister, shares that the pandemic provided an opportunity to update outmoded curriculum with colleagues, incorporating technology in a way that's more accessible for students and teachers. She credits her district and union with providing enough resources for staff to make that leap.

“When our schools closed down physically, we digitized our

Says San Benito High science and math teacher Isabel Garcia, "The pandemic definitely gave our team a chance to be more creative."



**"We are building the plane as we're flying it. We are learning and growing together, and there is beauty in that!"**

**—Isabel Garcia,**  
*San Benito High School Teachers Association*

learning environment very quickly," says Garcia, a member of San Benito High School Teachers Association. "The sense of urgency made a difference in pushing, promoting and supporting projects we were already working on, including revising curriculum."

Science teachers now access online simulations that allow students to do interactive experiments remotely and collaboratively with their peers. In chemistry, for example, students can adjust the volume, temperature and mass of ingredients online, re-creating the experience of students sitting at lab tables together.

"We flipped learning by recording our lectures and allowing students to do hands-on learning in simulations during class time," says Garcia. "The pandemic definitely gave our team a chance to be more creative."

## EMBRACING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Many who put off voluntary professional development before the pandemic found themselves attending an array of virtual workshops after school and on weekends once schools shut down. The trainings have sharpened their skills.

Wright, for example, attended every workshop available to transition to distance learning, and was excited to become more comfortable with technology.

Garcia helped organize a professional development workgroup called "Fan Favorites" that helped teachers in her district adjust to online instruction. Instead of using the term "best practices," which can be somewhat intimidating, teachers shared their favorite ways of doing things. The workgroup was a big hit.

"We are building the plane as we're flying it. If we find something that *works*, it's an instant Fan Favorite, which doesn't have the weighty expectation that comes with being a best practice," Garcia says. "We ask teachers to share what works for them. We are learning and growing together, and there is beauty in that."

As Garcia's district moves to hybrid, these sessions will continue.



Amy Rangel

## BECOMING OPEN-MINDED, FLEXIBLE AND PATIENT

Amy Rangel, a music and band teacher at Glendale High School, found herself in a quandary when the pandemic hit. Her students could no longer play together as a group. Playing and practicing music on Zoom or Webex doesn't work for an orchestra — there are time delays and technical glitches, and it's hard for the conductor to give directions to a specific section.

Rangel had to shift her thinking. "I still wanted them to have the feeling of playing as a group, so I shared my sound with them and they played their instruments along with me or with a demo recording," she says. "I couldn't hear them, but it gave them a sense of not playing alone."

A member of the Glendale Teachers Association who was honored on *The Kelly Clarkson Show* and was a finalist for 2019 Music Educator of the Year Grammy, Rangel also added solo projects and music appreciation activities. "My goal was to keep them playing and not just become a paper-and-pencil music class."

Students made their own choices of music and recorded videos of solo performances. Many were excited about having the freedom to choose what to play, she says. →

“I am able to be a more compassionate educator without compromising the quality of my classes. I have given myself permission to put my students and their well-being first.”

—Nicole Carrasco,  
Kern CCD/CCA



Rangel became creative with technology. She incorporated MusicFirst, which helps students learn how to read music while performing and creating music, and Smart-Music, a web-based suite of music education tools and home to an online, interactive music library, so students could play their solos with a background track.

“I never would have thought to use these programs before, because it would have seemed like an extravagance,” admits Rangel, who does her own fundraising for instruments and programs. “But now I am more open-minded, and I see them as tools to help students learn.”

Teaching in the pandemic has given Rangel more patience, and she has stopped being hard on herself when things don’t work out as planned.

“Maybe because I’ve become a student again, I see things with a fresh eye. I have become more patient with students that struggle. After the pandemic, we’ll still have concerts, performances and festivals, but it won’t be the be-all and end-all. I want to focus more on students’ progression and have them appreciate music, instead of just being in one performance after another.”



Candy Blanco

“For me, the boundary between faculty and students has broken down as we find ways to support each other. I am choosing to focus on the humanity of my students. I tell them I will work with them. My priorities as an educator have shifted.”

She allows students to turn in assignments later if they need more time and to work collaboratively. And she has extended office hours to help them understand the material and to support them emotionally. She wasn’t surprised when students began trying harder and achieving more when she became an ally.

“Because of the pandemic, I am able to be a more compassionate educator without compromising the quality of my classes. I have given myself permission to put my students and their well-being first.”

### DEVELOPING MORE EMPATHY

Nicole Carrasco, a sociology professor at Bakersfield College, says the pandemic has helped her put things in perspective.

“The world of higher education can be a pretty brutal place,” observes Carrasco, a Kern CCD/CCA member. “Faculty are always thinking about rigor, and sometimes this overshadows our humanity.”

Some of her students are caretakers for family members who are ill. Or they are attending class in sweltering heat outdoors because they have no privacy in their home. Students have called crying because they are too stressed and overwhelmed to complete assignments.

### SERVING UP FOOD AND COMPASSION

When schools closed, multiple districts continued serving meals to ensure students did not go hungry, including the Redlands Unified School District. Many low-income students rely on breakfast and lunch at schools for their main meals. And in the pandemic, many families have been struggling even more due to the economy.

In Redlands, staff united to make sure students — and community members — were fed before the schools reopened for



in-person instruction in April, says Candy Blanco, child nutrition services instructor for the district.

“One day a week, we had our ‘Grab and Go,’ where students up to age 18 could get a week’s worth of breakfast and lunch,” explains Blanco, a member of Redlands Education Support Professionals Association, who trains all the district’s child nutrition employees.

“For a lot of families, this wasn’t enough. It opened our eyes that a lot of people here are living in poverty.”

Students’ parents or guardians could pick up the food, no questions asked. Over time, the program was expanded for district employees to pick up food if necessary, which was the case when other family members lost their jobs.

“In the rain, the snow, the wind and heat, we handed out food, even during the summer,” says Blanco proudly. “We did everything we could to make sure that all our students were fed.”

Blanco marvels at how district employees pulled together as a team as never before. For her, that was the pandemic’s true silver lining.

“Classified [staff], teachers and administrators work in different capacities, but all of that changed in the pandemic. Everyone stepped up to help our kids. It was awesome how everyone came together.”

Blanco hopes that the same spirit of cooperation, respect and teamwork continues post-pandemic.

## STRENGTHENING PARENT RELATIONSHIPS

For Yvonne Molles, an early childhood special education preschool teacher for students with autism, the pandemic provided opportunities to work directly with parents in a way that has never happened before.

“I’m an early intervention specialist,” says Molles, president of the San Bernardino County Teachers Association. “Before the pandemic, we’d see parents once a year at Back to School Night and host seminars for them. But now we are Zooming directly into their homes. We’re teaching them while they are doing things with their children instead of sending them home with instructions. It’s more effective because parents are now able to understand exactly what they need to do as I guide them and help them in real time. They have become equipped with a whole new skill set.”

She hopes to continue working directly with parents when things get back to normal.

“They are much more successful helping their kiddos succeed when we collaborate together.”



**“I could focus on all the negative things. But there are also silver linings. The challenges we’ve faced have definitely made us stronger.”**

**—Yvonne Molles,**  
*San Bernardino County  
Teachers Association*

## BECOMING UNION STRONG

Prior to the pandemic, says Molles, about 20 members attended union meetings. When the coronavirus forced her chapter to go virtual, she was pleasantly surprised to see attendance rise.

“Now we have between 50 and 180 members in attendance out of 326 members, which is a huge increase. We are doing member engagement activities like online bingo for fun, giving out gift cards as prizes. And through online meetings, we have enhanced the relationship we have with our superintendent.”

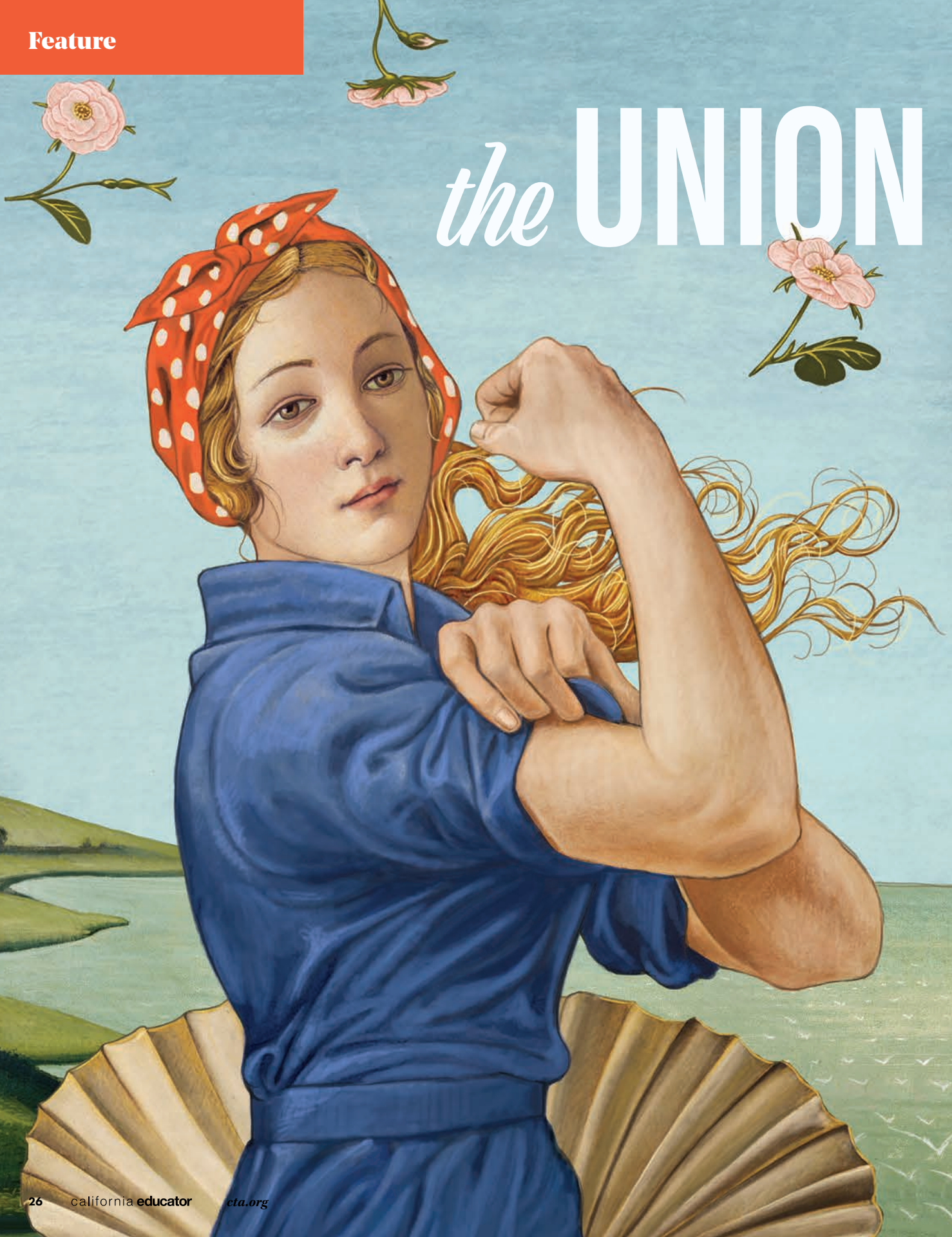
Recently, the executive board discussed amending the bylaws to allow virtual meetings to continue when the pandemic ends, which she thinks is an excellent idea.

