

# california educator

OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2021 VOLUME 26 ISSUE 2

## Building Heart and Hub

The transformative power of community schools

**PAGE 18**

### *Second-Year Scramble*

Educators, schools  
cope with year two  
of the pandemic

**PAGE 28**



New Special Ed Credentials Coming **PAGE 45**

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# california educator

VOLUME 26 ISSUE 2



## #WeAreCTA

OUR VOICE, OUR UNION, OUR PROFESSION

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

### MAGAZINE

#### SECOND-YEAR SCRAMBLE

Educators face challenges head-on in yet another unique school year. **PAGE 28**

#### POWER OF THE POSTCARD

Christine Karlberg's hand-written cards to students and their families give positive reinforcement. **PAGE 14**

#### A DIGITAL PIVOT

Antioch educators meet students where they are with a new virtual academy. **PAGE 42**

#### TALKING ABOUT MONEY

Tara Razi's push to teach all-important personal finance basics in high school. **PAGE 49**

### DIGITAL

#### THE GREAT ESCAPE

Virtual escape rooms are engaging and instructive for students. Build your own! **PAGE 41**

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#### PHENOMENAL RESOURCE

The Exploratorium's STEAM offerings support teachers statewide and entrance kids and adults alike. **PAGE 37**

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#### WELLNESS LICENSE PLATE

Teacher Caroline Wiseman advocates for student mental health — and needs your support. **PAGE 48**

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### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

#### DIFFERENT KINDS OF MINDS

Temple Grandin, well-known scientist with autism, speaks at CTA Fall Special Education Conference. **PAGE 15**

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#### LGBTQ+ ISSUES CONFERENCE

Open to all members, Oct. 29-31 in Palm Springs. **PAGE 9**

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#### ESP LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

ESPs interested in learning skills to lead their chapters must apply by Nov. 19. **PAGE 12**

#### GET MICRO-CERTIFIED!

Improve your practice with these short courses. **PAGE 40**

[cta.org/ipd](https://cta.org/ipd)

### MEMBER BENEFITS

#### INSURANCE JUST FOR YOU

CTA partner California Casualty has auto, home programs designed for educators.

[CTAMemberBenefits.org](https://CTAMemberBenefits.org)

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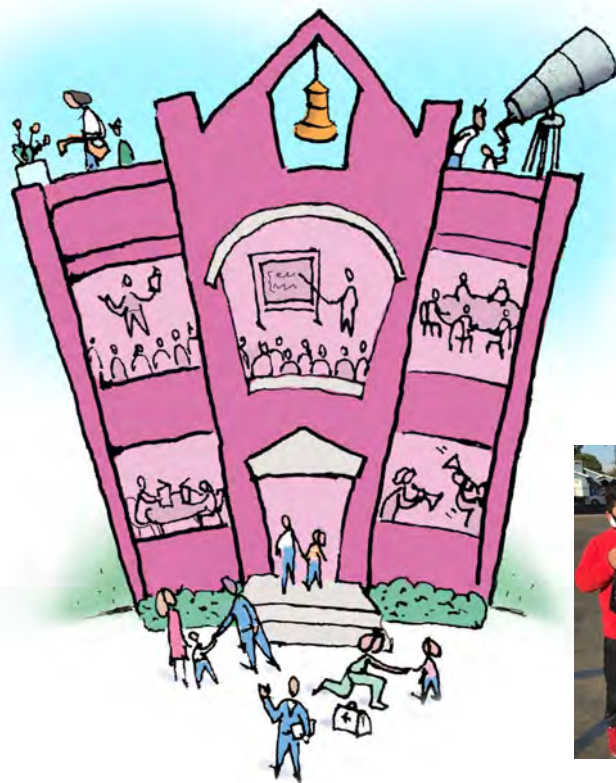
[CTAMemberBenefits.org](https://CTAMemberBenefits.org)

#### SORT YOUR FINANCES

All the info and tools you need to get your financial life in order. [ctainvest.org/the-academy](https://ctainvest.org/the-academy)

Photo: Swirling fog exhibit at the Exploratorium (see page 37).  
© Exploratorium, [exploratorium.edu](https://exploratorium.edu)

# COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



## ▲ BUILDING THE HEART AND HUB

Community schools involve strong partnerships among students and families, educators and schools, and civic and service organizations. Historic resources are set to further their transformative power. **PAGE 18**



## ◀ SECOND-YEAR SCRAMBLE

Quarantines, staffing shortages and a surge in virtual students mark year two of the pandemic.

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Cover: Illustration by Daniel Baxter. This page, above: Students at a book and backpack giveaway at 93rd Street Academy in Los Angeles. Left: Students in Capistrano Unified School District, at the beginning of this school year.



**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)



## School Furniture an Equity Issue

I taught for 18 years before retiring in 2017. During all those years, my kids had to sit in ancient plastic chairs that couldn't slide on the floor and had cracks in the seats that would pinch their bottoms! The desks were old and had been height-adjusted so many times the legs were no longer even. No desks were at the same height as other desks, so there was no flat surface for table groups to work on projects.

Each year I would ask for chairs and desks, only to be told there was no money for "furniture." Even when the rooms were renovated, the same terrible chairs and desks were brought back.

The teacher's desk was bad, but I would just line the filthy drawers with construction paper. I had to provide my own desk chair, taking it home over the summer so it didn't disappear.

Through the years we got computer labs, rolling carts with iPads and laptops. Extra teachers were hired to help second language learners and struggling students. We were sent to lots of trainings; new curriculum was purchased many times. But never was any furniture purchased.

My school has one of the lowest-income populations in our district. I learned from other teachers in higher-income schools that they did not have a furniture problem. How can kids feel valued in shabby desks and chairs that pinch their behinds? Equity is still a big problem in poor and nonwhite schools.

**MARILYN BURKS**  
CTA/NEA-Retired

## Environmental Fail

*Editor's note: The August/September issue was packaged with CTA membership cards in plastic bags. We heard what members had to say.*

I was dismayed to find the *Educator* wrapped in plastic. As an educator and human on this planet, I am very concerned about the pervasive use of single-use plastics and consider it my duty to educate my students about its destructive effects on our environment. Please consider eliminating plastic in future issues.

**JULIET JAMSHEED**  
United Teachers of Richmond

I find it ironic that CTA is undermining one of the major tenets of my educational practice, which is that we must teach about and prevent the destruction of our planet through excessive use of fossil fuels and plastics. Please, please, please stop this packaging. It is so damaging to the world around us.

**MICHELLE LEVERSEE**  
Campbell High School Teachers Association



## Pfizer COVID-19 booster shots for educators

California is aligned with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in recommending booster shots for educators who received their second dose of the Pfizer vaccine at least six months ago.

Along with educators and other frontline workers, the CDC recommends boosters for people 65 and older, residents of long-term care facilities, and people ages 18-64 with underlying medical conditions.

Get the booster at your local pharmacy or find a clinic and make an appointment at [myturn.ca.gov](https://myturn.ca.gov). More information is at the California Department of Public Health ([cdph.ca.gov](https://cdph.ca.gov)) and the CDC ([cdc.gov](https://cdc.gov)).

## California: COVID-19 vaccine mandate for students

On Oct. 1, Gov. Gavin Newsom announced plans to require the COVID-19 vaccine for students to attend in-person public and private schools, at the start of the term after the FDA fully approves the vaccine for their grade span (K-6 and 7-12). "Vaccinations are key for student and educator safety and keeping our schools open for in-person instruction," said CTA President E. Toby Boyd in a statement supporting the mandate. The California Department of Public Health will seek public comment before setting rules for exemptions. More on page 32.

EDITOR IN CHIEF Katharine Fong  
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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, 2021, to Aug. 31, 2022) are \$955, including a \$20 refundable contribution (see [cta.org/contribution](https://cta.org/contribution) for details). \$22.38 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 \$37.38 not deductible for income tax purposes. Please consult your tax adviser.

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

## CALIFORNIA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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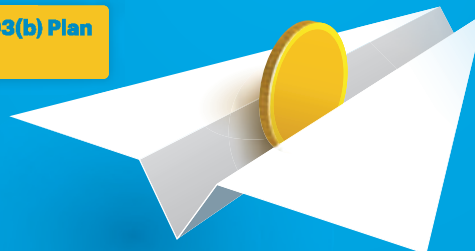
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# Standing Together, Standing Strong

**T**HE SCHOOL YEAR is fully underway, and every day I see evidence of your masterful work with students despite ongoing challenges. I am so proud of all of you.

As educators continue to bring their students back into the world of in-person instruction while minimizing risks associated with COVID-19, it's important to acknowledge that the pandemic has had secondary effects upon our schools that are becoming more pronounced. Looming among these is a growing teacher shortage, as we have seen a record number of resignations and retirements related to the stress of teaching during the pandemic. A June survey of NEA members showed that nearly a third planned to leave the profession earlier than expected because of the pandemic. In addition, many districts are finding it extremely difficult to hire enough substitutes to meet a need exacerbated by COVID and a shrinking pool of available subs.

One way to help turn that around is to continue to ensure that our schools remain safe, and to increase educator and public confidence in that fact. It's vital that we maintain the safety standards we have implemented during the pandemic and not enable outbreaks by lowering our guard. Vaccinations, with religious and medical exemptions, remain critical to stemming the tide. It's unfortunate that scientifically and medically approved safety measures like vaccines and masks have become a political football, instead of being universally recognized as the lifesaving measures they are. The data is irrefutable. In fact, a recent CDC report shows that schools without mask mandates are 3.5 times as likely to experience COVID outbreaks as those that have them. It's also important to remember that implementation of the statewide vaccine mandate is subject to local collective bargaining.



While many rightfully called educators *heroes* during the past year and a half, a small but vocal minority have tried to demonize us for our efforts to keep students and each other safe. These attacks have been amplified by the same media figures who question vaccines, masks and other measures that have proved effective in stemming the COVID-19 tide.

While polling shows the public still strongly stands behind educators and public schools, these ongoing attacks take a toll. In the recent failed gubernatorial recall, at least four of the major candidates opposing Governor Newsom supported school vouchers, which would take funding away from public education to send students to private schools. Touted as “school choice,” school vouchers deflect resources public schools need to ensure all California students get the education they deserve. Instead of supporting public schools, voucher schemes abandon them.

The recall defeat doesn't mean the voucher issue is dead. That's why it's so important that we continue to stand together and to stand strong. Educators speaking with one voice are a force to be reckoned with. Just as we've stood together for a safe return to classrooms, we must stand for schools to have the resources they need, and beat back efforts to privatize one of California's oldest and most valuable resources: our public schools. Our students continue to count on us, and as CTA members have already demonstrated, we're up to the challenge.

**E. Toby Boyd**

CTA PRESIDENT

@etobyboyd



# A Win-Win-Win

**COMMUNITY SCHOOLS** are trending right now, what with state, federal and NEA/CTA investment at previously unseen levels, bringing a high level of attention.

It's about time. The community school model works — and has been working for some years, especially in California. As our cover story “**Building the Heart and Hub**” (page 18) shows, community schools have had remarkable outcomes — raising enrollment, attendance and graduation rates; increasing the number of students who go on to college; and decreasing the achievement gap, the dropout rate, and chronic absenteeism.

By leveraging community resources so students are healthy, prepared for college and ready to succeed, community schools address poverty and long-standing inequities (and let educators focus on teaching and learning). Just as important, they forge connections and partnerships among diverse stakeholders, from students and families to educators and school administrators to local businesses and civic and service organizations. Community schools strengthen and help lift up the communities around them. They're a win-win-win whose transformative powers CTA heartily supports.

Heart certainly factors into your Herculean efforts in year two of the pandemic, as “**Second-Year Scramble**” (page 28) chronicles. How else to explain how

you continue to give your all to your students in the face of ongoing challenges? For many of you, schedules and class formats and structures change almost daily due to COVID-19 exposures, quarantines, and unclear policies (or policies that are not enforced), leading to confusion and frustration. “It isn't the back-to-school that some of us imagined,” says Maripaz Berlin, president of Oak Grove Educators Association.

Caring for yourself and taking control of your professional path are ways to cope during these difficult times — and you're not alone in this journey. Take a look at the resources, tools (collective and individual), examples and insights from members and experts on ensuring your well-being at [cta.org/ways-to-wellness](https://cta.org/ways-to-wellness). And explore CTA's professional development offerings, such as CTA/NEA micro-certifications, free to members on a variety of high-interest topics — see “**Polish Your Skills**” (page 40). Micro-certifications demonstrate your competency and mastery in a specific

skill or set of skills, and can be done individually at your own pace or as part of a learning community.

You can also join colleagues at specialized conferences offered by CTA and others to hone your skills and get different perspectives on the profession. We list a few in the **Calendar** on page 9, including **CTA's New Educator Weekend** (presented virtually Dec. 10-12 and in person Feb. 25-27), for those in their first three years in the profession. Check out more great opportunities coming up at [cta.org/conferences](https://cta.org/conferences).

Your work is vital. In our story on community schools, CTA Vice President David B. Goldberg says he became an educator “to make a true difference in a powerful way.” You make a difference in your students' lives every single day. Thank you.

**Katharine Fong**

EDITOR IN CHIEF

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

▼ The six pillars of community schools: strong, relevant curriculum; high-quality teaching; inclusive leadership; positive behavior practices; family and community partnerships; community support services. See page 22 for full description.





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October / November 2021

# CALENDAR

▼ Mural at Unidad Park in Los Angeles, titled *Filipino Americans: A Glorious History, A Golden Legacy*.



## Marking a Movement

**THIS YEAR** marks “50 Years Since the First Young Filipino People’s Far West Convention,” and that’s the 2021 theme of **Filipino American History Month** in October. The convention, held in Seattle in 1971, is hailed as the beginning of the Filipino American Movement. Over time, the Far West Conventions became an organizing space for community and youth activists that helped bring issues like Filipino farmworkers’ rights and opposition to martial law to the forefront. Many consider the conventions to be the impetus of Filipino American studies.

Use the month to teach students about California’s large Fil-Am communities (the Filipino population in the United States was 4.2 million, with 30 percent in California, according to a 2019 Pew Report) and the culture they celebrate. Find more at [fanhs-national.org](http://fanhs-national.org).

## VETERANS DAY, NOV. 11

**TEACH STUDENTS** about this holiday, which pays tribute to military veterans who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces. Thank veterans and their families for their resilience and sacrifice.



▼ One of the videos available at [stopbullying.gov](http://stopbullying.gov).



## BEAT THE BULLIES

**BULLYING** — in and out of school and online — is an ongoing problem. Use October, National Bullying Prevention Month, to talk to students about what it is and why it is not acceptable behavior. This includes encouraging a culture of kindness and tolerance, and developing an action plan for students and adults to stop bullying and advocate for the bullied. Find resources at [stopbullying.gov](http://stopbullying.gov) and [pacer.org/bullying](http://pacer.org/bullying).



## FIND A CURE

**BREAST CANCER** is *still* the most common cancer diagnosed among U.S. women and is the second leading cause of death among women after lung cancer. One in eight American women will develop invasive breast cancer over the course of her lifetime. Bring awareness to the disease, help find a cure, and ensure preventive health care access for all by donating and raising money through walks, runs and other events. Many organizations, such as Susan G. Komen and National Breast Cancer, host activities in October, Breast Cancer Awareness Month.



**DON'T MISS THESE!** CTA conferences this fall are geared for specific audiences, but all members are welcome. Learn, engage and network with your peers. Virtual conferences are free to members. University credits and professional growth hours are available at no cost. More info and registration at [cta.org/conferences](https://cta.org/conferences).

► **LGBTQ+ ISSUES CONFERENCE**, Oct. 29–31, Margaritaville Resort Palm Springs. "Beyond the Binary: Identity and Imagining Possibilities." The 13th annual gathering is open to all CTA members and provides a venue to discuss a variety of issues affecting educators, students and the community. Core focus areas: supporting and centering the most marginalized; healing, resilience and joy; and queer futures.

