

# california educator

FEBRUARY / MARCH 2023 VOLUME 27 ISSUE 4

**SCHOOL  
LAYOFFS:**  
*What you  
should know*  
PAGE 32

*Storytelling  
project lifts  
student voices*  
PAGE 26



## COMMUNITY SCHOOLS 5 STEPS TO SUCCESS

PAGE 16





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# california educator

VOLUME 27 ISSUE 4



## #WeAreCTA

### OUR VOICE, OUR UNION, OUR PROFESSION

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

#### MAGAZINE

##### BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Educators teach, celebrate history as well as Black Lives Matter at School. **PAGE 14**


##### CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

Learn more about those running for CTA officer positions this spring. **PAGE 52**

##### LEGAL BEAT: LAYOFFS

Steps you can take to prepare and protect yourself in school reductions in force. **PAGE 32**

##### METAMORPHOSIS

Students' lives, growth and voices reflected in school storytelling project **PAGE 26** 

#### DIGITAL

##### YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLBOX

New column on tools that work effectively across any platform. This issue: The power of data. **PAGE 38**



##### READ ACROSS AMERICA

March 2 is the day, but find recommended books to read to students all year round. **PAGE 10** [cta.org/careads](https://cta.org/careads), [nea.org/readacrossamerica](https://nea.org/readacrossamerica)

##### STANDARDIZED TESTING

Parents can opt out of high-stakes testing for their child — but know your rights when communicating with them. **PAGE 33** [cta.org/optout](https://cta.org/optout)

#### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

##### AWARDS, GRANTS

Opportunities for you and your students to showcase your talents and great ideas. **PAGES 11-12** [cta.org/awards](https://cta.org/awards)

##### LEADERSHIP TRAINING

BIPOC members interested in expanding their roles in CTA should apply for the Ethnic Minority Early Identification and Development program. **PAGE 11** [cta.org/emeid](https://cta.org/emeid)

##### NEW EDUCATOR WEEKEND

New-ish to teaching and want to improve your skills? CTA's NEW is for you! March 10-12 in Santa Clara. **PAGE 9** [cta.org/conferences](https://cta.org/conferences)

#### MEMBER BENEFITS

##### CTA DISASTER RELIEF FUND

Members who experience significant losses due to natural and other disasters in California may be eligible for assistance through the CTA Disaster Relief Fund. **PAGE 12** [cta.org/drif](https://cta.org/drif)

##### SPRING BREAK PLANS?

Get great deals on spring and summer getaways at CTA's Access to Savings. Plus: everyday discounts on food, clothing, more. [CTAMemberBenefits.org/access](https://CTAMemberBenefits.org/access)

Photo: Got Calm yet? CTA Member Benefits offers a free subscription to the relaxation and meditation app. Story on p. 47.





## COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: 5 STEPS TO SUCCESS

They're a proven model that serves the whole child, benefiting all students, families and communities

PAGE 16

## METAMORPHOSIS

Carrying Stories project elevates words and experiences to shine light on students' lives

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## CELEBRATING BLACK LIVES AT SCHOOL

Inclusion matters in February and all year round

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Top illustration and cover illustration by Audrey Chan. Middle photo: Fresno High School student shows his "Carrying Stories" project. Bottom photo: San Jose performing arts educator Veronica Talton, left, with a deejay friend in a teaching moment for students.



**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)



Jeff Smallwood and student, left; Salinas Surf Club students, right.

## Making Waves — in Salinas

[Re: our story on the Salinas Surf Club, Dec. 2022/Jan. 2023], our community has embraced this outstanding program. We are grateful to Mr. Jeff Smallwood for providing the opportunity for our youth. It is bringing together families and organizations from across Monterey County. Mr. Smallwood is to be commended for the time and effort he has given over the past six years. He is a shining example of the difference one teacher can make in the classroom, school and community.

**LI WILLIAMS**

*Former Special Education teacher, Salinas*



## A Missed Byline

We were so excited to present to readers our annual Innovation Issue (Dec. 2022/Jan. 2023) and the nine educators doing such creative and stellar work that we inadvertently left out the writer's name. **Sherry Posnick Goodwin** reported and wrote the stories we featured in the package, and we regret the omission.



## CTA Year in Review

**CTA's latest annual report** covers the period from September 2021 through August 2022, and showcases our extensive work to reach, teach, support and protect students, further public education, and build a just society.

As we emerged from the most difficult months of the pandemic, CTA led the charge for the resources our communities need and the public schools our students deserve. United by our dedication to our students, communities and the belief that education is the cornerstone of our democracy, CTA members showed that when we rise together, we are unstoppable.

Thank you for your time and effort to make these victories a reality. Visit [cta.org/cta-year-in-review-2021-2022](https://cta.org/cta-year-in-review-2021-2022) to learn more. [#WeAreCTA](https://twitter.com/WeAreCTA)

*Photo: CTA delegates at 2022 NEA Representative Assembly.*

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For our full social media directory, see [cta.org/social](https://cta.org/social).