“The pandemic has been rough,” says Molles. “And I could focus on all the negative things that have happened. But there are also some silver linings. The challenges we’ve faced have definitely made us stronger.” ■

## YOUR SILVER LINING

Have you found a few positives as an educator this past year? We’d love to share your story. Let us know in 250 words or less (subject to editing); email [editor@cta.org](mailto:editor@cta.org) with “Silver Lining” in the subject.

# *the* UNION





# RENAISSANCE

## *Educators organize for better as the labor movement is reborn*

By **Julian Peeples** Illustration by **Bob Venables**

**“IT’S HUMANIZING TO** have a voice, with people who share the same values and believe in teachers and education,” says ninth grade humanities educator Carol King. “That’s why having a voice is so important.”

In late April, King and about 400 of her colleagues at San Diego’s High Tech High charter school network organized High Tech Education Collective (HTEC), becoming the newest members of the CTA family and joining a growing list of charter educators who believe the best way to support their students and each other is in a union. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began in early 2020, educators have organized unions at seven charter school networks, affiliating with CTA to defend the health and safety of their school communities, protect and support their students, and rise together to fight for justice.

“The last two years have shown us how much we need to transform society. We need radical imagination and collaboration,” says King, an educator for 12 years, the last eight at High Tech High. “A union makes a lot of sense moving forward to reimagine our schools, so we can build a better world.”


Nationwide, labor unions are experiencing a renaissance of support. A recent Gallup poll found 65 percent of Americans support unions, the highest level in more than 50 years. And an April Pew Research Center report shows that a majority of Americans believe that the historic decline of union membership (only 10.8 percent of American

workers are union members today, down from 20 percent in 1983) has been bad for the United States.

Approximately 1,500 petitions for union representation were filed in 2020 with the National Labor Relations Board, including one by Amazon workers in Bessemer, Alabama, which made national headlines. Though their effort came up short, the workers showed that even in the heart of the South against one of the largest corporations in the world, the tide seems to be shifting. In late April, President Joe Biden created a White House Task Force on Worker Organizing and Empowerment, led by Vice President Kamala Harris and focused on increasing union membership, facilitating worker organizing nationwide, and increasing worker power in underserved communities.

“America was built by the middle class, and unions built the middle class,” Biden said in a statement. “The task force will be a historic effort to put the federal government’s policy of encouraging worker organizing and collective bargaining into action.”

### ***‘A unique union for a unique school’***

A lot has changed since High Tech High (HTH) public charter school opened in 2000 to serve 450 students. With 16 schools and 6,350 students on four campuses throughout San Diego County now, the charter school network is essentially a school district, according to Becky Frost, 



**“My hope and dream for this union is to give teachers a voice so we can continue to build the passion in this organization.”**

—CAROL KING, *High Tech Education Collective*





## WELCOME TO THE FAMILY

CTA-affiliated associations organized during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Coalition of Educators For Change Education Support Staff (Education for Change, Oakland)
- East Bay Educators United (Leadership Public Schools, Oakland)
- High Tech Education Collective (High Tech High, San Diego)
- Monterey Bay United (Monterey)
- Santa Rosa Academy/ Menifee Teachers Association (Menifee)
- South Bay Educators United (Downtown College Prep, San Jose)
- Sycamore Academy of Science and Cultural Arts/ Lake Elsinore Teachers Association (Wildomar, Chino)
- Yu Ming Educators Union (Oakland)

Victoria Albaracin (left) and teachers in Coalition of Educators for Change (CEFC) welcomed Paola Zamudio (right) and the charter network's education support staff, who organized and joined the union last summer.



HTEC member and 19-year High Tech Explorer Elementary School educator. When all the school's teachers could fit in a single room, their voices rang loudly, she says, but now many educators feel disconnected and left out of important decisions, especially related to the pandemic.

"Teachers didn't have a seat at the table like we used to," Frost says. "It was harder to get our voices heard."

When educators began organizing via Zoom earlier this year, they shared a lot of similar concerns, from high teacher turnover to the need for educator and student voices in decisions to the fear that HTH had strayed from its mission of equity that attracted so many of the teachers there in the first place.

"The pandemic really showed that the teachers didn't have a voice in our organization. Our hope is that a union can get us closer to bringing equity to life," says King. "This could, should and will be a unique union for a unique school. I see lots of opportunity for more collaboration that leads to better outcomes for students."

### *Building power through unity*

Two years ago, teachers at the largest charter school network in Oakland formed Coalition of Educators for Change (CEFC) to improve sustainability and build power to support their students and communities. With 175 teachers across six schools, CEFC finalized their first-ever contract during the pandemic, which includes language that gives teachers control over setting class sizes.

CEFC President Victoria Albaracin says teachers immediately sought to help the Education Support Staff (ESS) organize — and not into a different union but as members of a "wall to wall" CEFC that represents all the network's educators.

"This is what the labor movement is all about," says Albaracin, a kindergarten teacher. "You

can't be truly unified unless everyone is included."

Paola Zamudio works as a kindergarten tutor in the classroom with Albaracin. She says education support professionals have long been unrecognized, unseen and unheard, with working conditions only



Becky Frost



◀ High Tech High educator Diana Gonzalez says that HTEC will positively impact students for years to come.



getting worse with the onset of the pandemic — and many staff feeling like they were disposable.

“A lot of us were ready to fight for change,” Zamudio says, “and so we did.”

Starting their organizing on Zoom in the early days of the pandemic, the educators set a two-month deadline so they could file for recognition by the end of the school year, a feat that seemed difficult to accomplish at the time. With an organizing team of eight and the support of their teacher colleagues, Zamudio and ESS organizers drove around their communities and collected signatures, safely and from a distance. She recounted watching a colleague who works as a custodian sign the union petition while his grandchildren watched, witnessing the memorable moment.

“It was a very powerful time,” Zamudio says excitedly. “We created a union during the pandemic — who would’ve thought that would happen?”

The ESS educators filed in June and were recognized in August 2020 — a monumental effort in such a short time, and one that increases CEFC to nearly 300 members.

“We were just a baby union two years ago. And to have expanded and given a voice to the voiceless is an honor,” Albaracin says. “My hope is we build a strong place that educators want to stay.”

**When we come together as a community, we’re a very powerful force.**

—PAOLA ZAMUDIO,  
kindergarten tutor, *Coalition of Educators for Change*

## ***Union busting is real***

Not everyone is pleased with labor’s resurgence and an increase in empowered workers. Anti-union organizations like the Freedom Foundation and the Mackinac Center for Public Policy pour money into disinformation campaigns aimed at deceiving workers to leave their unions (see sidebar, page 31). Some charter management operators are notorious union busters, using any means necessary to scare, obstruct or otherwise prevent their educators from organizing a union.

Frost says that her current contract at High Tech High is year to year and at will. Being able to collectively bargain a contract is a big part of why she wanted a union. But it’s also why signing their names at the bottom of a union organizing letter can be cause for concern.

“It’s a scary thought,” says Diana Gonzalez, Spanish teacher and HTEC member. “But it’s not just about me. It’s for future colleagues and students. To have a union is going to positively impact their experiences. Even if I’m gone, the students will still benefit from the union.”

The question of “what if” went from a hypothetical to real life during the reporting of this story, when an HTEC organizing committee member was fired a day after being quoted in a San Diego area newspaper article on the unionizing effort. HTEC and CTA mobilized immediately, filing an unfair labor practice charge for the apparent retaliation and demanding the dedicated four-year teacher be reinstated.

“We believe it is our collective obligation as a union, as teachers, as peers, as High Tech High families, and as the larger educational community to protect the High Tech High teaching and learning community,” HTEC wrote in a petition to the HTH Board. “This means demonstrating our shared values by leveraging our collective power to correct this egregious act committed by HTH leadership.” →

Asha Hannah (left) and Andy Marshall-Buselt at CTA Summer Institute in 2016 (with Kamala Harris, then California attorney general), long before they helped organize East Bay Educators United.



“It was really clear that we needed a formal say at the table, so that the folks on the ground working with our students and families can shape our policies.”

—ANDY MARSHALL-BUSELT, special education teacher, East Bay Educators United

It’s a testament to how much these educators believe in each other and their students that they’re willing to put it all on the line for their union. King says that’s exactly what’s at the heart of HTEC: a belief in what’s possible for the students of High Tech High.

“I really think this union is forming out of love for this place,” King says.

### Uniting for students, fighting for justice

Asha Hannah and Andy Marshall-Buselt have been teachers at Leadership Public Schools (LPS) in Oakland for seven years, which is also how long they have been working on organizing a union. In February, their work was finally realized when

educators across three schools formed East Bay Educators United (EBEU), affiliating with CTA.

It is an effort that got a jolt of energy in 2019 when educators at LPS and other Oakland charter schools held a sympathy strike in conjunction with the Oakland Education Association strike.

Marshall-Buselt says the experience was transformational. “Having us help hold the line and be out there really meant a lot to our colleagues. It was a watershed moment for our staff. Ever since then, the way we look at our own rights has changed.”