► **FALL SPECIAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE (HOME EDITION!)**, Nov. 5–7, virtual. Theme: "IDEA." Created for educators

working in either general education or special education, workshops focus on core topics including instruction, identification, IEPs and behavior. Special keynote speaker: Temple Grandin, Ph.D., on "Developing Talents — Utilizing the Skills of Different Kinds of Minds." Grandin is one of the most accomplished and well-known adults with autism in the world.

► **NEW EDUCATOR WEEKEND (HOME EDITION!)**, Dec. 10–12, virtual. For educators in their first three years in the profession, this conference has everything you need to be successful, including sessions about classroom management, creating engaging classrooms, lesson plans and ideas, connecting with your union, student loan forgiveness information, member benefits, and project grants. (A twin conference, **New Educator Weekend North**, is planned to be held in person Feb. 25–27, 2022.)

## California STEAM Symposium

**OCT. 21–23** CONFERENCE

Virtual. CDE Foundation presents the ninth annual symposium supporting high-quality STEAM instruction. Educators will find multiple opportunities to align and integrate STEAM into their curriculum, connect with colleagues and community partners, interact with live speakers, and collaborate with the STEAM community. CTA members get an exclusive discount to attend. Register with the code JOINME21 for your discount. ► [steamcalifornia.org](https://steamcalifornia.org)

## Fall CUE Conference

**OCT. 23–24** CONFERENCE

Virtual. "Reimagining Education — Driving Innovation." The educational technology conference by CUE (Computer-Using Educators) offers a multitude of sessions with keynotes from world-renowned educators. ► [cue.org/fall](https://cue.org/fall)

**RA Reminder** The declaration of candidacy form for state delegates to the 2022 NEA Representative Assembly in Dallas, Texas, will appear in the December/January *Educator*.

## Voluntary dues contribution

**NOV. 1** OPT-OUT DEADLINE

Voluntary annual contributions by members support CTA Foundation's grants/scholarships and CTA's advocacy efforts. New members are automatically enrolled in the default contribution of \$10 for the CTA Foundation and \$10 for advocacy. Members may change their allocation or opt out. New members have 30 days from the date of enrollment; previously enrolled members have a window from Aug. 1 to Nov. 1. ► [cta.org/contribution](https://cta.org/contribution)

## Green California Schools Summit

**NOV. 4** CONFERENCE

Pasadena/virtual. The annual conference, presented by Green Technology, provides an opportunity for school stakeholders to share best practices and encounter new technologies. This year's event comes at a time with a focus on COVID-19 safety and indoor air quality, and a mandate to incorporate environmental principles in classroom instruction. It combines an in-person program (with keynote speakers, education sessions, and a Leadership Awards reception) and a virtual program (with prerecorded sessions and showcase videos). ► [green-technology.org/schools2021](https://green-technology.org/schools2021)

## American Education Week

**NOV. 15–19** EVENT

American Education Week is celebrated the week prior to Thanksgiving week and includes special days to honor parents, education support professionals and substitute educators.

► [nea.org/aew](https://nea.org/aew)

## CTA Scholarships

**JAN. 28** APPLICATION DEADLINE

The CTA Scholarship Program offers scholarships up to \$3,000 to CTA members; up to \$5,000 to dependent children of active members; and up to \$5,000 to Student CTA members. Applications will be available online in mid-October.

► [cta.org/scholarships](https://cta.org/scholarships)

## Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarships

**FEB. 11** APPLICATION DEADLINE

Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Scholarships up to \$6,000 are available to CTA members, their dependents and Student CTA members who are persons of color and are pursuing a teaching-related career. Applications will be available online in mid-October.

► [cta.org/scholarships](https://cta.org/scholarships)

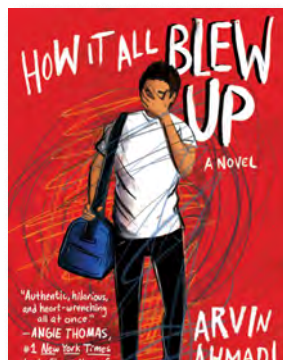


# WELL READ

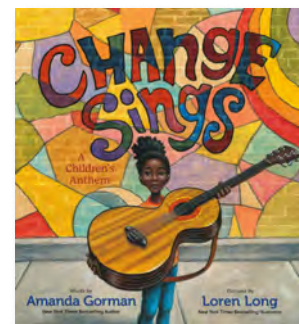
NEA's Read Across America site ([nea.org/readacrossamerica](http://nea.org/readacrossamerica)) is a trove of recommended books, authors and teaching resources that promote diversity and inclusion for students at all levels. You can follow its monthly calendar of recommended reads or simply browse through the many offerings. Among them:



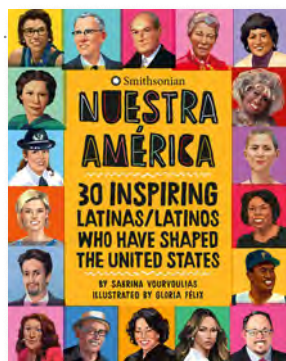
*We Belong* by Cookie Hiponia Everman. In this novel written in free verse, half-Filipino, half-white Stella and her younger sister Luna get a bedtime story of a Tagalog myth and their mother Elsie's immigration to the United States from the Philippines. Middle grade level.



*How It All Blew Up* by Arvin Ahmadi. A tale of coming out/coming of age/ coming home. Faced with a failed relationship, bullies, and being outed as gay to his conservative Muslim parents, 18-year-old Iranian American Amir Azadi blows off his high school graduation and runs away to Rome. Young adult level.



*Change Sings: A Children's Anthem* by Amanda Gorman, illustrated by Loren Long. In this lyrical picture book by the famed inauguration poet, a young Black girl leads others on a musical journey, and they learn that they have the power to change the world, their communities and themselves. Elementary grade level.



*Nuestra América: 30 Inspiring Latinas/Latinos Who Have Shaped the United States* by Sabrina Vourvoulias, illustrated by Gloria Félix. An anthology of brief biographies of notable Latino women and men who have made their mark in entertainment, sports, education, politics, advocacy, music, science and social justice. Middle grade level; also available in Spanish.



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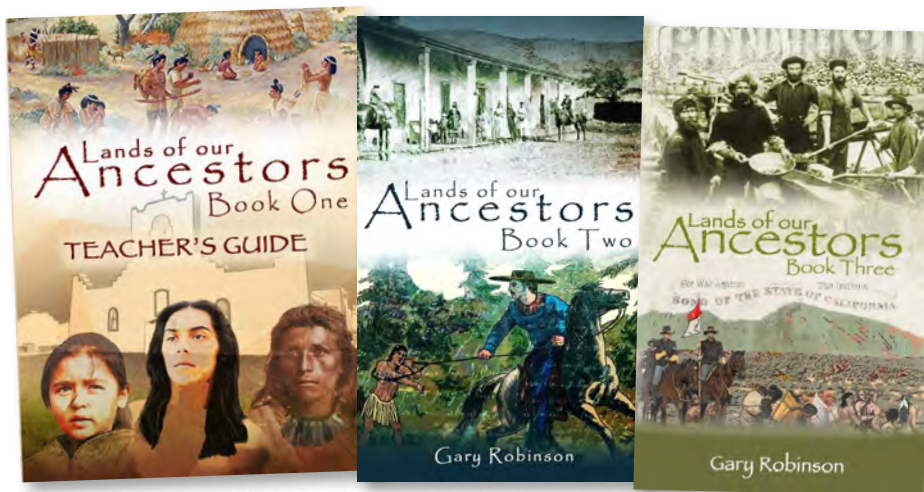
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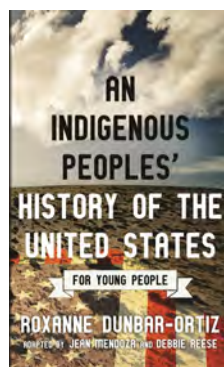
## NOVEMBER: *Native American Heritage Month*

**ENGAGE STUDENTS** in Native American heritage with historical novels.

*Lands of Our Ancestors*, a three-book series by Gary Robinson, is designed for fourth grade readers and follows three generations of a Chumash Indian family as they face challenges in major eras of California history: the Spanish mission era, the Mexican rancho period, the Gold Rush, and early statehood. Vetted by the California Indian History Curriculum Coalition (CIHCC), the books and accompanying teacher guides meet state history-social studies standards and provide an alternative for teaching fourth grade state history.

Older students can read *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States for Young People* by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, adapted by Jean Mendoza and Debbie Reese (young adult level). The colonization and settlement of Indigenous lands at the expense of Indigenous people is seen through a narrative centered on the story, experiences and perspectives of Indigenous peoples.

Find more curriculum and classroom resources at CIHCC (visit [csus.edu](https://csus.edu) and search for CIHCC).



## *Degrees of Success*

**DURING HIGHER EDUCATION MONTH** in October, celebrate the dedicated faculty and staff who help students follow their dream through higher education. Almost two-thirds of all jobs today require postsecondary education and training, meaning higher ed is essential for the majority of our students! Go to [nea.org/nhem](https://nea.org/nhem) for events, resources and ways to take action.



## COMPUTER SCIENCE EDUCATION WEEK, DEC. 6–12

**#CSEdWeek** is an annual call to action to inspire K-12 students to learn computer science, advocate for equity in CS education, and celebrate the contributions of students, teachers and partners to the field. This year, look for **#CSforSocialJustice**, focusing on how computer science can serve as a catalyst for social justice work needed to bring rigorous CS and STEAM courses to underrepresented students. During the week, your class can join in Hour of Code, one-hour tutorials for all grade levels, at [hourofcode.com/us/learn](https://hourofcode.com/us/learn). Learn more at [csedweek.org](https://csedweek.org).

**CELEBRATE**  
**National**  
**Higher**  
**Education**  
**Month!**

# Everything ESP



## NOMINATIONS OPEN:

### 2022 CTA ESP of the Year

EVERY YEAR, CTA recognizes an education support professional whose activities reflect the contributions of ESPs to public education as the Paula J. Monroe CTA ESP of the Year. The honoree is acknowledged at the March State Council meeting and is California's nominee for NEA ESP of the Year.

Nominations are now open for the 2022 ESP of the Year. Any CTA member may nominate an ESP member. The deadline is Dec. 17, 2021. Get more information and download the nomination form at [cta.org/espoftheyear](https://cta.org/espoftheyear).



2021 CTA ESP  
of the Year Maggie  
Peacock-Butler

## ESP Leadership Academy

### STRENGTHENING OUR

**SCHOOLS** means strengthening the voice of everyone who works within the school system. CTA provides an annual training exclusively for education support professional members interested in becoming effective leaders in their local chapters. Your participation will better prepare you to help your local organization deal with known issues today and the unknown tomorrow. Application deadline: Nov. 19.

For more information, contact George Young at [gyoung@cta.org](mailto:gyoung@cta.org).

### SESSION 1:

*Burlingame*

**JAN. 28–30, 2022**

### SESSION 2:

*Los Angeles*

**MARCH 25–27, 2022**

## Save the Date: National ESP Day on Nov. 17

**NEA recognizes ESP Day** on Nov. 17, during American Education Week. (CTA's annual ESP Day is May 17, 2022.) Watch for an NEA/CTA special event in November, and thank our ESPs — every day — for their enduring contributions to our students and schools.

## CTA Conference Grants

**Incentive grants** can help you attend one of CTA's scheduled in-person conferences in 2022. Applications are easy and quick; you only need to fill out one application to be considered for grants to all the conferences below. Grants cover registration and transportation and are available to new members, persons of color, members of small chapters, and special underrepresented groups (for the Equity and Human Rights Conference). For more information and to apply, visit [cta.org/grants](https://cta.org/grants).

- **Issues Conference**, Jan. 21–23, 2022, Las Vegas. Application cut-off: Nov. 8 at midnight.
- **Good Teaching Conference North**, Jan. 28–30, 2022, Burlingame. Application cut-off: Nov. 8 at midnight.
- **Equity and Human Rights Conference**, March 4–6, 2022, location TBD. Application cut-off: Jan. 3 at midnight.
- **Good Teaching Conference South**, March 18–20, 2022, Garden Grove. Application cut-off: Jan. 3 at midnight.



# Quotes & Numbers

Compiled by **Julian Peeples**

## 17

Days the start of the new school year was postponed by Lake Tahoe Unified School District after the massive Caldor Fire forced mandatory evacuations in South Lake Tahoe.

**“The surest path to safe and full in-person instruction throughout the school year is a strong emphasis on these reliable prevention measures: vaccines, masks, testing, tracing and ventilation.”**

—LINDA DARLING-HAMMOND, State Board of Education president, in an EdSource column about how California is leading the way nationally on safe school reopening.

## 30%

Percentage of California students who said in March that someone close to them had died from COVID-19, according to ACLU of Southern California.



**“A suspension is quick and dirty. It doesn’t deal with whether the student is having problems at home or mental health issues. Kids are complex, and we should grant them the same grace as we grant adults.”**

—CHARLES SCHALLHORN, social studies and psychology teacher at Mountain House High School and member of Lammersville Teachers Association.



**“A college is not a bunch of buildings. A college is students working with faculty to learn things. I can’t think of a better place (for the federal relief money) than in the pockets of the underpaid people who were actually allowing colleges to continue during the pandemic.”**

—CCA President ERIC KALJUMÄGI on the push to pay community college adjunct faculty for uncompensated work they did to transition from in-person to virtual instruction.



## 65,000

Fake applications filed at California community colleges by scammers using online bots in attempts to score student aid and federal pandemic relief money.

**“EDUCATORS REMAIN COMMITTED TO WORKING TOGETHER TO ENSURE OUR LOCAL SCHOOLS ARE THE SAFEST PLACES IN THE COMMUNITY.”**

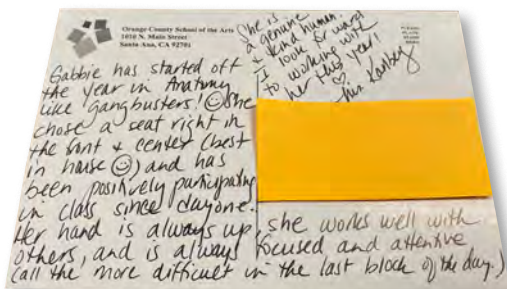
—NEA President BECKY PRINGLE, emphasizing that safe in-person instruction relies on a layered approach, starting with vaccines for all who are eligible, regular testing, and masks.

## > 5,000

Estimated number of community schools nationwide, according to the National Center for Community Schools.

**“Community schools serve as hubs for vital resources and connect students and families to services that can help them thrive. Importantly, community schools expand learning and enrichment opportunities for both students and parents alike, and promote family and community engagement in education, which ultimately can bolster students’ success.”** —MIGUEL CARDONA, U.S. secretary of education.

▶  
A sample note  
to students.



# Positivity Posts

*The lasting impact of humble postcards*

By **Christine Karlberg**

**AN ADMINISTRATOR CALLED** me a Luddite once in a staff meeting. Well, to be clear, she used that term for all of us *experienced* teachers who regularly chose not to jump on the newest iteration of the bright and shiny technological bandwagon. We were the ones who did not immediately embrace the 3D goggles contraption for cellphones or develop escape room lockbox activities or integrate the app du jour.

Nothing like a global pandemic to throw us all into the deep end of the technological pool. Now we can all Google Suite, Screencastify, and Zoom proficiently with our tech-savvy peers.

While I did learn and utilize these technologies, I also held tight to the tried-and-true activities with proven efficacy over two decades of teaching. My students and I drew together on whiteboards and in journals, we built models out of trash and recyclables, and we discussed and connected our content to natural phenomena.