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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

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

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CTA/NEA membership dues for the fiscal year (Sept. 1, 2022, to Aug. 31, 2023) are \$972, including a \$20 refundable contribution (see [cta.org/contribution](https://cta.org/contribution) for details). \$22.65 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 \$37.65 not deductible for income tax purposes. Please consult your tax adviser.

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

## CALIFORNIA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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# The Educator Superpower

**I HAVE MIXED FEELINGS** as I write this column. This is the home stretch of my presidency. While I'm tempted to look back and reflect, I can't... not just yet. I must continue full speed ahead with both hands on the wheel for the time being. Why? Well, because we have a lot of work to do and with that comes both opportunities and challenges. I am of course very optimistic about how CTA will create and seize opportunities and how, together, we'll meet any challenges that come our way.

One of my favorite things to do as your union president is to visit members around the state. Without exception, every time I hit the road, I am inspired by the dedication and care you show your students, the stories and experiences you share, and by how you meet challenges as educators and as a community.

I am pleased to report that the forecast is: bright futures. It's no secret that some public schools have access to more resources and safeguards than others, but it's also no secret that the educator superpower almost always involves heroic actions to make sure all students have equitable learning opportunities regardless of their zip code.

Often someone will ask why we care about the budget and the legislature... and voting. That's a good question and one that I can answer.

Gov. Newsom presented his 2023-24 state budget last month. Despite a \$22.5 billion deficit, he made good on his ongoing commitment to public education, and it looks like another record year for public school funding in California. This is one of the many reasons we care about voting. Electing leaders who share our values and goals for California's students and neighborhood public schools means they will show up in good times and in bad, just like Gov. Newsom did.

Overall, California per-pupil expenditures next school year will reach about \$22,000. For context, just 12 years ago that amount was \$7,000. That's a gain that directly benefits our students and why the budget, the legislature and voting matters.

While we're making steady progress in the climb from near the bottom of the 50 states in per-pupil funding, we should be at the top given that California is the fourth largest economy in the world. I have faith in all of us and know we will continue moving in the right direction.

A critical matter that needs our attention is the educator shortage crisis. The CTA Board of Directors created the New Educator Pipeline and Support workgroup that will make recommendations to address this crisis in the next couple of months. The governor and the legislature will be instrumental in adopting policies to attract and retain the



quality educators our students need and deserve.

In the meantime, we should encourage people to become educators. We can start by sharing our love of the profession with our own students and inspiring some of them to join us when they decide on a career. Think about why you got into teaching or another part of the education profession. When were those seeds planted? We should be planting those seeds with our own students. We need to inspire young people to enter the profession, and then make sure they have the tools, respect and support they need once they're here.

Community schools provide students with those tools and support. CTA is involved in every step as we build and transform many of our schools. I've seen firsthand the great things happening with these schools, based on a shared leadership model and democratically run from the bottom up. That means educators, district officials, parents and community partners work together to create learning environments and identify programs and services that local students need most. Our cover story "Building a Movement in School Communities" (p. 16) explains this transformational work.

I hope our paths cross when I visit your local or region. Until then, thank you for using your superpower to pave the way to success for your students and your community.

**E. Toby Boyd**

CTA PRESIDENT  
@etobyboyd



# Living a Better Day

**FOR MANY**, including me, a mass of data points — numbers, factoids, statistics — is just that: a mass, often hard to decipher for big-picture meaning. But as our new column **“Building Your Social Media Toolbox”** (page 38) explains, highlighting a single data point on Facebook or other platforms can be incredibly effective and powerful.

Consider the graphic above, which ran on CTA social media on International Women's Day 2022. (IWD is on March 8 this year, see page 8.) The fact that *women in union jobs earn almost one-third more per week than those in non-union jobs* is stunning, a stat that easily conveys a larger point. While focused, concise messaging is essential for social media, it works for much of what we want to communicate in today's universe of short attention spans.

Framing the message is critical as well - literally. In her Carrying Stories project, Fresno High School teacher Marina Santos chose a butterfly motif for the art and text that students use to present their story to the world (**“Metamorphosis,”** page 26). The visual impact of the colorful backgrounds and handwritten words help elevate student voices and life experiences.

These are voices and experiences that must be heard. One student writes of silently screaming at the grinding poverty and intolerable conditions he and his mother endure in Mexico. After a grueling border crossing, he enrolls in Fresno High and envisions his future: “This is where his legacy would begin...As time went on [he] grew into the man he had always dreamt to be...He was able to provide stable living conditions and love his family unconditionally. He was no longer dreaming of a better day, he was living a better day.”