Hannah says after hearing repeated tales of colleagues being disrespected and mistreated, it became apparent that educators needed a seat at the table. The top-down decision-making that often lost sight of student and educator needs only became more

*Continued on Page 32*

## Clovis Educators Launch Historic Organizing Effort

**FOLLOWING YEARS** of district decision-making that has excluded the needs of educators and classrooms as well as concerns that peaked during the pandemic, a large and diverse group of Clovis educators launched a petition drive in April to form a union.

The Association of Clovis Educators (ACE) began gathering signatures to build a union among the more than 2,100 teachers, school psychologists, itinerant specialists, school counselors and other educators in the Clovis Unified School District, just north of Fresno. ACE

announced its plans to organize in a letter to the Clovis Unified community signed by dozens of educators from the district who belong to the ACE union organizing committee.

The petition will circulate until a majority of educators’ signatures have been gathered.

“Clovis educators and schools are known for their excellence, and we believe that to stay true to our district’s core values, forming a union is our next important step,” says Kristin Heimerdinger, a 28-year Clovis teacher. “Though many of our concerns have been building for years,

a mismanaged school reopening during this pandemic has shown us that district decision-making is broken and does not value all students equally. Educators need a meaningful seat at the table, and we believe a union is the best way to ensure a strong future for our students and schools for years to come.”

Clovis Unified School District is one of the last large school districts in California without a union that represents educators. For more information about ACE, go to [cloviseducators.org](https://cloviseducators.org) (#WeAreACE).



# WHO WANTS YOU TO OPT OUT — AND WHY?

**THIS PAST SPRING** mailers were sent to San Francisco city employees, including educators, urging them to opt out of their union dues.

As reported by news site 48 Hills, the mailers were from Opt Out Today, a website run by the Washington-based Freedom Foundation. The foundation is part of a national network of conservative groups funded by anti-labor (and in some cases, anti-LGBTQ and anti-choice) organizations. It has a long record of working against public education in multiple states, taking positions *against* school funding, salary increases for educators, and providing technology and training for students.

This is not an isolated effort. Similar actions have occurred throughout the state over the past year, in campaigns targeting your mailboxes, phones and social media.

Google “join teachers union California” and one of the top results (along with Opt Out Today) is TeacherFreedom.org, with the headline “How to Opt Out of the California Teachers Association.”

TeacherFreedom.org is supported by organizations including the Association of American Educators (AAE) Foundation. Research by the Center for Media and Democracy shows AAE is partially funded by the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation to help “defund teachers unions and achieve real education reform.” The center reported in 2017: “Bradley is so anxious to silence the organized voice of public school teachers, it has pumped \$1.77 million into a substitute, the Association of American Educators Foundation.”

## **ATTACK ON YOUR RIGHTS**

Why are such concerted efforts being made now to convince you and other public sector workers to opt out of unions? Who are the groups behind the actions, and what do they want?

It helps to understand that opposition to organized labor has existed

— well, since labor started organizing workers. Labor leaders then and now have acted to give voice to workers, to improve working conditions, to ensure fair wages, and to allow workers and their families to live with dignity.

CTA fights for students and public education as well as educators.

“Since CTA’s founding in 1863, we have been fighting for equal access, justice and resources for all California’s students, teachers and classrooms,” says CTA President E. Toby Boyd. “All students deserve a quality education,

**The goal of these groups: to silence your voice in the classroom and suppress your rights on the job.**

and all educators should have the resources they need to provide it.”

With the 2018 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Janus v. AFSCME* allowing public sector workers to stop paying union agency fees (but maintain collective bargaining representation alongside dues-paying colleagues), well-funded conservative groups have sought to capitalize on the shrinking middle class to weaken unions, including educator unions.

The goal: to silence your voice in the classroom and suppress your rights on the job.

These groups want to break up labor’s influence to gain policies and laws more favorable to their interests — often done in the name of “reform.” Unfortunately, what is favorable to billionaires — such as limited government and fewer restrictions on businesses — is often at odds with the needs of the working class, resulting in lower wages and fewer protections for workers.

For example, privatizing education offers enormous profits for a few, while hurting many students who are left out and left behind. Until CTA members worked to change state laws, privately

managed charter school companies were allowed to cherry-pick students, and many continue to operate without full transparency.

The groups work fast. Within hours of the ruling in *Janus* — a case bankrolled by billionaires that overturned a unanimous 1977 Supreme Court ruling — the Michigan-based Mackinac Center for Public Policy flooded public school teachers’ inboxes and mailboxes nationwide with information on how to leave their unions.

And they’re not above exploiting a pandemic. The Freedom Foundation has been taking advantage of workers during this economically and emotionally vulnerable time by disseminating misleading and false information.

## **MISLEADING NAMES**

Many of the groups behind anti-labor and anti-public education efforts have pro-educator names such as Choice for Teachers and the California Teacher Empowerment Network. They label themselves as think tanks and operate as nonprofits, but the reality is that they are fronts for public education privatizers who want to weaken unions.

According to a 2018 Bloomberg story, tax filings reveal a who’s who of wealthy conservative groups behind the Freedom Foundation, including:

- The Sarah Scaife Foundation, backed by the estate of right-wing billionaire Richard Mellon Scaife.
- Donors Trust, which has received millions of dollars from a charity backed by conservative billionaire brothers Charles and David Koch.
- The Richard and Helen DeVos Foundation, backed by the family of former U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos.
- The State Policy Network, which has received funding from Donors Trust and is chaired by a vice president of the Bradley Foundation.

Learn more at

[cta.org/our-advocacy/union-strong](https://cta.org/our-advocacy/union-strong).

▼ Educators at Leadership Public Schools in Oakland hold a sympathy strike in 2019 in support of the Oakland Education Association strike — an experience they called “transformational.”

Continued from Page 30

extreme when the pandemic hit, when it should have brought more collaboration. After years of disappointment, it felt like something was different this time — educators crowded the organizing meetings held via Zoom.

“A lot of things have been really affirming this year. I feel like I’ve been charged up,” Hannah says of EBEU’s unity in purpose. “It’s been a really wonderful experience to sit down and say ‘What do you need as an educator?’ and know those things are going to make the experience better for our students.”

Since its formation, EBEU was formally recognized by LPS and created a bargaining team, which has held forums to develop priorities for their first contract.

“It’s so exciting to go from an idea to a bargaining team,” Marshall-Buselt exclaims. “We did it! We’re doing it!”

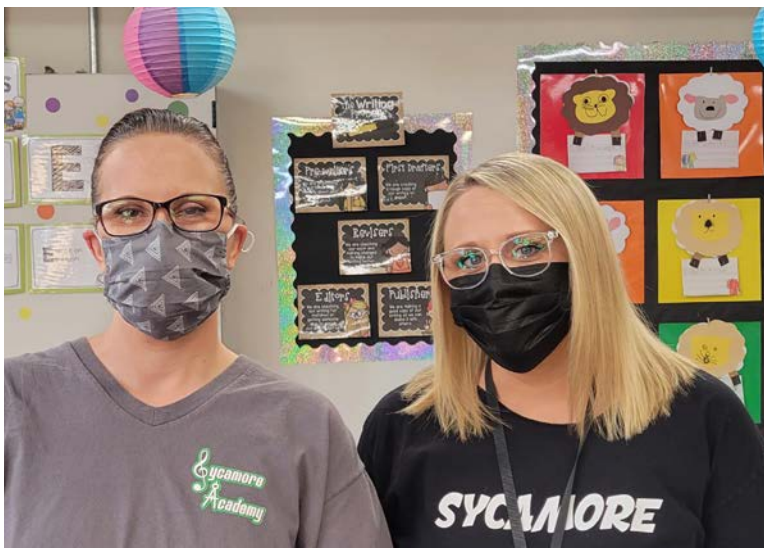
Hannah says it’s been a rewarding experience to organize successfully and join the CTA family. “No one gave up on us. It’s been seven years and it finally happened. I feel grateful that CTA was there to support and walk us through the process.”

This sentiment is shared by the 43 educators at Sycamore Academy of Science and Cultural Arts (SASCA), who started organizing at sites in Wildomar and Chino last September and subsequently voted to affiliate with Lake Elsinore Teachers Association (LETA). SASCA educator and LETA member Wendy Lizardi had previously reached out to CTA about forming a union, and after COVID hit, it was obvious that the time was now, she says.

“The pandemic was the tipping point. The benefits of having a union outweighed everything else,” says Lizardi, a TK-1 teacher. “We could see it wasn’t going to get better on its own.”

SASCA educator Beth Wilson says CTA staff guided educators through the organizing process, identifying potential roadblocks and providing much-needed support.

“CTA is a well-oiled machine. They know exactly what they’re doing and they’re going to support us 100 percent,” says Wilson, also a LETA member. “It made it so much easier to get through all of this.”



▲ Beth Wilson and Wendy Lizardi are two of 43 Sycamore Academy of Science and Cultural Arts educators, who voted to affiliate with Lake Elsinore Teachers Association.

Lizardi says educators wanted to have a voice and no longer be at-will employees. She hopes the union will be able to bring back the collaborative culture that made the school strong.

“We just want it to be a happy workplace for everyone,” she says. “Every year, I think it can’t get worse, and then I come in and get so frustrated. We’re tired of being treated certain ways, and we did it together.”