I also continued using my most analog of tools — the humble postcard. Yes, I am referring to (gasp!) snail mail. For years, I have been sending a handwritten postcard to the homes of my students and their families when they do something that catches my attention and is worthy

of praise and positive reinforcement.

Schools in large districts often have postcards available to teachers for this purpose. At my stand-alone public charter school, we originally did not. I was gearing up to write a DonorsChoose grant to try to acquire the postage paid cards, but decided to ask an administrator (yes, the same one who called me a Luddite) if

there were funds available to start such a program for our campus. I was surprised and pleased to find that there were, and our school administration has financially supported this program for several years now. (If you decide to try initiating this type of “positivity post” program at your school, I am confident that grant funding can help get you started.)

I have a personal goal to send out at least two cards per week, and I maintained that during distance learning last year. I thanked the students who were in class on time with their cameras on and positively participating. I gushed to the kids who would break the interminable silence and bravely share their ideas with the group. I shared with parents how their child had connected to something that I hadn’t even considered and taught me something new that day.

Those are the easiest cards to write

*“Even in these digital days of instant email gratification, there is just something special about receiving a handwritten card in our mailbox.”*



▲ Christine Karlberg with Cornelius in her classroom.

and the messages flow easily onto the cardstock. It can be harder to find that message for some students, but it is always there: an infectious grin and sense of humor, submitting an assignment that was challenging, serving as a role model for others, volunteering to be the facilitator for the lab group, being the student who was brave enough to raise a hand when others wouldn’t... The smallest of things that recognize and individualize a student makes them realize they are seen and valued. I have found that their affect and effort in my class improve as a result, and this can spread to those around them.

Almost without fail a few days after the postcard is mailed, I receive a lengthy email from the parent or student thanking me for taking the time to send the card. Even in these digital days of instant email gratification, there is just something special about receiving a handwritten card in our mailbox. Whether it goes on the refrigerator or in a scrapbook, or maybe it is even read and tossed, the message and gratitude remain there for the remainder of that school year and beyond, and the benefits of that are truly bright and shiny. ■

*Christine Karlberg teaches anatomy and zoology, and is a member of Orange County School of the Arts Teachers Association.*



# Beautiful Minds

## Temple Grandin on developing the talents of those who think differently

**TEMPLE GRANDIN**, Ph.D., is a professor of animal science at Colorado State University and one of the best-known adults with autism. She has long been an outspoken proponent of autism rights and the need to recognize different kinds of thinkers, including people with autism, dyslexia and ADHD, and the ways they learn and can contribute. A prolific author and speaker, she has expressed concern over labeling people who think differently: “Rigid academic and social expectations could wind up stifling a mind that, while it might struggle to conjugate a verb, could one day take us to distant stars.”

Dr. Grandin is the keynote speaker at CTA’s 2021 Fall Special Education Conference (Home Edition!), Nov. 5-7 (see box). In advance, she answered a few pressing questions.

*You’re an advocate of hands-on classes for students with autism such as art, woodworking, auto shop, theater. How can educators whose schools do not offer these classes help students develop similar skills?*

I’m an advocate for every kid to take these kinds of classes, especially kids with ADHD, who are dyslexic and autistic. Taking kids outside and exposing them to practical, real things helps. Gardening. Feeding animals on a farm and observing animal behavior. Looking at plant buds and constellations. I was exposed to cattle as a teenager, which led to my career.

People who think differently learn differently. How can students know if they like working with tools if they’ve never used them? There are kids growing up today who have never used a ruler. I’m concerned students are getting totally removed from learning the practical.

Hear Temple Grandin speak on “Developing Talents — Utilizing the Skills of Different Kinds of Minds” at the **2021 Fall Special Education Conference (Home Edition!)**. The virtual event, Nov. 5-7, is for CTA members working in general or special education. Sessions are focused on core special education topics including instruction, identification, IEPs and behavior. The conference is free. University credit and professional growth hours are available. Register at [cta.org/conferences](https://cta.org/conferences).

*You’ve talked about four different types of thinking: visual thinking/object visualizer; pattern thinking/spatial visualizer; verbal thinking/language translator; auditory thinking. How does that play out in the classroom?*

Educators need to understand how students think and teach to that. I’m a visual thinker — I think in pictures. Visual thinkers are poor at algebra. Pattern thinkers are good at math and music, and poor in reading. Verbal thinkers think in words, they’re good at history, they’re poor in drawing. Auditory thinkers can be dyslexic students, their visual perception is fragmented, they learn through their ears.

Education has been taken over by verbal thinkers. Other kinds of thinkers are sensory based, not word based, and more needs to be done to develop these thinkers. For example, algebra is a requirement to graduate from high school. I flunked out of algebra, and many other kids who are visual thinkers flunk out too. Why can’t geometry be required instead?

*You say there can be mixtures of these types of thinkers. How do you teach to that?*

People who think differently always have a dominant type of thinking. Kids who get the special education label tend to be more extreme — their skills are more uneven. Again, it’s a matter of exposure. For visual thinkers, have them try drawing and art, mechanical things. Give pattern thinkers *Science* and *Nature* magazines, computer coding. Show





## Common denominators of success for unique minds

- Grew up with lots of books and learning
- Early exposure to career interests, with hands-on projects
- Learned to work hard at an early age
- Not overspecialized — for example, did not just use math narrowly, but broadened it
- Mentors to help start career path
- Career entry with internships
- Learned to drive

Source: Temple Grandin

kids all kinds of books, textbooks.

I'm worried that our educational system is screening out too many kids with labels — autism, dyslexia, ADHD, Asperger's.

### *What specific tips can you give for working with minds that are different?*

- Never overload working memory.
- Avoid long strings of verbal instruction — give them a printed checklist, outline steps of a procedure.
- Provide choices of hands-on activities.
- Stretch them slightly out of their comfort zones.
- Limit idle screen time.

Learn more about Dr. Grandin at [templegrandin.com](http://templegrandin.com).

### *You've listed common denominators of success for unique minds [see box]. How can we best support students who may not have had exposure to some of these factors?*

In addition to schools keeping classes that foster creativity and problem solving, we need to involve the community. A retired mechanic can show kids how to fix things. Someone else can start a theater club, another can teach kids sewing or cooking.

We have a shortage of people in technical and skilled trades — welding, industrial building, metal fabrication, more. We're having to import things because we don't have people who can make them. We have to develop and utilize the skills of different kinds of minds.



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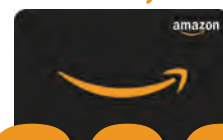
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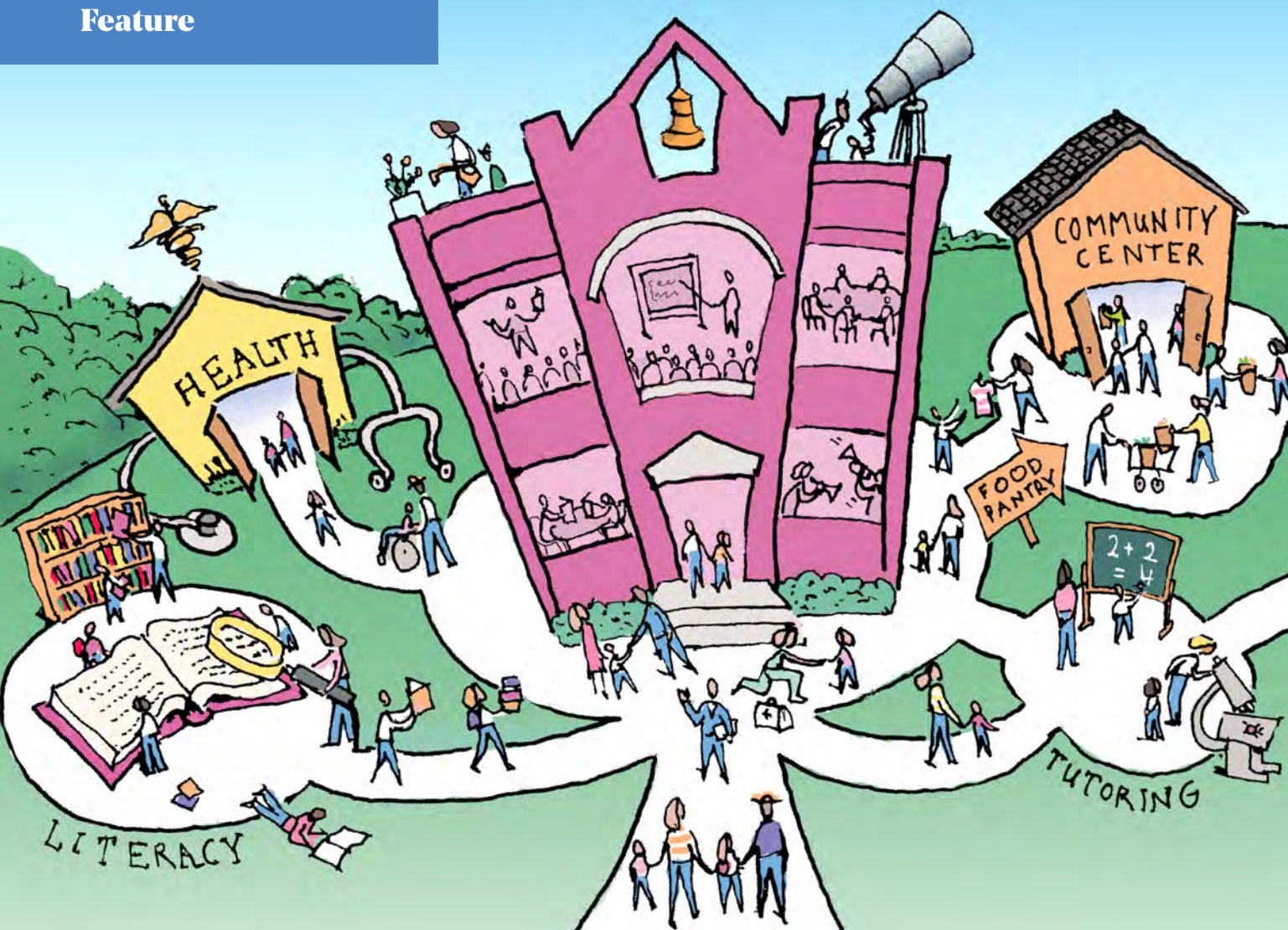
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# Building the Heart and Hub

**"WE'RE REIMAGINING SCHOOLS,"** says educator Ingrid Villeda. "It's so much more than what happens in class."

As the community school coordinator at 93rd Street Academy in South Central Los Angeles, Villeda works with students and families to support and connect them with the resources they need to learn and thrive. During the pandemic, her work has included delivering groceries to 250 school families every two weeks, the creation of a "giving room" with clothing, shoes and other items for students and families in need, and an after-school virtual enrichment program focusing on dance, art and sports.

"The community schools program is meant to support everything the students do," says Villeda, a member of

United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA). "They can't focus on academics if they're hungry or sad or tired."



Ingrid Villeda

With massive investments by the state and federal government, community schools are getting historic resources at a time when students and families need the support most. The community schools model is aimed at disrupting poverty and addressing long-standing inequities, highlighting areas of need, and leveraging community resources so students are healthy, prepared for college and ready to succeed. A community school is both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources with an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, leadership, and community engagement, leading to improved student learning,





## Historic resources for the transformative power of **community schools**

Story by **Julian Peeples** Illustration by **Daniel Baxter**

stronger families and healthier communities.

Since each community school is centered around local needs and priorities, no two look exactly alike. But they all share a commitment to partnership and rethinking how best to provide the resources students and families need.

“Your school has needs. As a community school, you identify and elevate those needs,” says Nick Chandler, community school coordinator and United Educators of San Francisco (UESF) member. “It is our role to elevate and push until that need is met.”

CTA Vice President David Goldberg says supporting the community school movement is a priority for CTA, with significant implications for justice and democracy as schools and families examine whom schools serve and how decisions are made. The possibilities are exciting, he says.

“This is why I got into this movement and became a teacher

— to make a true difference in a powerful way,” Goldberg says. “Community schools are a chance to do this.”

### The heart of the community

Danielle Rasshan had taught at Ganesha High School in Pomona for more than 20 years when the school was chosen to be part of the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) community schools pilot program in 2019. She was always “tied in” to which students needed more support and often intervened as the last stop to help some students before they faced serious discipline. Rasshan says she noticed the community school difference immediately, especially when it came to connecting students with resources and services.

“Now everything is located at my school. I know who to reach out to when I have a student who needs anything. I used to have trouble getting in touch with families, but now



Ingrid Villeda, forefront, with colleagues helping distribute food at 93rd Street Academy in Los Angeles.



I can reach them through regular community workshops,” says Rasshan, a member of Associated Pomona Teachers. “Community schools empower parents because their health and success create the best environment for their students to succeed.”

Rasshan says having these relationships meant that when the pandemic struck, a network already existed to reach out to school community members to provide support. She says several food distributions were held at Ganesha High and its feeder schools (“We consider them part of our family, too”), while the school quickly distributed necessary technology and addressed connectivity issues. Ganesha also used COVID relief funds to hire more tutors when the pandemic forced in-person tutoring opportunities to go virtual.

“This work means so much to me, because you have to build love, passion and commitment for your town and the people we serve. Community schools are a way to cultivate that,” Rasshan says. “I think we’re going to see some real effective change.”

A community school should be the heart of a community,



*“This work means so much to me, because you have to build love, passion and commitment for your town and the people we serve. Community schools are a way to cultivate that.”*

—Danielle Rasshan,  
Associated Pomona  
Teachers

uniting diverse and engaged stakeholders to strengthen the school community and support the whole child — meaning students are not only supported in academics but also learning in environments that make them feel safe, valued, engaged, challenged and healthy.

At Buena Vista Horace Mann K-8 Community School (BVHM) in San Francisco, families expressed a need for help with a safe and stable place to sleep at night. What followed was a deliberate and coordinated effort to elevate the issue, leading to the creation of the Stay Over Program, a cross-sector collaboration that provides an overnight sleeping program for up to 20 BVHM families in the school’s gymnasium — the only program of its kind nationwide.

“We started with the need, we started with the data, and then we moved forward with shared leadership,” says Chandler. “We have successfully hosted hundreds of families.”

In Los Angeles, 74th Street Academy community school coordinator Nicole Douglass says the school became a community hub during the pandemic, with families turning to it for everything from groceries



▼ Nick Chandler at Buena Vista Horace Mann K-8 Community School in San Francisco. He helped the school open its gym to BVHM families who are unhoused in 2018, a program that continues today.

*"Your school has needs. As a community school, you identify and elevate those needs. It is our role to elevate and push until that need is met."*

—Nick Chandler,  
United Educators of  
San Francisco

and school supplies to mental health services. Formerly a special education teacher there, Douglass continues to serve the school community, forging connections and helping families do more than just hold on.

One Friday at 5 p.m., a phone call came from a mother who needed food for the weekend, saying that being able to make her family a traditional Nigerian meal would mean everything during difficult times. Since items from food banks don't typically include the necessary ingredients for such a meal, Douglass and her colleague pooled their money, delivering \$50 to the mother so she could cook the food that would bring smiles to her family's faces during difficult times.

"There are a lot of stories like that for us, and it's brought us closer to our families when we needed to be. If the pandemic didn't happen, I don't think we would've been able to dig this deep," says Douglass, a UTLA member. "We've been able to connect with our families and students on a deeper level, and it will be lifelong."



*"We are committed to improving the educational experience of our young people. Community schools provide the framework for how we do that."*

—Leslie Hu, United  
Educators of San Francisco

## A movement born out of struggle

While community schools as a concept have been around since the turn of the century (thanks to famed social worker Jane Addams and educator John Dewey), the movement to create these centers of transformative change got a huge boost in 2019 when UTLA members included community schools in their demands during their historic strike. They won funding for 30 community schools and additional UTLA positions as part of Los Angeles Unified's Community Schools Initiative. With California now investing more money into the community schools movement than all other states combined, Goldberg says, it's important to remember the sacrifice educators made to win this funding for students and families.