Living a better day — with opportunity and meaningful supports for students — are what community schools are



all about. **“Building a Movement in School Communities,”** page 16, tells of the steps needed to make them a reality. Funding is important. But ongoing collaboration is crucial. As the story describes, students, parents and community partners are joining educators and districts across California to build and transition schools into hubs that serve the whole child and benefit families, neighborhoods and cities. In some cases, educators and partners are putting structures in place so when districts and funding are ready, plans can come together quickly.

Educators play major roles in this growing equity movement. “It’s exciting and invigorating to do this work,” says Elizabeth Kocharian, a high school teacher working as a community schools coordinator for Montebello Teachers Association. “We all know the challenges our families are facing but now we have the opportunity to help them.”

There is much opportunity for you, too, in the following pages: conferences, trainings, workshops to refresh your professional skills; and grants, scholarships and awards for you and your students (pages 9-12). Let me know what else you’d like to see in the Educator, and thanks for reading.

**Katharine Fong**

EDITOR IN CHIEF

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February / March 2023

# CALENDAR



## March Is Music in Our Schools Month

Get involved and help promote the importance of school music programs! The National Association for Music in Education offers lessons for multiple grade levels that are free to teachers to use and share at [nafme.org/programs/miosm](https://nafme.org/programs/miosm).



## Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. In 2020-21, the number of public school students who received special education services was 7.2 million, or 15 percent of all public school students. With the right supports, these students can be included in and contribute to all areas of school and community life. Read CTA's stance on education for those with developmental disabilities at [cta.org/our-advocacy/special-education](https://cta.org/our-advocacy/special-education).

*Artwork: National Assn. of Councils on Developmental Disabilities.*

# CELEBRATE WOMEN!

The 2023 theme for **International Women's Day** on March 8 is **#EmbraceEquity**. Equity means creating a fair and equal world. Each one of us can actively support and embrace equity within our own sphere of influence. We can all challenge gender stereotypes, call out discrimination, draw attention to bias and seek out inclusion. Encourage and rally friends, family, colleagues and community to embrace equity and work collectively to impact positive change. To get involved and find ideas for action, go to [internationalwomensday.com](https://internationalwomensday.com).

March is also **National Women's History Month**; this year, the theme is "Celebrating women who tell our stories." This includes women, past and present, who have been active in all forms of media and storytelling — writers, songwriters, scholars, playwrights, performers and more. Use the month to teach students about significant women's voices who have expanded our understanding and strengthened our connections with each other. Visit [nationalwomenshistoryalliance.org](https://nationalwomenshistoryalliance.org) for more.





## New Educator Weekend North **MAR. 10-12** Santa Clara Marriott

New-ish to teaching and want to improve your skills, better manage your classroom and be a more effective educator? CTA's New Educator Weekend (NEW) is for you!

NEW focuses on what teachers need to know to be successful in the classroom, with sessions focusing on classroom management, lesson plans, assessments, navigating IEPs, special education, behavior management, technology and working with colleagues. You'll be able to immediately apply what you learn to your classroom and school community.

Registration for CTA members is only \$49 for close to two full days of professional development, opportunities to network with other new teachers and access to top educators in the state. Booking deadline is Feb. 23, so hurry!

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

## NEA Foundation Awards for Teaching Excellence

**MAR. 3** NOMINATION DEADLINE

One CTA member will be chosen to compete for NEA Foundation's Awards for Teaching Excellence, presented at a gala in Washington, D.C. Five awardees receive \$10,000 each; one selected from the five receives \$25,000. CTA members and staff may nominate themselves.

► [cta.org/nea-foundation-awards](https://cta.org/nea-foundation-awards)

## Read Across America

**MARCH 2** EVENT

Celebrate this annual event by reading with your students! CTA's California Reads program offers teacher-recommended book selections year-round for students of all ages.

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

## CTA/NEA-Retired Issues Conference

**MARCH 16-17** CONFERENCE

Santa Clara Marriott. Learn how CTA/NEA-Retired is protecting your future and watching legislation that affects your benefits. Stay connected, be protected, and enjoy great benefits.

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

## Chavez/Huerta Awards

**MARCH 3** ENTRY DEADLINE

Cesar E. Chavez and Dolores Huerta Education Awards honor students who show they understand Chavez's guiding principles with a visual art project or written essay. Awards up to \$550 go to both the sponsoring CTA member and the student. ► [cta.org/scholarships](https://cta.org/scholarships)

## Equity and Human Rights Conference

**MARCH 17-19** Santa Clara Marriott.

Affirms CTA's mission to protect the civil rights of all people and secure a more equitable, democratic society. Speakers and workshops give members a greater understanding of diversity, equity and social justice.

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

## NEA National Leadership Summit

**MARCH 10-12** CONFERENCE

Moscone Convention Center, San Francisco.

"Joy, Justice, Excellence: The Strength of Educators. The Brilliance of Students. The Power of Community." To develop activist leaders and prepare them with the knowledge and skills necessary to lead thriving associations.

► [nea.org/leadershipsummit](https://nea.org/leadershipsummit)

## Spring CUE

**MARCH 16** CONFERENCE

Palm Springs Convention Center.