Frost at High Tech High says the union is a vehicle for positive change, a common theme for all these new educators unions. “We all love our schools. I wouldn’t put all this effort into organizing if I didn’t love where I work.” ■





# A BOLD BUDGET

## Governor, Legislature propose big dollars for education

**GOV. GAVIN NEWSOM** and state legislators both proposed \$267 billion in total spending in the 2021-22 state budget, with record education funding. Key differences in the respective budgets were being negotiated at press time. Education highlights, in billions:

### NEWSOM'S MAY REVISE

- \$93.7 Proposition 98 funding for public schools and community colleges — nearly \$14,000 per student. —————→ \$96.1
- \$17.3 Federal aid for K-12 schools and community colleges.
- \$8.4 Late payments owed to schools, community colleges. —————→ \$11.0
- \$5.0 After-school and summer school programs in districts with the most low-income students, over five years. \$3.0
- \$3.3 Educator training and retention programs.
- \$3.0 To convert 1,400 districts and charter schools to full-service community schools. \$0.7
- \$2.7 To extend transitional kindergarten to all 4-year-olds, phased in by 2024-25.
- \$2.6 High-intensity, in-school tutoring. —————→ \$0.0

#### In addition:

- \$7.0 American Rescue Plan and state funds to expand broadband access for students and rural areas. \$0.9
- \$4.0 Behavioral health treatment for all Californians age 25 and younger, for a five-year period.
- \$2.0 To create \$500 college savings accounts for low-income children and youth, with an additional \$500 for foster and homeless youth. —————→ \$1.0

### LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

- Proposition 98 funding (higher because budget uses LAO's higher revenue projections).
- Late payments owed to schools, community colleges (making full restitution).
- Paying down CalSTRS and CalPERS obligations.
- One-time funding to help more students pass "a-g" courses.
- High-intensity tutoring cut from Newsom budget, but such tutoring allowed in \$4.6 billion return-to-school funding approved by Legislature in March.
- Ongoing funding for special education — double what Newsom proposes.
- For CalKIDS college savings program. Provides children born in California with a minimum of \$25 to invest in the state's 529 college savings plan.

CTA's priority in education funding is to ensure the final budget provides students and educators with the resources they need to emerge from the pandemic in an equitable manner, focused on opportunities for all.

This includes investment in academic programs, increased funding for special education and community schools, mental health and social and family supports, implementing universal transitional kindergarten, providing school meals, investment in teacher training, support for educators in high-need schools,

and resources to reduce staffing ratios and hire additional educators. CTA also supports paying down pension obligations to further offset school districts' employee contribution rates to CalSTRS and CalPERS.

An unexpected surplus of \$76 billion from tax revenue plus \$27 billion in federal aid were key to both Newsom and the state legislators' budget proposals.

The Legislature must pass a budget by June 15, and Newsom is required to sign it by June 30. ■



# Legislative Update



◀ Assembly Members Reginald Jones-Sawyer, Wendy Carrillo and Ash Kalra helped usher AB 101 to the state Senate.

## **AB 101: Ethnic Studies Bill Moves Forward**

The fight for ethnic studies for all California students is one step closer to reality after CTA-co-sponsored AB 101 was approved by the Assembly, sending it to the state Senate. The bill would require all school districts to offer ethnic studies courses by 2025-26 and make the completion of an ethnic studies course a requirement for high school graduation starting in the 2029-30 school year.

“Our history should not be optional,” says AB 101 author Assembly Member Jose Medina (D-Riverside). “It’s time to make ethnic studies a requirement for all California high school students!”

AB 101 is key to promoting respect and understanding among races, supporting student academic success, and teaching life-time critical thinking skills for the 21st century, and co-sponsoring the legislation strengthens CTA’s long-standing commitment to provide student access to quality ethnic studies courses and to fight for racial justice and equity.

## **AB 438: Fairness for Education Support Professionals**

A bill that would bring parity to the layoff process for certificated educators and education support professionals is one step closer to the governor’s desk after approval by the Assembly.

Co-sponsored by CTA, AB 438 (Gómez Reyes) revises provisions relating to the layoff of classified school employees to require certain notices and opportunities for a hearing when a classified employee’s services will not be required for the coming year due to lack of work or funds. This bill will establish parity between the layoff process for classified school employees and certificated school employees.

The bill now heads to the state Senate.

## **AB 1269: Part-Time Faculty Parity Bill Stalls in Committee**

A CTA-sponsored bill that would address a long-standing disparity in compensation for part-time community college faculty — AB 1269 (Garcia) — is being held under submission in the Assembly Appropriations Committee, as of press time. This is an action taken when a bill is heard in a committee and there is an indication that the author and committee members want to work on or discuss the bill further, but there is no motion for the bill to progress out of committee.

## **Education Coalition Calls for Changes to Funding Calculations**

Despite a statutory requirement to include charter school average daily attendance (ADA) in the state’s calculation of excess Educational Revenue Augmentation Funds (ERAF) property tax revenues, the State Controller’s Office has continued to exclude charter school ADA. In doing so, Proposition 98 funding will be reduced by approximately \$900 million over the three-year budget period, effectively undoing the Budget Act of 2020.

The Education Coalition, comprising CTA and eight other statewide K-12 public education associations, urges the Legislature to clarify the law to ensure charter school ADA is counted toward the excess ERAF calculations. Without this clarification, local school districts will see \$60 to \$75 less funding per ADA on a statewide basis.

# BARGAINING ROUNDUP

Compiled by **Julian Peeples**



## **STOCKTON:** *Return agreement ratified*

**Stockton Teachers Association** negotiated and ratified a return to in-person instruction agreement that details the format for the hybrid school schedule, provides for more professional development, and implements additional safety procedures throughout the district. The agreement captures increased pay rates for daily and long-term substitutes, while providing the remaining unit members a site-return stipend of approximately \$1,900. STA negotiated an additional \$3,400 stipend for all members as compensation for distance-learning-related work that resulted from the pandemic.

The agreement also secures the opportunity for STA members to keep their own children who are Stockton Unified students in class with them and have their non-Stockton Unified students attend supervised day camps at various sites in the district.

## **BAKERSFIELD:**

### *Multiple agreements*

**Bakersfield Elementary Teachers Association** successfully bargained a series of agreements during the COVID-19 pandemic, protecting educators and students. Per the most recent agreement, all BETA members were offered full doses of the vaccine and wait time for optimal effectiveness before returning to in-person instruction. All members were provided \$1,000 in COVID merit/expense pay for increased workload and expenses incurred. Educators were able to select their work location, on-site or remote. Safety protocols and distancing language are being maintained, even with shifts in state and Kern County guidance.



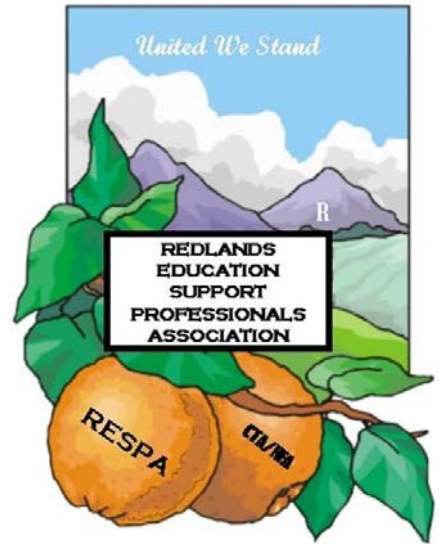
## **BEVERLY HILLS:** *Safety compliance plan*

**Beverly Hills Education Association** negotiated a return to full in-person instruction for TK-12 in April, with TK-5 specialist instruction and TK-5 physical education instruction remaining virtual. As part of the agreement, the district agreed to rescind all 10 certificated layoff notices that were issued in March. All members will also receive a stipend.

The district created a COVID ombudsman position at each site, which includes one union member and one administrator. The position was created to quickly deal with compliance issues at each site. If a site cannot solve an issue, a district position is in place to then rectify it.

## **REDLANDS:** *Safety protections for ESPs*

**Redlands Education Support Professionals Association** negotiated a comprehensive agreement that includes additional safety protections based on students returning to in-person instruction, as well as stipends for a variety of job duties and an additional 80 hours of SB 95 COVID sick leave.



## **SOLEDAD:** *Stipend, prep time*

**Soledad Teachers Association** recently ratified their hybrid reopening memorandum of understanding. Highlights include six days of asynchronous time for educators to work in their classrooms to set up their learning environments and prepare lessons for the last few weeks of school; a \$2,500 stipend for the additional work created by the hybrid model; and an additional \$250 to spend on classroom supplies. STA leaders, site representatives and district administration will walk campuses to ensure all components of the MOU are being met.

## **CULVER CITY:** *Union-building agreement*

**Association of Classified Employees - Culver City** reached an agreement addressing the return to campus, including four additional days of leave, a \$500 stipend paid to each member, and all previously bargained safety guarantees. ACE also negotiated to add about 30 instructional assistants into the union who were previously paid by a parent group at an elementary school. The district is providing on-site COVID-19 testing and making vaccinations available to all employees and their families, and to students and their families.



## **VICTOR VALLEY:** *Mobilizing for safe return*

**Victor Valley Teachers Association** members rose to defend themselves and their students when the school district fully reopened in a hybrid model in early April without a memorandum of understanding and without following CDC guidelines. Teachers were forced to return to campus for two days of preparation while the district failed to provide the necessary tech support and equipment. VVTA filed several grievances, *Williams* case complaints, and a Cal/OSHA complaint on safety.

The strong momentum generated by the VVTA organizing and grievance committees created pressure and assisted the negotiations committee in finalizing an MOU for the return to in-person instruction in a hybrid model. The agreement includes 11 hours paid at per diem rate for teacher preparation, and child care for members to work remotely during asynchronous time. At press time, VVTA is organizing for a vote of no confidence in the assistant superintendent of human resources.





Heather Farrell at the opening of the Sustainable Outdoor Learning Environment (SOLE).

## *The SOLE Reason*

This outdoor classroom offers students a breath of fresh air

By **Sherry Posnick-Goodwin**

**NATURAL LIGHTING.** Fresh air. Open space. Energy efficiency.

Welcome to the ultimate outdoor classroom at Thousand Oaks High School, which has been dubbed the Sustainable Outdoor Learning Environment (SOLE). It will be ready to roll this fall (literally) when the outdoor furniture and equipment is wheeled out from a nearby cargo container.

Environmental science teacher Heather Farrell, the powerhouse who championed the green classroom, can hardly wait to teach in a learning environment that offers students sunshine, fresh air and open space.

“We started planning for this way back in 2017, but it was timed perfectly to provide a safer environment in a pandemic,” says Farrell, a member of Unified Association of Conejo Teachers (UACT).


The classroom has no doors or walls, just a solar rooftop and battery that powers the classroom’s 86-inch touchscreen TV and LED lighting. There are also energy-efficient circulating fans

designed to keep students cool in mostly sunny Thousand Oaks, a community located 39 miles west of Los Angeles. The SOLE has plenty of plugs for lab equipment and Chromebooks, too.