"Part of the reason we can do this is because of the courageous efforts of our locals. It allows us to bring CTA support and infrastructure to these struggles that have been so powerful and meaningful," Goldberg says. "What UTLA has done is the gold standard for community schools."

UTLA's victory has blossomed into a \$3 billion windfall for community schools — one-time Proposition 98





# THE SIX PILLARS OF COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

**THE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS** model advanced by CTA and NEA includes six pillars of practice. Unlike most public education models, these pillars are adaptable to the needs of a school's students, staff, families and community, and pay particular attention to creating, supporting, and sustaining a culturally relevant and responsive climate.

## *Strong, Relevant Curriculum*

Community schools provide a rich and varied academic program, allowing students to acquire both foundational and advanced knowledge and skills in many content areas. Learning and enrichment activities are provided before and after the regular school day, including sports, the arts, and homework assistance. Parents and families are supported through adult education.



## *High-Quality Teaching*

Teachers at community schools are fully licensed, knowledgeable about their content, and skillful in their practice. Instructional time focuses on learning rather than testing. Individual student needs are identified, and learning opportunities are designed to address them.



## *Inclusive Leadership*

The leadership teams of community schools include educators, other school staff, parents, students and community members. The leadership team ensures that the community school strategy remains central in the decision-making process. The team plans development and implementation, including thinking about sustainability.



## *Positive Behavior Practices*

Community schools emphasize positive relationships and interactions. Restorative discipline practices such as peer mediation, community service, and post-conflict resolution help students learn from their mistakes and foster positive, healthy school climates where respect and compassion are core principles. Zero-tolerance practices leading to suspension and expulsion are avoided.



## *Family and Community Partnerships*

Families, caregivers and community members are partners in community schools. Their engagement is not related to a specific project or program, but is ongoing and extends beyond volunteerism to roles in decision-making, governance and advocacy.



## *Community Support Services*

Community schools recognize that students often come to school with challenges that impact their ability to learn, explore and develop in the classroom. Community schools provide meals, health care, mental health counseling, and other services before, during and after school. Connections to the community are critically important so support services and referrals are available for families and other community members.



For more information, examples and resources, visit [cta.org/communityschools](http://cta.org/communityschools).

▼ NEA President Becky Pringle, left, listens to a student at Alhambra High School's Dream Center, a supportive space for undocumented, immigrant and other marginalized groups.



funding through 2028 to expand community schools across the state through the California Community Schools Partnership Program. School districts with more than 50 percent of students qualifying for free or reduced-priced lunch will be eligible for grants, with priority given to districts with greater need, those disproportionately impacted by COVID, and districts with a plan to sustain community school funding after the grant expires. Sustaining funding is a key piece to achieving the goal of turning every school where 80 percent or more of students live in poverty into a community school over the next five years.

On the federal side, President Biden's budget includes \$443 million for schools to become community schools, nearly 15 times the previous amount.

CTA has long been advocating for more funding for community schools. President E. Toby Boyd made a request to prioritize community schools as a member of Gov. Newsom's state Task Force on Business and Jobs Recovery to provide more medical and mental health services to students amid the pandemic



***"This is why I got into this movement and became a teacher — to make a true difference in a powerful way. Community schools are a chance to do this."***

—CTA Vice President  
**David B. Goldberg**

and as an integral part of an equitable restart to in-person learning.

"This investment in community schools is hugely important. When we talk about reimagining public education, community schools are a big part of that vision," Boyd says. "It's how we connect what's best for students and educators to parents and our communities."

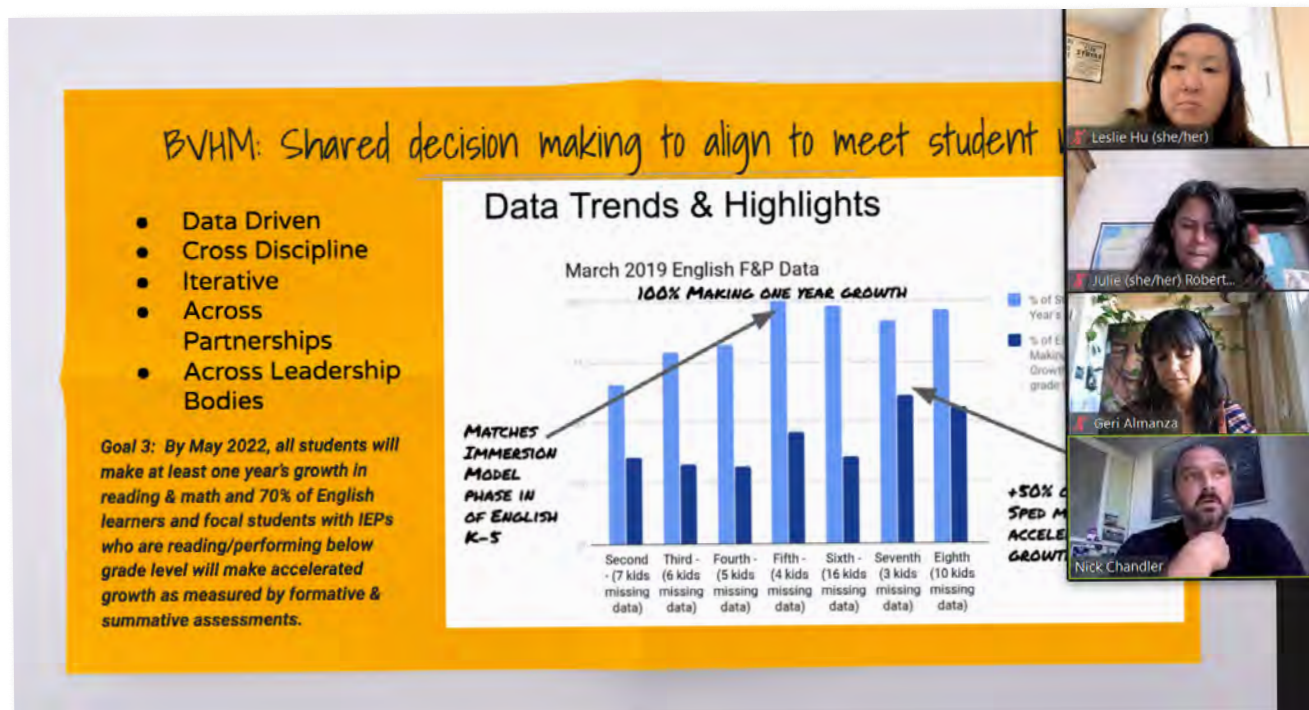
One prominent supporter of community schools first proposed funding the model when he was a school board member more than a decade ago. Now state superintendent of public instruction, Tony Thurmond says he is excited for the opportunity and grateful for the funding.

"It's like a dream come true for the types of supports our students need. Given what we've seen throughout the pandemic, the timing couldn't be better to make investments in community schools," Thurmond says. "As a former social worker, I see community schools as the ultimate way to support whole child learning."

Thurmond says the funding could result in one-third of all California public schools becoming community



▼ United Educators of San Francisco is holding webinars to educate members about community schools and organize for funding.



## SHARED LEADERSHIP: KEY TO SUCCESS

**A CRUCIAL PIECE** of the community schools model (and one of the most difficult) is shared leadership. School leadership teams include educators, students, parents and community members. These teams share the responsibility of school operations with the principal, and they ensure the school is serving the needs of the school community.

"Shared leadership is a difficult thing because people traditionally in power have to give some of that up," says Leslie Hu, community school coordinator and secretary of United Educators of San Francisco. "When you center schools around student and community voices, it makes it hard for a traditional approach."

As one of the major pillars of community schools, inclusive leadership is a commitment to the school community that students, families and educators will be part of the decision-making, implementation and accountability process. This ensures that solutions are built with shared interest and responsibility.

"That's really a game changer for our

roles as educators," says Kyle Weinberg, vice president of San Diego Education Association. "Governance of schools is not set up to be equitable. If you're intentional about investing in collaborative leadership, it will pay dividends."

For community school coordinator and United Teachers Los Angeles member Nicole Douglass, it's just not possible to accomplish the goals of supporting students and uplifting communities without sharing goals, responsibilities and leadership.

"If this is a community school, there is no one leader," she says. "Shared leadership is everything."

A true test of family partnership at community schools, Hu says, is who the school considers to be experts on students and their needs.

"Do you think of the parents as experts, or do you center yourself as the expert? That's a significant shift," she says. "If we believe young people are the experts on their own lives, that families are experts on their own children, schools will look totally different."



*"We view it as an opportunity to empower all the stakeholders in our school communities. What's transformative about community schools is the empowerment."*

—Kyle Weinberg,  
San Diego Education  
Association



▼ State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond, shown visiting Ganesha High School in Pomona, says community school funding is “a dream come true.”



schools, and he’s eager to lay groundwork for supporting them past the one-time funds, including potentially leveraging federal funding for more mental health and medical services. He adds that the California Department of Education is planning to hold a series of listening sessions on the grant process before opening the application period, noting that CTA will be involved “in a significant way.”

Thurmond says he is eager to replicate the success of Los Angeles-area community schools in supporting the whole child and prioritizing equity.

“LACOE and LA Unified provide us with really rich examples of places we can learn from,” Thurmond says, adding that he’s excited to partner with educators in this important movement. “UTLA put it forward. I want to thank everyone in the CTA family for having the vision to call for community schools.”

## Support from CTA and NEA

In addition to state and federal funding, NEA and CTA are providing resources to support local associations to join the community schools



Kim Bui



Mayra Alvarado

movement. NEA is directing \$3 million annually to help school districts make the transition to community schools, starting with the 100 largest school districts in the country.

CTA is creating a network to support local associations in community school initiatives. There are 20 CTA locals taking part in the NEA Strategic Campaign on Community Schools, with most receiving NEA Community Advocacy and Partnership Engagement (CAPE) grants to support their organizing efforts. Westminster Teachers Association (WTA) is using some of its \$75,000 grant to build a partnership with the district’s parent-teacher association and start a conversation about community schools with families. WTA is also offering a stipend to a district parent to be a part of the community school leadership team and help promote and organize community schools in Westminster.

“I’m really happy that NEA is doing this,” says WTA President Kim Bui, noting how important it is to build a culture of collaboration with families. “We have each other and we support each other. We can do so much together for our community and our kids.”



# Educators Request Parameters for Community School Funding

**THE STATE'S** \$3 billion investment is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and CTA leaders are focused on ensuring the historic funding is used to create the community schools that students and families need across the state.

In a letter to Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond and State Board of Education President Linda Darling-Hammond, the presidents of the 20 CTA local associations participating in NEA's Community Schools Strategic Campaign Institute requested the creation of a statewide Community Schools Steering Committee. This body would ensure democratic community stakeholder involvement, overall state-level ongoing guidance, community education and engagement, pathways to sustainable funding, and ongoing evaluation, assessment and support — essential to the success of community schools.

The CTA locals and their community partners also proposed regulations for school districts that receive state community schools funds, requiring:

- A rigorous and bottom-up application process to become a community school.
- Full-time community school coordinators at each school.
- Additional funding at each school annually to build the program.
- Training and systematic coaching for coordinators and others to support the leading and implementation of assessment of needs and development of a strategic plan at each school.
- Professional development, training and systematic coaching on culturally responsive curriculum, community organizing, and other key pieces of the community schools model.

San Diego Education Association (SDEA) leaders parlayed an NEA training on building a community schools coalition four years ago into convincing the San Diego Unified school board to adopt a supportive resolution last year and develop a plan to open five community schools for the 2022-23 school year. SDEA, which is also a CAPE grant awardee, is

working with school sites to prepare for the state grant application process, developing their community school pillars and strengthening partnerships, according to SDEA Vice President Kyle Weinberg.

"The funds from the grant are going into developing the leadership and coaching skills of our members who are doing this work," he says. "NEA has done some

groundbreaking work with community schools. It inspired us at SDEA to attempt to implement community schools with fidelity. We've taken a lot of the guidance from NEA and CTA to heart about what a community school can look like."

Leslie Hu, community school coordinator at San Francisco Unified and UESF member, has been working with NEA and

Children at book and backpack giveaway at 93rd Street Academy in L.A.



*"We are here as a community, working together to serve the whole child and the whole community."*

—Olivia Udovic,  
Oakland Education Association

- Expanded decision-making purview for parents, youth, community and educators at each community school.
- A Community Schools Steering Committee in each district that receives funding to guide the process with the above elements; help assess and evaluate the work; lead on broad community education about community schools; spearhead creating sustainable funding for community schools; and ensure broad and diverse community involvement and stakeholder leadership.





*"When we talk about reimagining public education, community schools are a big part of that vision. It's how we connect what's best for students and educators to parents and our communities."*

—CTA President  
E. Toby Boyd

receiving coaching for the past few years to expand the community school movement nationwide. She says community schools are effective vehicles to uplift the voices of young people and families.

"It's all based on what they need, on what the communities hope for," says Hu. "We're really interested in centering our young people and families. How do we use the power and resources of the union, of CTA and of NEA, to push this work forward?"

Mayra Alvarado teaches at Manzanita SEED Elementary School — one of more than 40 community schools in Oakland. She says educators and parents got a lot closer as they weathered the pandemic together, utilizing their "parent-teacher union" to organize and fight for the needs of their school.

"It's about parents supporting teachers as workers, and teachers supporting parents in what they need for their children," says Alvarado, an Oakland Education Association member. "Our teachers are aware of where our families are coming from. I wish I went to a school like the one I'm teaching at!" ■

For more information about CTA and NEA's work on community schools, go to [cta.org/communityschools](https://cta.org/communityschools).

◀ CTA President E. Toby Boyd talks to a child at Prescott Elementary School in Oakland.

## Money for Community Schools

**TONY THURMOND**, state superintendent of public instruction, says the increase in funding could result in one-third of California's 10,600 public schools becoming community schools.

- **\$3 billion from the state:** One-time Proposition 98 funding through 2028 to expand community schools across the state through the California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP). The goal is to transition every school where 80 percent or more of students live in poverty into a community school over the next five years. School districts with more than 50 percent of students qualifying for free or reduced-priced lunch will be eligible for grants, with priority given to districts with greater need, those disproportionately impacted by COVID, and districts with a plan to sustain community school funding after the grant expires. Thurmond will present the CCSPP plan to the State Board of Education for approval in November.
- **\$443 million from the federal government:** Funding in President Biden's budget for U.S. schools to become community schools, nearly 15 times the previous amount.
- **\$3 million from NEA:** Annual funding to help school districts make the transition to community schools, starting with the 100 largest school districts in the country. Twenty CTA locals are taking part in the NEA Strategic Campaign on Community Schools, with most receiving NEA Community Advocacy and Partnership Engagement (CAPE) grants to support their organizing efforts. Details about CAPE at [nea.org/cape](https://nea.org/cape).



▼ Students in Capistrano Unified School District, where a survey of parents found that few wanted to transfer their children from in-person to online learning. Other districts have found the opposite.



# SECOND-YEAR SCRAMBLE

*Quarantines, staffing shortages and surge in virtual students as educators and schools contend with year two of the pandemic* By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin

**THIS WAS** the year when things were supposed to return to normal — but it's been anything but for schools in California.

California has the lowest COVID-19 rate in the U.S., thanks to a highly vaccinated population and mask mandates. But infections and exposures are having a big impact on some districts, say teachers. Educators are weary but meeting the challenges head-on, as chapters negotiate agreements to keep students and staff safe in these difficult times.