This educational technology conference by CUE (Computer-Using Educators) offers hundreds of sessions with keynotes from world-renowned educators.

► [cue.org](https://cue.org)

## Good Teaching Conference South

**MARCH 3-5, 2023**

Hyatt Regency Orange County, Garden Grove.

Supports excellent teaching practices with a variety of diverse workshops focused on curriculum content areas for K-12 teachers. Bonus pre-conference sessions: "Understanding and Addressing Challenging Behaviors," Thurs.,

March 2, 5:30-7 p.m. (virtual); and "Fill Your Toolbox with CTA/NEA Member Benefits & Resources," Fri., March 3, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Booking deadline: Feb. 13.

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

## NEA ESP Conference

**MARCH 24-26, 2023**

Hyatt Regency, Seattle. The nation's premier professional development opportunity for education support professionals enhances ESPs' skills and knowledge.

► [nea.org/espconference](https://nea.org/espconference)

## John Swett Awards

**MARCH 3** NOMINATION DEADLINE

CTA's John Swett Awards for Media Excellence recognize media professionals for outstanding coverage of education during 2022, and student journalism. CTA local chapters and Service Center Councils may nominate.

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

## EMEID Leadership Program

**APRIL 7** APPLICATION DEADLINE

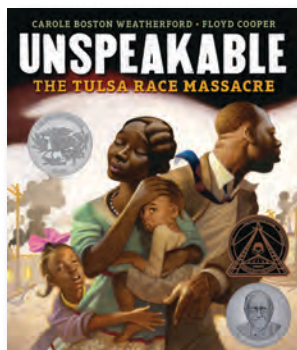
BIPOC members interested in CTA leadership roles may apply online to the Ethnic Minority Early Identification and Development program starting Feb. 17. Applicants will be notified by May 13. Participants will attend EMEID Orientation and Emerging Leaders Program at CTA's Summer Institute, July 22-27, 2023. ► [cta.org/emeid](https://cta.org/emeid)

# Read Across America Day:

## March 2



**GET READY** to celebrate with your students and school community with a focus on books and the written word, special guest readers and more. Find ideas and resources at [nea.org/event-ideas](https://nea.org/event-ideas). And yes, reading and literacy are year-round activities. Start with CTA's 2023 California Reads, teacher-vetted, engaging books for all grade levels — a few are mentioned below. Find them all at [cta.org/careads](https://cta.org/careads), where members can also find links to buy the books at a 20 percent discount. NEA offers a monthly calendar of recommended books, authors and teaching resources that promote diversity and inclusion at [nea.org/readacrossamerica](https://nea.org/readacrossamerica).



In *Unspeakable: The Tulsa Race Massacre*, author Carole Boston Weatherford and illustrator Floyd Cooper provide a powerful look at one of the worst incidents of racial violence in our nation's history. The book traces the history of African Americans in the Greenwood district of Tulsa, Oklahoma, and chronicles the devastation that occurred in 1921 when a white mob attacked the Black community. News of what happened was largely suppressed, and no official investigation occurred for 75 years. This picture book sensitively introduces readers in grades 6-8 to this tragedy and concludes with a call for a better future. A free educator guide is available to download.



What do you do when an octopus captures Grandma? Put on your superhero cape and rescue her! *Octopus Stew's* author/artist Eric Velasquez, the son of Afro-Puerto Rican parents who encouraged music and storytelling, draws from his upbringing to present an imaginative, hilarious story about family, food, creativity and more. English text intertwines with Spanish phrases; included are a glossary and a recipe for — octopus stew. For grades 1-2.



In *Swishing*, by author Victoria Monroe and illustrated by Shawn Richardson, grade 3-5 readers are taken along on Victorica's journey of identifying as deafblind, facing prejudice and playing basketball. The book explores important topics such as diversity, acceptance and discovering identities. Also included are questions for pre-reading and post-reading discussion.



▼ The 2022 EMEID cohort.



## CTA Leadership Training

**Are you a CTA member** and educator of color? Are you interested in broadening your knowledge of your union and exploring leadership opportunities? Read on!

CTA's Ethnic Minority Early Identification and Development (EMEID) program identifies Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) CTA members who are interested in expanding their roles in CTA. EMEID's goal is to increase the number of BIPOC CTA leaders in roles such as president, bargaining chair, State Council delegate, Service Center Council chair and officers and other positions.

The program builds on existing CTA/NEA programs, trainings, conferences and events and incorporates interaction and coaching with local chapters, CTA and NEA leadership and CTA staff. Participants are paired with a coach who assists them in defining goals and identifying appropriate steps to achieve those goals.

**Applications for the 2023-24 EMEID cohort are being accepted now through April 7.** Members selected to participate in the program must commit to attend the EMEID Orientation on Sat., July 22, as well as the Emerging Leaders Program at CTA's Summer Institute held Sun.-Thurs., July 23-27. For more information and a link to the application, visit [cta.org/emeid](https://cta.org/emeid).



