

# california educator

APRIL / MAY 2022 VOLUME 26 ISSUE 5

## CAN STUDENTS SAVE THE EARTH IN TIME?

*Teaching climate  
change takes on  
new urgency*

PAGE 16

*Hone Your  
Skills*  
SUMMER TRAININGS,  
REFRESHERS

PAGE 9



*How to Save Smart*  
A RETIREMENT SAVINGS  
PLAN JUST FOR YOU

PAGE 11

**POSTER FOR DAY OF THE TEACHER,  
ESP DAY AND SCHOOL NURSE DAY**

INSIDE BACK COVER

# Special Enrollment Opportunity Ending Soon



## New to your school district this school year? This offer is for you!

If you're an educator or ESP who started at a new school district this school year, you have a special opportunity to **apply with no health questions asked** for CTA-endorsed Disability insurance and up to \$200,000<sup>1</sup> of CTA-endorsed Life insurance.

Disability insurance can help protect your income while Life insurance helps protect your loved ones.

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<sup>1</sup> Coverage reduces to 65% of the amount in force at age 70, 45% of the amount in force at age 75 and 30% of the amount in force at age 80. Offer not available to retirees.

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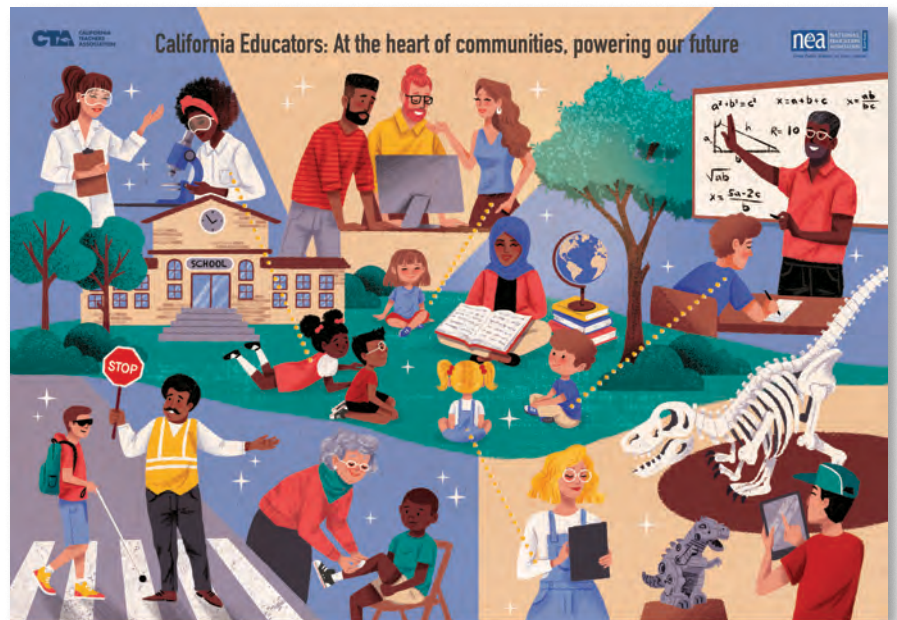
# california educator

VOLUME 26 ISSUE 5

*In May we celebrate some very special days:*

**California Day of the Teacher**, May 11, **National School Nurse Day**, May 11, and **CTA ESP Day**, May 17.

Find this poster inside the back cover, along with ideas of how to honor our essential educators.



## #WeAreCTA

OUR VOICE, OUR UNION, OUR PROFESSION

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

### MAGAZINE

#### ESP OF THE YEAR

Meet Mary Ambriz, the Paula J. Monroe 2022 CTA ESP of the Year. **PAGE 48**

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

#### EDUCATORS IN THE ROOM

CTA liaisons and ambassadors bring educator voice to agencies statewide. **PAGE 30**

#### REPRESENTATION MATTERS

Heritage months give visibility to Arab Americans, Asian Pacific Americans and Jewish Americans. **PAGE 24**

#### LIT FROM WITHIN

Showcasing new(ish) work by our members. **PAGE 52**  
[cta.org/lit](https://cta.org/lit)

### DIGITAL

#### HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDS

Kudos to CTA's 2022 Human Rights Awards honorees. **PAGE 38**

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

#### INVEST IN OUR PLANET

On Earth Day, April 22, and every day, have students learn and get involved. **PAGE 16**

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

#### A PHOTO TELLS 1,000 WORDS

Check out CTA's social media for stunning visuals of locals and members.

#### GET THE LATEST UPDATES

The digital *Educator* and CTA's website are where you'll find the latest. [cta.org](https://cta.org)

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

#### CCA SPRING CONFERENCE

The Community College Association event focuses on membership. April 29-May 1, Irvine. **PAGE 9** [cca4us.org](https://cca4us.org)

#### SUMMER CONFERENCES

CTA and NEA conferences and trainings are back in person. Check [cta.org/conferences](https://cta.org/conferences) for current information, and make plans to attend now:

- **NEA Representative Assembly**, July 3-6, Chicago
- **Presidents Conference**, July 14-17, venue TBD
- **Summer Institute**, July 24-28, UCLA, Los Angeles

### MEMBER BENEFITS

#### CREATE YOUR NEW ACCOUNT

CTA's new login system gives you easy access to members-only content and services.

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

#### RETIREMENT: SAVE SMART

CTA has a retirement savings plan tailored just for educators, and you'll save big.

**PAGE 11** [cta.org/cta-rsp](https://cta.org/cta-rsp)

#### EAT, PLAY, TRAVEL

CTA Access to Savings offers deals on everything. What are you waiting for?

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

Illustration by Camila Gray, IllustrationX



# 16

## COVER STORY

Students are learning environmental literacy. Is it enough to change our future?

# 30

## Educators in the Room

CTA liaisons to state agencies and organizations make educators' voices heard.



# 35

## Taking Action

Educators strike for the schools students deserve.

## FEATURES

- 24 **REPRESENTATION MATTERS:** Arab American Heritage Month
- 27 **HERITAGE MONTHS IN MAY:** Respecting other cultures, histories

## DEPARTMENTS

### In the Know

- 8 Calendar
- 10 News & Notes
- 12 Quotes & Numbers

### Spotlight

- 13 **MEMBER Q&A:** State Board member Gabriela Gonzalez

### Advocacy

- 28 **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:** COVID sick pay, part-time faculty parity
- 29 **OPTING OUT:** Talking to parents about state-mandated tests
- 30 **LIAISONS:** CTA's eyes and ears at agencies statewide
- 35 **BARGAINING:** Statewide roundup

### Social Justice

- 38 **HONORED:** CTA Human Rights Award winners

### Teaching & Learning

- 43 **ENGLISH LEARNERS:** 4 ways to make instruction accessible
- 45 **GROUP FEEDBACK:** Teaching students how to work together
- 47 **TECH TIPS:** Mental health tools

### CTA & You

- 48 **HONORED:** CTA ESP of the Year Mary Ambriz
- 49 **STATE COUNCIL:** In person again
- 52 **LIT FROM WITHIN:** Works by our members

### INSIDE BACK COVER

Poster for Day of the Teacher, ESP Day, and School Nurse Day

Photo above: Sacramento City Teachers Association and SEIU 1021 members rally for their students and schools. Posters feature SCTA sixth grade Spanish/English immersion teacher Andrea Alvarado; artwork by SCTA educator Xico Gonzalez. Cover: Deposit Photos.



**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)

## Making the Grade

In the article “Remaking the Grade” (February/March), the assumption that minority students cannot exhibit acceptable behavior or meet deadlines is so condescending. I have been teaching high school for over 60 years. Holding minority students to the same standards as white students is a sign of respect. When needed, one can focus extra attention on minority students to help them improve study skills, behavior, and meeting deadlines.

When I taught at City University of New York’s SEEK Program (Search for Education, Enlightenment, and Knowledge), students were from minority communities. We taught them what they needed to improve class grades, pass state Regents Exams, and do well on college entrance exams. They were not admitted to college because of the color of their skin, only to fail in college because they were not prepared. Teaching students content to be exhibited when assigned, proper behavior, and the ability to meet deadlines prepares them for life after high school. I respect my minority students too much to assume that they cannot succeed by the standards we have been using for decades.

**JERRY FREEDMAN**

*Los Angeles County Education Association (retired)*

## A Way to Keep Teachers at School

If sometime in the future, teachers were unable to commute to their place of employment due to some fuel shortage or other disaster, teachers would only be able to get to their local schools. I propose a Teacher Emergency Allocation Management System, or TEAMS. TEAMS would be a simple database with teachers’ home address and the subject they teach. If all commuting became nearly impossible, some teachers could be allocated to teach in their hometown based on necessity.

**VANCE LANG**

*Monterey County Office of Education Teachers Association*



## A Call to Divest

CalSTRS wants teachers to fear that divestment will hurt their pensions. Yet numerous studies by major investment experts show that funds are likely to be “stronger” when they exclude fossil fuels.

BlackRock, the largest asset manager, concluded that portfolios that divested from fossil fuels “experienced no negative financial impacts.” In fact, they found evidence of “modest improvement in fund return.” That’s why asset managers overseeing a combined \$40 trillion are now committed to offloading holdings in oil and gas. Entities that have divested from fossil fuels include: the State Pension Fund of New York, Harvard University, the UC system, and the Church of England.

The immense wealth and power of fossil fuel companies is jeopardizing our chance at a livable planet. Teachers shouldn’t have to bet their money against their own futures; that’s why local unions representing 150,000 teachers have passed resolutions calling for fossil fuel divestment.

The fossil fuel industry has had 50 years to prevent climate destruction. Attempts from shareholders to “engage” these companies and make them more sustainable have consistently fallen short. Instead, the fossil fuel industry continues to seek profit at our expense.

The climate crisis is killing people now. Black and brown communities have disproportionately higher rates of exposure to toxic pollutants from factories, urban fracking sites, drilling sites, etc. As a result, BIPOC disproportionately suffer from respiratory and cardiovascular health issues including asthma and cancer.

The climate crisis threatens all of our lives, and yet fossil fuel companies continue to emit carbon. Now is the time to divest from climate destruction and racism, and stand with what is right.

### YOUTH VS. APOCALYPSE

*Editor’s note: Youth vs. Apocalypse (YVA) is a group of young climate justice activists. An expanded version of this letter is at [cta.org/yvaletter](https://cta.org/yvaletter). For more on this issue, see page 50.*

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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, youth and adults are protected; and to secure a more just, equitable and democratic society.

#### EDITORIAL INFORMATION

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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](http://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.

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## Provident Credit Union's Mortgage Program

Find your home and save.

- ✓ Exclusive 0.125% mortgage rate discount for CTA members
- ✓ \$100 discount on a standard mortgage loan for CTA members
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- 1) Online at [providentcu.org/cta](http://providentcu.org/cta)
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- 3) Visit your local branch

1) One-time credit of the \$250 off closing costs on new mortgages is based on: (a) you having one of the following Provident products: home equity loan/line of credit, auto/boat/RV/motorcycle loan, Provident Checking accounts and (b) you must sign up for our automatic payment option when you sign your formal loan documents. If you do not have a qualifying product at time of application, you must open a qualifying product within one week of application.  
 2) Movable<sup>®</sup> Mortgage feature is available on 5/5, 7/23 & 10/10 fixed adjustable mortgage loans only.  
 Owner-occupied single family homes, condos and second homes in California only. Other restrictions may apply. Membership required. Subject to final approval.





# MAKING SCHOOLS THE BEST THEY CAN BE

**MORE THAN TWO** years after California classrooms closed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we find ourselves moving cautiously beyond that deeply challenging period and, hopefully, embarking on a new day. With safety still a priority, our focus is where it truly belongs: making our schools the best they can be.

California still lags behind the rest of the nation in per-pupil funding. By last measure we rank 37th among the 50 states and Washington, D.C., but this year's state budget promises to bring another year of record investment in California schools. These investments are essential to ensure our students have equitable access to the education they need and deserve. Most immediately, that means we must recruit and retain teachers, counselors, nurses and education support professionals.

We must also use this new influx of funding to build back our profession and to make education a more attractive field for young people to consider. California is facing a massive teacher shortage, and it is imperative we do all we can to mitigate factors contributing to an increase in people leaving the profession and a decline in the numbers coming in.

While local decision-makers will determine how to use much of the funding, there are at least two statewide programs of tremendous significance that will impact California students for decades to come. One is the move to make transitional kindergarten available to all 4-year-olds by 2025. This is an opportunity for our youngest learners to start their education on a more level playing field and should have a positive impact on millions of students from elementary through high school and beyond.

I'm also tremendously excited about the \$3.4 billion state and federal investment in community schools. The community schools model, which takes a whole student approach to learning and makes the local school a hub

Boyd, center, with Rohnert Park Cotati Educators Association members.



for wraparound services, has had remarkable outcomes, such as raising enrollment, attendance and graduation rates, and increasing the number of students who go on to college. When schools become the heart of the community, the community gives its heart back to our schools.

A recent *USA Today* headline citing “militant” teachers observed that educators are doing what it takes to improve our profession, and that across the country they are organizing to make up for lagging salaries and poor working conditions exacerbated by the pandemic. If being “militant” means being vocal and taking action to get the dignity and respect educators deserve, then I know a lot of militant CTA members.

Over the past few months we've seen an increase in educator activism in many CTA locals. Chapters like Rohnert Park Cotati Educators Association and Sacramento City Teachers Association have gone on strike in order to improve student learning and make their local districts more competitive for hiring. Going on strike is never easy, but just as educators were willing to make huge sacrifices for their students throughout the pandemic, they continue to be willing to do so to fight for contracts that benefit everyone: students, educators and communities.

Throughout the pandemic, I have encouraged you to take time for yourself. Take time to care for yourself and your family, just as you have cared for your students. I also encourage you to recognize and reflect on the incredible job you have done over the past two years. We have three special recognition days coming up: California Day of the Teacher and National School Nurse Day (May 11), and CTA Education Support Professionals Day (May 17). It's a time to be honored by others or just to treat yourselves to a little something special. You have earned it, for all you've done and for all you to continue to do to make things better for California students and public schools.

**E. Toby Boyd**

CTA PRESIDENT  
@etobyboyd

*“If being ‘militant’ means being vocal and taking action to get the dignity and respect educators deserve, then I know a lot of militant CTA members.”*



► CTA's Human Rights Award winners and supporters cut loose. Front row: Magret Nunes, CTA officers David Goldberg, E. Toby Boyd and Leslie Littman, and Telly Tse. Second row: C. Scott Miller, Brenda Walker, Daniel Gallegos, Christina Alaniz, Juli Stowers, Guadalupe Carrasco Cardona, Vanessa Aranda, Gina Gray, VanCedric Williams and Alberto Nodal. Story on page 38.

# Showing Us What's Possible

ONE OF CTA'S most moving events is the Human Rights Awards presentation at the Equity and Human Rights Conference. You can read about **this year's stellar awardees** on page 38, and watch their videos at [youtube.com/californiateachers](https://youtube.com/californiateachers), which convey just a glimmer of their work and their impact. But attending the event in person sheds an entirely new light on our social justice warriors.

The excitement in the ballroom is palpable. Seeing individual winners take the stage to great applause, hearing them express gratitude to their students and colleagues while calling for the work to continue, and watching the faces of proud families and friends during this recognition are all hugely inspirational.

"They show us what is possible and that we do make a difference in this world," said CTA President E. Toby Boyd at this year's ceremony.

Every day, in fact, educators show students what is possible and teach that their actions make a difference. This is particularly urgent as we address climate change and its fallout: wildfires, drought, warming oceans and more. As you can read in "**Can Students Save Earth in Time?**" (page 16), what young people learn and discover under the guidance of teachers gives us hope that we may be able to stop and perhaps reverse what is happening.