"We are constantly revising how the ship we're sailing on is built, because of how COVID has spread," says Lisa Bustillos, president of Brentwood Teachers Association in Contra Costa County. "We have had to quickly change course and constantly keep up with new regulations and ways to prevent the spread."

"We reached a memorandum of understanding with our district that provides significant protections for members by extending COVID sick days, COVID testing and contact tracing. The challenges are numerous."

Manuel Bonilla, president of Fresno Teachers Association, says educators are overwhelmed in his district, where hundreds of students have tested positive.

"We recently asked our teachers to use one word to describe the way they're feeling, and the overwhelming results were *exhausted*, *tired* and *stressed*," Bonilla said during an interview shortly into the new school year on [yourcentralvalley.com](http://yourcentralvalley.com). "It's an overlay of not only trying to do your best to provide for the educational needs of the students, but also trying to provide for the health and safety of those students."

## *Infections and quarantines take a toll*

CTA members and news media report that districts with predominantly low-income students are experiencing higher numbers of infected or quarantining students.

Karen Rosa, president of the San Lorenzo Education Association in Alameda County, noticed an uptick in COVID cases

and exposures in San Lorenzo. She thinks it's due to community spread and demographics.

"I get daily email about sites that have positive COVID cases. At first it was one or two schools per day, but now it is five or six schools daily. I think the numbers are high because the community is low-income and students have parents who work in essential jobs."

Other members mention how anti-mask and anti-vaccine groups may contribute to COVID cases.

"It seems as though most exposure starts in the community and then spreads through classrooms," says Joy Schnapper, president of Capistrano Unified Education Association (CUEA). "I believe we have higher numbers due to the socioeconomics in some of our communities, but also due to the conservative nature of Southern Orange County, which has anti-mask and anti-vaccine groups."

Students who have been exposed to the virus either are sent home to quarantine or undergo a "modified quarantine," approved by the California Department of Public Health, which allows students exposed in school to remain in school if asymptomatic.

"However, students are usually at school during their infectious period, according to contact tracing," observes Maripaz Berlin, president of Oak Grove Educators Association in San Jose, which has modified quarantine. "They test immediately and again around the fifth day. When a student is COVID-positive, it impacts the whole class, because the district considers everyone in the classroom 'close contacts.'"

In San Lorenzo, the district has students quarantine only if they sit within 6 feet of a student who tested positive. "This is causing an uproar among the primary grade teachers, who say their students are impossible to keep apart during lunch, recess and class time," says Rosa.

In West Contra Costa Unified School District, teachers filed a complaint with Cal/OSHA when principals at two schools sent students "exhibiting symptoms" back to class after teachers dismissed them, rather than sending them home. The principals blamed the symptoms on allergies.

"Since school started, we've heard from teachers, parents and students about COVID issues (including six students staying in schools when they have COVID symptoms), lack of contact tracing, testing not happening at sites, and classrooms not being cleaned," United Teachers of Richmond



*"We are constantly revising how the ship we're sailing on is built, because of how COVID has spread."*

—Lisa Bustillos,  
president of Brentwood  
Teachers Association

President Marissa Glidden said to KRON News about the complaint.

In wealthier communities where masking and vaccination rates are high, COVID has had less of an impact. For example, in the middle-class community of Brisbane in San Mateo County, only a handful of students have been impacted, says Monica Kibble, president of Brisbane Teachers Association. David Campbell, president of Mountain View-Los Altos District Teachers Association in an affluent area of Santa Clara County, describes a "minimal" COVID impact. Nonetheless, administrators continually push for in-person rallies and assemblies — and educators push back to keep infection rates low, says Campbell.

### *Keeping quarantined students on track*

Temisha Brame Carter, president of Centinela Valley Secondary Teachers Association in Los Angeles County, says teachers are scrambling to help quarantining students keep up academically.

"It's been significant enough for educators to ask for suggestions to remedy how they might reteach content for students. Educators are working after school to offer support and/or reteach content. We are also attempting to have the normalcy of in-person instruction. Educators have found it challenging to support the volume of students quarantined."

In Murrieta, teachers are providing independent study for quarantining students using the Canvas platform, says Kimberly Binning Chevlin, president of Murrieta Educators Association in Riverside County.

"At the elementary level, the district provided Canvas course titles for 10 days of schoolwork by grade level for teachers to assign when a student needs to be out due to quarantine or illness. At the secondary level, teachers are expected to place their lessons into Canvas and have some sort of work for the student to do during quarantine/illness."

Capistrano is also among the districts using Canvas for absent students, says Schnapper, adding that teachers have said no to livestreaming their classrooms to students at home.

"CUEA will do whatever is in our power to prevent this from happening again. Our answer is to push these students to online instruction."

### *Testing, notification confusion*

All students and employees of Los Angeles Unified School District have been required to take weekly coronavirus



Karen Rosa

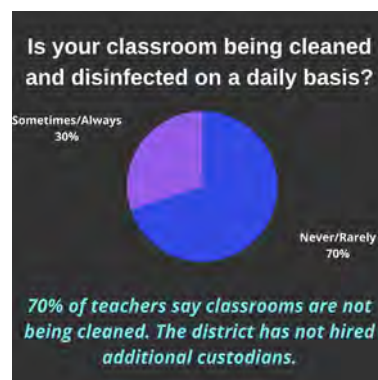
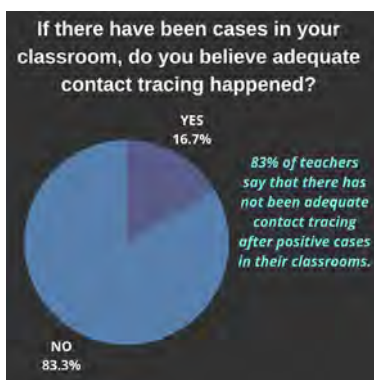




◀ Marissa Glidden, pre-pandemic, reads to her class. She is president of United Teachers of Richmond, whose members answered the questions in the graphics below.



Joy Schnapper



tests regardless of their vaccination status, and the district provides testing sites on school campuses. In other districts, testing is less convenient.

“Our district is currently trying to contract with an on-site testing company to make it easier for our students and families to test, instead of looking around and attempting to make appointments for tests in the community,” says Berlin in San Jose.

In San Diego Unified School District, student testing frequency seems to depend on socioeconomic factors.

“Schools with higher levels of poverty tested far fewer students than low-poverty schools,” asserts a Sept. 16 report by *Voice of San Diego*. “Schools in the most high-income areas in the district tested on average 99 students and staff members last week. Schools in the lowest-income

*“We’ve had entire classrooms quarantined [and temporarily] go back to virtual instruction. The additional hours teachers put in to create packets of work and make themselves available is just overwhelming.”*

—Laura Finco, president of San Ramon Valley Education Association

areas tested more than three times less, just 30 on average.”

The biggest challenges for Murrieta are contact tracing and notifying teachers when a student in their class tests positive, says Binning Chevlin, adding that the situation has been exacerbated by a “great deal of infighting” between vaccinated and unvaccinated staff. “Employees are not aware of how to report an absence due to COVID symptoms. All along that spectrum, there is confusion as to how to report and when to report.”

There has been similar confusion in San Lorenzo, says Rosa. “They did not have a plan for who would oversee the COVID-19 reporting email system, the contact tracing, or reporting to the county health department. They thought the nurses would continue to do the work this year. They didn’t



anticipate that the nurses would have to take care of students and attend IEPs.”

Teachers in San Lorenzo are concerned that siblings of exposed students who attend the same school are not sent home to quarantine. “The district said the positive case notification is ‘confidential’ and that teachers should not be talking to one another about the students and discovering if there are siblings,” says Rosa.

### *Delta surge creates virtual surge*

Due to safety concerns, increasing numbers of families have opted for online learning in existing or newly created virtual schools in their districts, which has presented challenges.

Rosa in San Lorenzo says, “Large numbers of students have opted to enroll in independent study with remote learning. This is unprecedented, and it is decimating some school communities, causing classes collapsing, transfers and reassignments of teachers and students.”

Binning Chevlin of Murrieta says there has been a larger than expected enrollment in virtual classrooms, resulting in a need to fill teaching spots.

“This has also impacted the virtual site, because we have run out of classrooms and teachers are required to share a room with another virtual teacher.”

Laura Finco, president of San Ramon Valley Education Association in Contra Costa County, says that as more students have moved to the district’s virtual academy, it has been chaotic with “many more combination classes all around and collapsing classes.”

In Capistrano, few parents wanted to transfer their students from in-person to online learning. “Our district did a survey in summer to find out exact numbers of students that would choose to stay online this year, and we were looking at ways to provide them an option, but it turned out that only 300 people out of 47,000 were interested,” says Schnapper.

### *Staffing shortages felt*

California has long had a teacher shortage, but the problem has worsened since the pandemic began. And a law requiring schools to provide independent study for quarantining students



*“I would describe the current school year as confusing and chaotic. The biggest challenges have been contact tracing and notifications when students test positive.”*

—Kimberly Binning Chevlin, president of Murrieta Educators Association

has increased staffing needs at many sites.

“Not only has the number of teacher candidates declined during the pandemic, but the state also has seen an increase in the number of teachers retiring,” reports EdSource. “California school districts, already struggling to find enough teachers for classrooms, are facing a substitute shortage so severe that officials at smaller districts fear temporary school closures.”

Among those cited as suffering in EdSource’s September report are rural districts located in Lake County, Nevada County and Tulare County.

Berlin says her urban San Jose district is also impacted.

“We are struggling with a lack of subs for certificated and classified staff. Our sub calls sometimes remain unfilled, and we end up using our TOSAs [teachers on special assignment] and administrators to sub in classes, thus overworking them. Our classrooms are not being cleaned as often as we need them to be cleaned due to a custodian shortage. It’s a year of putting out one fire and then heading to the next fire.”

Fresno Unified is frantic for subs and clerical workers, including bus drivers, nutrition services workers and office staff.

“It’s been a herculean effort to get substitutes to fill any vacancies,” said FUSD communications officer Nikki Henry in an ABC News report. “We have unfilled vacancies every day.”



▼ Centinela Valley Secondary TA leaders, left to right: Daniel Swearigen, Phyliss Buchanan, Temisha Brame Carter, Crystal Thayer, Lorraine Parsons, Jennifer Llanares, Race Headen, Eric Sanders, Ruth Cebreros.



*“We are working after school to offer support and/or reteach content [to quarantining students]. We are also attempting to have the normalcy of in-person instruction.”*

—**Temisha Brame Carter**, president of Centinela Valley Secondary Teachers Association

## MOUs ensure safety

A memorandum of understanding between a union and a school district is the best way to ensure safety measures are enforced. But it’s not always easy.

“Our MOU is in progress,” says Brame Carter of Centinela. “Our challenges have stemmed from delays in communication and/or effective interpretation of communication pertaining to COVID.”

Finco says her chapter’s MOU with the district has a provision for extended COVID sick leave to be paid by the district to any fully vaccinated educator who has had to take leave due to COVID exposure or illness.

“Last year we had some of the most amazing MOUs in place,” says Schnapper. “We worked long and hard to make sure our teachers were protected, and we provided many options for them to teach in a variety of ways.”

“Yes, we agreed on a safety MOU,” says Berlin. “It is important that we

follow the current state guidelines. We have cleaning protocols, ventilation and air filtration protocols, limit visitors on campus, and limit in-person staff meetings to 1.5 hours per month with the rest virtual.”

School is back in session, but it’s hardly business as usual, says Berlin, with masking, testing, monitoring students for symptoms, reporting COVID cases, and making sure quarantined students don’t fall behind.

“It isn’t the back-to-school that some of us imagined,” says Berlin. “COVID is ever-present and looming. It’s taking a toll on all of us, physically, mentally and emotionally. But educators continue teaching, counseling, having meetings and grading. Just how much have we been affected? We won’t know until we can finally put some distance between us and the virus.” ■

## COVID vaccine mandate for California students

**ON OCT. 1**, Gov. Gavin Newsom announced plans to require the COVID-19 vaccine for students to attend in-person public and private schools, at the start of the term after the FDA fully approves the vaccine for their grade span (K-6 and 7-12). The California Department of Public Health ([cdph.ca.gov](https://cdph.ca.gov)) will seek public comment before setting rules for exemptions.

Prior to the announcement, Newsom had left the decision on student vaccine mandates to local school districts. Newsom’s plan does not override districts’ decisions; it allows districts to “accelerate” the requirements.

In August, Culver City Unified School District became the first in the nation to require eligible students, 12 and

older, to receive vaccinations. Eligible students in Los Angeles Unified must be vaccinated by the end of October.

In Oakland Unified, students 12 and up must soon receive vaccinations, though they can be exempted for medical or religious reasons. In nearby Piedmont, beginning Nov. 17, eligible students must be vaccinated, with no religious exemptions. Students in Hayward must be vaccinated by Dec. 17 or face weekly testing.

Newsom also announced plans to add COVID-19 to the list of infectious diseases the state requires students to be vaccinated against. For more information, go to CDPH.

*At press time, Pfizer had asked the FDA to authorize its COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 5-11.*

# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

By Julian Peeples

## *Lawmakers Clarify Independent Study in Budget Cleanup Bill*

**ADDRESSING ISSUES** with independent study is one of many pieces of “cleanup” legislation approved by the state Assembly and Senate in early September. The 2021-22 education budget cleanup bills, including SB 170 (“Budget Bill Jr.”), AB 167 (K-12) and SB 169 (higher education), contain technical changes and address other unresolved issues from the June budget. These bills were signed by the governor Sept. 23.

Here are notable provisions in these bills:

### INDEPENDENT STUDY

- Specifies that local educational agencies (LEAs) may receive funding for students participating in independent study because of COVID-related quarantine, beginning on the first day of quarantine.
- Specifies that a classroom-based charter school providing independent study to students who are unable to attend classes in person because of COVID-related quarantine is not required to count these students as non-classroom-based charter school average daily attendance and is not required to file for a funding determination.
- Clarifies that an LEA may obtain signed independent study master agreements up to 30 days after a student begins an independent study program.
- Clarifies that synchronous instruction under independent study may be provided by the teacher of record or the certificated teacher of the LEA providing instruction for course-based independent study.

### FUNDING PROCESS DURING EMERGENCIES

- Clarifies that LEAs must have a plan to offer instructional services to students within 10 days but may provide for short-term independent study for 15 school days pursuant to

independent study requirements.

If applicable, an LEA must provide the state or local public health or public safety order that required school closure to the superintendent of public instruction.

- Specifies that from Sept. 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022, an LEA may not receive funding for material decreases in attendance or closures related to COVID-19, except due to COVID-related staffing shortages if certain criteria are met.

### SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS

- Extends the amount of time a substitute teacher can provide instruction in a class from 30 to 60 days. This extension expires on July 1, 2022.

### MODEL CURRICULUM

- Requires the California Department of Education to enter into contracts with county offices of education for the development of model curriculum related to each of the following: the Vietnamese American refugee experience (by Sept. 1, 2024); the Cambodian Genocide (by Sept. 1, 2024); Hmong history and cultural studies (by Sept. 1, 2024); and Native American studies (by Sept. 1, 2025).

**“Every student’s school day depends on the work of thousands of ESPs, from office workers to food service workers and custodians. AB 438 recognizes the hard work of these essential employees by providing them with greater stability and professional rights.”**

—CTA President E. Toby Boyd

### HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENT HOUSING

- Creates the Higher Education Student Housing Grant Program and the Capacity Expansion Grant Program to support affordable student housing at UC, CSU and community colleges. The bill appropriates \$500 million in one-time General Fund monies in 2021-22 for student housing projects, and includes legislative intent to provide \$750 million each in 2022-23 and 2023-24 for this purpose. Community colleges will receive 50 percent of this funding.