## Awards for Teaching Excellence

**The NEA Foundation Awards for Teaching Excellence** recognize, reward and promote both excellence in teaching and advocacy for the profession. Educators who are recognized "impart not just knowledge but love of learning and discovery." The awards are presented jointly by the National Education Association (NEA) and the NEA Foundation. More information and the nomination packet are at [cta.org/awards](https://cta.org/awards) (under "NEA Grants and Awards"). Deadline is March 3.

## Grants for Your Great Ideas

### CTA's Institute for Teaching (IFT)

works to create better teaching and learning conditions in our public schools by promoting strength-based, teacher-driven change. This model lets educators provide an asset-based approach to emphasize talents over weaknesses and strengths over deficits to create a learning environment that supports and encourages every student to do their best.

Among other initiatives, IFT awards grants directly to CTA members and local chapters to help implement their student-centered ideas and innovations. All CTA members are eligible to apply for an Educator grant (up to \$5,000) or an Impact grant (up to \$20,000).

The IFT grant application is now open and must be submitted online by March 31. Awarded IFT grants will be implemented during the 2023-2024 school year.

Find details, application materials, previous years' grant summaries, FAQs and more at [cta.org/IFT](https://cta.org/IFT). Need help with your application? IFT holds office hours on Tuesdays, 2-5 p.m.; call 916-288-4953. Or go to the IFT booking site (at [cta.org/IFT](https://cta.org/IFT)) to schedule a video conference during regular office hours. You can also contact IFT at [IFT@cta.org](mailto:IFT@cta.org).



## Honoring César Chávez and Dolores Huerta

Educators can celebrate the lives of labor and civil rights icons César Chávez and Dolores Huerta in March and April. **Cesar Chavez Day** is March 31, a state holiday in California. **Dolores Huerta Day** is on April 10, which this year marks her 93rd birthday.

Show students that change is possible through the lessons of their lives. The State Board of Education offers model curriculum and resources about Chávez's life and work, for all grade levels, at [chavez.cde.ca.gov](http://chavez.cde.ca.gov). Several years ago, a team of educators including CTA members worked with the Dolores Huerta Foundation to develop K-12 curriculum based on Huerta's life and legacy; find it at [doloreshuerta.org](http://doloreshuerta.org).

## Enter the César E. Chávez and Dolores Huerta Education Award Program

This program provides recognition for educators and their students who demonstrate an understanding of the vision and guiding principles embraced by César E. Chávez and Dolores Huerta. Categories include written essays and visual art. Pre-K to higher education students and their sponsoring CTA member educators can receive up to \$550 each. Deadline is March 3; for details, go to [cta.org/chavez-huerta-award](http://cta.org/chavez-huerta-award).

Heads up! There will be a silent auction of past recipients' artwork at CTA's Equity and Human Rights Conference, March 17-19 in Santa Clara. For conference information go to [cta.org/conferences](http://cta.org/conferences).



2022 winning artwork by Eveline Garcia (teacher Blanca E. Munoz), then in 9th grade, Napa High School



## CTA Is Here for You

Members who experience significant losses due to natural and other disasters in California — such as what may have occurred during recent storms — may be eligible for assistance through the CTA Disaster Relief Fund.

Grants include:

**Standard Grant** — up to \$1,500 for significant economic hardship related to damage to primary residence, displacement or disruption in required utilities.

**Catastrophic Damage Grant** — recipients of the Standard Grant may be eligible for up to another \$1,500 if damages exceed \$50,000.

**Temporary Displacement Grant** — up to \$500 for those displaced from their primary residence as the result of a disaster, but who do not meet the requirements for a Standard Grant.

**School Site Grant** — members may receive up to \$500 for damage to their classroom or school site.

Find information about these and other grants and qualifications at [cta.org/drf](http://cta.org/drf), or call CTA Member Benefits at 650-552-5200.



# QUOTES & NUMBERS

Compiled by **Julian Peeples**

## 50

Percentage of California LGBTQ youth who identified school as an LGBTQ-affirming space, according to The Trevor Project's 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health. 30 percent identified home as an LGBTQ-affirming space.



Kim Cosier

*"Thank you to family and friends who witnessed today as we embarked on a new journey to recruit 10,000 counselors for our schools and to help young Californians learn to read by third grade."*

—TONY THURMOND, California Superintendent of Public Instruction, on his Facebook page following his Jan. 2 swearing-in ceremony in Sacramento.

## 48,000

University of California workers who went on strike for 40 days late last year — the largest higher education strike in American history. (The strike has since been settled.)