The space is 30 by 30 feet and can hold up to 40 students. Instead of rows of desks, there are easily movable and stackable chairs, stools and ottomans that can be assembled in any configuration for a comfortable and flexible workspace atop a rubber mat decorated with the school’s logo.

### ***Multiple teachers, students will use the space***

The SOLE will be used mostly for STEAM instruction, but any teacher or campus club is allowed to sign up and reserve the outdoor classroom.

Jeffrey Lewis, a biology and chemistry teacher at Thousand Oaks High and UACT member, is excited about the space. “Presenting ideas and concepts that I provide in the 

traditional classroom is one-dimensional,” he says. “The SOLE allows me to take students into nature to have them explore the world of biology as field scientists do in their careers.

“By exploring the area around the school, students can look for patterns in life and bring back their own discoveries to the SOLE, where we can discuss their implications and meanings. Creating relationships with the environment and the life around them will be invaluable in students’ understanding of the ecosystems and biology of the world.”

Likewise, English department chair Brinden Wohlstatter looks forward to using the SOLE to help students think differently. “I view it as a place for students to shake off traditional learning and get creative,” says Wohlstatter, also a UACT member. “In my English classroom I’m excited to use it for writing brainstorming, Socratic seminars and class discussions.

“I’ve always taken my students outdoors to study texts when the weather is comfortable, so it will be that much more exciting to bring them to an official designated space where they can also access Wi-Fi, use their devices, and incorporate technology into our learning.”

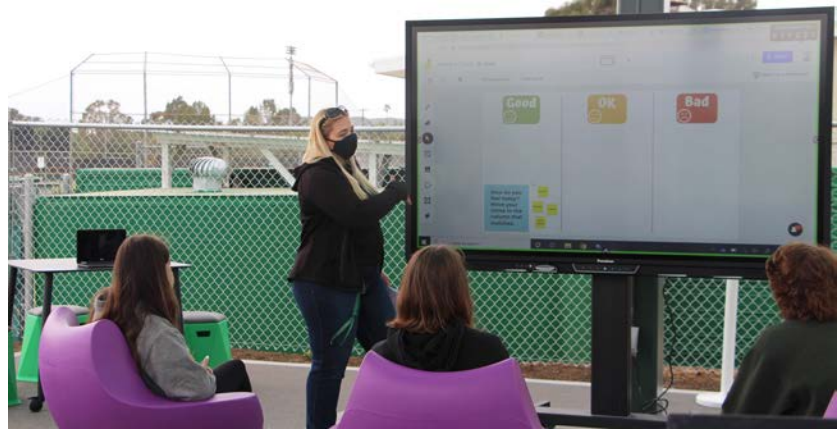
## How the SOLE was built

“My high school environmental science teacher inspired me to love science and the outdoors — and to protect the world around me,” says Farrell. “Today, as an environmental teacher myself, I hope this SOLE can inspire many of our students here. I know that all students, teachers and subjects will make great use of this space.”

Having an outdoor learning environment was something that Farrell thought about constantly throughout her 17-year teaching career. “I’ve always wanted to immerse my students in nature as we were exploring curriculum, but we didn’t have any place outside where we could hold class and still be productive.”

In 2017, her former principal, Lou Lichti, handed her a flyer from Schneider Electric, a Paris-based multinational company specializing in sustainable electricity, showing a concept for a sustainable outdoor classroom, and asked for her opinion.

“I knew immediately that this was what had been missing,” Farrell says. “Research shows that outdoor learning environments are effective tools to help



Heather Farrell







**“Outdoor learning environments are effective tools to help students learn. Being outdoors also helps reduce stress and increases students’ productivity and creativity.”**

—Heather Farrell,  
Unified Association  
of Conejo Teachers



Clockwise, from top left: At the opening in April, Heather Farrell demonstrating how the 86-inch touch screen TV works; students from her AP Environmental Science class; a student plants succulents; Farrell and others at the ribbon-cutting ceremony; depiction of the SOLE once it is up and running this fall.

students learn. Being outdoors also helps reduce stress and increases students’ productivity and creativity.”

She made phone calls and sent emails seeking more information and checking the viability of the project. She was often told no along the way. But she never gave up.

Ironically, the sponsor was right in her own backyard. Schneider Electric happened to be installing the school’s new air conditioning system in 2018. Farrell convinced program manager Marc Starkey that building this one-of-a-kind classroom would serve as an impressive promotional tool for future projects, and Schneider Electric donated \$250,000 to build it.

Her new principal, Eric Bergmann, jumped on the bandwagon for the SOLE, which received approval from the school board in 2020.

“The details were worked out between myself, Dr. Bergmann, the district office and Schneider,” recalls Farrell. “I picked the location and told them my wish list, and then Schneider went looking for donors and partnerships to find everything we needed.” Partners included M Bar C Construction, Baker Electric, STS Education, FlexGround, MeTEOR Education, and Rexel USA.

### ***The social-emotional component***

Farrell, who has been teaching virtually since March 2020, plans on using the SOLE as often as possible when she resumes in-person teaching this fall. At the ribbon-cutting ceremony in April, she and students who attended the school’s hybrid classes demonstrated some of the SOLE’s groundbreaking capabilities to community members. Students planted a garden of succulents nearby for the occasion.

“The students said ‘This is so cool!’ and told me they couldn’t wait to use it.”

Farrell believes that being outside makes students feel better in general, which makes them more open to learning.

“Now more than ever, students need social-emotional support. Connecting them with nature and teaching them outdoors can be part of that process.”

It’s also a way to demonstrate that fighting climate change is possible.

“This outdoor classroom shows students that we have the technology to make smarter and better choices and that positive change can happen,” Farrell declares. “The SOLE shows students we can build a brighter future and use our resources in sustainable ways. It’s going to be a very powerful teaching tool.” ■





Guest speaker and school principal Brittony Billingslea, center, speaks of her experience of how women must continually prove themselves and be more prepared than men because of perceptions of gender.



# SETTING COURSE

**Melissa Baldwin's journey to get women and gender studies on the (school) map**



Melissa Baldwin



**MELISSA BALDWIN**, a member of West Sacramento Teachers Association, teaches women and gender studies (WGS) and English at River City High School in West Sacramento. She created the WGS class in 2018, getting it approved by her department chairs and the school board, and then as an “a-g” course meeting CSU and UC admission requirements. Though exact data is hard to come by, the course is one of just a few WGS classes in California and nationwide.

Baldwin taught her inaugural WGS class in the 2019-20 academic year. This fall she has enough students signed up for two 35-student sections — an indication of the interest and need for the course among young people. She is eager to share her experience and help other educators navigate creating similar courses in their schools, so they can help their LGBTQ+ and WGS students feel safe and connected on campus.

### **What spurred your interest in teaching WGS?**

It's my passion. I have an undergraduate degree in American studies with a gender and sexuality emphasis, and in grad school I studied queer theory. I became an English teacher, and then a program specialist focused on college and career readiness, where I got CTE [career technical education] courses "a-g" approved.

But I belong in the classroom. I kept thinking, why have I not created a gender studies course? I taught it at the community college level while concurrently teaching high school.

### **Describe the process for course approval.**

I wrote the course based on the college-level course I had been teaching, but with modifications for high school students, and designed it to be a survey — an introductory class that was mindful of LGBTQ+ and gender studies content. It was an extensive process, but because of my experience with the CTE "a-g" courses and because I had been a WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) coordinator, I knew what to write in the "correct" way, where all audiences could hear and see my vision.

### **How detailed were you in writing the curriculum?**

I looked at other "a-g" courses to make sure I was clear on standards and goals, and that the demonstrated coursework was rigorous enough. I had to provide key details on the coursework. For example, it wasn't enough to say students would write an essay. Instead, students would write a reflective essay on their identities in class, at home, in media and/or film, and in society as a whole.

A great series of books, *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, with individual titles on various groups such as African Americans, people with disabilities, etc., helped. The texts organize everything by American studies terms, and I formulated my course by some of these keywords.

### **How does the curriculum play out in class?**

It includes film and television reviews, historical projects, interviews, and guest speakers. We discuss intersectional issues such as race and sexuality — for example, the hypersexualization of bodies and how race plays a part. We had a transgender author

from the Sacramento LGBT Community Center speak on National Coming Out Day, and other speakers have been women and women of color dealing with career and discrimination, single motherhood, how they've succeeded.

A big part of our discussion is performance — how do we perform our gender and what does that mean? For example, one student watched Disney's TV show *Bunk'd*, and then wrote an essay on how it ingrains in young children strong ideas about race, class and gender.



**A BIG PART OF OUR DISCUSSION IS PERFORMANCE — HOW DO WE PERFORM OUR GENDER AND WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?"**

### **How did the pandemic affect the course?**

The course ran pretty well in fall even though we were remote. The one thing missing was a sense of collaboration and community. It was hard because some kids didn't turn on their cameras or unmute, but they did have a lot of chatbox conversations about their ideas and others' ideas. Students told me in person and in messages that they still enjoyed the class. One parent emailed me saying, "Oh my gosh, my

daughter talks about your class every night when we sit down at dinner."

I had to change my approach teaching remotely, because I was in students' homes and maybe they were taking care of younger siblings, so I'd tell them to wear earphones or go somewhere private because the material wasn't age-appropriate. I had to tweak the lessons. For instance, previously I had assignments to watch film clips of gay conversion and listen to guest speakers on conversion therapy and adoption rights, but I couldn't stream the films remotely. (I was still able to have the guest speaker.) I wanted to be respectful of students' homes.

### **Have any of your students gone on to study WGS in college?**

Yes! The first group of kids graduated in 2020. A couple of students that I've run into in the community have taken gender studies in their first year of college and told me things like, "Because of your course I knew [this], and I was able to talk to my professor that much better."

*Find more information about Melissa Baldwin's WGS course, including curriculum and syllabus materials, at [bit.ly/2RfZvWU](https://bit.ly/2RfZvWU).*



# Who Do You Call On?

When teachers who find evidence of unconscious bias take steps to correct it, they can create a more welcoming space for all students

By Maurice J. Elias

I WAS APPROACHED by a middle school student who said, “My teacher doesn’t like me.” I knew the teacher, and I couldn’t conceive of him communicating something like that to a student. I said that I found it hard to imagine, and the student insisted, “He doesn’t like me.” I asked him how he knew. “He never looks at me.” I said I thought that was surprising but would look into it.