Like their influence in the classroom, educators' voice is essential in our communities and at the tables where policies and decisions are made; it brings much-needed and unique perspectives, experience and expertise. Montebello Teachers Association member Gabriela Gonzalez, recently appointed to the State Board of Education, says her new role is important for her students ("**A Voice for Students, Educators,**"

page 13). "Students need a teacher who reflects them — a child of immigrant parents, a second language learner," she says. "I like to show students examples of people in this profession and what they can achieve."

CTA ensures educators' voice is heard at many levels ("**Educators in the Room,**" page 30). More than 60 members serve as CTA liaisons and ambassadors to a wide array of state agencies and organizations whose work affects education. They monitor meetings and make educators' views known on behalf of all members and students.

Of course, educators operate on a much more personal level as well — with their peers. Look no further than Mary Ambriz, the **Paula J. Monroe 2022 CTA ESP of the Year** (page 48). A longtime member and executive secretary of Redlands Education Support Professionals Association, she has had an impact on many. As one of her supporters said, "She lifts up ESP

colleagues by expressing that ESPs matter, that our students matter, and together we can achieve great things."

With educators, everything is possible.



ESP of the Year Mary Ambriz

**Katharine Fong**

EDITOR IN CHIEF  
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# EDUCATORS

## Create Your Professional Growth Path

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

### FEATURED COURSES

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

#### Design or Revise New Curriculum with this Convenient Online Self-Paced Course

This course is designed for educators in the K-12 classroom and allows for creative planning of new curriculum or revision of existing curriculum, with the goal of making classroom improvements. Participants will choose an instructor they feel best fits their subject matter and grade level. Participants coursework plans can include the introduction of new materials, designing new lessons, implementing new resources, converting curriculum to online/remote modality, revising current curriculum or implementing a new strategy. After instructor approval of the coursework plan, participants will receive instructor feedback as they move through the course.

#### CHOOSE ONE COURSE:

**EDU-X740P6 | Innovative Curriculum for Motivated Learning | 6 units**  
Enrollment open now through Jun 27

**EDU-X740P4 | Innovative Curriculum for Motivated Learning | 4 units**  
Enrollment open now through Jul 11

**EDU-X740P2 | Innovative Curriculum for Motivated Learning | 2 unit**  
Enrollment open now through Jul 18

Course is open now to begin today and completed course work must be submitted no later than Aug 29, 2022.

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

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

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#### Independent Study:

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

#### Online Self-Paced:

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

#### Online Fixed-Date:

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

#### Classroom:

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



**View our course offerings now!**

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

April / May 2022

# CALENDAR

Show the  
**LOVE!**

**PLAN NOW** for some big events in May: **National School Nurse Day**, May 11, on the Wednesday of National Nurse Week (May 6–12); **California Day of the Teacher**, also May 11; and **CTA ESP Day**, May 17, which falls during ESP Week (May 15–21), observed by the state as Classified School Employee Week.

CTA's theme for this year's celebration: **"California Educators: At the Heart of Communities, Powering Our Future."** Read about Mary Ambriz, our Paula J. Monroe CTA ESP of the Year, on page 48. See the back of this magazine for a poster to pin up in your classroom or school hallway. And check out resources and ideas on how to celebrate educators at [cta.org/dayoftheteacher](https://cta.org/dayoftheteacher) and [cta.org/espday](https://cta.org/espday).



## Earth Day, April 22

It's not a day — it's a movement, and time is of the essence. This year's theme: "Invest in Our Planet." Find classroom resources, lesson plans, and ways you and your students can take action at [earthday.org](https://earthday.org). And read how educators are teaching students about climate change and environmental literacy on page 16.

## Autism Acceptance, Better Hearing and Speech Months

Autism Acceptance Month in April is a time to increase understanding and acceptance of people with autism. Find information and resources at [autismspeaks.org](https://autismspeaks.org). May is Better Hearing and Speech Month. Find classroom resources at [asha.org/bhsm](https://asha.org/bhsm), where you can also search for "Tips for Helping Students With Hearing Loss in Virtual and In-Person Learning Settings."



## LGBTQ+ Safety in Schools Grants and Scholarships

CTA's LGBTQ+ Safety in Schools Program in Honor of Guy DeRosa offers scholarships up to \$2,500 to self-identified LGBTQ+ members pursuing an education career, and grants up to \$2,500 for groups and projects promoting understanding and respect for LGBTQ+ persons. Applicants must be an active CTA or Student CTA member, or a student sponsored by an active member. Application deadline is May 31!

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

### ASCD Annual Conference

**APRIL 20-22** CONFERENCE

Virtual. "Recharge and Reconnect." Choose from over 70 sessions plus exclusive content. Connect with fellow educators who are committed to serving students and changing our education landscape for the better.

► [events.ascd.org/annual-conference](https://events.ascd.org/annual-conference)

### Region IV Leadership Conference

**APRIL 22-24** CONFERENCE

Hilton Orange County/Costa Mesa. "Fight for the Present, Shape the Future." Develops leadership skills and emphasizes that building strong local unions and school site structures through nuts-and-bolts organizing, including member and community engagement, is the key to a stronger union. ► [cta.org/conferences](https://cta.org/conferences)

### CCA Spring Conference

**APRIL 29-MAY 1** CONFERENCE

Hilton Irvine/Orange County Airport. The Community College Association's spring conference highlights membership and features the presentation of CCA's WHO (We Honor Ours) Awards. ► [cta.org/conferences](https://cta.org/conferences)

### CTA Institute for Teaching Grants

**APRIL 30** APPLICATION DEADLINE

Deadline extended. ► [cta.org/ift](https://cta.org/ift)

### NEA Foundation Grants

**MAY 1** APPLICATION DEADLINE

The NEA Foundation gives Student Success, Learning & Leadership, and Envision Equity grants up to \$5,000.

► [neafoundation.org](https://neafoundation.org)

### National Teacher Day

**MAY 3** EVENT

National Teacher Day (also called Teacher Appreciation Day) is on Tuesday of National Teacher Appreciation Week (May 2-6).

► [capta.org/teacher-appreciation-week](https://capta.org/teacher-appreciation-week)

### CTA Communications Awards

**MAY 6** NOMINATION DEADLINE

The Communications Awards Program recognizes and honors CTA chapters, service centers and UniServs that communicate effectively with their members. ► [cta.org/awards](https://cta.org/awards)

### California Primary Election

**JUNE 7** ELECTION

Together, let's elect lawmakers and leaders who share our values and support public education, students, our profession and our communities. Deadline to register to vote is May 23. Check out our webpage to see CTA's candidate recommendations.

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

### CA LMI Summer Institute

**JUNE 21-23** CONFERENCE

San Diego. The California Labor Management Initiative Summer Institute brings together labor-management teams to energize partnerships, build community, and navigate the upcoming year together. Pre-conference on June 21 for new teams.

► [cdfoundation.org/clmi](https://cdfoundation.org/clmi)

### ISTE Live 22

**JUNE 26-29** CONFERENCE

New Orleans/virtual. The International Society for Technology in Education offers over 1,000 sessions to provide practical strategies for your classroom you can implement right away.

► [conference.iste.org/2022](https://conference.iste.org/2022)

### PBL World 2022

**JUNE 27-30** CONFERENCE

American Canyon High School, Napa. PBL World, sponsored by Buck Institute for Education, is the premier conference for Project-Based Learning.

► [pblworks.org/pbl-world-2022](https://pblworks.org/pbl-world-2022)

### NEA Representative Assembly

**JULY 2-6** CONVENTION

Chicago. NEA's annual RA is the world's largest democratic deliberative body with about 8,000 delegates. CTA members will help set policy and chart the direction of NEA business.

► [nea.org/ra](https://nea.org/ra)

### Presidents Conference

**JULY 14-17** CONFERENCE

TBD. Provides new and returning chapter presidents a foundation to rely upon as we prepare for future challenges.

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

### Summer Institute

**JULY 24-28** CONFERENCE

UCLA, Los Angeles. CTA's premier training workshop offers sessions in areas that assist chapter leaders in the day-to-day representation and support of members. ► [cta.org/conferences](https://cta.org/conferences)



# A DÍA TO REMEMBER

**HUNDREDS OF** public and school libraries celebrate reading around April 30, El Día de los Niños/El Día de los Libros (Children’s Day/Book Day), commonly known as Día. This national library program fosters literacy for all children from all backgrounds. Join in the fun by reading to students or having them read, and by participating in literacy activities. Find resources at [dia.ala.org](http://dia.ala.org), including planning tools, coloring and activity sheets.

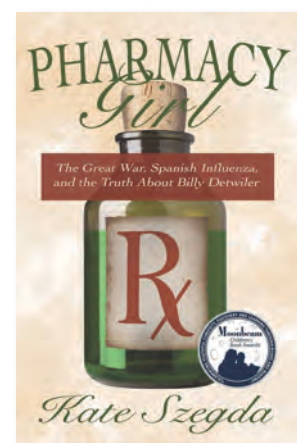
As far as picking a book to read, you can’t do better than CTA’s California Reads ([cta.org/careads](http://cta.org/careads)). The annual booklist is recommended by teachers and has suggestions for all grade levels. Among the 2021-22 books:



*Amy Wu and the Perfect Bao* by Kat Zhang, illustrated by Charlene Chua (pre-K, kindergarten). Funny, fierce and fearless Amy Wu loves to make bao with her family. But her dumplings keep coming out all wrong. Then she has an idea that may give her a second chance. A delightful story that teaches perseverance and ingenuity, as well as culture.



*We Dream of Space* by Erin Entrada Kelly (grades 3-5). Three siblings in seventh grade together in Park, Delaware, in 1986 struggle with their own anxieties as the launch of the space shuttle Challenger approaches. One is in danger of failing seventh grade again. Another has an explosive temper he doesn’t understand. And his twin dreams of being NASA’s first female shuttle commander — but feels like she’s disappearing. Science teacher Ms. Salonga assigns her students a project related to the ill-fated Challenger, which changes their lives and brings them together in unexpected ways.



*Pharmacy Girl: The Great War, Spanish Influenza, and the Truth About Billy Detwiler* by Kate Szegda (grades 6-8). During the Spanish influenza in 1918, people wore masks, and schools, restaurants and churches closed. An estimated 675,000 Americans died — at the same time the country was embroiled in World War I. Meanwhile, young Josie’s problems with school and friends become insignificant when her mother comes down with the flu. While she faces spoiled, arrogant Billy Detwiler, who derisively calls her “pharmacy girl,” in a class election, she raises money for a Liberty Loan (a war bond) and steps up to help her family when the pandemic strikes home.





◀ A scene from the show's "day in the life" series, focused on educators and school staff.



## CTA's 403(b): A Smarter Way to Save

**YOU MAY HAVE SEEN** recent headlines about educators discovering they have paid thousands in extra fees on supplemental retirement accounts such as 403(b) and 407(b) accounts. In fact, many plans offered by financial firms end up charging high fees and commissions over time that can add up to a substantial amount of your hard-earned money.

CTA has developed a 403(b) Retirement Savings Plan (RSP) built specifically for educators to help you build a secure financial future and avoid such predatory tactics. The plan has low, flat fees, and there are no commissions or surrender charges. CTA oversees the plan, and partners with service providers that have been vetted for quality and service.

"You spend your career helping students plan for their future," says CTA President E. Toby Boyd. "CTA wants to help you plan for yours."

Read our story for more information, and get started on your savings plan at [cta.org/cta-rsp](https://cta.org/cta-rsp).

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#OurVoiceOurUnion #WeAreCTA

## Get Inside California Education

**NEW EPISODES OF** *Inside California Education*, the award-winning TV series produced by PBS KVIE and aired on PBS stations across the state, are now available. Check your PBS listings or [insidecaled.org](https://insidecaled.org).

*Inside California Education* travels the state to tell important stories about public education at the K-12 and community college levels. Recent episodes include "The Gamer Generation: The Rise of E-Sports," reported out of Fullerton, and "Farm to School: Growing Food for Students," reported out of Fresno. Check if your geographic area and schools have been featured through an interactive map on the home page, which also has past episodes.



Chad Madden/Unsplash

## MEMORIAL DAY MAY 30

**THE DAY HONORS** those who have died while serving in the U.S. armed forces. Use the holiday to teach students about the meaning behind the observance. Check out NEA's lesson plans and activities for all grade levels at [nea.org](https://nea.org) (search "Memorial Day").

# QUOTES & NUMBERS

Compiled by **Julian Peoples**

American School Counselor Association



**527:1** Ratio of students to school counselors in California schools, according to the American School Counselor Association. Only five states have a higher ratio.

**40%**

Percentage of all school districts nationally that did not have a school psychologist in the first full year of the pandemic, according to *Education Week*.

**600,000**

Difference between the number of educators working in public schools nationwide in January 2020 (10.6 million) and those working today (10 million), according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

**\$1 billion**

Federal funding pledged by President Joe Biden in his State of the Union address to hire more school counselors, psychologists, social workers and other staff who work directly with students.

**55%**

Percentage of educators thinking about leaving the profession earlier than they had planned, according to a January NEA survey. A survey in August found 37 percent.

**“It’s about creating a school with a caring environment in every respect, one that is connected to families.”**

—State Board of Education President **Linda Darling-Hammond** on the California Community Schools Partnership Program in late January.



*“While some students are ready to immediately remove their masks, others remain very afraid. We urge local school districts to continue to work with educators and families and to act cautiously while prioritizing the safety of students, educators and their families.”*

—CTA President **E. Toby Boyd** on the Feb. 28 California Department of Public Health decision to end mask mandates in public schools.

**“Our children are growing up in the age of social media — and many feel like they need to measure up to the filtered versions of reality that they see on their screens. We know this takes a devastating toll on children’s mental health and well-being.”**

—California Attorney General **Rob Bonta**, announcing an investigation into popular video social media network TikTok in early March.



**“To my fellow educators: Even in the middle of a global pandemic, even as you have shouldered your own exhaustion, you continue to dig deep into your wells of strength, creativity and purpose to continue serving your students. No one can thank you enough.”**

—NEA President **Becky Pringle**, on Twitter in mid-February.





# A Voice for Students, Educators

**Gabriela Gonzalez's** new role lets students see what's possible

**GABRIELA OROZCO GONZALEZ** began her first term on the State Board of Education (SBE) in March. The elementary school teacher, a member of Montebello Teachers Association, is excited about her new role. But mostly, she is thrilled to represent educators across California and show her students what is possible.

"I bring to the board what I think is needed — a teacher that is practicing in the classroom, and an elementary voice," says Orozco Gonzalez, who currently teaches second grade in a predominantly Latino district. "I understand urban schools and their needs, and

the interventions and accountability from assessments that help provide effective instruction to students. And more than ever, students in the state need a teacher who reflects them — a child of immigrant parents, a second language learner. I like to show students examples of people in this profession and what they can achieve."

Orozco Gonzalez has been a role model for students for years. A master teacher and Common Core standards expert, she has presented at multiple CTA conferences.

She is a teacher leader with the Instructional Leadership Corps (ILC), a partnership of CTA, the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, and the National Board Resource Center at Stanford University. Using a "teachers train teachers" model, ILC grows and sustains a state-wide community of educators supporting other educators.

She is a facilitator with NEA's Ed Communities and has served on the board of CTA's Institute for Teaching. She has written Smarter Balanced assessments and is a curriculum writer for her district.

Orozco Gonzalez answered a few questions the day before her first SBE meeting.

## How did your appointment to the SBE come about?

I'm always interested in roles with teacher and student voice, that prioritize the needs of our community and reflect our population. When I started thinking about SBE, I wanted the board to reflect someone like my students. It was a way for them to see themselves in me.

With 22 years of teaching under my belt, leadership experience with ILC and huge projects for my district, I felt ready, so I applied.

## Will serving on the board take you away from the classroom?

For the days I have SBE meetings my district releases me from my duties, and a sub takes my place. I will then meet with the board. It's a huge commitment, and I'm grateful for support from my family and from my district.