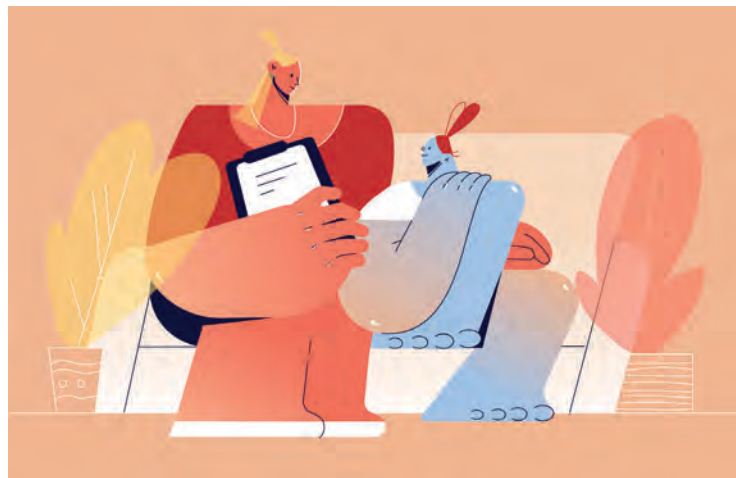
## \$6.1 BILLION

Amount of federal COVID-19 emergency funds that states passed on to districts that were used to meet students' academic, social, emotional and other needs, according to a recent report from U.S. Department of Education.



*"Parents and teachers have been with us the whole time. Fighting and pushing and believing in ourselves and what our kids deserve."*

—DAN NELSON, president of Ventura Unified Education Association, upon reaching a tentative agreement and ending a lengthy and difficult bargain in December.



## > 2,700

Number of school districts nationwide who used Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds for mental health supports, including hiring additional school counselors and school psychologists, and providing professional development for staff, according to K-12 Dive.

*"Teaching is a fickle beast. It is sometimes thankless, overwhelming and exhausting. It is also affirming, heartwarming and exciting. These two experiences occur simultaneously, making teaching a job where heart and passion need to be a factor."*



—KATI BEGEN, high school science educator and Fresno Teachers Association member, in a January EdSource column.

## 302

Number of school shootings nationwide in 2022, according to the K-12 School Shooting Database. A total of 332 people were shot in those tragic incidents.





▼ Veronica Talton sings at San Jose's State of the City address, as part of the Tabia African American Theatre Ensemble.



▼ Duan Kellum holds his screen print "GPA," a commentary on school shootings. Credit: Laarn Palec.



**"Black History Month is a time when we feel safe to celebrate who we are. It's a time of liberation, celebration and appreciation. I want to bring that to my students, my community and my union."**

**—Veronica Talton, Alum Rock Educators Association**

identify as Black, Indigenous or People of Color (BIPOC). In an effort to create a supportive affinity space for Black educators in Santa Clara County, Talton and a couple other Black teachers formed a group that meets regularly to support each other and collaborate and share.

Redlands Teachers Association member and high school educator Duan Kellum helps students explore issues of identity, social movements and unconscious bias in his ethnic studies class. He was part of a district committee that developed the ethnic studies curriculum for Redlands Unified, focusing on helping students get a better understanding of others and learning what it means to be an American through a different lens.

"Once you understand yourself, then you can start understanding others," Kellum says.

Kellum's class focuses on many perspectives — Sikhs, Arab and Muslim Americans, Latinx, Asians and Pacific Islanders, Native Americans and the fight for Black civil rights — and the intersectionality of their struggles. He incorporates the material in his curriculum throughout the year, not just during BHM.

"Black history is American history, and we include it with all the other histories whenever we can," says Kellum, a former CTA CADRE trainer in unconscious bias and sensitivity. "I think my presence in the classroom represents Black history, and the material we cover addresses it."

In addition to being an AVID and ethnic studies teacher, Kellum is an accomplished artist using screen-printing to shine a light on social and racial issues. He was vocally supportive of the Black Lives Matter protests nationwide in 2020, and his passion for social change is well-known at the high school and beyond.

Kellum incorporates art into his classes, asking students to utilize music, video or visual art to explore the identity

issues they cover in class. His classroom wall is covered with student creations that include pieces on gun violence, race, justice and LGBTQ+ identity. Kellum also holds screen-printing workshops on campus.

Kellum works to create safe spaces for his students, serving as adviser for the Wildcat Pride Student LGBTQ+ group and working to elevate student voices on issues like gender-neutral restrooms on campus and removing gender-based restrictions on the choice of colors for graduation gowns.

During the pandemic, Kellum co-opened another safe space — this time in San Bernardino. Creative Grounds studio is part of a broader movement to bring arts and culture back to San Bernardino. There, he's worked with local immigration coalitions to hold fundraisers and hosted a variety of community events, including book signings, monthly music events, youth poetry performances, LGBTQ+ events and a Dia de los Muertos celebration.

Attendees of last year's San Geronio Service Center Council Leadership Conference were treated to a crash course on Art for Union Leaders led by Kellum, where he discusses the history of union art and how to create signs that resonate.

Kellum says the most meaningful piece of his ethnic studies work is exposing his students to important and thought-provoking material that resonates inside them, helps them learn more about themselves and facilitates connections with others.