## **AB 101: Historic ethnic studies bill becomes law**

CTA-co-sponsored AB 101 (Medina) adds ethnic studies to California's high school curriculum starting in the 2025-26 school year, and adds the completion of a one-semester course in ethnic studies to the state high school graduation requirements, commencing with students graduating in the 2029-30 school year.

AB 101 is key to promoting respect and understanding among races, supporting student academic success, and teaching lifetime critical thinking skills for the 21st century.

"The inclusion of ethnic studies in the high school curriculum is long overdue," says bill author Assembly Member Jose Medina. "The signing of AB 101 is one step in the long struggle for equal education for all students."

AB 101 was signed into law by Gov. Newsom on Oct. 8.

## **AB 438: Parity for education support professionals**

CTA-co-sponsored AB 438 (Reyes) would require certain notices and opportunities for a hearing in the event of the layoff of education support professionals to establish an equal process for all educators.

"Every student's school day depends on the work of thousands of education support professionals, from office workers to food service workers and custodians," says CTA President E. Toby Boyd. "In the absence of adequate workplace protections, more than 2,000 classified staff have

been laid off since March, even though our schools have not lost state funding. This bill recognizes the hard work of these essential school employees by providing them with greater stability and professional rights as they strive to support their families."

AB 438 was signed into law by Gov. Newsom on Oct. 8.

## **AB 367: Free menstrual products in schools and colleges**

CTA-supported AB 367 (Garcia) would require all public schools that serve students in grades 6-12, the CSU system, and all community colleges to stock their restrooms with menstrual products. Doing so helps ensure all students have equal access to education, regardless of their gender or economic status.

AB 367 was signed into law by Gov. Newsom on Oct. 8.

## **SB 294: Removes retirement limitations for educators**

CTA-co-sponsored SB 294 (Leyva) removes the 12-year limitation for CalSTRS or CalPERS service credit earned during employer-approved compensated leave. This cap unfairly singles out education employees, harming the ability of elected union leaders to take a leave of absence to represent their union without losing benefits during their time of service.

SB 294 was signed into law by Gov. Newsom on Oct. 5.

# NEW STATEWIDE LITERACY CAMPAIGN

By **Julian Peebles**

**ON SEPT. 21**, state Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond and education leaders including CTA President E. Toby Boyd announced a statewide literacy campaign aimed at helping every California student learn to read by third grade by the year 2026. The effort includes a biliteracy milestone for dual-language learners.

Thurmond will convene a task force comprising education leaders and practitioners, researchers, parents, students, and other experts to identify key strategies for focusing on literacy. Their recommendations will inform legislation, authored by recently elected Assembly Member Mia Bonta (D-Alameda), to advance the campaign

goal. The legislation will be introduced in 2022.

Recommendations will likely include a variety of resources to advance literacy and biliteracy, family engagement approaches, and other reading strategies. Town hall meetings in the coming months will allow the task force to present ideas to the public and the public to give feedback.

Thurmond anticipates the legislation will lay out a multifaceted strategy that considers issues of readiness, chronic absenteeism, needs of students with disabilities and multilingual learners, early education, and socioeconomic factors that impact a student's ability to learn to read.

Boyd says that after decades of disinvestment in public schools, this year's education budget reflects our shared values and priorities.

"Expanding transitional kindergarten, increasing [the number of] community schools, and additional resources for social and emotional supports for students are significant investments that will help support our neediest schools — and are key programs we need to combat illiteracy," he says. "Equally important will be addressing the needs of our dual-language learners. Biliteracy is a strength of our global economy."

# BARGAINING ROUNDUP

Compiled by **Julian Peebles**



## BURLINGAME:

### *Organizing to fight for fair contract*

**Burlingame Education Association** members have held rallies, letter-writing campaigns, and even an online petition to urge Burlingame School District to utilize its robust reserves to provide a living wage to educators.

BEA recently filed with the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) to move into fact-finding in an attempt to reach a fair agreement. The most recent budget figures show that the district is holding more than 28 percent of its budget in reserve, while only offering a 1 percent raise to the educators who went above and beyond to support students over the past two years.

BEA leaders say educators willingly took no salary increase in 2019-20 due to the district's financial health, but now, with resources available, the district should make a fair offer including a living wage that is comparable to that of educators in nearby school districts in the Bay Area.

"We now have proof that disputes the unfounded tale of economic doom and shows that the school board simply would rather save more than 1-in-4 dollars of their budget than use the money for its intended purpose — to educate children," says BEA President Brian McManus.

## OLD ADOBE: *Better wages and benefits*

**Old Adobe Teachers Association** members in Petaluma will see more than 12 percent in pay increases over two years, having won a 7 percent raise in 2021-22 and 5 percent in 2022-23. OATA also won an increase in the district's health care contribution from \$10,020 to \$15,914, as well as the elimination of a cap on years of experience.



## Success!

We have reached an agreement with Twin Hills Union School District! We can't wait to be in our classrooms with our students this school year. Thank you to everyone who supported us. Our community is the best!

#WeAreTHTA

## TWIN HILLS:

### *Strike averted as educators win pay hike*

After nearly a year of unsuccessful negotiations that led to the setting of a strike date, **Twin Hills Teachers Association** finally forced the district to make a fair offer — winning a 6 percent on-schedule pay increase over two years. THTA (based in Sonoma County, one of the least affordable counties in the nation for educators) also won a 2 percent bonus for 2020-21 and increases to the district's health care contribution.

THTA members now turn their attention to the next bargaining, which will begin in January.

## EVERGREEN:

### *Rally for safe and healthy schools*

**Evergreen Teachers Association** members in San Jose rallied in September to demand that the school district administration and school board do more to ensure that our schools are safe. Educators say that administrators failed to adequately plan and prepare a safe physical reopening of Evergreen schools, including:

- No testing or contact tracing system in place at the start of the school year.
- Failure to complete a ventilation report, as agreed to in April.



- No updated safety plan in place until after the school year began.
- Failure to hire adequate staff for students with special needs, and no first-day plan to address it.

ETA called on the school board to provide the resources schools need to protect students and staff, and show that health and safety are a priority.

## TWO ROCK:

### *One-year deal reached*

By implementing countywide coordinated bargaining strategies, **Two Rock Education Association** in Petaluma achieved a one-year agreement with a 5 percent on-schedule wage increase as well as a change to the salary schedule that results in approximately 1.5 to 1.7 percent in additional pay increases. TREA also won an additional \$1,200 annually toward health care, along with district-paid disability insurance and life insurance.

## MILPITAS:

### *COVID leave extended*

**Milpitas Teachers Association** successfully negotiated an agreement that would require Milpitas Unified School District to provide COVID-19 leave for certificated members, as described in Senate Bill 95, beyond the expiration of the legislation until the end of the 2021-22 school year.

## REDLANDS:

### *Bonus for vaccinations*

To incentivize members of their local chapters to get vaccinated, **Redlands Teachers Association** and **Redlands Education Support Professionals Association** negotiated an agreement with Redlands Unified School District that provides a cash bonus to all educators who get vaccinated. Each member who shows proof of their second shot (or first shot if they received the one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine) will be paid a \$250 bonus. Encouraging the last certificated and classified staff to get vaccinated benefits all parties and helps create a safe environment for the entire school community.

## PASADENA:

### *Safe reopening dates*

**United Teachers of Pasadena** fought back against a unilateral imposition by Pasadena Unified School District regarding the reopening date for district schools. The parties had an active MOU in effect, which clearly stated that the date of return to in-person instruction was negotiable. Working with local leaders and staff, the CTA Legal Department drafted a cease-and-desist letter that was sent to the district. Both parties returned to the bargaining table, and a new plan to safely reopen schools was agreed to. The approach is a scaffolding reopening, with lower grades opening first, and then upper grades opening a week later. The new language also provides three student-free days for educators to reacclimate to their school sites and classrooms.







# PHENOMENAL RESOURCE

## The Exploratorium supports K-12 science teachers statewide

By **Sherry Posnick-Goodwin**

**THE EXPLORATORIUM** in San Francisco is a museum of science, art and human perception where visitors don't just look at exhibits — they *play* with them. For example, you can dance with your own shadow, touch a tornado, mix colors and break light apart. You can also suspend a ball in a stream of air and stamp your feet to create a miniature earthquake. The museum has been creating interactive exhibits since 1969 for science buffs of all ages.

It's a fantastic field trip, but visiting the Exploratorium is just one of many ways educators can take advantage of what it has to offer. There's also a plethora of free online and in-person resources and trainings available to teachers throughout California that are designed to make science fun, engaging and hands-on for K-12 students. In fact, the Exploratorium is playing a strong role in supporting the implementation of the Next

Generation Science Standards (NGSS) across the state.

"Our goal is promoting equitable K-12 science education for all students in California by supporting teachers at all levels of their careers," says Lori Lambertson, director of the Exploratorium's Teacher Institute. "We have professional development geared for beginning teachers, experienced science teachers, and those in leadership positions like TOSAs [teachers on special assignment] and department heads. We believe that science keeps students interested in what's going on around them — and that science can be integrated into *all* subject matter."

**"THEY ARE CONSTANTLY DEVELOPING NEW CLASSES, UPDATING THEIR CURRICULUM, AND RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF TEACHERS AND CHANGES IN EDUCATION."**

—**Daisy Yeung**, *Sequoia District Teachers Association*



▲ Daisy Yeung uses a bug-catcher for a science experiment.

### ***Professional development a priority***

The Teacher Institute provides professional development for middle and high school teachers, and the Institute for Inquiry focuses on K-5 science education. Both



▼ Jacob Aringo conducts an experiment with cabbage, using it as an acid-base indicator.

programs work online and in person and utilize scientists and classroom teachers, who collaborate on the creation of workshops, experiments and other programs. Through state funding, private donations and grants, teachers receive stipends to participate in most workshops, which occur outside of school time. There is also a Summer Institute for educators and a science teacher induction program.

Daisy Yeung, a science coach for the Sequoia Union High School District in Redwood City, began professional development at the Teacher Institute as a second-year high school science teacher in 2009. “I reached out to them,” says the Sequoia District Teachers Association member. “It’s unique, because instead of offering the same workshops over and over, they are constantly developing new classes, updating their curriculum, and responding to the needs of teachers and changes in education.”

Yeung spent a year as a teacher in residence at the Exploratorium, working with scientists and helping to create professional development. Then she returned to her district as an instructional coach and continues her affiliation in the Exploratorium’s K-12 Science Leader Network.

“I love that the Exploratorium builds community among science teachers almost like a family,” she says. “They support you in ways you never realized that you needed. And you have so much fun at the workshops. There’s a sense of playfulness. When I return, I’m excited and rejuvenated, which trickles down to the students.”

Jacob Aringo, a STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) teacher at Hoover Middle School in San Francisco, says professional development and working with the Teacher Institute have transformed how he teaches and interacts with students.

“Now, in my class, we explore phenomena by asking students, ‘What do you notice?’ I’ve noticed the kids have become more engaged and more interested in exploring. We do a lot of activities that allow students to conceptually



**“IT’S ALL ABOUT INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING AND TAKING A CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH TO LEARNING AND TEACHING. I’VE NOTICED THE KIDS HAVE BECOME MORE ENGAGED AND INTERESTED IN EXPLORING.”**

—Jacob Aringo,  
*United Educators of San Francisco*

and/or physically break things apart to understand what each component does and then put them together to see how each component interacts with other components.”

Aringo, a member of United Educators of San Francisco, participates in the K-12 Science Leader Network and has conducted a workshop on incorporating project-based learning into science instruction. He was pleased to receive feedback from participants that they were able to use what they learned in their day-to-day lessons.

## ***Investing in science education for all***

In October, statewide science leaders will convene at the Exploratorium to develop a blueprint to advocate for equitable K-12 science education. It is necessary, observes the National Academies of Science, because “many students, particularly students of color living in poverty and rural areas, lack access to high-quality science education across K-16, and have been shut out of many opportunities in STEM. As a diverse and innovative state, California should be investing in and prioritizing better, more equitable science education.”

The Exploratorium’s staff are eager to get the message out that the museum can be an integral part of this effort.

“We want to put the Exploratorium on the map as an organization that promotes equitable K-12 science education and supports teachers,” says Lambertson. “We are pleased that more teachers and school districts are becoming aware of what we offer.”

“The Exploratorium is an excellent resource for science teachers,” says Yeung. She adds that some educators are still struggling to implement NGSS, especially at the secondary level where there is less support from the state. “I recommend that educators visit the Exploratorium’s website and begin by checking out the hands-on activities that can be done easily. It’s about fun, learning, and yes, exploring.” ■



# TREASURE TROVE *for Teachers*

**THE EXPLORATORIUM** has made more resources available virtually during the pandemic with several in Spanish. Some in-person workshops are planned, too. The resources are described in detail at [exploratorium.edu](https://exploratorium.edu). They include:

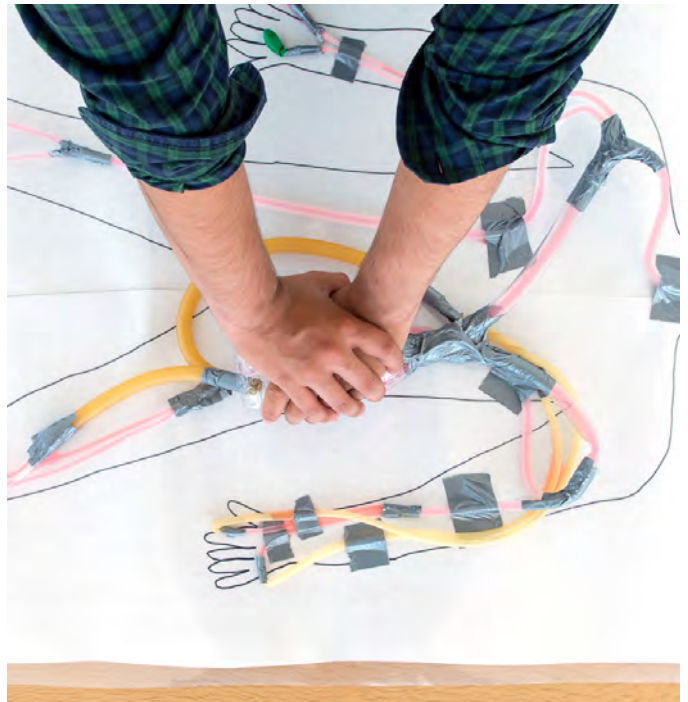
- **Science Snacks:** Teacher-tested, hands-on activities for K-12 that bring explorations of natural phenomena into the classroom and home. Listed by grade levels, subjects and NGSS. Examples include a "Penny Battery" that lights an LED with 5 pennies; a "Vocal Visualizer" that uses your voice to transform laser light into dazzling patterns; and a "Squeeze Box" where youngsters can speed up geologic time with a sedimentary squeeze.
- **Digital Teaching Boxes:** Curricular resources for middle and high school life science teachers, from cell biology to genomics to human evolution.
- **Tools for Teaching and Learning:** The most comprehensive landing page for K-12 educator resources.
- **NGSS Planning Tools:** Tools that help teachers adapt activities to align with NGSS and sequence activities to explain a phenomenon.
- **COVID-19 activities and resources:** Explore the science of viruses and how they impact us.

Free, hands-on, synchronous online workshops for educators designed to support students:

- **Exploring Bubbles Workshops:** K-5 students use soap bubbles to explore, observe, collect data, and look for patterns.
- **Phenomenal Science Activities:** Activities for secondary science teachers.

Watch and Do Science: Hands-on learning videos for K-5 teachers to use with students in virtual or in-person environments, with minimal prep time and common household items. In English and Spanish.

- **Exploring Ramps and Rollers:** Record data, compare observations, and learn how small changes can lead to big differences in how objects roll.
- **Exploring Shadows:** Use light and shadow to see how shadows change shape, size and direction.
- **Exploring Balance:** Explorations with multiple weights.