But I'm not leaving teaching! I adore teaching. Over the years there have been opportunities for me to leave, but I would never leave the best job in the world. For me, teaching is a true passion project.

## What do you hope to accomplish on the SBE?

The pandemic has been challenging, with many students in distance learning and with new curriculum. I want to help guide what comes next. I can definitely give that expertise.

I also want to be involved in professional learning for teachers and good teaching practices so we can best support students. Educators and students are surviving and thriving despite what's been happening, so now how do we continue that with recent education budget increases? How do we use the funds for programs and interventions students really need?

## Are you still involved with ILC?

Yes, I lead our team in Montebello. We're now doing a smaller ILC project, and it's exciting to the max.

We wrote in our contract that we have a voice in our professional learning opportunities (a great bargaining win). I helped start and sit on the professional development committee in my district. So, for example, every summer we have



**"Collaboration keeps my work fresh. Teachers are at their best when they share ideas and engage in meaningful lessons taught by actual practitioners."**

## Spotlight

a symposium similar to CTA's Good Teaching Conference, where we invite our educators and share knowledge with each other. The district has really embraced this. It started at CTA, which led to ILC's work and then to the district.

### How do you stay energized as an educator year after year?

When Common Core was first introduced, our district hired consultants who had never taught standards. I was looking for ways to get involved in my profession and community. I learned more about the standards,

found resources, and started my blog so I could teach myself. Teachers sent emails thanking me and asking for my graphic organizers and lessons. My district and CTA provided me with a forum where I could share my expertise.

This collaboration piece keeps my work fresh. Teachers are at their best when they share ideas and have opportunities to engage in meaningful lessons taught by actual practitioners. We know what's best for our students. That's how I stay fresh.

### Where can we find you when you're not working?

At baseball games! My sons Benjamin, 12, and Joaquin, 14, are active baseball players. I'm their number one fan.

My mother lives in Downey, where we live. I lost my father to COVID-19. But during the pandemic, my husband, who always liked how excited I was when I came home from work, decided to get his credential. He's now a fourth grade teacher with LAUSD. There are always life events that happen.

**The State Board of Education** The 11-member State Board of Education is California's K-12 policymaking body for academic standards, curriculum, instructional materials, assessments and accountability. It holds six two-day meetings a year. Ten members are appointed by the governor to four-year terms. The 11th member, also appointed by the governor, is a California public high school student who serves a one-year term.

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# CAN STUDENTS SAVE EARTH IN TIME?

Teaching climate change takes on new urgency amid catastrophes

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin



▲ Students with Schools for Climate Action in Washington, D.C., in 2018.

**STUDENTS AT** Salmon Creek Middle School in Occidental are well aware that climate change poses a threat to humankind. Since 2017, Sonoma County residents have been evacuated six times due to fires and flooding related to global warming.

When students learn the science of what is happening to their community and their planet, it’s traumatic, says sixth grade teacher Park Guthrie, a member of Harmony Union Teachers Association. Some students become upset; others pretend not to care or make jokes to protect themselves psychologically.

“But no matter how they react to this terrible realization, all of the kids have the same question. They all ask *why*,” Guthrie says. “They want to know why adults haven’t taken care of this, why we are still investing in fossil fuels, and why we are still having debates about climate change.”



Park Guthrie

His students have a reason to point fingers. *USA Today* reports that people under 40 will experience an “unprecedented life” of disasters including more heatwaves, droughts, wildfires, flooding and crop failures — all related to global warming.

A September 2021 study by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communications shows that the majority of parents believe it’s important for their children to learn more about climate change. The study also reports that teachers need more training and support to implement climate change instruction in the classroom.

## More resources are coming

Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a bill last July allocating \$6 million to create education resources on climate change and environmental justice. The landmark legislation will provide free, standards-based curricular resources to all

**“The kids all ask *why* — why adults haven’t taken care of this, why we are still investing in fossil fuels, why we are still having debates about climate change.”**

—Park Guthrie,  
Harmony Union Teachers Association

K-12 teachers and students in California, through a partnership between the San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE) and Ten Strands, a nonprofit dedicated to advancing student environmental literacy.

“The grant money from the state should arrive soon, and the curriculum should be available in 2024,” says Andra Yeghoian, environmental literacy and sustainability coordinator for SMCOE.

“It’s critical for California to teach environmental literacy. And it’s critical that it be embedded into all subjects by incorporating the state’s Environmental Principles and Concepts [EP&Cs].”

The EP&Cs (at right) were approved by legislation in 2004 and created collaboratively by the California Department of Education, the Environmental Protection Agency, and other public agencies, with more than 100 scientists. They are integrated into the state’s curriculum frameworks for science, history and social science, and health. They will also be included in the upcoming mathematics framework.

In 2018, they were added to the Education Code by Gov. Jerry Brown. As part of that same bill, climate change and environmental justice were added to the list of topics covered by the EP&Cs, clearing the path for the recently allocated funding. Ten Strands worked with state Sen. Ben Allen (D-Santa Monica) on both advocacy efforts.

The new curricular resources will be “trauma-informed,” says Yeghoian, acknowledging that learning about climate change can be scary if not framed in a way that is empowering.

“The resources will emphasize teaching about this topic in a way that allows students to feel hope and possibility instead of despair and apathy,” says Yeghoian. “There will also be an emphasis on environmental justice, Project-Based Learning (PBL), and professional development for teachers.”

## CALIFORNIA'S ENVIRONMENTAL PRINCIPLES

Highlighting the Deep Relationship Between Humans & the Natural World

**PRINCIPLE 1**  
People Depend on Natural Systems

**PRINCIPLE 2**  
People Influence Natural Systems

**PRINCIPLE 3**  
Natural Systems Change in Ways that People Benefit from and Can Influence

**PRINCIPLE 4**  
There are no Permanent or Impermeable Boundaries that Prevent Matter from Flowing Between Systems

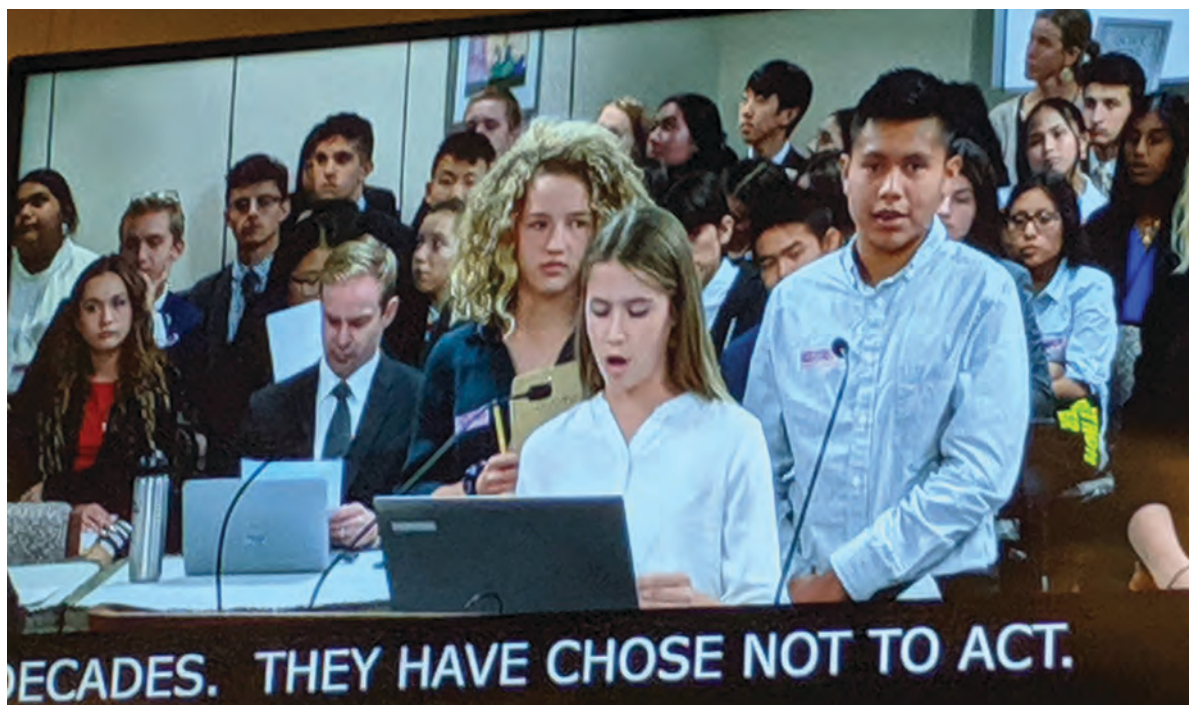
**PRINCIPLE 5**  
Decisions Affecting Resources and Natural Systems are Complex and Involve Many Factors

## Occidental activists

PBL at Salmon Creek Middle School started with small steps, and eventually made a nationwide impact to increase awareness that the Earth is warming.

Guthrie founded the Schools for Climate Action Club





▲ Schools for Climate Action students address the State Board of Education in Sacramento in November 2019.

in 2016 with his two children, then students at the school. Members of the after-school club met with leaders of school boards and the California Association of School Psychologists, asking them to speak up for climate justice.

In 2017, Guthrie founded Schools for Climate Action (SCA), a nonprofit that helps school boards, teachers unions, student councils, and other educational organizations draft and adopt climate action resolutions. These resolutions acknowledge the threat of climate change and offer plans to reduce impacts from carbon emissions.

Two Salmon Creek students, along with 150 other SCA youths, traveled to Washington, D.C., in 2018 to engage in nonpartisan advocacy for climate action. They delivered more than 50 climate justice resolutions from school boards and education organizations across the country to lawmakers. The resolutions call for creating a paradigm shift to recognize climate change as a generational justice and equity issue — and for elected leaders to support commonsense climate policies, including transitioning to clean energy.

Guthrie is proud to see students pressure lawmakers to take

action. In his classroom they write letters, create artwork, and ask school boards, student councils, school environmental clubs, PTAs and other organizations to speak up and pass resolutions. They planted redwood trees on campus as a carbon sequestration project.

“We all have the chance to use our voices for the better,” says

Savanna Conwell, a former Salmon Creek student who is now a high school sophomore. “Despite the ominous chatter about the climate crisis and its drastic effects, there is still great silence among those in power to do something about it. This is why it is so important to educate our youth about the climate crisis. We will be the generation to change our world. We will be the generation to fix the mistakes of those in the past. We will be the generation of innovation and saviors. We are our planet’s last hope.”



Veronica Garcia

### Oakland students step up

Students at Oakland Technical High School persuaded the Oakland Unified school board to make teaching climate change a higher priority. To accomplish this, they enlisted support from AP environmental science teacher Joseph

## A FEW FACTS

- Human influence has unequivocally warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land. The last decade was the hottest in 125,000 years.
- The ocean absorbs most of the heat we produce, threatening coral reefs and marine life. We are losing 1.2 trillion tons of ice each year.
- It could become too hot to live in many places by the end of the century, with unbearable temperatures affecting up to 3 billion people.
- Natural disasters — drought, flood, fires, hurricanes and storms — can be attributed to human-driven climate change, which has not always been the case.
- When fossil fuels burn, they release large amounts of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) into the air, which traps heat in our atmosphere, causing global warming. CO<sub>2</sub> is at its highest level in 2 million years.
- Global warming is partially reversible if we take action soon. Our future depends on it.

Compiled by *Earth.Org*



**“We can either cry about it or we can do something about it. It’s the largest social problem and environmental justice issue facing students, so how are you covering it in your classroom?”**

—Joseph Senn,  
Oakland Education Association

Senn. They also received support from the Sierra Club’s climate literacy program and students from Portland, Oregon, who successfully sued their district for doing them a “disservice” by not teaching about climate change.

In January 2019, following a student presentation, the Oakland Unified board updated its policy on environmental education to mention climate change specifically and commit to connecting district sustainability projects like solar panels and school gardens to environmental education.

It was good for students to see the fruits of their labor, says Senn, a member of Oakland Education Association. But the pandemic and a budget shortfall have delayed implementation.

“Students want to make sure climate change is tied into all K-12 subjects and not just included in science literacy. Hopefully, that will happen,” Senn says. “Meanwhile, the board is creating a work group on how to address implementation. What teachers really need is leadership and trainings.”

Senn acknowledges that educators have never had more on their plate, and it’s easy to put climate change on a back burner. But the urgent threat to the planet should not be ignored.

“We can either cry about it or we can do something about it. My question to teachers is this: It’s the largest social problem and environmental justice issue facing students, so how are you

covering it in your classroom? Please take the time. There are resources to help you.”

## Garden Grove stewards of the Earth

Veronica Garcia, a seventh and eighth grade science teacher at Louis Lake Intermediate School in Garden Grove, finds real-life examples to help students understand what is happening to the Earth.

“We study evolution and talk about animals that have gone extinct — and why. We talk about the power grid and why it went out in Texas. We discuss alternative energy like solar and wind power. We study fracking and how it contributes to air pollution and more carbon emissions. We look at plastics, which are made from oil, and how it harms the ecosystem and why so much plastic packaging is unnecessary.”

Garcia, a member of Garden Grove Education Association, encourages students to see themselves as stewards of the Earth. She is educating herself on ways to help students make a difference and has found support from the NEED project (National Energy Education Development), a nonprofit organization that offers K-12 curriculum on energy and conservation. Last semester she taught a new elective, Discovery Science, which has units on climate change. →



◀ Students in Veronica Garcia's class.

**“We have to educate our children about climate change. Hopefully, they can make changes and reverse some of the damage that’s been done.”**

—Veronica Garcia,  
Garden Grove Education Association

Garcia also shows *The Twilight Zone* episodes that once seemed futuristic, such as “The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street,” where suburban residents battle each other when they lose power, or “The Midnight Sun,” where two women cope with oppressive heat and a lack of water. At first students wonder why they are watching old black and white TV shows, but they soon see the connection with today’s climate crisis.

“We have to educate our children about climate change. They are the future. Hopefully, they can make changes and reverse some of the damage that’s been done.”

### Riverside looks at sea change

Pia VanMeter, a marine biology teacher at Martin Luther King High School in Riverside, says most people believe climate change occurs on land, not sea. But oceans absorb most of the excess heat the planet produces.

“The biggest threat to our oceans is that they are becoming more acidic,” says the Riverside City Teachers Association member. “The ocean is absorbing more CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere.



Pia VanMeter

This is changing the chemical composition of the ocean that affects the amount of carbonate ions needed by calcifying organisms such as oysters and calcareous plankton, which affects the entire food chain. Coral bleaching occurs as a result, as well as increasing temperatures. The sustainability of our oceans is threatened.”

A new study by the Monterey Bay Aquarium finds that global warming reached a turning point in 2014, when more than half of the world’s oceans experienced extreme heat. Marine heat waves, which hit the California coast from 2014 to 2016 causing environmental disruption, are becoming more common and severe.

Another recent study by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicts that sea levels will rise as much as 6 inches in California and along the West Coast by 2050, and that major flooding will occur five times as often in the next three decades as it does today.

VanMeter says students are eager for the truth and want to avoid “fake news” that is circulating. Some have done field studies with the Birch Aquarium at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, visiting tidepools and collecting biodiversity data through the years. Their research shows less biodiversity compared to previous years — and an explosion of sea urchins and fewer starfish.

“We share our data with Scripps and record observations. It’s

▼ VanMeter's students study the changes and threats to our oceans and sea life.



**"It's important that students see there are solutions. If we tell them there are no solutions, why would they care?"**

—Pia VanMeter, *Riverside City Teachers Association*

not just students writing a paper; it's real science."

Students are also concerned about the vast increase of plastic in the ocean, its impact on marine life, and the fact that plastic is created by fossil fuels. They have created public service announcements about the threat to the world's oceans. VanMeter conducts Socratic seminars where they have deep discussions and look for solutions.

"It's important that students see there are solutions. If we tell them there are no solutions, why would they care? We need them to care, because they will hopefully be the generation that can change things."