"These are our future leaders, lawmakers and innovators. There are students who are positively taking in this information and it's really rewarding," Kellum says. "What we do is powerful — and now I understand why there is so much opposition to it." ■



# BUILDING A MOVEMENT IN SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

By **Julian Peeples** Illustrations by **Audrey Chan**

**"IT'S EXCITING** and invigorating to do this work," says Elizabeth Kocharian, a Bell Gardens High School teacher on partial-release time working as a community schools coordinator for Montebello Teachers Association. "We all know the challenges our families are facing but now we have the opportunity to help them."

The movement to build transformative community schools continues to grow in districts throughout California, thanks to resources from the state's landmark \$4.1 billion investment and the efforts of educators and their local associations. With the first round of planning and implementation grants awarded in May 2022, school districts are developing and enacting plans to



build community schools that support the identified needs of their students and community.

During this first round of grants, local associations are generally encountering three distinct reactions from school districts: interested and willing to plan collaboratively with educators and stakeholders; interested but unwilling to work collaboratively; or uninformed and/or reluctant to apply. While each of these require a different response from locals in working toward the inclusive and collaborative planning needed to build community schools, the end goal is the negotiation of an agreement with the district outlining the shared governance structure for each community school.

A strong partnership between educators, parents, community and the school district are all vital pieces to a successful

community school, but the lack of a collaborative relationship with district management doesn't mean the community school effort grinds to a halt. Local associations are organizing in their communities, building relationships with parents, neighborhood groups and other organizations, and continuing necessary work to build community schools.

CTA and NEA have been at the forefront of efforts to build community schools, providing resources and guidance to educators and local associations as they embark on this important work. And now, CTA leaders and staff have developed a five-step path to help locals build member and community support.

Here are the steps to building successful community schools, as illustrated through the journeys of five local associations.

## FIVE STEPS TO *SUCCESS*

# 1

### STEP 1:

### BUILD CHAPTER LEADER SUPPORT

*Fairfield Suisun Unified Teachers Association  
(FSUTA)*

Members: 1,048

Nancy Dunn, president

Audrey Jacques, organizing chair



**When FSUTA President** Nancy Dunn first heard about community schools, it sounded a lot like the work Fairfield-Suisun educators were doing to build relationships in their community and capacity in their local. FSUTA applied and was selected for NEA's community schools cohort in 2021, also receiving a \$75,000 NEA grant. Dunn says that the district's superintendent is not interested in collaborative leadership, so FSUTA is focusing on building internal capacity, identifying new leaders, and developing





Nancy Dunn



Audrey Jacques

"We're building relationships with community partners, but we needed to build relationships among our members as well."

—Audrey Jacques, Fairfield Suisun Unified Teachers Association

partnerships to be ready when that changes.

Dunn says that community schools are a part of FSUTA's organizing plan, which she and Organizing Chair Audrey Jacques presented to both their executive board and representative council to build support among FSUTA leaders.

"Part of it is the commitment to writing it down and being able to go back to our policy-making bodies to say 'we committed to doing this,'" says Dunn.

FSUTA used the grant funds to release Jacques from the classroom to work full-time starting last February on organizing and community schools — engaging new members, building relationships and taking note of potential leaders.

"We've been able to identify a lot of members who were looking for something that spoke to them," says Jacques, explaining that FSUTA established four new caucuses to provide spaces for members to meet and share. "We're building relationships with community partners, but we needed to build relationships among our members as well."

Dunn says FSUTA made changes to their structure to enhance member voice in the local and share leadership responsibilities among more members. Jacques is building action teams at school sites, creating new links between educators and their union, and developing collaborative leadership in FSUTA as a model for when they have district leadership willing to work together to support students and their families.

"We're hitting all of the notes, so when the ability to collaborate becomes available, we're ready to go," says Dunn. "We have all the pieces in place other than the district."



## 2

### STEP 2: BUILD EDUCATOR AND STUDENT SUPPORT

Natomas Teachers Association (NTA)

Members: 695

Mara Harvey, president

**NTA's advocacy** for community schools in the early stages of Natomas Unified's planning grant application led to strong foundations for building a collaborative process.



Mara Harvey

President Mara Harvey says the local continues to share resources with district administrators to ensure effective implementation, including development of shared leadership structures. NTA is focusing on working with members at the district's selected community school site and districtwide to help foster understanding

about the potential impact of community schools.

"We're working to ensure educators and parents have voices in schools. That's an exciting idea for



*"We want to have a collaborative relationship. It's about setting up a structure, so everyone has a voice."*

—Mara Harvey, *Natomas Teachers Association*  
(if run in this story, no attribution because only one person in story)

educators," says Harvey. "There's this huge well of opportunities for our students. A lot of people are excited to get the resources to our families."

Harvey says they are currently analyzing community needs at their future community school site to determine what supports are necessary when it opens next school year. That information will be used to help identify potential needs in other schools.