When I sat in on a couple of classes, I saw that the student sat in the front on the far-right side of the room, and the teacher looked almost exclusively to the left half of the room. I spoke to the teacher about it, and he had no idea about his tendency to look to his right. I suggested that he use a technique I learned about from UK researcher Michael Fielding and rotate asking a few students over the course of a few weeks to keep track of some of his patterns:

- Where he tended to face.
- Who did he tend to call on — male/female, race/ethnicity, disability status.
- In what parts of the room did he tend to call on students.
- With which students did he use or not use a student’s name when he called on them.

The teacher spoke with the student once the issue was brought to his attention. He said the incident made him and his class more aware of how they all — teacher and students — could inadvertently insult, offend or exclude someone without realizing it.

As we work to improve our students’ social and emotional skills and help them understand how to form relationships using both words and nonverbal behaviors, it stands to reason that they will be more aware of how they are treated by

their teachers, school staff, administrators and other adults. So adults need to be more aware of what they are projecting with their actions.

### *Implicit biases?*

Tendencies to look left or right or call on boys more or usually call on people in the front or back of the room can be considered forms of implicit bias. Similarly, it’s a form of bias to favor students of certain racial or ethnic backgrounds in the frequency of calling on them or using their names. These are not patterns we consciously plan, yet many of us have them.

As noted in a January 2021 Edutopia article, “A Simple Way to Self-Monitor for Bias,” tracking is the most effective way to identify biases. Before introducing students to tracking some of the areas above, teachers would have a direct conversation with their class about these kinds of



**“AS WE WORK TO IMPROVE STUDENTS’ SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS AND HELP THEM UNDERSTAND HOW TO FORM RELATIONSHIPS USING BOTH WORDS AND NONVERBAL BEHAVIORS, THEY WILL BE MORE AWARE OF HOW THEY ARE TREATED BY THEIR TEACHERS, SCHOOL STAFF, ADMINISTRATORS AND OTHER ADULTS.”**

implicit biases and the benefits of tracking them honestly. This models the idea that we all have implicit biases, and it’s OK to get help in identifying them as the first step in reducing them.

While students can help track certain behaviors, other areas are less appropriate for students to monitor directly. These are areas in which biases can lead to significant differences in students’ opportunities:

- Who do you speak to informally?
- Who gets to help you when you need assistance in the classroom?
- Who do you suggest for opportunities (such as clubs, service, extracurriculars)?
- Who do you encourage when they don’t volunteer?

If teachers discover bias, it’s best to confront it right away. As cognitive scientist Daniel Kahneman has shown throughout his career, we all have biases of varying kinds. It’s often difficult — and ultimately pointless — to find out how we acquired them. What matters is to identify them and then work to eliminate those we feel will be harmful to our students’ success.

### ***Participation is the key***

When biases operate, students often give up, lose hope, disconnect and learn less. This response to what they feel as dislike, ignoring or outright rejection (even though this is the furthest thing from most teachers’ minds) makes sense — when people don’t feel their participation matters or is appreciated, it’s natural to be less motivated to try, leading to less motivation to learn.

We see this, for example, with participation of girls in STEM classes. Years of bias — girls being called on less, not being given opportunities, expected to

not be the best — create internalized oppression. They stop trying. So someone walking into a classroom and seeing all the male hands up and the female hands down would say, “Of course more boys are called on. They volunteer more.” That’s why it is so necessary to uncover and reduce biases and encourage enthusiastic classroom participation.

Class participation involves a number of social and emotional competencies, as well as character attributes such as courage, persistence and confidence. There are ways to make it easier for more students to feel that their participation is welcome without requiring norm-breaking initiative:

- Before a class discussion, have students meet in pairs to share ideas about the topic to be discussed, or have them meet in small groups to discuss the topic and rotate having students report out a summary of the group’s thoughts. Provide the questions that will be covered in the discussion and give students a few minutes to gather their thoughts and write them down. This way, their later participation will be more like reading their ideas than having to think on the spot.

- When you put students in pairs or groups, create intentionally diverse mixes, and have a goal of students being with as many different classmates as possible.
- Articulate core values for the classroom that apply to all. This creates a set of uniform expectations that all students are believed to be capable of living up to. Explicitly holding everyone to common standards sends an important equity message, and so does ensuring that classroom and school discipline systems are firm, fair, restorative and consistent.

By paying attention to our own patterns of encouraging classroom participation — and letting students know we are doing so and why — we take essential steps toward increasing all students’ sense of value and potential. As we improve the diversity of student participation, we create the additional benefit of reducing the operation of implicit biases in students about their classmates... because biases have a way of being contagious. ■

*This article originally appeared in [edutopia.org](https://www.edutopia.org).*



Character icons used in Blooklet.

# POWERFUL, *Lesser-Known* Tech Tools for Teachers

**YOU'RE PROBABLY VERY** familiar with Google tools, Flipgrid, Nearpod — the usual suspects of remote learning. Here are some lesser-known, free web-based tools that are powerful supports to online learning and can help switch things up a bit and refresh your routine.

These free tools can boost efficiency and engagement in online learning By Michele Eaton

**MOTE: AUDIO FEEDBACK**

Anytime we can provide feedback for students that is more personal, the better their online experience is. Mote ([justmote.me](https://justmote.me)) is a Chrome extension that makes giving feedback via audio fast, simple and personal. Use it within Google Classroom, Google Docs and Google Slides, and even in Gmail. Just click the purple Mote icon, and record and append audio comments to students' work.

You can choose normal commenting or audio commenting, which lets everyone engage in the way they feel most comfortable. Students don't need the extension installed to receive your audio feedback.

An added bonus? Save time: You can say a lot more in 30 seconds than what you can type.





## **DOTSTORMING:** COLLABORATIVE BRAINSTORMING

Dotstorming ([dotstorming.com](https://dotstorming.com)) offers a powerful collection of tools such as voting boards and “walls” (whiteboards and collages) that enable collaboration.

Students collaborate, post and share their ideas, leave feedback for their peers, and come to a consensus, all via a digital bulletin board that allows them to vote up their favorite contributions from their classmates.

For example, I used Dotstorming to brainstorm and prioritize expectations for our virtual option this past school year. As a group, we shared ideas and then voted to determine our collective priorities.



## **VIDEOANT:** LIVELY VIDEO DISCUSSIONS

When developing online lessons, it’s standard practice to create videos or find instructional videos from YouTube, particularly with asynchronous instruction. However, simply sharing a video as part of direct instruction is not always effective, because it can lack the critical engagement component: It’s a one-way street of delivery that can make students passive.

VideoAnt ([ant.umn.edu](https://ant.umn.edu)), which was created by the University of Minnesota College of Education and Human Development, can change that dynamic by allowing students to add their own comments or annotations to an online video (either one you’ve created or one from YouTube). It transforms any video into a discussion activity.



## **KIALO EDU:** TO FOSTER DEBATE

Discussion boards are common tools in online classrooms, but they don’t always work that well when it comes to facilitating complex conversations or debates. Enter Kialo Edu ([kialo-edu.com](https://kialo-edu.com)), a custom version of debate site Kialo, which is designed for classrooms and helps build critical thinking skills.

Instead of participating in a linear discussion thread, students provide evidence for their claims on either side of an issue using Kialo’s pro and con tree structure. They can then explore the arguments shared by their classmates and develop those further with supporting evidence and counterarguments.

## **BLOOKLET:** ENGAGING GAMES

If you love playing review games like Kahoot! or Quizizz with your class but are looking for something new, try Blooket ([blooket.com](https://blooket.com)). As with other review games, teachers set up the game and students join in using a code that you display on the screen. You can create a game from scratch or browse the Blooket community for games that other educators have designed.

Blooket stands out from similar tools because it offers a variety of educational games that help students remain engaged. Students can play independently or in teams and can earn coins and avatars called Blooks.



## **CLASSKICK:** INTERACTION WITH CLASSROOM MATERIALS

With Classkick ([classkick.com](https://classkick.com)), teachers upload content that would normally be print materials to the site. Then, they and their students can add drawings, audio, video, text and more to mark up the content. Teachers can see all students working at the same time if they’re doing a synchronous activity, making it easier to provide just-in-time feedback directly on their canvases.

Classkick gained momentum this past year, particularly with online primary teachers. The ability for students to draw and record on their screen has been a game changer among emerging readers.



*This article has been adapted from a story that originally ran on [edutopia.org](https://edutopia.org) in April 2021, under the same title.*





**“As word nerds, educators are trained for this! Knowing how words are put together, blended and spelled sure helps.”**

—**Laura Trammell,**  
Saddleback Valley Educators  
Association

Left, Laura Trammell strikes a victory pose at the big board with Vanna White and Pat Sajak.

Below, Trammell reacts as *Wheel of Fortune* host Pat Sajak tells her she has won a new home.

# WHEEL LUCKY

## Educator's *Wheel of Fortune* spin wins her a house

By **Ed Sibby**



**LAURA TRAMMELL**, a sixth grade teacher and member of the Saddleback Valley Educators Association in Orange County, confesses she has been a lifelong *Wheel of Fortune* fan. “I’ve always wanted to be on *Wheel*. I have watched for many years, and told my husband, if he could figure out how to get me on the show, I would try my hardest to win us something.”

She went on the show hoping for a little cash or a trip. After she correctly gave the answer “I caught a glimpse,” for the first time in its 46-year history, *Wheel of Fortune* gave away a brand-new house. Trammell’s success winning a home in Daytona Beach, Florida, was beyond any expectations. “Little did I know that this all would have happened!” she says.

While teachers have no overt advantage as contestants on *Wheel*, “knowing how words are put together, blended and spelled sure helps,” she explains. “As word nerds, we’re trained for this!”

Trammell attained celebrity status upon her return to school after the show’s airing on April 27. “I opened my door Wednesday morning to let my students in the classroom, and they all cheered and clapped! There was an announcement over the school PA, and many colleagues and my admin came to visit me in my classroom.”

She was touched by the outpouring and how everyone was so genuinely happy for her. “I felt a little like a rock star that day! And curriculum took a break for the day, too!”