## Tahoe students face the new normal

Sierra College's Truckee campus sits in a location where extreme weather is becoming the new normal. Jon Larson, a professor who teaches environmental studies and a class on energy and the environment, points to recent extremes of too much snow or too much drought. He explains that natural variability in the climate system is becoming more pronounced with a clear human influence.

Larson conducts underwater research in Lake Tahoe, which draws thousands of vacationers. He believes higher

temperatures and invasive species are causing the once crystal-clear water to become murkier. He recalls the Caldor Fire came close to devouring the bone-dry Lake Tahoe Basin last year, resulting in mass evacuations.

Larson encourages students to calculate their carbon footprint and lower it with the help of The Nature Conservancy at [nature.org](https://www.nature.org). (See resources for teachers, page 23.) A carbon footprint is the total amount of greenhouse gases that are generated by one's actions.

"My most popular lecture is how I accomplished this myself," says the Sierra College Faculty Association member. "I finally decided to change my lifestyle after teaching about this over a decade."

He installed solar panels on his house, with local subsidies that made it more affordable. He bought an electric car, figuring that money saved on gas would more than compensate for the cost of the car, which has proved true. His philosophy is: "You can't change the world unless you change yourself first."

Some college students tell him they believe climate change is part of "God's will" or that God will take care of the Earth, so people needn't worry.

"I say, 'You may be right, but meanwhile, let's move





◀ Larson doing research at Lake Tahoe.

**“I am trying for a more centrist approach of bringing people together regardless of politics, so we can look at this seriously, come together and take action.”**

—Jon Larson, *Sierra College Faculty Association*

forward and be informed by science, which has brought us a long way so far.’ The purpose of my class is to focus on the science.”

Larson worries that the climate of political polarization has hindered peoples’ ability to find common ground and work toward finding real solutions.



Jon Larson

“We’re being pushed to such extremes that people either think climate change is a hoax or that we’re all doomed. I am trying for a more centrist approach of bringing people together regard-

less of politics, so we can look at this seriously, come together and take action.” ■

## A SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUE

**SALINA GRAY** teaches integrated science at Mountain View Middle School in Moreno Valley. She received her doctorate from Stanford University in science education, with a focus on social justice. When it comes to teaching climate change, that’s still her focus.

“Whenever there’s an issue facing any aspect of society, people struggling financially and those who have been historically marginalized suffer more,” says the Moreno Valley Educators Association member. “This applies to the environment; those with fewer resources and infrastructure suffer more from extreme weather.”

USC Rossier School of Education’s 2021 talking points for teaching climate justice agree:

- Food insecurity due to flooding and crop failure affects people of color adversely.
- Urban neighborhoods with more pavement and fewer trees experience higher temperatures, increasing the risk of heat illness, especially for those who lack access to air conditioning.
- Indigenous communities are losing their homes due to rising sea levels and drought.
- People of color are more likely to experience property damage and homelessness from catastrophic climate events.

Gray sees the connection between climate change and the social justice/anti-racism movement growing in importance — especially since the World Health Organization believes that climate change will cause approximately 250,000 additional deaths between 2030 and 2050.

Her class incorporates the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for taking urgent action on climate change.

She also teaches the story of the hummingbird by 2004 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Wangari Maathai of Kenya. A forest is on fire, and the animals watch helplessly as it burns. When a small hummingbird flies to the nearest stream and spreads drops of water on the fire as fast as it can, the other animals tell the bird that it is too little and a drop of water doesn’t have much impact. But the hummingbird refuses to be discouraged and tells them, “I am doing the best I can.”

“The point of the story is that we are all hummingbirds,” says Gray. “We should all be doing the best we can to save our environment.”



Salina Gray





## RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

- A carbon footprint is the total amount of greenhouse gases that are generated by one's actions. Calculate yours at [nature.org](http://nature.org) (under the "Get Involved" tab).
- NASA Global Climate Change, [climate.nasa.gov](http://climate.nasa.gov), and NASA Climate Kids, [climatekids.nasa.gov](http://climatekids.nasa.gov).
- NASA Earth-Now, a free app (iOS and Android) that allows students to manipulate color scales on a 3D model of Earth and see reports on temperature, carbon dioxide, sea level and other climate factors.
- National Center for Science Education, [ncse.ngo](http://ncse.ngo).
- National Geographic lesson plans and educational videos, [tinyurl.com/NatGeoClimate](http://tinyurl.com/NatGeoClimate).
- Center for Sustainable and Climate Resilient Schools climate literacy resources, [tinyurl.com/ClimateLiteracyResources](http://tinyurl.com/ClimateLiteracyResources).
- Climate justice teaching resources, National Science Teaching Association, [tinyurl.com/STEMClimateJustice](http://tinyurl.com/STEMClimateJustice).
- Global Oneness Project, resources and toolkits on the impact of climate change on people and communities, [globalonenessproject.org](http://globalonenessproject.org).
- Sierra Club San Francisco Bay chapter's climate literacy page, [tinyurl.com/SCSFClimateLiteracy](http://tinyurl.com/SCSFClimateLiteracy).
- Schools for Climate Action, a nonpartisan campaign with a mission to empower schools to speak up, [schoolsforclimateaction.weebly.com](http://schoolsforclimateaction.weebly.com).
- Documentary: *An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power* (2017), Al Gore's sequel to *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006).

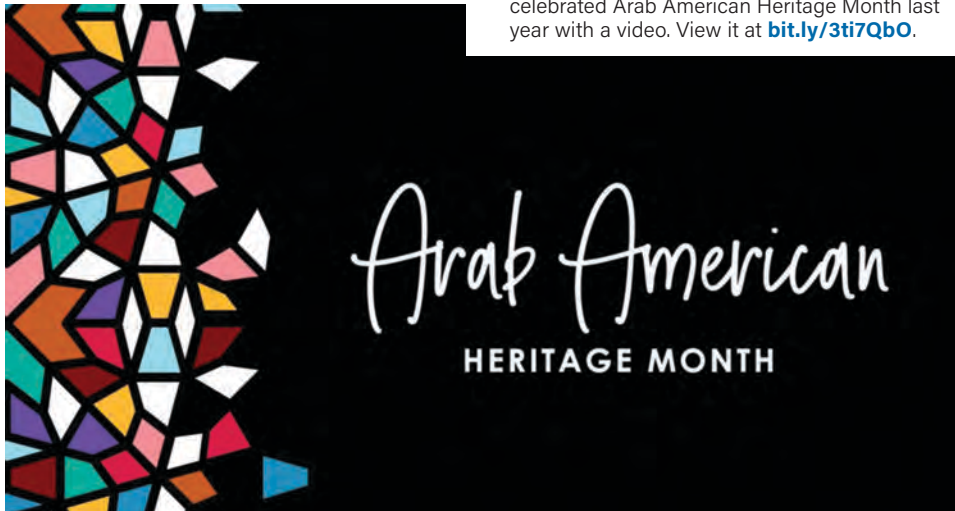
# 36 Years of Supporting California Public Education



*With the support from players, retail partners, and our local communities,* the California Lottery has contributed over **\$37 billion** to California public schools since 1985. Lottery funding goes to K-12 public schools, community colleges, the California State University, the University of California, and other school jurisdictions.



▼ Folsom Cordova Unified School District celebrated Arab American Heritage Month last year with a video. View it at [bit.ly/3ti7QbO](https://bit.ly/3ti7QbO).



*“We’re a highly stereotyped group of people, and it’s often negative. We need to work toward changing this narrative by teaching and embracing the diversity of Arabs.”*

—Nadine El-Awar,  
United Teachers Los Angeles

# Representation Matters

## April Is Arab American Heritage Month

By **Julian Peebles**

“**REPRESENTATION MATTERS** to me on an individual level because people like me have made a difference in this country,” says Randa Wahbe, an English professor at Cypress College and member of United Faculty North Orange County Community College District. “We’ve been erased from the history books of this country, so being recognized is noteworthy.”

Of Lebanese descent, Wahbe is one of thousands of Arab American educators making a difference in classrooms across the state and country. Their contributions and those of all Arab Americans past and present will be celebrated during Arab American Heritage Month in April. Observed in California since 2018, Arab American Heritage Month received federal recognition for the first time last year, with President Joe Biden penning a message to commemorate the occasion.



Nadine El-Awar

“The Arab American community exemplifies so much of what our country stands for: hard work, resilience, compassion and generosity,” Biden wrote. “In nearly every arena of our society, Arab Americans bring dynamic energy, boundless creativity, and a love of family and neighbors that have always defined who we are as Americans.”

CTA officially recognized Arab American Heritage Month with a unanimous vote at the January State Council of Education meeting. Wahbe, who serves as vice president of the Community College Association (CCA) and chair of the CTA Communications Committee, says she was honored to introduce the proclamation at the meeting.

“It was extremely powerful for me as an Arab American for my union to say ‘I see you,’” says Wahbe. “For CTA

to officially recognize the month is really empowering.”

### Inclusion and diversity

The celebration of Arab Americans and their contributions to science, literature, history and American society as a whole is an important piece to ending historic marginalization, says Nadine El-Awar, seventh grade science teacher and member of United Teachers Los Angeles. She says the recognition of Arab American Heritage Month is a symbolic step toward a more inclusive experience for all Arab Americans.

“We’re a highly stereotyped group of people, and it’s often negative. We need to work toward changing this narrative by teaching and embracing the diversity of Arabs,” says El-Awar, a Lebanese American. “It’s very damaging when there’s a stereotyped image. By educating people and elevating the positive, we can counter the misconceptions and misinformation, and instead value the contributions of Arab Americans.”

*“It was extremely powerful for me as an Arab American for my union to say ‘I see you.’ For CTA to officially recognize the month is really empowering.”*

—Randa Wahbe,  
Community College Association vice president

For Michael Butros, education is key to a more inclusive and understanding society. A physics and math professor at Victor Valley College for 22 years, Butros grew up in his father’s native Jordan before coming to the United States. He says it was a different climate for Arab Americans when he arrived in the 1980s.

“I had people ask me if I was a terrorist. For someone who’s new in the states, that leaves an impression,” says Butros, a member of Victor Valley College Faculty Association. “You have to break that cycle somehow, and education was how I tried to break it. I’m trying to make others better than I am.”

Sadly, Butros’ experience is not uncommon in an America that has often been an unsupportive home for Arab Americans. The state proclamation recognizing Arab American Heritage Month acknowledges: “The history of Arab Americans in American life often remains neglected or defaced by misunderstanding, bigotry and anti-Arab hate.” It notes that these transgressions continue today in the form of civil rights abuses, harmful stereotyping, harassment and bullying.

Everyday life for many Arab Americans became particularly difficult after the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. Hate crimes against Arab and Muslim Americans jumped more than 500 percent from 2000 to 2009, according to data from Brown University. Butros was teaching that day and recalls the difficult months that followed.

“I know some Arab Americans who were assaulted in the town I live in, stores that were vandalized,” says Butros, a member of the CCA Board of Directors. “But I also remember good friends who called and asked if there was anything they could do. There’s always good.”



Randa Wahbe

**Fostering empathy**  
Wahbe started at Cypress College just before Sept. 11. Soon after that day, she was approached by numerous students who asked for her help in starting a Muslim Student Association on campus. Though not Muslim herself, Wahbe agreed, serving as the club adviser for many years, facilitating forums on hate crimes, and helping create safe spaces for students.

She also created a specialty literature course focused on Arabic literature translated into English — the only such course



## FACTS: Arab American Heritage Month

**The U.S. Department of State** designated April as Arab American Heritage Month on April 1, 2021, the first such federal recognition in U.S. history.

There are approximately 3.7 million Arab Americans in the United States.

Arab Americans have ancestry in the world’s 22 Arab nations, which are located from northern Africa to western Asia: Algeria, Bahrain, the Comoro Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon and Yemen.


More than two-thirds of Arab Americans live in just 10 states, with more than 373,000 living here in California, the largest population in any state.

The majority of Arab Americans are native-born, and nearly 82 percent of Arabs in the U.S. are citizens.

While the Arab American community traces its roots to every Arab country, the majority of Arab Americans have ancestral ties to Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Iraq.

Source: Arab American Institute, [aaiausa.org](http://aaiausa.org)

taught at a community college outside of Connecticut. Wahbe says she created it as another way to humanize Arab Americans “and show we’re just like you.”

“Through the reading of literature, we can become more empathetic,” Wahbe says. “Arabs love and hope” 

and cry and pray similar to other humans. We all share these things.”

Wahbe’s efforts to elevate Arabic voices are informed by her own experiences as a student. It wasn’t until the third year of her bachelor’s program that she read an author of color; she calls it a life-changing experience.

“I did not know that people who have been historically marginalized had contributed so much to this country until I took an ethnic studies course as a professor,” says Wahbe. “That’s shocking to not learn sooner.”

El-Awar says experiences like these show the important role educators can play in helping Arab American students feel seen and valued, and underscore the need for representation and



*“I had people ask me if I was a terrorist. For someone who’s new in the states, that leaves an impression.”*

—Michael Butros,  
Victor Valley College  
Faculty Association

inclusion in the classroom and curriculum.

“Educators must validate and understand cultural identities of Arab American students and create a space where they feel included,” she says.

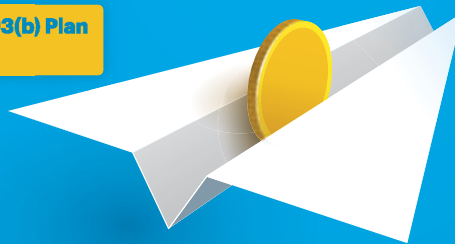
Butros says educators deserve more respect for the impact they have on students, noting that teachers are revered in many countries.

“Where I come from in Jordan, teachers and clergy are almost on the same level,” he says. “There’s a lot more respect.” ■

For more information, curriculum, and other Arab American Heritage Month resources, visit [arabamericafoundation.org](http://arabamericafoundation.org).

# ENSURING A PATH TO A WONDERFUL RETIREMENT

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**JEWISH  
AMERICAN  
HERITAGE MONTH**

# HERITAGE MONTHS IN MAY

**Asian Pacific American Heritage Month** and **Jewish American Heritage Month** are both in May. They recognize the contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) and Jewish Americans to the history, culture and achievements of the United States.

May was permanently designated as Asian Pacific American Heritage Month in 1992 to mark the arrival of the first known Japanese immigrant to the U.S. on May 7, 1843, and to honor completion of the transcontinental railroad — built by as many as 20,000 Chinese workers — on May 10, 1869. Today, AAPIs are a diverse population of 23 million Americans, including roughly 50 ethnic groups with roots in more than 40 countries.

Educators can use the month to celebrate AAPI histories and cultures, build empathy and understanding, and fight xenophobia and discrimination (see sidebar). Primary sources from the Library of Congress, the National Archives, the Smithsonian and other resources are available at [asianpacificheritage.gov/for-teachers](https://asianpacificheritage.gov/for-teachers).

In April 2006, President George W. Bush proclaimed May as Jewish American Heritage Month, recognizing the more than 350-year history of Jewish contributions to American culture. May was chosen because of the May 2004 celebration of the 350th anniversary of the American Jewish community (dating from a settlement of Jewish refugees from Brazil in New Amsterdam in 1654).

Educators can access relevant primary sources and document-based activities spanning the course of American history, created by the National Archives and teachers around the world. The National Endowment for the Humanities has helped fund educational programs on the Jewish American experience. Find these resources at [jewishheritagemonth.gov/for-teachers](https://jewishheritagemonth.gov/for-teachers). ■

## HELP STOP HATE

**HATE AND VIOLENCE** against others — whether due to race, ethnicity, national origin, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, or any other way people can be seen as “other” — has long stained American society. The last few years have seen a major uptick in such acts, including against AAPIs and Jewish Americans. Some numbers:

- Hate crimes against AAPIs rose 164 percent (possibly higher) in the first quarter of 2021 compared with the same period in 2020. San Francisco and Los Angeles experienced significant increases. (Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism, CSU San Bernardino)
- A total of 10,905 hate incidents targeting AAPIs occurred between March 19, 2020, and Dec. 31, 2021. (Stop AAPI Hate)
- Incidents of anti-Semitic propaganda rose by 27 percent in 2021, including propaganda on flyers, stickers, banners and posters. (The Anti-Defamation League)
- As recently as February 2022, anti-Semitic flyers were distributed in Folsom, Orange County and the Bay Area.