© Exploratorium, [exploratorium.edu](https://exploratorium.edu)





CTA/NEA Micro-Certifications

## POLISH YOUR SKILLS

Grounded in research,  
micro-certifications offer  
accessible learning — for you

**IMPROVE YOUR PRACTICE** as an educator and create better outcomes for your students. CTA Instruction and Professional Development is offering CTA/NEA micro-certifications free to members on a variety of high-interest topics.

Micro-certifications are a digital form of certification indicating demonstrated competency/mastery in a specific skill or set of skills. They're short, job-embedded professional learning opportunities designed by educators for educators, which can be completed individually at your own pace or as part of a learning community. CTA/NEA micro-certifications are:

- **Personalized:** You can create your own learning journey, based on your interests and career goals, gaps in your skills, and the specific needs of your students, school and district.
- **Flexible:** You can study when it's convenient for you, alone or with your peers.

- **Performance-based:** Unlike “sit-and-get” certifications, our micro-certifications are awarded based on demonstrated mastery of the subject matter, not just for showing up.

CTA/NEA currently features nine micro-certification stacks (curated collections of related micro-certifications):

- Assessment literacy
- Teacher leadership: diversity, equity and cultural competence pathway
- English learners
- Arts integration
- Classroom management
- Five core propositions (related to National Board Certification)
- Exceptional learner
- Supporting LGBTQ+ students
- Technology integration



**CHECK IT OUT:** Go to [cta.org/cta-nea-micro-certifications](https://cta.org/cta-nea-micro-certifications) for details, including specific micro-certifications, continuing education credits available, a recent training, and other important information. Then create an account, browse the offerings, enroll, and you're on your way!

▼ Educator Karly Moura designs escape rooms for various grade levels and subject areas.

# The Great Escape

## Build a virtual escape room for your next lesson plan

By **Terry Ng**

**ESCAPE ROOMS** are adventure games where players work together to find clues and solve puzzles to escape a simulated danger before time runs out. The first escape room was created in 2007 by Japanese company Scrap Entertainment, and the experience has become so popular that today there are more than 2,300 escape rooms in America.

Now educators are creating virtual escape rooms to enhance their curricula. They're a great way to introduce gameplay, teamwork and problem solving to any lesson plan. Students usually must answer questions, solve puzzles, or work out problems to unlock the next level.

Examples are plentiful online. Try a few free escape rooms created by Karly Moura, a member of Mt. Diablo Education Association, at [sites.google.com/view/karlymourapdresources](https://sites.google.com/view/karlymourapdresources). (She also offers a slide deck that walks you through creating one.)

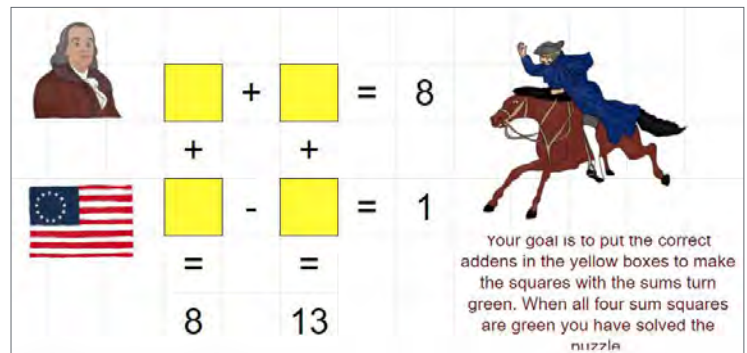
Build your own digital escape room with a combination of a few free tools:

- Create a virtual "room" or multiple areas with Google Sites ([sites.google.com](https://sites.google.com)). Use Canva ([canva.com](https://canva.com)) to illustrate the space with your own photos, graphics and drawings.
- Add and view clues on a Jamboard ([jamboard.google.com](https://jamboard.google.com)).
- Make digital puzzles and keys with Google Forms ([forms.google.com](https://forms.google.com)).

Need some ideas to try? Here are a few to get you started:

- Create an escape room in a different century and have students answer different **history** questions from that era to return to the current day.
- Students on a field trip at the zoo accidentally fall into the lion's den. Can they unlock the ladder of **math** puzzles to climb out before the lions wake up from their nap?
- It's Halloween, and you and your friends are trapped in Dracula's house. You must use all the spooky clues to solve the **science** questions and unlock the locks before the clock strikes 12.

Have a virtual escape room idea for the classroom you'd like to share? Let us know on Twitter [@wearecta](https://twitter.com/wearecta).



thanksgiving day is Coming soon and your favOrite animal is in troUble! you must be cleveR and find A way to ProteCt all of the turkeys and save the hOliday.



I have no feet to dance,  
I have no eyes to see,  
I have no life to live or die  
but yet I do all three.

**What am I?**

It's All Hallows' Eve and you and your friends have stumbled onto an old graveyard. You must figure out all of the clues and unlock the locks before the clock strikes 12 or else...



# A Digital Pivot

Educators meet student and community needs in helping create virtual school in Antioch

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin



**AS THE PANDEMIC** waned and schools reopened, most educators were thrilled to resume in-person instruction in a brick-and-mortar classroom; but others discovered that they preferred the freedom, flexibility and technology of online instruction. The same has been true for students: While many struggled with distance learning and missed being in the classroom, others thrived and loved it.

To meet the needs of students, parents and teachers who wanted learning to remain online, Antioch Unified School District created Thomas Gaines Virtual Academy for grades TK-8, in collaboration with the Antioch Education Association (AEA). The academy opened in August.

“We intend for it to stick around in the future,” says AEA President Valorie Luke. “It’s not just an answer to COVID concerns.”

Nonetheless, the recent COVID-19 surge made the school more desirable for families wanting to minimize exposure. The COVID surge, in fact, correlated with a huge surge in enrollment. What began as a small school with about 100 students grew to nearly 1,000 enrollees in one month.

At first the virtual school was open to students from other districts whose families sought more than independent study for at-home learning. But now the burgeoning academy only enrolls new students from Antioch Unified. Enrollment fluctuates, and students are allowed to transfer to the virtual academy — or back to in-person learning — upon request.

Planning for the academy started in November, when administrators asked Luke and other AEA members to join a committee to discuss the future of education and incorporate some of the beneficial things from distance learning into the 2021-22 school year. The group queried teachers, parents and students, asking what kinds of things they would like to

see carried over to this school year. Many requested that virtual education itself continue.

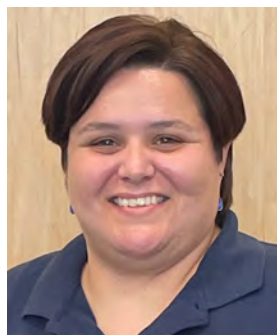
“We weren’t surprised to see this kind of enthusiasm from our school community,” says Stephanie Allred, an AEA member who served on the committee and teaches seventh grade history and English at Thomas Gaines. “Distance learning isn’t for everyone, and it doesn’t work if it’s mandatory. Some students need to be in a room with other people to have a connection with learn-

ing. But we saw some students thrive in remote learning, and they didn’t want to go back. When you look at the data, you can see their academic growth.”

The model for the academy was not based on existing online schools. Instead, a team of educators created a model based on what they knew worked with remote learning in Antioch and built upon that foundation. The school board voted to approve the academy as a separate school.



Jennifer Raymond



Valorie Luke

***“We intend for it to stick around in the future. It’s not just an answer to COVID concerns.”***

—Valorie Luke, president,  
Antioch Education Association





***“We saw some students thrive in remote learning. When you look at the data, you can see their academic growth.”***

—Stephanie Allred,  
Antioch Education Association

## DIFFERENT THAN DURING THE SHUTDOWN

When schools shut down during the pandemic, teachers were operating in “survival mode,” says Allred, who was then teaching at Antioch Middle School. But with the benefit of experience, collaboration and better technology skill sets, the academy has expanded creatively to offer project-based learning, social-emotional learning, digital citizenship, peer collaboration, individual and group projects and more. When COVID numbers go down, in-person voluntary activities will be held, such as science experiments and social gatherings.

There’s far more live online instruction, too. First grade teacher and AEA member Jennifer Raymond has whole-group instruction from 8 to 10:45 a.m., and after that she works live with English language development students while other students work asynchronously. After lunch, she works with small groups, who take turns working with her and working independently.

“I am live with my students all day long aside from a recess break or lunch,” says Raymond, who gets breaks when students spend time with online PE and music teachers.

At the middle school level, Allred has a different class every 50 minutes, including ELD classes, and works mostly with live students. Through Microsoft Teams, she set up a channel that serves as a forum for students who want to socialize during lunch and after school.

AEA member Samantha Franceschi, who teaches seventh and eighth grade math and science, likes being able



As well as not being exposed to COVID-19 at school, Janin Gonzalez’s son Devon is learning valuable computer skills and self-discipline through Thomas Gaines.

to do virtual, interactive labs and simulations with students, which is a huge change from last year.

“I love having the flexibility to do things with technology, whereas before, it was mostly with paper and pencil,” she says. “This type of instruction also allows students to go at their own pace. It’s much easier to individualize instruction virtually than in person. I’m doing that for a student who is a year above grade level.”

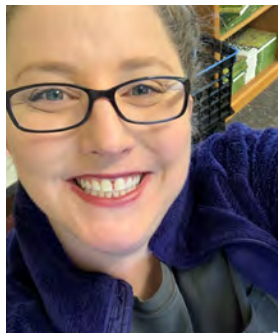
Franceschi, who previously taught at Antioch Middle School, enjoys other aspects of online learning, such as increased student engagement. Last year, many students kept their cameras off and were not engaged. But those who sign up for Thomas Gaines commit to leaving their cameras on and are much more focused.

“I like that classroom management is not a major issue,” she says. “I don’t have to deal with tardiness or class disruptions. I tell my students if they are late or need to ask me a question, they can send me a *ding* to let me know. And if they need to go to the bathroom, they don’t need to ask for permission.”

Because most students have parental or adult supervision at home, teachers say, it’s easier to help students stay on track.

“I have constant conversations with families to make sure the structure and learning environment in the home is conducive to learning,” says Raymond. “The parents want to know what they can do to support an online environment where their child can be successful.”





***“This type of instruction allows students to go at their own pace. It’s much easier to individualize instruction virtually than in person.”***

**—Samantha Franceschi,**  
Antioch Education Association

### WORKING OUT THE PROBLEMS

Not everything is going smoothly. Students’ moving between the academy and in-person schooling has created challenges with managing class size, staffing and scheduling throughout the district. Some schools had to reconfigure classes and create more combination classes.

“The definite downside of a student going from the academy to their home school is that their home school may not have a spot for them anymore,” Franceschi says. “So then they may have to move to a school outside of their zone. It also causes some teachers to have combination classes because they don’t have enough kids in one grade level at a certain school.”

But AEA President Luke is proud to say there have been no involuntary teacher transfers. Educators have been happy to meet their students’ needs, wherever they are.

### FAMILIES AND STUDENTS APPRECIATE THE FLEXIBILITY

“I like Thomas Gaines because it lets me learn from home,” says James, an eighth grader. “I only have four teachers for six classes, and I like that because it makes me feel more comfortable. I think it’s easier to learn



Rhonda Beshears, right, says her son James needs the virtual academy because of her husband’s medical issues and James’ learning disability.

because I can have my mom and dad to help me if I need it.”

His mother, Rhonda Beshears, is grateful her son can learn online because her husband is undergoing cancer treatment, and online learning reduces the chances that her son will expose her husband to COVID.

“We didn’t know what we were going to do without something like the academy,” says Beshears. “Our only other option was independent study, but our son has a learning disability, so we weren’t sure that would work.”

She says that her son’s grades have gone up, which she attributes to a structured environment that is free from distractions and social pressure.

Janin Gonzalez initially chose Thomas Gaines because she worried her son Devon would be exposed to COVID in a regular classroom. She believes that it was a good choice and he is learning valuable computer skills and self-discipline.

“Virtual school last year was completely different,” she says. “I’m not sure Devon will be here forever, but for now I am satisfied that Devon is learning what he needs to learn.”

“I like that I can be home,” says Devon. “I like that the teachers let you type in the chat. And it doesn’t really make a difference to me. I’m just learning on a laptop instead of being in normal school.” ■

# New Special Education Credentials Coming

## Option for bridge authorizations available for current holders

By **Julian Peeples**

**CHANGES ARE COMING** to education specialist credentials that will authorize holders to serve a broader range of students, rolling out in teacher preparation programs next summer. Current education specialist credential holders will be able, at their sole discretion, to pursue bridge authorizations to the new credentials.

The new education specialist structure consolidates seven credential areas into five by integrating the Language and Academic Development and the Physical and Health Impairments credentials into each of the other credential areas. The scope of authorizations under the current Mild/Moderate, Moderate/Severe, and Early Childhood Special Education credentials is expanded under the new structure of Mild to Moderate Support Needs (MMSN), Extensive Support Needs (ESN), and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), while the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Visual Impairments credentials carry forward unchanged.

Under the current structure, Mild/Moderate and Moderate/Severe credential holders are limited to serving students within specific federal disability categories. The new MMSN and ESN credentials will allow holders to serve a broader range of students based on the intensity of their needs while maintaining compliance with federal law.

Holders of the new credentials would continue to be authorized to support students from transitional kindergarten up to age 22. The new ECSE credential expands the range of

federal disability categories a holder is authorized to support, while expanding the age range to birth through kindergarten.

### Optional bridge authorizations

The system of bridge authorizations for current education specialist credential holders mirrors the authorizations for new preliminary credentials. The new credentials are aligned with modified Teacher Performance Expectations (TPE) that reflect the expanded authorizations. Current credential holders seeking a bridge authorization will need to demonstrate mastery of the modified TPEs in the new MMSN, ESN and ECSE credentials. This can be done several ways, including completing coursework offered by authorized teacher preparation programs, engaging in professional development, and demonstrating competence as verified by local school districts.

The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) will not issue bridge authorizations prior to Jan. 1, 2023.

The proposed regulations for the revised education specialist credentials are available on the CTC website at [ctc.ca.gov/commission/notices/rulemaking](https://ctc.ca.gov/commission/notices/rulemaking), while information related to their implementation can be found at [ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/special-education](https://ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/special-education).

#### Current Structure

1. Mild/Moderate Disabilities (M/M)
2. Moderate/Severe Disabilities (M/S)
3. Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)
4. Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH)
5. Visual Impairments (VI)
6. Physical and Health Impairments (PHI)
7. Language and Academic Development (LAD)

#### New Structure

1. Mild to Moderate Support Needs (MMSN)
2. Extensive Support Needs (ESN)
3. Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)
4. Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH)
5. Visual Impairments (VI)

*Physical and Health Impairments (PHI) and Language and Academic Development (LAD) are now integrated into each credential.*



# 7



## THINGS TO SAY TO CREATE A SUPPORTIVE CLASSROOM

*Build a lasting foundation for success with these teacher-tested expressions* By **Stephen Merrill**

**“Saying ‘We really missed you yesterday’ signals that you thought about the student when they weren’t there and underscores they are a valuable contributor to the classroom community.”**

**THERE’S NO WAY** for a teacher to get through a whole school year without blurting out the wrong thing a few times. Difficult mornings sometimes become insufferable afternoons, and kids of all ages know how to press adults’ buttons. When you do slip up, extend yourself some grace.

The good news? You can prepare to be supportive, and even practice before you step into the classroom. “One of the hardest things I had to do was learn how to change my ‘teacher’ language so that I could encourage and empower students on a daily basis,” confides sixth grade teacher Alyssa Nucaro. In time, she concluded: “Using powerful and effective teacher language takes a lot of practice and awareness.”