As for her Florida prize, she and her husband are still figuring out what the future looks like with their new home. “Right now, we are in the process of finalizing all of the options we get to choose from.” The completion date is set for June 2022, and their preliminary plan is to rent it until they are both a little closer to retirement. “And then,” she admits, “we will have some more big decisions to make!”



McKinley Blehm, Lucas Jaye and Casey Simpson in a scene from *Timecrafters*. Much of the movie was shot in Mendocino.



# TIME-TRAVELING PIRATES!

## Retired member brings a swashbuckling adventure to the big screen

**UNTIL HE RETIRED** in 2017, Chip Fraser was a California educator for almost 30 years and president of the Ventura Unified Education Association for the last five of them. He is also a writer, and 23 years ago he began to work on a script with his friend Jeffrey Butscher, a writer and producer.

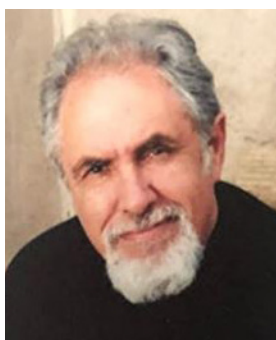
“The idea came to me in Duck, North Carolina, where I was living on the ocean,” Fraser recalls. “It was a cold winter’s night sitting there. I could imagine pirate ships coming and planting treasure on the beach — which they actually did.”

After they finished the script and pitched it to numerous people over the years, including a few big-name producers, Fraser and Butscher’s movie finally got made. *Timecrafters: The Treasure of Pirate’s Cove* premiered late last year.

The plot has time-traveling pirates

searching for lost treasure. They end up in the modern day battling unlikely foes — a group of kids with the latest tech gadgetry.

Though set in the Outer Banks in North Carolina, the film was shot mostly in Mendocino in 2019 and stars Denise Richards and Malcolm McDowell, along with some talented young performers.



Chip Fraser

“It’s a kids’ movie, but adults will not be bored out of their minds,” Fraser says. “It has a nice cast. All the kids have Disney shows. One has 2.5 million followers.”

Teacher Fraser worked several educational components into the script. “At the end, Josh, the lead kid, talks about what treasure means. He comes to value family and friends, not money, gold and jewels.”

The movie children are also required to work as a team and think critically about history and how to interpret and search

for ancient items. They must consider how time can be manipulated and how people can time-travel.

While the kids in *Timecrafters* are sixth graders (one was modeled after Fraser’s young son at the time), Fraser taught mostly at the high school level, at continuation schools and with special education students. “We took kids nobody wanted, and shining stars came out of that school. They did and are doing wonderful things,” he says, recalling his 20-year stint with Ventura Unified.

The CTA/NEA-Retired member is happy when he runs into former students in the community, many working locally with families of their own.

Fraser is currently finishing a book called *Emerald City* (“about being happy and getting the most out of life”) and lives what he writes with Pamela, his wife of 40 years. They enjoy their grown children and grandchildren.

Of the journey *Timecrafters* took from a long-ago idea to fruition, he’s philosophical. “We never gave up on it.” ■

*Timecrafters: The Treasure of Pirate’s Cove* is now available on cable and streaming services including Amazon Prime.



# Excellence in Math and Science Teaching

## CTA members are finalists for presidential STEM awards

By **Gabriella Landeros**

**FIVE CTA MEMBERS** are California finalists for the 2021 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). Despite the significant challenges of the past year, these educators went above and beyond to give their students the tools to succeed, while encouraging them to think critically and creatively.

The PAEMST awards, administered by the National Science Foundation, are the nation's highest honors for K-12 teachers of science, technology, engineering, mathematics and computer science. The California Department of Education (CDE) partners with the California Mathematics Council and the California Association of Science Educators to recruit and select nominees for the PAEMST program.

(Note: CTA recognizes STEAM and the importance of arts education, but for this article we use STEM, the official award designation.)

"On behalf of our 310,000-member union, I extend heartfelt congratulations to our five finalists," says CTA President E. Toby Boyd. "During the pandemic, these educators quickly adapted an innovator's mindset and tailored their lessons to emphasize curiosity and inspire students' lifelong love of learning. They have worked harder than ever to show that even though buildings were closed, teaching and learning never stopped. They are truly leaders."

The PAEMST program requires that applicants display subject mastery, appropriate use of instructional methods and strategies, lifelong learning, and leadership in education outside the classroom. Candidates must also submit a 30-minute video lesson in support of their application. (For more information, visit [paemst.org](https://paemst.org).) ■

## Science Finalists

### GARRETT LIM

*Walnut Valley Educators Association  
Walnut High School*



Lim, a 14-year teacher, helped develop and currently teaches the school's first-ever International Baccalaureate Higher Level Chemistry course. He was part of a district committee tasked with brainstorming how the Common Core curriculum could be implemented and integrated within the science classroom. The topic of his video lesson: How different materials have different specific heat capacities and their relationship to how they feel.

"Being a chemistry teacher has been so rewarding, and I am glad that this award exists to honor those that inspire and educate the next generation in STEM," Lim says. "As we are battling a global pandemic, the importance of STEM has never been clearer. From being a discerning citizen to being a scientist or engineer that is working to solve our world's problems, STEM education is foundational in informing and hopefully inspiring our students to become contributing members of society."

### CATHERINE MESSENGER

*Los Gatos-Saratoga District  
Teachers Association  
Los Gatos High School*



Messenger teaches AP Biology along with a STEM research class. A 15-year teacher, she was the science department chair from 2015 to 2020 and led the Los Gatos High team participating in a multischool program to launch a corrosion of iron experiment to the International Space Station. She has also shared advanced science research curriculum with San Francisco Bay Area teachers. Her video lesson focused on the properties of carbon and water.

"STEM is so important to me and for our students [because] we need objective critical thinkers to navigate these very challenging times," Messenger says. "I stay in touch with students who enrolled in my science research class, and they are already making significant contributions in STEM — many of them directly addressing COVID. My hope for the future of STEM education is that we can make a program like my research class accessible to all students at all levels. Carrying out authentic research not only promotes critical thinking and problem-solving skills, but also gives the students the confidence to take on any problem and know that they can find a solution."



## Mathematics Finalists

### KRISTIE DONAVAN

*Irvine Teachers Association*  
Woodbridge High School



A 13-year educator, Donovan has taught Math II, Enhanced Math II, Enhanced Math III, Advanced Placement Calculus BC, and Math Foundations. She previously worked as a teacher on special assignment, building relationships with secondary math teachers across the district and leading district math teams to create new math classes, implement integrated math courses, and reexamine high school grading practices. She also mentored teacher candidates and early career teachers. She is a National Board Certified Teacher and has presented at the California Mathematics Council and National Council of Teachers of Mathematics conference.

"My vision for mathematics education is that all students feel capable and confident as problem solvers," says Donovan, whose video lesson had her students discovering the relationship between Cartesian graphs and their corresponding polar graphs. "I strive each day to make math engaging and accessible, to encourage students to persevere through struggle, and to honor multiple ways of thinking so that every student feels like they have something valuable to contribute."

### MARIA GARCIA

*Wiseburn Faculty Association*  
Richard Henry Dana Middle School



Garcia, a 20-year educator, is an eighth grade algebra teacher and chairs the math department. She was a previous PAEMST state finalist in 2019. The video lesson she submitted helped students discover patterns in quadratics leading to conceptual understanding of completing the square. In addition to teaching, Garcia hosts Math Saturday events for parents and students. She created the Girls Who Code Club at her school, and has led the Mommy and Me coding event. She also launched the Hack-a-Challenge in which students in grades 5-12 came together to create a robot that could successfully clean beaches in the community.

"[The PAEMST application] was a rigorous process that allowed me to revisit, reflect and refine my craft," Garcia says. "Through the reflection process, I found that my students' smiles and joy for learning are what fueled my constant desire to continue to learn and motivate others with the beautiful world of math. I hope that our future STEM students will be inspired to make our world a better place and see the beauty in all!"

### STEPHANIE PARIS

*United Teachers Los Angeles*  
Granada Hills Charter High School



The lesson that Paris, a six-year teacher, submitted for her Algebra I class explored exponential functions and examined patterns of growth and decay. As a master teacher fellow with Math for America, she has provided professional learning to teachers across the district and state. She mentored student teachers and helped teachers develop project-based learning units. She also co-taught classes with a science teacher, creating interdisciplinary projects that connected mathematics and science, specifically in algebra and physics. During 2020, she facilitated professional learning courses to help teachers create virtual math lessons and build community relationships during distance learning.

"I still consider myself a fairly new teacher, so having my work recognized by others was an honor," says Paris. "The [PAEMST] application pushed me to think deeply about my practice, and I became a better teacher by the end of it. One of my hopes for the future of STEM education is that it incorporates more compassion and empathy and becomes more interdisciplinary. STEM students are our future innovators and decision-makers, so it is important that they become empathetic, thriving learners."

Chris Lambert, creator of the podcast *Your Own Backyard*, left, with Tracy Ruiz.

# Teaching to Inspire

Tracy Ruiz uses her connection to true-crime podcast to engage students

By Austin McLellan



**TRACY RUIZ CHOSE** to attend Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo in 1991 because it was close to the beach and she thought it was safe.

After Kristin Smart went missing from the Cal Poly campus in 1996, however, Ruiz viewed her alma mater differently. Now an English teacher at Will C. Wood High School in her hometown of Vacaville, Ruiz has been able to use the Smart case and *Your Own Backyard*, the podcast devoted to it, in her curriculum. Lessons have completely engaged her students: In addition to learning critical thinking skills, they feel connected to the case, and are dedicated to preserving Smart's memory.

Ruiz, a member of Vacaville Teachers Association who graduated from Cal Poly in 1995, heard about the global hit podcast in summer 2020. Created by Chris Lambert in 2019, it follows the long-unsolved case of Smart, a Cal Poly freshman who vanished on her way back from a party, and how it impacted her family and the community.

"Walking through and feeling that loss in the podcast was unexpectedly powerful," Ruiz says.

Ruiz saw other teachers using true-crime podcasts in their teaching and designed a unit around *Your Own Backyard* for her AP Language and Composition class. Assignments included writing a letter to the Smart family and

a final essay in which students, using evidence Lambert laid out in the series, had to "present a viable and coherent theory of the crime that includes the role of Paul [Flores], his father Ruben, and his mother Susan." Paul and Ruben Flores were arrested in connection with Smart's death in mid-April.