Educators can make a tremendous difference in helping students understand and fight systemic racism and unconscious bias. Some resources:

**CTA** ([cta.org/our-advocacy/social-justice-resources](https://cta.org/our-advocacy/social-justice-resources)). Readings, toolkits, links to lesson plans and more, on topics including racial justice, LGBTQ+ students and mental health.

**NEA's Center for Social Justice** ([nea.org/professional-excellence/just-equitable-schools](https://nea.org/professional-excellence/just-equitable-schools)). A program to help educators identify and correct explicit and implicit discrimination in their classrooms. Trainings and resources let educators adjust their practice to better serve students from diverse backgrounds.

**Learning for Justice** ([learningforjustice.org](https://learningforjustice.org)). Resources for K-12 educators to teach tolerance with an emphasis on anti-bias and social justice, including lesson plans.

**Teaching for Change** ([teachingforchange.org](https://teachingforchange.org)). Professional development, curriculum and resources help K-12 teachers and students build a more equitable society.



Jason Leung/Unsplash

# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

## COVID paid sick leave and other legislation of interest By Julian Peeples

**IN FEBRUARY**, CTA members and labor allies celebrated the enactment of SB 114, which provides COVID-19 supplemental paid sick leave to workers (see details, next page). “Paid sick leave is critical for keeping our school communities healthy and thriving during this pandemic,” said CTA President E. Toby Boyd in a statement. “This law is the culmination of months of hard work and advocacy by thousands of educators, our broader labor community, and others.”

Several bills sponsored or co-sponsored by CTA are now making their way through the legislative process.

### *Sponsored Legislation*

**AB 1667** (Cooper) — This bill would exempt retirees from any financial liability resulting from overpayment of benefits due to erroneous information provided to the State Teachers’ Retirement System (CalSTRS) by the school district or reporting agency; provide adequate notice and due process to all CalSTRS members impacted by CalSTRS audits; and clarify that any changes to CalSTRS’ interpretation of creditable compensation laws must be preceded by prior notice. AB 1667 would also create a more transparent and accountable system to ensure school districts and reporting agencies receive timely and accurate information from CalSTRS and make other changes to minimize CalSTRS reporting errors and to prevent harm to retirees. The bill would ensure CalSTRS retirees will be justly compensated for benefit reductions that stem from employer and CalSTRS reporting errors, create a more transparent and accountable system to ensure school and community college districts receive timely and accurate information from CalSTRS, and reduce the likelihood of reporting mistakes in the future.

Status: Awaiting hearing by the Assembly Committee on Public Employment and Retirement.

**SB 868** (Cortese) — This bill would use excess funds within CalSTRS’ purchasing power account to provide an equitable distribution of these funds by addressing systemic tiers among retirees, and create a one-time permanent adjustment applied to the total current benefit that is being paid to CalSTRS retirees and beneficiaries of retirees who retired prior to 1999, helping CalSTRS retired members most in need of assistance while not compromising the financial integrity of the purchasing power account and its ability to provide inflation protection long term. SB 868 will protect the purchasing power of California’s oldest retired teachers while maintaining the fiscal integrity of CalSTRS.

Status: Awaiting hearing by the Senate Committee on Labor, Public Employment and Retirement.

### *Co-sponsored Legislation*



▲ Chris Holland, part-time professor at Bakersfield College, works for Instacart to pay the bills.

**AB 1752** (Santiago) — Establishes parity for part-time community college faculty. This bill would require community colleges to pay workers who are employed to teach adult or community college classes part time an amount that bears the same ratio to the amount provided to full-time employees as the time actually served by those part-time employees bears to the time actually served by full-time employees with comparable duties. AB 1752 imposes this pay requirement upon the expiration or renewal of existing collective bargaining agreements.

Status: Awaiting hearing by the Assembly Higher Education Committee.

**“SB 114 is the culmination of months of hard work and advocacy by thousands of educators, our broader labor community, and others.”**

—CTA President **E. Toby Boyd**

**AB 2573** (McCarty) —This bill would require a certificated employee of a school district or a county office of education who completes two consecutive school years and is reelected to be classified as a permanent employee. AB 2573 would also provide permanent status for certificated employees teaching adult education and career technical education at a regional occupational program after a two-year probationary period, and require a probationary employee employed in an assignment less than full time who has served for at least 75 percent of the number of days required of the assignment to be deemed to have served a complete school year. The bill would further require a probationary employee of an adult education program to be deemed to have served a complete school year if the employee serves for at least 75 percent of the hours constituting a full-time equivalent position for adult education programs in the school district.

Status: Awaiting hearing by the Assembly Education Committee.

## **Priority Legislation**

**SB 114** — This bill revives the COVID-related supplemental paid sick leave program to provide up to 80 hours of additional emergency paid sick leave until Sept. 30 for workers of employers that have 26 or more employees, and applies retroactively to Jan. 1. Forcing Californians to work or go to school while infectious will needlessly prolong this pandemic, waste taxpayer dollars, cause outbreaks and end lives.

Status: Signed into law by Gov. Newsom on Feb. 9.



Deposit Photos

# The Latest on Student Assessments

## Opting out of testing: Know your rights as an educator

**IT'S SPRING**, which means testing in schools is underway. Educators should be aware that California has a law allowing all parents to opt out of state-mandated standardized testing. State regulations govern what educators can say to parents and families about this. Educators are allowed to inform parents of their right to opt out of high-stakes testing for their child, but are prohibited from soliciting or encouraging parents to do so.

Know your rights as an educator! Check out CTA's information and resources about parents' and educators' rights, and guidance for educators in discussing the subject with parents, at [cta.org/optout](https://cta.org/optout).

CTA also offers:

- An updated resource on student assessments (both state-required tests and state-optional tests) at [cta.org/testingresource](https://cta.org/testingresource).
- A new, informative podcast from CTA Instruction and Professional Development that can answer many questions you may have, at [cta.org/update-on-2022-state-testing](https://cta.org/update-on-2022-state-testing).



# EDUCATORS *in the Room*

Liaisons and ambassadors are the eyes and ears for CTA at agencies and organizations statewide

By Julian Peebles

**WHEN A CALIFORNIA** government agency or organization is considering a policy position or key action item that could impact educators, students and public schools, CTA is there — literally.

More than 60 members serve as CTA liaisons and ambassadors to a wide array of state agencies and organizations whose work affects education. They monitor meetings, carry CTA’s message, and promote the policies of CTA on behalf of all members and students of California.

“It’s crucial for CTA educators to be in the room so that the policy and perspectives of CTA members are articulated,” says

Danette Brown, liaison to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) and member of La Habra Education Association. “It’s extremely satisfying to serve as a liaison to the CTC and work to positively impact the future of our profession.”

Appointed by the CTA Board of Directors, liaisons are members who participate in state agency work as the eyes and ears of the union (in addition to CTA staff), while ambassadors engage with organizations and serve as a conduit between them and CTA. Some ambassadors also serve on their assigned organization’s board of directors, like C. Scott Miller, who sits on the board of Equality California.



## LORRAINE RICHARDS

LIAISON (ONE OF TWO) TO THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
*Montebello Teachers Association*

**Role and responsibilities:** "Michael Juba and I attend meetings every other month and monitor the business. We meet with CTA staff prior to the meeting to discuss the agenda and clarify impactful agenda items that require CTA public comment."

**Importance of educator voice:** "The teacher's voice is needed at the meetings. It reminds the State Board and the public how the decisions impact students."



## DANETTE BROWN

LIAISON (ONE OF TWO) TO THE CALIFORNIA COMMISSION  
ON TEACHER CREDENTIALING  
*La Habra Education Association*

**Role and responsibilities:** "I attend approximately 10 two-day meetings annually. Prior to these meetings, the liaisons review the agenda and participate in pre-planning meetings to prepare for public testimony. We reach out to partners, like the Association of California School Administrators and California School Boards Association, to lobby for support for our positions."

**Importance of educator voice:** "The CTC is our professional standards board and serves as the gatekeeper of entry and exit to the profession. We need to have a strong voice at the table so the CTC understands exactly how their decisions will impact not only educators, but potential future educators."

**Value to CTA:** "Being in the room allows us to foster informal and formal relationships with both the commission and other educational partners to further the positions of CTA."




***"It's crucial for CTA educators to be in the room so that the policy and perspectives of CTA members are articulated."***

—Danette Brown

"We, CTA members, are advocating for our own working and learning environments. The work is personal and rewarding because we know how it affects fellow educators and ultimately students," says Miller, a member of Santa Ana Educators Association. "If we want change, we have to make it!"

All liaisons and ambassadors file regular reports, which are reviewed by CTA's Agency Review Committee, a subset of the Board of Directors, and then shared with the respective State Council of Education Committee. The committee considers and makes recommendations about procedures for individual monitoring of the activities of state governmental agencies.

Liaisons and ambassadors are divided into five groups to network with colleagues and communicate about similar issues: Student Services, Career Education, Curriculum Issues, Equity Issues and Watchdogs.

"As part of the 'watchdog' group, we are tasked with being in the space in order to be aware of any issues that may impact CTA or local associations," says Wendy Eccles, ambassador to the California Fair Political Practices Commission and member of NEA-Jurupa. "Building and maintaining relationships with like-minded outside organizations is imperative to our overall success and survival as an organization." 

*Continued on page 34*

## KRISTAN MORALES

AMBASSADOR TO THE CALIFORNIA  
MATHEMATICS COUNCIL

Temecula Valley  
Educators Association



**Importance of educator voice:** "It is important that CTA representatives are in the room for CMC conversations, especially about items such as new framework adoption and legislation that involves curriculum and instruction. The partnership between the organizations means we can support each other to move forward with policies that best serve students and educators."

## WENDY ECCLES

AMBASSADOR TO THE CALIFORNIA FAIR  
POLITICAL PRACTICES COMMISSION

NEA-Jurupa



**Role and responsibilities:** "I attend monthly commission hearings and listen for anything that could impact CTA or our local associations. This includes changes to FPPC policies, proposed legislation, and any fees or fines that may be levied against local associations related to their political activities and campaigns."

**Importance of educator voice:** "FPPC regulations impact our organization at the state, service center, and local levels. Knowing the rules and any changes to them helps ensure that we don't get into any fiduciary or legal entanglements."

**Value to CTA:** "Having CTA members in as many spaces as possible not only allows us to hear about the ongoing issues or ideas that may affect us, but also gives us the opportunity to provide context, feedback, and influence the conversations. We need to be visible in the rooms where it happens."

# WATCHDOGS

*for Educators and Students*

CTA liaisons and ambassadors monitor the meetings and matters affecting public education of the following agencies and organizations.

### Liaison Agencies

State Board of Education  
Advisory Commission on Charter Schools  
Advisory Commission on Special Education  
Instructional Quality Commission  
California Practitioners Advisory Group  
California Workforce Pathways Joint Advisory Committee  
California Commission on Teacher Credentialing  
State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS)  
California School Finance Authority  
California Collaborative for Educational Excellence  
California Community Colleges Board of Governors  
Chancellor's Consultation Council  
Council of Faculty Organizations  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

### Ambassador Organizations

Asian Americans Advancing Justice  
Public Employment Relations Board (PERB)  
California Association for the Education of Young Children  
California Association for Bilingual Educators  
California Association for Career and Technical Education  
Association of Mexican American Educators  
California Association of Resource and Special Educators (CARS+)  
Association of Career and College Readiness Organizations  
California Association of School Counselors  
California Association of School Psychologists  
California Association of Teachers of English  
California Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages  
California Agricultural Teachers Association

Create CA (formerly California Alliance for Arts Education)  
 California Council for Adult Education  
 California Council for the Social Studies  
 California Community of Practice on Secondary Transition  
 California Educators of the Deaf  
 California Industrial and Technology Education Association  
 California Kindergarten Association  
 California Mathematics Council  
 California Middle Grades Alliance  
 California Music Educators Association  
 California Native American Heritage Commission  
 Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS)  
 California Pupil Services Coalition  
 California Reading Association  
 California School Library Association  
 California School Nurses Organization  
 California Association of Science Educators  
 California Speech Language Hearing Association  
 Californians Together  
 Authentic Preparation Today (APT) Work Group  
 (formerly Promoting Authentic College, Career and Civic Readiness Assessment Systems)  
 Computer-Using Educators  
 Department of Fair Employment and Housing  
 California Fair Political Practices Commission  
 First 5 California (California Children and Families Commission)  
 California State PTA  
 State Student Attendance Review Board

**Ambassador Organizations with CTA members on the board**

Consumer Federation of California Policy Board  
 Equality California

**C. SCOTT MILLER**

AMBASSADOR TO AND BOARD MEMBER OF EQUALITY CALIFORNIA  
*Santa Ana Educators Association*



**Role and responsibilities:** "Equality California is the nation's largest statewide LGBTQ+ civil rights organization, working at the local, state and national levels. I have served as financial committee chair and on the governance and executive committees to ensure EQCA brings the voices of LGBTQ+ people and allies to institutions of power in California and across the United States, striving to create a world that is healthy, just and fully equal for all LGBTQ+ people."

**Value to CTA:** "Many of our members are unaware that CTA has thriving relationships with statewide organizations. What is impressive is that this work is being done by regular classroom teachers or other education professionals and not by special-interest lobbyists."

**NAQIBA GREGORY**

AMBASSADOR TO THE NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE COMMISSION  
*West Sacramento Teachers Association*



**Value to CTA:** "It is imperative that we are knowledgeable about the issues that face our state and where to focus our efforts so that we can meet the community and educational needs of our teachers and students. The liaison and ambassador program keeps us relevant, aware and informed."



Continued from page 31

Miller says while some might think implementing school policy is easy, there are thousands of other issues that affect day-to-day business in schools. He says the relationships built through the liaison and ambassador program allow educators to provide a true, authentic glimpse into the school system. He recalls when a colleague on the Equality California board suggested training all teachers statewide on an important issue but didn't fully grasp the complexities of coordinating

such an endeavor with more than 1,000 school districts statewide.

***“With student mental health a necessary focus, supporting educational support personnel is critical in making sure students have access to people and resources.”***

—Josh Godinez

“When I explained that it isn't that simple and no one can just wave a magic wand to create change in our public schools, it was eye-opening that many people outside of education simply don't understand how it works,” Miller says. “It is not enough to send your kids to school or to have attended school, for that matter, to claim to know how to make change in our schools.”

The liaisons and ambassadors don't work in isolation. They receive training at each State Council meeting on current issues facing education and CTA's official positions on them. Miller says they also work directly with CTA's officers and staff to deliver CTA's message and develop strategies to build ongoing relationships. It's a lot of hours on top of their jobs and other responsibilities, but liaisons and ambassadors say it's a rewarding charge.

“To represent the many voices of CTA as an ambassador to the Pupil Services Coalition is such an honor,” says Josh Godinez, a member of Corona-Norco Teachers Association. “With student mental health being

## JOSH GODINEZ

AMBASSADOR TO THE CALIFORNIA PUPIL SERVICES COALITION

Corona-Norco Teachers Association



### Importance of educator

**voice:** “CTA is the foundation for education in California, and having a voice with those who offer support services is key, because together we create school communities that enhance the educational experiences and meet the ever-changing needs of California's students daily.”

**Value to CTA:** “Representation is extremely important because we are the pulse of the school communities and the voice of California educators who work hard to educate, empower and inspire students daily.”

such a necessary focus as we work on increased attendance, promoting positive cultures and climates, and academic achievement, supporting educational support personnel is critical in making sure that our students have timely access to the people and resources that provide these unique supports.”