For professor of English education and former elementary and secondary teacher Todd Finley, being mindful about supportive language means surveying students about how they like to receive praise. Do they prefer “receiving acknowledgments via private or public oral communication? Do they want personal notes or notes home?” Finley even recommends that teachers keep track of who has received positive feedback: “Chart who you’ve praised so you can spread the love evenly,” he says.

Being intentional and reflective about the way you deploy language is the key. Start by imagining common classroom scenarios that call for the thoughtful use of language — delivering hard feedback after considerable student effort, for example, or discussing academic or behavioral struggles — and walk through your responses mentally to make sure you hit the right notes. To find more advice on the productive use of language, we combed through teacher comments and articles by experienced educators to identify phrases that empower learners and create a supportive environment.

1

**"I BELIEVE IN YOU."** Teachers are required to correct papers, hand out grades, and at times chastise poor behavior. That power dynamic can subtly undermine students' self-confidence. Saying "I believe in you" is a powerful way to redress the imbalance and remind kids that you are there first and foremost to help and to serve — and that at the root of all your feedback is an abiding belief in their uniqueness and their potential.

Finding language that blends constructive criticism with faith in the student's ability can be delicate, but being straightforward generally works. In a seminal study in *The Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, when teachers used language like "I have high expectations" for an essay, for example, but "I know you can reach them," the number of kids who submitted revisions doubled, from 40 percent to 80 percent.

2

**"WE MISSED YOU."** Instead of asking "Where were you?" which can carry a note of suspicion — or simply sound like prying — try to respond to a student's absence with a more positive twist. Say "We really missed you yesterday" to signal that you thought about the student when they weren't there and to underscore that they are a valuable contributor to the classroom community.

3

**"I'M LISTENING."** Used as both a confirmation and an invitation — for example, as an open-ended prompt when a student looks troubled or starts to feel frustrated — the phrase "I'm listening" signals that there is space and respect for student voice in your classroom.

Experienced educators in our community are keen to remind fellow teachers not to jump in to fill the silence too quickly. Refrain from speaking directly after an "I'm listening," and pair the phrase with body language — eye contact if the student is amenable to it, for example — that invites them to fill the vacuum and speak their mind.

4

**"OOPS, I MADE A MISTAKE."** There are a thousand ways to say you messed up. Saying "That's a real whopper!" or "I can't believe I did that again!" can even convey the idea that academic or social miscues can be both frequent and humorous.

In several threads on Edutopia's social media feeds, teachers emphasized that a certain comfort level with errors is essential to academic resilience in students. To reinforce this idea with their students, many educators weave preplanned mistakes into their lessons, stop to acknowledge and praise the thinking behind a student's creative error, or pepper their instruction with references to epic mistakes that they've made themselves. While mistakes are never the objective,

academic progress always involves failure — and actively challenging the taboo against academic error by saying "I made a mistake," in whatever form you prefer, should be a regular occurrence in your classroom.

5

**"WE'LL FIGURE IT OUT TOGETHER."** This deceptively simple phrase is more profound than it seems. In classrooms, where instruction tends to flow in one direction, collaborative language that positions the teacher and student as partners and co-learners flips the script and is subversive in all the right ways.

Students who are struggling with a concept and hear you say "We'll figure it out together" retain a sense of agency, are reminded that even teachers need help, and are encouraged to think of themselves as competent, equal participants in a problem-solving exercise.

6

**"YOU'VE REALLY IMPROVED..."** and **"I REALLY ADMIRE..."** Feedback that is specific, measured and focused on a student's process or effort is motivating and actionable. But it also requires that teachers be attentive to the intricacies of a student's learning journey.

When teachers notice and then articulate areas of academic progress by saying "You've really improved on your descriptive writing — I loved the way you described your family in this story," for example, they signal that learning is a tangible, ongoing process powered by effort and persistence.

Steer clear of feedback that engages in hyperbole, lacks specificity, or praises ostensibly inherent qualities like intelligence. Research suggests that from the upper elementary grades on, students recognize praise that is inauthentic, and complimenting children for "being smart" or for outcomes like good grades reduces their tolerance for taking academic risks and stymies growth.

7

**"I'M SORRY."** Saying "I'm sorry" can be a bitter pill. It's a frank admission of wrongdoing, and in classroom settings it can feel like ceding authority and thus losing ground in the struggle for discipline and focus. But a judicious use of "I'm sorry" also models one of the most powerful — and rarest — acts of civility and instantly humanizes the relationship between teachers and students. A simple, heartfelt "I'm sorry" instills trust, signals respect for the receiver, and makes you more accessible.

*This story originally appeared on [edutopia.org](https://www.edutopia.org).*

# Advocate for Student Wellness

**Educator turns pain into passion to help young people's mental health**



**THIRD GRADE TEACHER** Caroline Wiseman, like many educators, is seeing higher than ever levels of stress, anxiety and depression among her students. Some of this, of course, is due to the pandemic and the challenges of the past year and a half. But much is the result of children and youth experiencing difficulties as they navigate the increasingly complex social and emotional environment around them.

Wiseman and her husband Graham know this all too well. In 2013, they lost their 15-year-old son Colin to depression and suicide. Since then, the Wisemans have actively supported mental health in schools across California. In 2019, they and friend Gail Miller founded BeingwellCA, a nonprofit based in Lafayette that raises the visibility of young people's mental health, and provides schools, parents, students and communities with workshops, toolkits and trainings to improve mental health support.

A key component of BeingwellCA's work is helping establish and fund school wellness centers. After seeing the benefits of a small wellness center at her school, Caroline Wiseman felt such a resource should be available to all children. To date, BeingwellCA has been instrumental in the creation of dozens of school wellness centers in multiple districts.

But with 1,000 school districts in California, there are many campuses that still need them. BeingwellCA is behind Senate Bill 21 by Sen. Steve Glazer (D-Contra Costa), which would establish a California mental health awareness license plate program to help the California Department of Education fund school wellness centers. If it is approved, the DMV will be authorized to issue the special license plate.

"The proceeds from the purchase of the plate will fund wellness

centers on high school campuses throughout California," says Wiseman, a 33-year teaching veteran and Mt. Diablo Education Association member. "Mental health affects 1 in 4 people. Let's bring mental health to light, even if it's a traffic light."

BeingwellCA held a contest for the license plate design, which was won by a high school student in San Ramon. Wiseman is urging the public to show support for SB 21, currently under consideration in the Senate Appropriations Committee, at [BeingwellCA.org](https://BeingwellCA.org).



***"Mental health affects 1 in 4 people. Let's bring mental health to light, even if it's a traffic light."***

Setting up a wellness center on campus requires a multipronged approach. The Wisemans and Miller spend a lot of time speaking with parent groups and PTAs, making them aware of the need. Parent foundations often donate money and help convince the school to fund a center, and sometimes funds come through grants and special programs.

"We start by informing parents," Wiseman says. "The vast majority of schools

need help with funding. We need funds from the license plate."

While a major focus is on high school wellness centers, BeingwellCA also does outreach to elementary and middle school communities. ➔

*Continued on page 50*





◀ Razi with her dog Molly Grace.

**“We need this class — truly, it should be a graduation requirement.”**

—Tara Razi,  
San Marcos Educators  
Association

# TALKING ABOUT MONEY

**Tara Razi's personal finance class is a hit**

**PERSONAL FINANCE** — including such basics as keeping checking and savings accounts, establishing and managing credit, and paying taxes — is arguably one of the most important things young people need to know before launching into adulthood. But currently only a quarter of California high school

students even have the choice of taking a personal finance course.

Tara Razi is doing her part to change that. The social science teacher at San Marcos High School in North San Diego County spent her summer creating a year-long personal finance course meeting UC and CSU “a-g” admission requirements,

which proved to be so popular this fall that another instructor and more sections were quickly added.

“I want to help teach seniors and juniors the real-life skills they need to be successful in a post-high school world,” explains Razi, a member of San Marcos Educators Association (SMEA) in her eighth year of teaching.

The course also addresses budgeting, investing, financial pitfalls and ethics. It takes students through a real process of applying for a job (writing a creative résumé and cover letter, building a career portfolio, interviewing with an employer, sending thank-you notes). “They don’t have to take the job; that’s not the purpose,” Razi says.

Students start the course with two weeks of “executive development” where they must email all their teachers, introduce themselves, and talk about their strengths and where they might need support. They learn critical organizational and time-management skills.

Guest speakers from the community add further relevance to the lessons. Razi, who says she has always been financially responsible and taught herself important skills from others’ mistakes, developed her curriculum based on her own work and content at Next Gen Personal Finance ([ngpf.org](http://ngpf.org)), which provides curriculum and other resources for educators. She also consulted with The San Marcos Promise, a nonprofit foundation serving students in the San Marcos



In addition to her own work, Razi’s class uses content from Next Gen Personal Finance ([ngpf.org](http://ngpf.org)), which provides curriculum and other resources for educators.

*Continued on page 50*

**WELLNESS**, continued from page 48

Wiseman is happy that talking about mental health has become more acceptable.

“No one eight years ago wanted us to come on campus to talk suicide,” she says. “Now everyone agrees that elementary kids need to know how to talk about not feeling well.”

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is now part of the school curriculum, though Wiseman believes it should be every day and not just every five days. “Students practice deep breathing, and the words and methods to express themselves with the person they’re angry with,” she says. “They’re learning the tools and learning about mental health. I am so thankful.”

Learn more, and show your support for SB 21, at [BeingwellCA.org](http://BeingwellCA.org). ■



▲ The special license plate for mental health awareness, designed by a student in San Ramon.



### Applause for “Sing Show LIVE”

Jennifer and Joshua Ray, third and fourth grade teachers at Orchard Elementary in Citrus Heights, recently made a big splash on *The Kelly Clarkson Show*, and deservedly so. The married Twin Rivers United Educators members were featured for their weekly “Sing Show LIVE.” The Rays (shown talking to Kelly Clarkson) had been doing the beloved show at school on Friday mornings for 20 years, and when the pandemic hit, they took it online. It has since grown even more popular, with fans in the community and beyond. The variety show is for children and families, with songs, storytelling, puppet shows, crafts, and lots of educational info in between. At [YouTube.com/SingShowLive](https://www.youtube.com/SingShowLive).

**MONEY**, continued from page 49

Unified School District with programs and resources throughout their education and into employment. It was helpful that the district’s other high school had started a similar course last year, taught by SMEA member Jeff Montooth.

It doesn’t surprise Razi that the course is in such demand, with a waiting list in addition to six sections. “We need this class — truly, it should be a graduation requirement.” She now teaches three personal finance courses as well as three U.S. history courses. While that keeps her busy, she finds the time to keep and train two therapy dogs, run triathlons and marathons, and head up her school site council, the football team snack bar and the social committee.

Such multitasking, of course, extends to the personal finance class. Razi teaches



▲ Razi teaches many skills that go way beyond understanding money or planning a career, such as how to sew a button.

many skills that go way beyond understanding money or planning a career. “A postal service worker came to talk about how to address envelopes, which many students did not know. They learn to sew buttons! I talk to them about price-matching in stores and how to get it. They find out what to do in a car accident, how to go through insurance claims, how to leave a voicemail.”

Invaluable life hacks — what students (and all of us) need. ■

▼ The proclamation by Pomona Unified praised educators for keeping students' needs and well-being at the forefront last year during the pandemic.

**PROCLAMATION BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE  
POMONA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
HONORING ALL CERTIFICATED EDUCATORS  
2021-22 TEACHER OF THE YEAR**

**WHEREAS**, the onset of the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic brought new complexities and challenges to schools with no advance warning, our teachers and certificated staff stepped up to ensure our children were still learning,

**WHEREAS**, throughout the pandemic, teachers quickly adapted to provide learning opportunities without a physical classroom; and

**WHEREAS**, teachers and certificated staff put in countless hours to create and implement a strong distance learning program, and also to ensure a safe return to the current school year; and

**WHEREAS**, student needs and well-being were at the forefront of all decisions, contributing to a robust distance learning program and more recently a successful return to campus for many of our students; and

**WHEREAS**, great resolve was shown by our teachers and certificated staff during this pandemic, not only to learn and educate, but to support each other; and



# Honoring All of You!

## Districts recognize all their educators as Teachers of the Year

**AT LEAST TWO** California school districts chose to honor *all* their educators as Teachers of the Year recently, due to the extraordinary work done during the last year and a half by — well, everyone.

On Aug. 16, the Pomona Unified School District Board of Education passed a proclamation recognizing their 1,600 certificated educators as 2021-22 Teachers of the Year, including teachers, nurses, psychologists, counselors, speech-language pathologists and librarians. Superintendent Richard Martinez thanked Associated Pomona Teachers (APT) President Manuela Echeverria for “representing certificated members and for keeping kids first.”

“It was an APT idea, and then a collaborative effort with the district,” says Echeverria, adding that APT works with the district every year to select the Teacher of the Year. “We had to keep on top of this to make sure the district came through with the proclamation.”



Manuela Echeverria

The Irvine Teachers Association (ITA) also participates in selecting Irvine Unified School District’s Teacher of the Year. Last spring, ITA’s then-President Tori Sorey, along with an assistant superintendent, came up with the notion to honor all 1,700 TK-12 educators at a virtual school board meeting. The effort influenced APT to do the same later in the year.

“ITA and the district decided not to vote for the usual Site Teachers of Excellence and District Teachers of the Year, instead working with the PTA to honor every educator in light of the exceptional creativity, hard work and dedication that our members demonstrated, whether returning to teach in person or working in a virtual program,” says Sorey.

Sorey worked with PTA presidents on a plan for all teachers to receive notes from students or parents to express their appreciation.

Congratulations all around! ■





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



## ***I Can Be That Too!***

Educator **Nadine A. Luke** writes children's books that reflect young people of all backgrounds and specifically children of color. The Palmdale Elementary Teachers Association member's 2020 *I Can Be That Too!* series shows and tells young readers that there are no limits to their dreams, no matter their skin color or socioeconomic background. *The Musician*, *The Veterinarian Fashion Designer* and *The Gymnast* are available in English and Spanish, with accompanying activity books. And don't miss Luke's *They Call Me Africa*, about a boy's journey as he copes with racism and bullying by his classmates. At [njlukepublishing.com](http://njlukepublishing.com) and Amazon.

Got something for this page? Tell us at [editor@cta.org](mailto:editor@cta.org) with "Lit From Within" in the subject line. We lean toward new(ish) work that can be used in the classroom.

## ***Kudos All Around***

Props to **Karalee Wong Nakatsuka**, Arcadia Teachers Association; **Karla Zambrano-Armijos**, United Educators of San Francisco; and **Andrew Williams**, Gilroy Teachers Association. All were mentioned in *Time* magazine's "Educators Who Saved a Pandemic School Year" in September.

Eighth grade history teacher Nakatsuka was praised for quickly adapting her lesson plan in March, after a gunman in Atlanta killed eight, including six women of Asian descent. Her district is 70 percent AAPI, and students were already fearful of anti-Asian hate crimes amid the pandemic. She chose to focus on the history of anti-Asian discrimination in the U.S., and made all students feel comfortable speaking up about their feelings and experiences.

In March 2020, family support specialist Zambrano-Armijos was suddenly asked to coordinate an hourlong daily TV show for San Francisco kids during lockdown. Selected because of her expertise in early childhood education, she had the *SF Loves Learning* program soon airing on a local TV channel and streaming on YouTube. She called on the city's museums, the San Francisco Ballet, and the public library to help with segments on science, movement, literacy and more. The show ran for three seasons.

Williams, as we reported earlier this year, has been building desks for needy students during the pandemic. Congrats to all!

## ***Show Us Your Swag***

We love seeing new swag our locals come up with, such as these items from Selma Unified Teachers Association. We want to see yours — ideally worn by members. Post pics to CTA's Facebook page or email us at [editor@cta.org](mailto:editor@cta.org) with the hashtag **#CTAlocalswag**.





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