The letter, which teaches students empathy and how to thoughtfully consider their audience and the purpose of their writing, was student Perri Cargill's favorite assignment of the unit.

**"One of the biggest lessons we got out of this activity was putting yourself in those shoes and trying to figure out what you can say to a family in pain."**

—Tracy Ruiz, Vacaville Teachers Association

Cargill wrote in her letter, "I see Kristin as my sister, as my mom, as my best friend, as my little brother, as my own stubbornness and wild love for life. I have never thought of her as 'gone.' I see her in the moonlight and the sun."

"That was one of the biggest lessons I think we got out of this activity, putting yourself in those shoes and trying to figure out what you can say to a family in pain," Ruiz says.

After Ruiz posted about her curriculum on Facebook, she became online friends with Lambert's mom. With that connection, Ruiz organized a Q&A session with Lambert over Zoom.

Cargill helped Ruiz review submitted questions to prioritize the right ones for the Q&A, and Ruiz had the class practice their questions the day before.

"I didn't sleep the night before meeting Chris, but on the day of the talk, I had to kick the students out after they were 20 minutes late to their next class," Ruiz recalls, laughing.

Student Kayden Garrison was excited about the opportunity to meet Lambert.

"You could tell he cared about Kristin and cared about bringing that story to life. He was honest and transparent about all the work he's done," she says.

Ruiz notes that on the day of the Q&A, every student was present and had their cameras turned on. Not one student missed an assignment in the unit. Even weeks after they had completed the unit, students stopped class in its tracks to discuss the arrests of Paul and Ruben Flores.

"Watching my students so engaged in real time was unique and something I will definitely remember. It has opened my eyes to moving away from traditional teaching and doing better at getting their attention," Ruiz says.

Ruiz's own connections to Cal Poly made a difference for students, too.

"Knowing [Ruiz] went there almost created a reference point for the class," Garrison says. "It made it feel so real



Continued from Page 52

knowing she was down there around the time when [Smart] was abducted.”

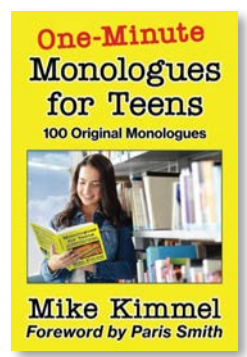
Cargill agrees. She says that “meeting” Smart through Lambert’s telling of her was an inspiration to live her own life to the fullest.

“Seeing what Cal Poly alumni [like Ruiz] can accomplish and realizing Kristin wouldn’t experience that honestly made it more tragic,” she adds.

Garrison says learning about the Smart case impacted her life.

“I have learned to step out of my world and insert myself into another person’s life. It changed my perspective on how I interact with people,” Garrison says. ■

Adapted from a story that appeared in the Mustang News. Read it in full at [mustangnews.net](http://mustangnews.net).



### For Young Performers

ESL and drama teacher (and actor and playwright) **Mike Kimmel**, Burbank Teachers Association, spent his downtime during the pandemic writing not one, but *three* new books. Two are sequels to his previous books, with all-new material. Find them on Amazon:

*One-Minute Monologues for Teens*. One hundred original monologues for young actors, with optimistic spins and challenging ideas.

*Monologues for Teens II*. Help students nail their next audition with 60 new monologues.

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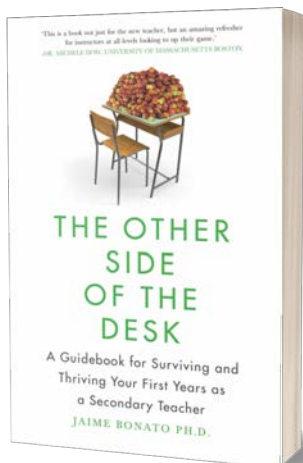
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# Lit From Within

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

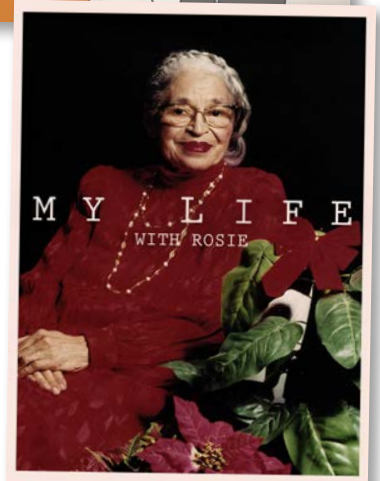
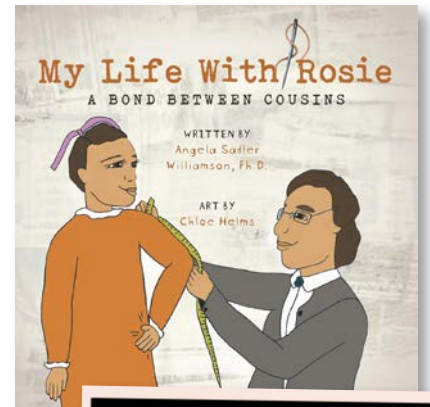


## ▶ *My Life With Rosie*

**Angela Sadler Williamson**, associate professor at Rio Hondo College and member of the Rio Hondo College Faculty Association, published *My Life With Rosie: A Bond Between Cousins* last year. Voted the best children's book on Black history by *Mothering* magazine, it shares a different side of Rosa Parks only known to her family — the Williamson family.

Parks spent most of her adult life living in Detroit after leaving Montgomery, Alabama, in 1957, and Cousin Rosie, as she's known, formed many special relationships with young people, especially her young cousin, Carolyn Williamson Green (the author's aunt). The book helps continue Parks' legacy and philosophy on activism by teaching young readers how to become change agents in their community. On Amazon.

In 2017, Williamson made the award-winning documentary *My Life With Rosie*, which examines Parks and Green's relationship and Green's quest to continue her cousin's activism. On Amazon Prime.



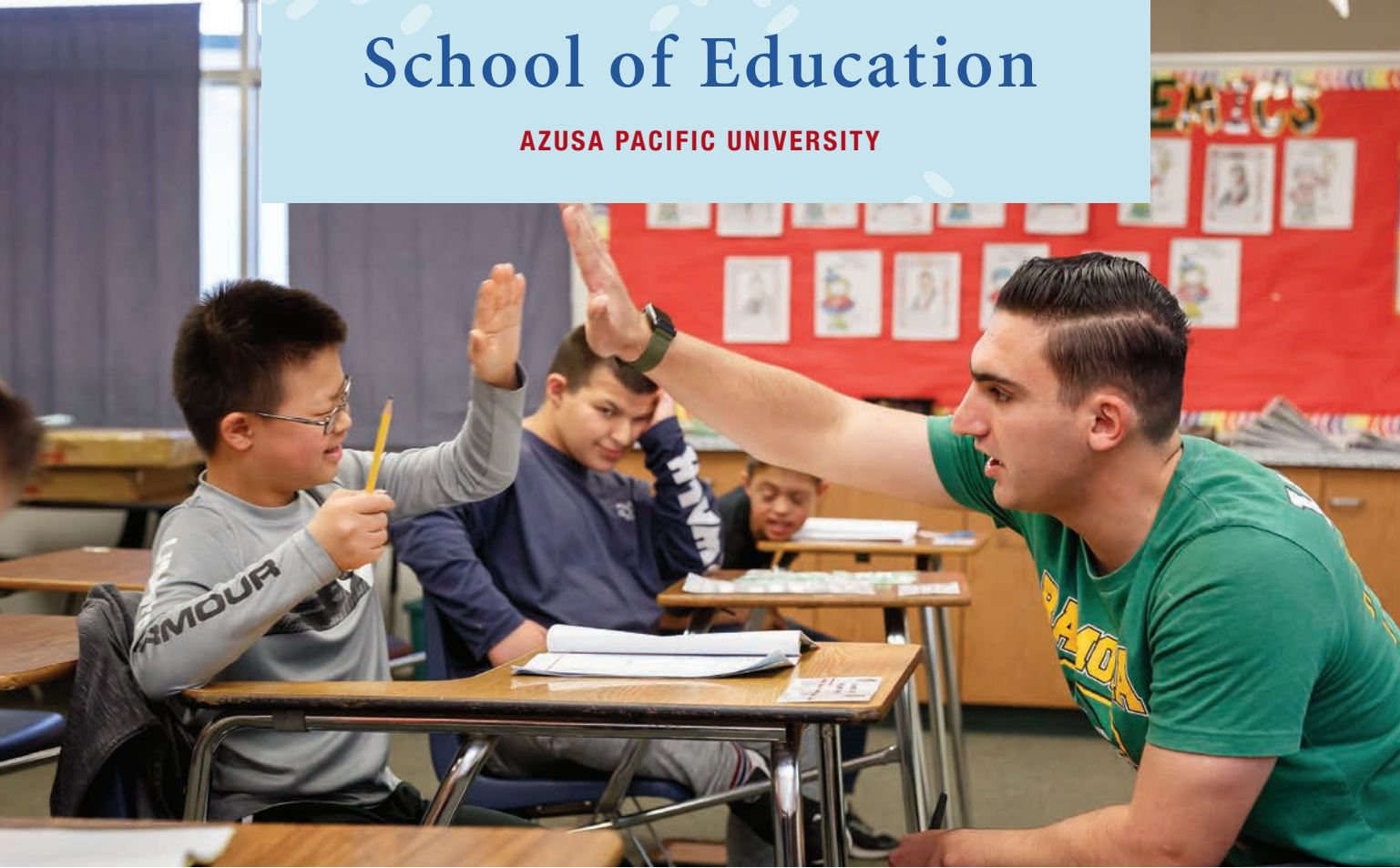
## ▶ *The Other Side of the Desk*

**Jaime Bonato** is a 20-year educator and member of San Juan Teachers Association whose passion is supporting new teachers. She has just published *The Other Side of the Desk: A Guidebook for Surviving and Thriving Your First Years as a Secondary Teacher*, which helps early-career educators design, create and maintain an effective classroom, step by step. The book shows novice teachers how to streamline and focus on the most important systems and resources to have the most positive impact on student learning — while saving their sanity. Good for teacher mentors and anyone in need of a refresher, too. On Amazon.

Continued on Page 51

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