For more information about CTA liaisons and ambassadors, visit [cta.org/liaisons](http://cta.org/liaisons). ■

# BARGAINING ROUNDUP

Compiled by **Julian Peoples**



**ROHNERT PARK COTATI:**

## *Win after six-day strike*

After six powerful days on the picket line, the **Rohnert Park Cotati Educators Association** won a tentative agreement on March 17, ending their strike.

The agreement provides a 14.6 percent raise over three years. RPCEA members will also receive a \$2,000 off-schedule bonus this year and a \$1,000 bonus next year.

The new contract will help improve the retention and recruitment of quality educators for the schools that Rohnert Park Cotati students deserve. Cotati-Rohnert Park Unified School District has been paying RPCEA educators almost 20 percent less than the state average, leading the state-appointed fact-finder to recommend the 14.6 percent raise.

The strike became a communitywide movement, with parents keeping their children home in solidarity and joining educators on the picket line. Support came from other CTA locals, SEIU 1021, and the Teamsters Joint Council 7. The CTA Board of Directors also joined RPCEA, bringing love and energy from CTA's 310,000 members to the streets of Rohnert Park and Cotati.

"Thank you for the overwhelming outpouring of support," RPCEA posted on Facebook. "We will come out of this stronger!"



**SACRAMENTO:**

## *Victory for students, educators*

After an eight-day strike, the **Sacramento City Teachers Association** (SCTA) and the classified employee union **SEIU Local 1021** reached tentative agreements with Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD) on April 3.

Thousands of educators, parents, students and labor and community allies had joined the picket lines demanding that SCUSD address a staffing crisis, among other issues — more than 10,000 students do not have a permanent teacher, every day. The new contracts, which were set to be ratified in early April, should help to ease the crisis. The agreements also contain salary increases, no takeaway on health care, and provisions for improved health and safety.

"From start to finish, our members have been united in the belief that schools should be adequately staffed with a teacher in front of every classroom," says SCTA President David Fisher. "We stayed strong, and as a result we now have a contract that will help us attract and retain staff and provide our members with modest raises."

For more details, see our coverage at [cta.org/educator](https://cta.org/educator).

## *Unite Summit votes to authorize strike*

For two years, educators at the seven Bay Area Summit charter schools have been in negotiations for their first contract through their union, Unite Summit. They are fighting for a contract that addresses Summit's high teacher turnover and provides more supports for students, especially English learners. On March 31, 95 percent of the union's membership voted to authorize a strike. Their core demands include a two-year probationary period and increased support for English learners. Show your support at [tinyurl.com/SupportUniteSummit](https://tinyurl.com/SupportUniteSummit).





**MT. DIABLO:**

**Agreement averts strike**

After more than 250 days without a contract, **Mt. Diablo Education Association** reached an agreement with Mt. Diablo Unified School District that will help attract and retain quality educators.

MDEA won a 10.5 percent raise over three years when an agreement was reached at the fact-finding hearing on March 18. That day, MDEA picketed with approximately 500 members and supporters outside the district office while the hearing was underway in a show of unity. Two days before, MDEA announced 92 percent of its members had voted to authorize a strike.

“Both MDEA and the district believe this settlement is the best agreement possible after discussion with the fact-finding panel, and considering the available up-to-date information,” MDEA and MDUSD said in a joint statement.

The agreement preserves prep time for fourth and fifth grade teachers, ensures the new state law regarding transitional kindergarten staffing ratios will be followed, and limits class sizes at continuation high schools to 28.

**HEMET:** *Two-year contract*

**Hemet Teachers Association** reached agreement in February on a two-year contract that pays educators more and improves contract language. Hemet educators will receive a 4 percent on-schedule raise retroactive to 2021 and a 3 percent off-schedule payment for the current school year, and a 3 percent on-schedule increase and a 4 percent off-schedule payment on July 1.

HTA also won increased summer school pay and improvements to transfer and reassignment language in the contract.

**TWIN RIVERS:**

**Solidarity campaign**

**Twin Rivers United Educators**

in North Sacramento kicked off a solidarity campaign across their 50 sites in February to help gear up for the start of bargaining in mid-March. Every week, all members are being urged to wear their union shirts on Thursdays. The TRUE organizing team worked with leadership to highlight five sites each week on both internal and external social media. TRUE leaders are also visiting one site every Thursday to help boost unity and hear from members.

See and engage with the campaign on Instagram and Facebook with the hashtags **#WeAreTRUE** and **#TRUETimeIsNow**. The TRUE team also launched a new Instagram with the handle **@WeAreTRUEunion**.



**TORRANCE:**

**Getting a raise, making progress**

**Torrance Teachers Association**

won an agreement that provides a 3 percent retroactive salary increase, in addition to 2 percent already applied this year for a total of 5 percent, and a prospective 3 percent pay increase for next year. TTA also won additional contract language, including language related to RTI (Response to Intervention) time, and agreed on calendars for the next two school years.

Although TTA and the district are fundamentally deadlocked over some key unresolved issues, both sides have committed to work together to resolve them in the coming months.





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Front row: Magret Nunes, CTA Vice President David Goldberg, President E. Toby Boyd, Secretary-Treasurer Leslie Littman, Telly Tse.

Second row: Daniel Gallegos, Christina Alaniz, Juli Stowers, Guadalupe Carrasco Cardona, Vanessa Aranda, Gina Gray, VanCedric Williams.



# CTA'S 2022 HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD WINNERS

## Celebrating our social justice activists and educators

**THE COMMON DENOMINATORS** in the work of this year's CTA Human Rights Award recipients are inclusion, teaching truth, and empowering students and peers. The award-winners' efforts to unify are especially notable.

Nine educators and one CTA chapter have been recognized for their outstanding dedication to social justice, and for promoting and protecting human and civil rights — within their schools and in the greater community.

"At a time when there are far too many outside forces seeking to stoke division and fear, these inspired educators are showing us how to tackle our past and present honestly, confront injustice, and educate with integrity and courage," said CTA President E. Toby Boyd. "They are showing us how to create a more equitable future, so that all our students can think critically, see themselves in our classrooms and curriculum, and have the opportunity to succeed."

Following are the awardees, in the order in which they were honored at a special ceremony during CTA's Equity and Human Rights Conference on March 5.



**VanCedric Williams**  
*United Educators of San Francisco*  
**African American Human Rights Award  
 in Honor of Lois Tinson**

VanCedric Williams became an educator more than 20 years ago in part because he recognized that to advance the achievement of students of color, and specifically young

Black males, they need good role models. Now a high school ethnic studies teacher in San Francisco, he has established a culturally relevant and historically accurate curriculum for his students. Throughout his lessons he weaves in African American and other groups' culture, values and traditions. He challenges his students to dig for the truth and sets



## Christina Alaniz

*Palm Springs Teachers Association*

**American Indian/Alaska Native Human Rights Award in Honor of Jim Clark**

Christina Alaniz has been involved with the Native community her entire life. A Cahuilla and Serrano descendant of the Morongo Band of Mission Indians, she was raised and still lives on the Morongo reservation.

Alaniz volunteered in her children's classrooms for 11 years. It was there that she found her passion for education and helping students succeed. She became involved in the local PTA and served as PTA president for two years. She worked with her tribe to bring culturally relevant educational opportunities to the classroom.

After earning a bachelor's degree in history and a master's in education, Alaniz began teaching in 2010. She taught for four years on the reservation before moving to Palm Springs Unified, where she currently teaches second grade. She has written ethnic studies curriculum, has served the past seven years on her school site council, and is a current member of an anti-racist coalition.

Alaniz helps the district engage with the Native community in Palm Springs, including the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, and is creating a Native American Parent Advisory Council to facilitate the process. She consults with the tribe on curriculum and works to represent the Native community in education and social issues.

She is active on the equity team at her chapter and is a member of CTA's American Indian/Alaska Native Caucus. She serves on CTA's Racial Equity Affairs Committee, participates in the 2021-22 Ethnic Minority Early Identification and Development cohort, and regularly trains and presents workshops to colleagues.



## Guadalupe Carrasco Cardona

*United Teachers Los Angeles*

**César Chávez "Sí Se Puede" Human Rights Award**

Guadalupe Carrasco Cardona is committed to promoting educational equality, critical pedagogy, and a college-going culture at Edward R. Roybal Learning Center. She has distinguished herself through her excellent mentorship of teachers and students and her work in underserved communities.

Carrasco Cardona has been involved in developing statewide ethnic studies curriculum. Her work centers the voices of people of color and furthers a student-centered classroom environment based on mutual respect, critical thinking and collaboration. She has led multiple workshops to embed this curriculum at Roybal. She has organized the school and community to fund students and their families who were struggling to make ends meet, even to fund funerals for family members lost during the pandemic.

In 2019, she brought *danzantes* to Roybal during El Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead), honoring the cultural heritage of many students. In 2020, she brought *Canción del Inmigrante: A Latin Folk Opera* to Roybal, a free event for school families and the larger community.

As chair of the Association of Raza Educators of Los Angeles, Carrasco Cardona organizes praxis institutes to support teachers in their professional development and helps secure funds and scholarships for Dreamers.

She created "La Trenza" (The Braid), a YouTube channel for the Latinx community that helps Latinx youth see themselves in books and curriculum.

Carrasco Cardona is one of the founders of the Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Coalition, which designs and coordinates training programs for educators of BIPOC students. She is earning her doctorate in ethnic studies.



ambitious standards for them.

Having taught refugee students from Sudan, Williams also knows how important it is to be prepared to help all students, particularly those who bring trauma to school. Beyond the classroom, he leads a student mentoring program that encourages and

empowers BIPOC students to be their best selves, know their history, and grow leadership skills through community service.

Williams was elected in 2021 to the Oakland Unified School District Board of Education and has worked tirelessly to help eliminate the opportunity gap

across all district schools by 2026. Long active in CTA, he currently serves as an NEA director and a member of the CTA Budget Committee. He has been a member of the CTA African American Caucus and the Racial Equity Affairs Committee.



## Telly Tse

*Beverly Hills Education Association*

### **Pacific Asian American Human Rights Award**

Telly Tse has been an unflinching advocate for human and civil rights in the Asian American and Pacific Islander community. He has demonstrated leadership and excellence in many areas, such as bilingual programs, immigrant issues, anti-Asian violence, political activism, educational equity, and training and leadership opportunities. He has done this through his work as a special education teacher, local association president, CTA Board member, NEA Board member, NEA APIC regional director, mentor of AAPI educators in an NEA-funded program, and vice president of the Los Angeles chapter of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA).

Serving as the first male AAPI member of the CTA Board, Tse supports regional Racial Equity Affairs Committees to promote inclusion of underrepresented communities within CTA and build relationships with community organizations that focus on racial equity issues.

In his role as a mentor teacher, Tse works with new AAPI educators across the country to examine the challenges they face and ways they can address them. One point he always makes is the positive correlation between union involvement and human rights, which shows the importance of AAPI involvement in the labor movement.

As a past vice chair of the CTA Pacific Asian American Caucus and a current regional director of the NEA Asian Pacific Islander Caucus, Tse has helped to increase AAPI involvement and representation in CTA and NEA.



## Juli Stowers

*Saddleback Valley Educators Association*

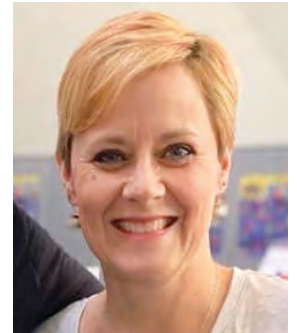
### **Human Rights Award for LGBTQ+ Advocacy in Honor of Nancy Bailey**

Juli Stowers demonstrates leadership and commitment to LGBTQ+ advocacy through her extensive service as an educator, labor leader and community organizer.

Stowers is the first LGBTQ+ and human rights contact for her local. She serves on the advisory committee for CTA's LGBTQ+ Safety in Schools Grant and Scholarship Program in Honor of Guy DeRosa and is a Human Rights Cadre trainer.

Stowers is secretary of the Lavender Democrats of Orange County, and is active with the LGBTQ Center OC, where she has served as co-facilitator of the Trans Community and Allies Together group. She has organized many events, such as Trans Day of Remembrance. She is a member of the Human Rights Council and GLSEN, and has collaborated with other LGBTQ+ organizations to organize events and support allies in their campaigns for school board, state and national positions.

What makes Stowers special is what she has helped to create. She is a founding member of Youth First OC, which advocated for the California Healthy Youth Act and the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive and Respectful Education Act in Orange County schools. She is a founding member of the Newport Beach PFLAG group. As a Cadre trainer, she has helped create workshops on LGBTQ+ issues, including one on supporting trans students. Perhaps most important, she works behind the scenes in her district and community to help students and parents with name changes, safety, and learning how to advocate for their rights — not easy in her community.



## Daniel Gallegos

*Lynwood Teachers Association*

### **Students With Exceptional Needs Human Rights Award**

Daniel Gallegos' goal is to shift students with exceptionalities' views of themselves from failures to successes and to see themselves as able and responsible. Gallegos helps enable

students to set goals, commit to a course of action, and experience the consequences of their choices, decisions and actions.

Throughout his career, Gallegos has established safe and secure learning environments to assist each student in achieving their goals. He encouraged students to participate in building this environment and the daily regimen — essential in engaging each student and

## Gina Gray

United Teachers Los Angeles  
**Human Rights Award  
for Women's Advocacy**

Gina Gray has consistently worked toward ending gender bias and racial discrimination within her union.

Gray was a leader in creating the UTLA equity team's "Brave Space" series, which was formed in response to the continual killings of unarmed Black people at the hands of police. She facilitated dialogues allowing educators to see a model of how they might approach naming instances of implicit bias and racist policies at their schools, to have the tools to dismantle racism in real time.

In her classroom, Gray has selected texts from woman authors that provide an account of history centered on the experience of women of color. For example, in her English class, Gray uses *Ain't I a Woman* by bell hooks to engage students in a critical historical analysis of the experiences of Black women throughout American history.

Gray also has used UTLA's social media platforms to educate the broader union workforce on the accomplishments of women of color and invite teachers to use these messages in their classrooms.

Most recently, Gray and colleague Denisha Jordan, as the UTLA women's advocacy coordinators, have organized TEA (Train, Empower and Activate). TEA organizes women of color in UTLA around issues facing the community such as fair pay, the right to choose, child care, health care and family leave. The goal is that these dialogues lead to action plans so women and allies can work to create a fair environment not only in the workplace, but in society at large.



## Vanessa Aranda

Redlands Teachers Association  
**CTA Peace and Justice  
Human Rights Award**

Vanessa Aranda has promoted peace, justice and international understanding through her teaching, her work with students, and her advocacy for reflective curriculum.

Aranda's journalism class extends beyond the classroom and the alternative high school where she teaches. She has guided her students to create an online, student-driven social justice journal for equity called *Ethic News*. All students from the district's five high schools, including exceptional students and English learners, contribute. Students are challenged to look at their own communities through a peace and justice lens to create relevant content. Aranda assists in evaluating their work and guides them to reflect on its social impact on themselves, the community and the greater world.

With a recently received grant, the journal will be open to multiple media.

Aranda has been instrumental in creating a curriculum for her literature students that promotes literacy through social justice. The curriculum is approachable; students become engaged by reading relevant, personal pieces around ethics, diversity and justice. Their reading skills have improved. For some of her students, this is the first time in a while that they have felt successful.

In addition, Aranda has been one of the main contributors for the school district's new ethnic studies course. She has been instrumental in incorporating current literature and news pieces that focus on justice and peace, as well as on ethnic studies.



having them take responsibility for their own learning. He has also focused on underlying assumptions that have led to learning or communication breakdowns, which allows his colleagues to work in partnership with learners and their families to identify concerns and strategies to address them.

He and his students discuss

hurdles to learning, frustrations and underlying assumptions. This collaboration becomes the basis to identify steps to overcome obstacles, take responsibility for behavior, and ultimately achieve success.

As special education department chair at Cesar Chavez Middle School, Gallegos has brought a sense of

cohesion to the department with consistent effective communication and positive interpersonal relationships with all staff. This is also true of the broader school community, where Gallegos staunchly advocates for the inclusion of students with exceptionalities in general education classrooms and school activities.



## Magret Nunes

John Swett Education Association

CTA Member  
Human Rights Award



When Magret Nunes became the president of John Swett Education Association, she became a powerful advocate for social justice. She started by promoting and identifying social justice issues with administrators and the school board and updating her district's equity policy. She pushed further and established Social Justice Activists (SJA), a representative group of all stakeholders in the district, with whom she meets monthly to determine social justice issues that need to be addressed.

Nunes also created district equity teams and a structure to disseminate information from SJA to school sites via site representatives as part of a five-year equity plan formulated by Nunes with the Labor Management Initiative in her district.

She helped to expand SJA by creating a student branch that she advises. These meetings are designed to engage youth in social justice activism.

Nunes wrote and secured a \$7,000 NEA CAPE Grant to engage the school community in social justice. It included buying relevant books for students, promoting a student T-shirt design contest, and coordinating book readings and discussions in neighboring associations and union locals. She won a \$20,000 CTA IFT Grant to implement project-based learning for inclusivity in social studies curriculum, including individual, small group and community service projects, based on needs and interests of students.

She and her chapter received a \$3,000 CTA Membership Engagement Grant to develop social justice training opportunities for member educators.



## Sacramento City Teachers Association

CTA Chapter Human Rights Award

SCTA leadership has worked hard to develop and promote civil and human rights awareness, initiatives and trainings for its members, and help to eradicate discrimination within the profession.

SCTA bargained and created a full-day professional learning (PL) session on white supremacy culture in education and abolitionist teaching strategies prior to the start of the 2021-22 school year.

SCTA has been working in concert with the Black Parallel School Board since 2016 to bring anti-bias and anti-racist PL to Sacramento City Unified School District. This became a bargaining point starting in 2018. After hours of negotiation, the SCTA bargaining team was able to secure one of the two pre-service days to present PL created and led by teachers to address the systemic racism within our education system. The SCTA equity team created a virtual menu of options to meet all teachers' needs, from those beginning their journey to social justice warriors.

The PL included a case study from a district elementary school that detailed their journey toward anti-racism; an assignment to create a transformative classroom using the work of Ghodly Muhammad, author of *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy*; individual and team action items; further readings; and a reflection form to guide the work of the equity team.

The PL received great feedback, was used to create SCTA's Equity Action Plan, grew the equity team's membership, and created a space for essential conversations regarding race and racism in the district.

## Watch and Listen

**VIDEOS OF** CTA's 2022 Human Rights Award winners feature the awardees and supporters talking about their work and what it means to them, their students and communities. Watch the videos at [youtube.com/CaliforniaTeachers](https://youtube.com/CaliforniaTeachers).



# The Language of Success

## 4 ways to make instruction accessible for multilingual learners

By **Valentina Gonzalez**

**DESIGNING INSTRUCTION** that is accessible to English learners (ELs), or multilingual learners, is of the utmost importance. It's simply not enough to make content available to learners. That's like being given a car but no keys to use it. Equitable instruction is instruction that provides every learner with what they need for academic success.

In recent years, there has been a positive shift in the way educators view and teach multilingual learners — recognizing the linguistic, academic, and cultural assets they bring. The reality is that multilingual learners enter our classrooms with unique lived experiences and traditions that add value to instruction. Teachers face the challenge of ensuring that multilingual learners are gaining content and developing language without falling behind in either. Multilingual learners who experience grade-level instruction with additional linguistic support tend to do better in school and have a greater chance of mastery.

But how does that happen when we have mountains of content to cover and grades to gather? How do we create lessons that are accessible and meaningful for multilingual learners? What does that look like in the lesson plans and in instructional practice?

*Scaffolds and accommodations for writing include offering sentence starters or paragraph frames and encouraging drawing, labeling and use of the first language.*

### Methods That Make Instruction Accessible to ELs

**1. Infuse instruction with peer-to-peer discussion and exploration.** This student-centered practice allows multilingual learners to build their listening and speaking vocabularies as they negotiate meaning. There may be much content to cover, but hiding it behind a lecture that multilingual learners may not comprehend does little good. It's important for multilingual learners to uncover their understanding through interacting with peers.

When I began carving out more space for student talk, even though quiet classrooms were encouraged by colleagues and some administrators, it was challenging for a few reasons:

- Multilingual learners weren't talking even when I asked them to. Lack of linguistic support, uncertainty about expectations, fear or anxiety about speaking in a new language, and other factors seemed to contribute to their silence.
- Sometimes the talk was uncontrollably loud.
- Conversations often seemed to stray from the topic.





◀ Resources such as word walls, anchor charts and translation dictionaries can enhance multilingual learners' understanding of concepts. Above, a digital word wall created by [WordSift.org](https://www.wordsift.org), using the Inauguration poem "The Hill We Climb" by Amanda Gorman.

You may be experiencing similar struggles. I found that structuring the peer discussion alleviated these problems and created an environment that controlled the chaos and provided routines and expectations that my students needed. My multilingual learners' voices were being amplified, and it began to surface in their confidence, comfort, and writing, so I knew we were on the right track. Most of the challenges that seemed to keep multilingual learners from participating in speaking with peers were eliminated by my intentional and planned routines for speaking, such as these:

- Using open-ended questions and posting them for students to see.
- Providing sentence stems for responses.
- Intentionally pairing students for discussion and modeling the routine.

**2. Offer adapted or engineered texts when reading materials are dense.** As multilingual learners get older, a common challenge is that content and reading selections become more complex. You can adapt or engineer texts, chunking them into pieces with annotations and synonyms, and even use a multilingual learner's first language. Sometimes, adapting a text looks like providing a side-by-side of the original text:

- Provide a similar text in the student's first language.
- Do a side-by-side of the original text and an audio version.
- Give them a side-by-side of the original text and a text a few reading levels lower.

**3. Provide daily opportunities for written expression in all content areas with the use of scaffolds and accommodations.** Daily writing can be brief, such as quick pieces that are about three minutes or sketch notes using visuals and words. Multilingual learners benefit from seeing teachers model writing expectations and examples at various levels of proficiency.

Other scaffolds and accommodations for writing include offering sentence starters or paragraph frames

and encouraging drawing, labeling, and use of the first language. Multilingual learners at beginning levels of English proficiency pull from all of their language repertoires to access their knowledge and demonstrate what they understand and can do.

Students will perform at different levels. It took me a while to realize that my students' products didn't have to be the same. I remember expecting all my students to write lengthy essays. One of my newly arrived multilingual learners could do that, but not in English yet. He wrote his first essay primarily in his language. Stepping outside of my comfort zone was at first a challenge. How was I going to assess writing that I was unable to read? Through collaboration with colleagues who could read the language, I was able to assess my student's writing. Some teachers in similar situations have used apps to translate students' writing.

**4. Utilize classroom resources.** Resources such as word walls, anchor charts, and translation dictionaries can enhance multilingual learners' understanding of concepts, especially when they include pictorial or visual support. The most effective resources act as co-teachers when we're unable to assist multilingual learners as they work independently. But even this doesn't happen by magic.

Teachers can directly teach students how to use these resources by referring to word walls, anchor charts, and dictionaries:

- When modeling academic language and effective communication, use words from the word wall.
- When reading aloud, use and point to a strategy from a reading anchor chart.
- When modeling writing, show how to use a translation dictionary, thesaurus or other dictionary.

When we model for learners how to use resources and remind them that they can use them too, they are more likely to do it independently.

Sometimes my husband (who is quite a bit taller than I am) drives my car, and when I get back into the driver's seat, I silently thank the car designers for their efforts in assuring that I'm able to adjust the mirrors, move the seat up and forward, and even move the steering wheel — I need to see the road ahead of me. Everyone does. This analogy is how I visualize us as lesson designers for multilingual learners who need to see and have access to their grade-level curriculum. We design the lessons, and we can provide the access. ■

*Valentina Gonzalez, co-author of Reading & Writing With English Learners: A Framework for K-5, is a former teacher and specialist/facilitator for English learners. This story originally appeared on [edutopia.org](https://www.edutopia.org).*



**“Group feedback strategy can help students learn effective group-level behaviors and understand the interactions you expect. It promotes student participation, collaboration and equity.”**

without understanding the work, or having lengthy off-task conversations.

# Group Feedback

## A guide to teaching students how to work together

By **Cheyenne Freitas**

**TODAY**, students in my Integrated Math 1 Support Class are taking a group quiz. As they work together, I overhear them say things like “I think we need to combine like terms” and “Did you multiply to get  $3x$  squared?” and respectfully correct one another by saying, “I think it should be negative since it’s a negative times a positive.”

What distinguishes today from yesterday? This is the first time I’ve used the group feedback strategy with these students, and in a matter of minutes, it’s made a world of difference.

Collaborative learning allows students to solve problems, construct explanations, critique other students’ reasoning, and engage in rich academic discourse. But as teachers, we all know how difficult it is to get students to communicate and collaborate. The group feedback strategy can help students learn effective group-level behaviors and understand the interactions you expect. It promotes student participation, collaboration and equity.

Teachers take personal notes while students work in groups. This strategy works

for assessments, labs, literature circles and study groups. You can use this strategy for large or small tasks and remind students of these expectations whenever they work in groups. Here are some ideas for using it in your classroom.

### PREPLANNING

Before starting a task, make sure that students understand your expectations. Give them a list of expected group norms ahead of time. You may want students to (1) ask and answer clarifying questions, (2) share ideas with team members, (3) justify reasoning, and (4) critique and question the reasoning behind team members’ perspectives.

During team tests, for example, I want to see students explaining ideas and strategies to one another, leaning in and looking at each other’s work, asking questions, respectfully disagreeing with teammates, and working on the same problems at the same time so that various suggestions and strategies can be shared and discussed. I do not want to see students working on problems individually, copying answers from others

### IMPLEMENTATION

During implementation, display your student feedback to drive student actions. This way, students understand the implications of their actions and words as they work.

Feedback can take many forms. Typing on a document table while projecting it, typing on a designated slide or in the speaker notes section while students collaborate on a virtual assignment, or writing feedback on posters around the room are just a few suggestions. Use color coding, plus or minus signs, and a dynamic grade to help students distinguish between positive and negative feedback. Consider the group’s work and their discussions.

Highlight the positive interactions you witness and explain why they are positive as well as who was involved. Recognize students for their valuable contributions, such as clarifying questions or providing a small idea that sparks further discussion. I publicly acknowledged it when a quiet student mentioned a “box” that helped his teammates remember the area model tool. It communicated to the entire group that his comment was valuable and raised the student’s standing within the group and in the classroom.

Keep negative remarks to a minimum to highlight and reinforce positive actions. I like to include neutral comments for random things I hear or notice; it’s a fun way to connect with students while also letting them know



# Teaching & Learning

you're paying attention. When a teammate read something in a British accent, I commented. The team laughed and was surprised that I heard it from across the room. The British accent became an inside joke for the rest of the year.

Encourage students to read the comments you provide to their own and other groups for more ideas on how to interact positively. Keep a list of sentence frames or sample feedback handy if you worry about running out of comments.

## DEBRIEFING AND GRADING

Share your feedback with the entire class. Allow them time to read through each group's comments. I also recommend holding a class debriefing discussion the first few times you use this strategy to acclimate the students. During this five-minute discussion, I usually highlight

a positive team point or ask students to share one they will try next time.

Some teachers prefer to give grades, while others prefer to give feedback. I think it's important for teachers to hold students accountable for their collaboration, and I've had more success when group feedback is graded. One idea is to weigh the group task's collaboration score equally with the academic work completed.

Each time I give students a group test, I grade their collaboration and weigh it as 40 to 50 percent of their group test grade. This has inspired both high achievers who usually work alone and low achievers who don't want to let down their teammates.

You could also make this grade dynamic so that students must demonstrate positive collaboration in order to receive full credit, but they can also lose

points for negative behaviors.

For example, start all groups with a 6 out of 10 scale that increases by one point for positive comments and decreases by one point for negative comments. Whether or not a grade is assigned, providing feedback and communicating positive collaborative behaviors should always be prioritized.

I recommend implementing this strategy semi-regularly; even once every few months will have a long-term impact on how students collaborate in your classroom. ■

*Cheyenne Freitas, a member of Dixon Teachers Association, teaches high school math. She is a teacher leader for the UC Davis California Mathematics Project. This story originally appeared on [edutopia.org](http://edutopia.org).*



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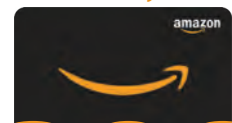
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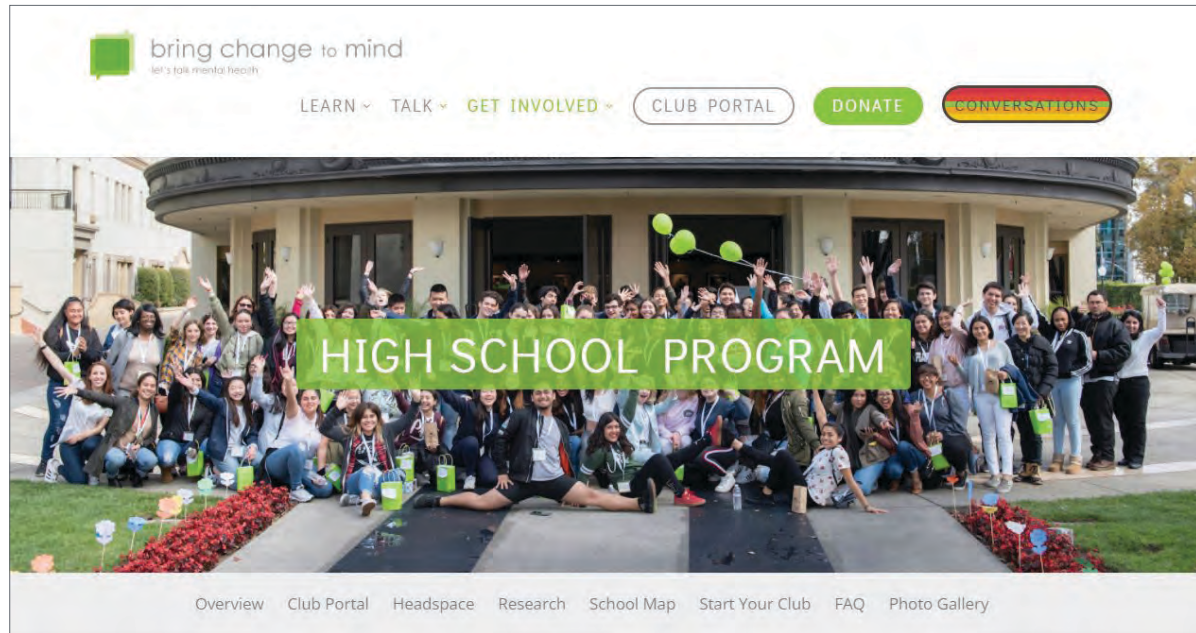
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▼ Through Headspace, teens can join or start a “Bring Change 2 Mind” program at their high school, which helps raise awareness, normalize conversations around mental health, and create a culture of peer support within schools.



# FREE MENTAL HEALTH TOOLS FOR EDUCATORS, TEENS

## Popular app can help boost health and wellness

**TO SAY LIFE** has been stressful the past few years is a massive understatement. Learning and practicing ways to ease stress can help boost your overall health and wellness — and there’s an app for that.

Headspace, at [headspace.com/educators](https://www.headspace.com/educators), offers K-12 educators free access to its extensive and well-organized content library centered on mindfulness and meditation. You can choose from intro sessions and short courses to more advanced work, from breathwork and calming techniques to guided and group meditation.

Need help sleeping or eating better? Try “sleepcasts” or mindful cooking and eating tips. Workouts based on mind-body connections are led by Olympic athletes; curated playlists from Grammy-winning artists help you focus; and informative articles deal with everything from social to election anxiety. “Navigating Injustice” presents meditations by voices with diverse perspectives to help recognize our differences, struggles and unique journeys.

Headspace, which is based in Santa Monica, says it works with LA Unified School District and other schools to understand educators’ needs. (The

app is listed as a resource for educators on the [achieve.lausd.net](https://www.achieve.lausd.net) site.)

The app is easy to navigate and can be set up to give you daily reminders, track your progress, and include others through a buddies feature.

Just launched in November 2021 is Headspace for Teens ([headspace.com/teens](https://www.headspace.com/teens)) — also free, with content tailored for young people, offering tools to de-stress, sleep and focus.

“The goal is to provide a platform for teens to be kind to their mind,” says spokesperson Alice Nathoo.

Teens can sign up individually, or by starting a “Bring Change 2 Mind” program at their high school or joining one. The program helps raise awareness, normalize conversations around mental health, and create a culture of peer support within schools.

“We want to convert the conversations to action,” Nathoo says.

Educators can use Headspace for Teens as a supplemental resource to social-emotional learning and mindfulness in the classroom. The app supports teachers with a variety of materials, including videos, posters and other tools, to assist with this.



▲ A classroom guide for educators

# Lifting Up All ESPs

Mary Ambriz is the Paula J. Monroe CTA Education Support Professional of the Year



**WHAT MARY AMBRIZ** enjoys most about her work as office manager at Mariposa Elementary School are the students.

“There is just nothing like a child. They are so candid, so funny,” says Ambriz, a member of Redlands Education Support Professionals Association (RESPA), who has been named the Paula J. Monroe CTA ESP of the Year. “I love interacting with them.” Even though she’s in the principal’s office, there are always students around. “We don’t consider the principal’s office a bad place to go. Children are welcome here. They come in for a hall pass, or to tell us something like they have a loose tooth.”

Ambriz was honored at CTA’s March State Council meeting not only for her years in education, but also for her dedication to her union. She has been a site rep and RESPA director of clerical, and has served on the executive board. She has been RESPA’s executive secretary for 10 years.

Ambriz says her RESPA work is very fulfilling. “You have the ability to impact so many peoples’ lives, such as when you represent a member who has been called in for disciplinary action, and you help them navigate an outcome that is not punitive. And I really enjoy mentoring new RESPA leadership. Showing them that we don’t have to be at odds with our administration, though there needs to be firm boundaries. Explaining that this is what someone is able to do, or not — it’s right here in the contract.”

Her colleagues appreciate the mentorship. “Mrs. Ambriz continues to

show me how to be the best leader I can be with her continued support,” wrote Sharon “Liz” Huerta-Brewster in her nomination letter. “Mary is helpful, caring, resourceful, and always happy to offer service no matter the task.”

Ambriz is also deeply involved in the Redlands community, and public service runs in the family. She and her late husband, who was a police officer, instilled their belief in public service and volunteering in their children. Daughter Becky is an elementary school teacher in the same school district, Redlands Unified. Son Daniel is a paraprofessional in the district and is finishing his education to obtain a teaching credential. And youngest son Matthew is a firefighter for the city of Long Beach.

Ambriz is a proud grandmother of two, with two more on the way. “I’m a big quilter, and I love to read. I’m starting to paint watercolors — I’m not good at it, but I enjoy it. But being ‘Nana’ is the best.”

Her RESPA peers think she’s the best in other ways, too. As Huerta-Brewster says, “She lifts up ESP colleagues by expressing that ESPs matter, that our students matter, and together we can achieve great things.”

Congratulations! ■

**“There is just nothing like a child. They are so candid, so funny. I love interacting with them.”**

▼ State Council representatives express solidarity with striking educators at Sacramento City Teachers Association.



# Hello Again: CTA State Council Reunites in Los Angeles

Emotional return for first in-person meeting  
in two years *By Julian Peoples*



▲ CTA President E. Toby Boyd welcomes educators back to the in-person meeting.

**AFTER MORE THAN** two years of virtual meetings, CTA State Council of Education reunited in person in a powerful weekend that embodied a familiar rallying cry: *We are CTA.*

The first in-person State Council since January 2020 was packed with business. Council representatives reviewed and considered more than 250 pieces of state legislation and 51 candidate endorsements, with extensive discussions that are a hallmark of in-person State Council meetings.

CTA President E. Toby Boyd welcomed educators back with an emotional opening to the meeting, remembering all those lost to COVID-19 and acknowledging all that has happened since State Council was able to be together.

“You managed this pandemic not only for your families, but also for your students. When schools closed, you pivoted in a minute and learned how to teach virtually,” Boyd said. “You made sure students were connected for online learning and had the food support they counted on. As the days went on, you dealt with constantly

changing safety protocols and guidance. You did what needed to be done to keep students and schools safe.”

During his address, Boyd reviewed the many issues facing educators during the past two years, noting that CTA members have been leading the fight for public education, equality and economic justice. From standing together to stop Asian hate to supporting LGBTQ+ students whose networks were shrunk or eliminated during the pandemic to marching in the streets to state unequivocally that Black lives matter, Boyd said educators showed courage and selflessness.

**“EDUCATORS ROSE TO THE CHALLENGE OF THE PANDEMIC WITH TREMENDOUS SKILL AND GRACE. BEING TREATED BY THEIR EMPLOYER WITH RESPECT SHOULDN'T BE TOO MUCH TO ASK.”**

—CTA President **E. Toby Boyd**

## **Solidarity With Striking Educators**

State Council stood in solidarity with Sacramento City Teachers Association members as they entered the fourth day of their strike. There were requests to support SCTA's strike fund, as well as the fund for Rohnert Park Cotati Educators Association, which had won a fair contract after six days on strike.

“It's a shame that so many locals are having to deal with even the potential for a strike. Educators rose to the challenge of the pandemic with tremendous skill and grace. Being treated by their employer with respect shouldn't be too much to ask,” Boyd said. “School districts argue that they can't afford to pay their teachers and education support professionals more. This is almost universally simply untrue.” →

## Honoring Our Own

State Council honored the five California Teachers of the Year, all CTA members: Alondra Diaz, Saddleback Valley Educators Association; Nichi Avina, Palm Springs Teachers Association; Sovantevy “Sovey” Long-Latteri, Fullerton Secondary Teachers Organization; Tiffany Jokerst, Grossmont Education Association; and Virginia Vasquez, Alhambra Teachers Association. Diaz, California’s nominee for National Teacher of the Year, gave a passionate speech on behalf of the five winners that drove many in the audience to tears.

Members also honored the Paula J. Monroe CTA Education Support Professional of the Year, Mary Ambriz, a member of Redlands Education Support Professionals Association. The CTA Women’s Rights Committee shared a Women’s History Month presentation, and the CTA Hispanic Caucus honored legendary organizers César Chávez and Dolores Huerta.

## Taking Care of Business

CTA Executive Director Joe Boyd praised educators for their fortitude during the pandemic. “What you have done for safe schools, vaccines for our staff, keeping kids safe, keeping communities healthy and our schools functioning, is nothing short of heroic,” he said. “Yes, it’s been a mighty struggle and it will continue to be a struggle, but if we aren’t struggling, we aren’t organizing.”

CTA Vice President David B. Goldberg moderated a forum on fossil fuel investments by CalSTRS (see sidebar). “This forum came out of a democratic process by State Council,” he said. “How do we protect our retirement, and how do we take care of our planet?”

The following members were elected by State Council:

- Angela Normand, CTA Board of Directors District C
- Mike Patterson, CTA Board of Directors District D
- Margie Granado, CTA Board of Directors District L
- Kisha Borden, CTA Board of Directors District P
- DeWayne Sheaffer, CTA Board of Directors District Q
- Roberta “Robbie” Kreitz, NEA Coordinating Director
- Laura Finco, NEA Alternate Director Seat 1
- Luciano Ortiz, NEA Alternate Director Seat 3
- Mayra Alvarado, CTA/ABC Committee District C
- Jennifer Wilkin, CTA/ABC Committee District F
- Wendy Eccles, CTA/ABC Committee District K
- Lorraine Richards, CTA/ABC Committee District L
- Jessica Merschtina, CTA/ABC Committee District P
- Patrick Mitchell, CTA/ABC Committee District Q
- Andrea Reyna, CTA/ABC Committee At-Large

CTA State Council of Education next meets May 20-22 in Los Angeles. ■

## Fossil Fuel Investments: Divest or Transition?

### Debate continued at State Council forum

By **Julian Peebles**

**A LONG-STANDING** discussion about fossil fuel investments by the State Teachers’ Retirement System (CalSTRS) continued during a forum held at the State Council of Education meeting in March.

The 90-minute session looked at the best path forward to address the climate crisis in relation to approximately \$6 billion in investments in fossil fuel producers held by CalSTRS. Hosted by CTA Vice President David Goldberg, the forum focused on two approaches: immediate divestment from all fossil fuels versus a gradual transition to fossil fuel net zero by 2050.

“We have got to get to 100 percent clean renewable energy as fast as possible, which means we have to dismantle the fossil fuel industry as fast as possible,” said Mark Norberg, a member of Burbank Teachers Association, who spoke in favor of divestment. “We can do this. We have the influence to quite literally save the planet.”

On the transition side, CalSTRS Deputy Chief Investment Officer Scott Chan said divestment has a potential loss of \$20 billion for the fund. He said CalSTRS’ path to net zero includes engaging companies, influencing policies, investing in climate solutions, and managing risk.

“If our move to net zero undermines our ability to pay the pension promise, then we need to put the brakes on it,” said Harry Keiley, CalSTRS Board chair and member of Santa Monica-Malibu Classroom Teachers Association.

At the meeting, State Council took a “Watch” position on SB 1173 (Gonzalez), which would prohibit CalSTRS from making or renewing investments in fossil fuels and require full divestment by July 1, 2027. The bill is awaiting hearings in multiple legislative committees.

For more information on CalSTRS’ transition approach, visit [calstrs.com/path-to-net-zero](https://calstrs.com/path-to-net-zero). To learn more about the divestment approach, visit [ctadivest.org](https://ctadivest.org) (a pro-divestment website not endorsed by CTA).



Continued from page 52

Got something for these pages — a book, blog, album, video, podcast or other creation? 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.



## O&M Comic Books

Roselle Tamayo is a certified orientation and mobility (O&M) specialist and United Educators of San Francisco member. She is also an editor of a series of educational comic books called *My O&M*, written and illustrated by Lorena Cipri. The comics are designed to help educate people about the importance of O&M services for students with visual impairments, teaching them safe, efficient, effective travel skills. "We are passionate O&M teachers, who just want to share more about our field," says Tamayo.

The 12-page comic books are designed for grades 1, 2, 8, 10, 11 and 12, and include descriptions of various visual impairments. Each comic has a

main character who shares their story of how O&M helps them to further develop their independence. Tamayo edited *My O&M in the 1st Grade: Inclusion, Independence, and Sensorimotor Development*, as well as the 11th and 12th grade comics.

*My O&M* comics can be used by teachers as a supplemental educational tool in the classroom. They are colorful and easy to read, and are available in large print and Braille. On [lakonikarts.com](http://lakonikarts.com).

## The Many Wonders of Black

Black is a wonderful color. Black is special. It is true. It's the sky when the morning is new.

*Black: The Many Wonders of My World* is a new picture book from author Nancy Johnson James, San Leandro Teachers Association, and illustrator Constance Moore, Alameda Education Association, the team that created *Brown: The Many Shades of Love*. In this loving and lovely celebration of the color black, a girl describes the many wonders of her world — from the black of starry nights to her own black eyes, clear and bright. On Amazon.



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# Lit From Within

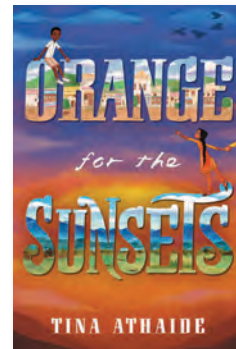
Often educators' creativity spills over into a book, blog, app or other work. We're happy to showcase members' talents.

## Tales of Upheaval, Mindfulness

**TINA ATHAIDE** is a 30-year educator who works at Santa Rosa Academy, a newly unionized charter school in Menifee. Her debut as a writer was *Orange for the Sunsets* (grades 6-7), an award-winning book inspired by her childhood in Uganda. It follows two friends, Asha (Asian Indian) and Yesofu (African Ugandan), who've never cared about their differences until Idi Amin announces that Indians have 90 days to leave the country. As tensions between Indians and Africans intensify, the pair find that nothing seems sure — not even their friendship. Could the bravest thing of all be to let each other go?

Athaide has also published *Meena's Mindful Moment* (grades pre-K-2), a picture book with illustrations by Åsa Gilland. Meena is a rambunctious child whose energy becomes an imaginary character she calls her hurly-burly hullabaloo. But when Meena makes a mess, her grandfather teaches her how to handle it with deep breaths and meditative poses.

Both books are on multiple outlets online. Athaide offers activity guides and other teaching resources at [tinaathaide.com](http://tinaathaide.com).



## Bully on the Ballot

**TRACY WADDLES**

**WILLIAMS**, special education teacher and United Teachers Los Angeles member, has written *No, Mr. President, That's Not OK!* It's a timely, funny children's book with a multicultural cast of children of diverse races and abilities, illustrated by Uroosa Aslam Faiq. It's also a multisubject teaching tool featuring the election process, which tackles social-emotional issues such as bullying and treating other people fairly.

Ronald, an overly confident fifth grader, enters the race to become the president of his grade level. He uses bullying and manipulation to win. When he continues to use these same tactics while president, his classmates begin to fear him, causing him to question his leadership abilities. He speaks with his dad and realizes he must become a better president and friend. But how?

Available on Amazon and [thatstnotok.us](http://thatstnotok.us).



## Honoring the Children of the Holocaust

**IN 2008**, Lisa Liss, an educator at Woodlake Elementary in Sacramento and member of Twin Rivers United Educators, embarked on an awe-inspiring commitment with her students: collecting 1.5 million bandages to honor the lives of children killed in the Holocaust. In June 2019, they reached their goal.

The Bandage Project was spearheaded by a group of fourth graders who called themselves "Tolerance Kids," and was continued by students over the years. Bandages were donated from classrooms and communities all over the world. Liss and her students would write the name of a child victim of the Holocaust on each bandage.

A glass case with the bandages is now on display at the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, next to the Anne Frank exhibit.

Liss wrote a book, *Bandage Project*, documenting what it took to complete the project and sharing inspiring moments, such as a visit from the director of the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam. Liss hopes the book will inspire others to make a difference in the world.

The book is available from Liss: [@lissaliss22](mailto:@lissaliss22) (Venmo) or [txpuppywoman22@gmail.com](mailto:txpuppywoman22@gmail.com). Visit [bandageproject.com](http://bandageproject.com).



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**EDUCATORS ARE CENTRAL** to students’ lives and our schools and communities. Their work ensures students’ academic growth and success, as well as student and family health and well-being. Because of what they do, our future is bright!

**California Day of the Teacher** is May 11. **National School Nurse Day** is also May 11, during National Nurse Week (May 6–12). **CTA ESP Day** is May 17, during ESP Week (May 15–21).

Display this poster in your classroom or school hallway. Ideas to show educators how much you appreciate their work:

- Use hashtags **#DayOfTheTeacher**, **#SchoolNurseDay** and **#ESPDAY** on social media to thank them.
- Have students make and deliver cards.
- Consider food, gift cards and other items.

Find resources and more ideas at [cta.org/dayoftheteacher](https://cta.org/dayoftheteacher) and [cta.org/espday](https://cta.org/espday).

Artist: Camila Gray,  
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