"The more resources we can get to our students, the better," Harvey says. "It's exciting to me because education is about bringing your community together."

Harvey says talks are ongoing between NTA and Natomas Unified to reach a memorandum of understanding about shared governance.

"How do we guarantee a role in leadership in this effort? We see it as fundamental to the success of community schools. That is really the key piece," she says. "We want to have a collaborative relationship. It's about setting up a structure, so everyone has a voice."

Harvey says it has been helpful to have a neighboring local — Twin Rivers United Educators — that is a couple years ahead on the community schools timeline and willing to provide advice and support as needed. For local associations just starting, she recommends reaching out to fellow CTA leaders building community schools in their districts.

"What are other districts doing and how can that work for us," Harvey asks, adding that CTA support has been invaluable. "CTA has been really strong behind us and there's so much excitement about it."



# 3

## STEP 3: BUILD PARENT AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

*Sacramento City Teachers Association (SCTA)*  
Members: 3,036  
Nikki Milevsky, vice president

**Sac City TA** made a community schools proposal that the school district refused to even discuss during bargaining leading up to their strike last March, but that hasn't stopped educators from moving forward with plans to build community schools in Sacramento. This includes successful action at the ballot box in the November 2022 election.

"Community schools fit very tightly with priorities we set in 2016 and build an avenue for things we want to accomplish for our students," SCTA Vice President Nikki Milevsky says.

During their strike, three parents led more than 50 parents, students and community members in

*"It's amazing how similar educators' thoughts are to parents' and the community's thoughts. The goal is the success of our students."*

—Nikki Milevsky, *Sacramento City Teachers Association*



▼ Nikki Milevsky and SCTA ran a school board campaign last year to elect leaders who would direct district management to collaborate with educators and the community on, among other issues, community schools. Three SCTA-supported candidates won, flipping the board and changing the direction of the district.



occupying the school district office and demanding to speak to the superintendent, signifying the community's solidarity with educators and helping lead to Sac City TA's settlement victory that ended the eight-day strike. SCTA hired one of those parents to work as a community schools organizer and help build relationships.

"She's been doing a great job organizing parents and school site councils for community schools," Milevsky says. "It's just amazing how similar educators' thoughts are to parents' and the community's thoughts. The goal is the success of our students."

Knowing that they would make no progress on community schools as long as their superintendent lacked the desire to work with them, SCTA set out on an ambitious school board campaign last year to elect leaders who would direct district management to collaborate with educators and the community. SCTA mounted an extensive community-based campaign, supporting a CTA educator and two community members who emerged during the strike as community leaders. In a massive victory, all three won election, flipping the school board and changing the direction of the district.

"That's been a critical step in moving forward for community schools," Milevsky says. "The teachers and community are going to fight to get true community schools for our students."

Milevsky recommends working with community and parent groups to learn about their needs and wishes for their students. She says it was inspiring to hear from other locals and working community school coordinators at last year's Summer Institute and learn from their experiences.

"We've found CTA and NEA support to be invaluable in this effort," Milevsky says. "It's so powerful to know you're not alone."



# 4

## STEP 4: PLAN COLLABORATIVELY WITH THE DISTRICT

*Montebello Teachers Association (MTA)*

Members: 1,333

David Navar, president

**Montebello educators** are planning for community schools on the ground and at the bargaining table, with MTA making a community schools contract proposal late last year that outlines structures for shared leadership. MTA reached a tentative agreement in January on a new community schools article

in their contract, which establishes a joint steering committee that will make recommendations regarding the implementation of the community schools program, including applying for an implementation grant from the state. While the grant would provide necessary resources, President David Navar says MTA educators are ready to build community



David Navar

schools in Montebello, regardless of the outcome.

"We want community schools in our district whether we get the grant or not," Navar says.



▼ MTA leaders attended last year's Montebello Eggstravaganza to engage the community about the benefits of community schools and build support.



**"The school board knows that MTA is leading the charge for community schools. Our students are who this was made for."**

—David Navar, Montebello Teachers Association

In 2021, MTA received a \$75,000 grant from NEA for community schools planning, which they used to organize internally and release a teacher full-time to work on community schools (see sidebar). MTA held a community schools public forum and a series of trainings on leadership development, inviting educators, parents and community organizations to participate. Navar says these sessions were wildly popular and important in building their movement.

"We need to be ready from an organizational perspective to demand and win community schools," he says. "The school board knows that MTA is leading the charge for community schools. It is in the minds of people that this is the focus of our association."

MTA adopted an educational justice resolution in 2021, which Navar says aligns with the goals of community schools. MTA is currently building capacity for the community schools effort, which includes educating members and the community about the power of these spaces. He's also hoping that district management will better embrace community schools — their responses have been tepid at times and collaboration lacking, according to Navar.

The groundwork continues to build community schools in Montebello, where Navar notes the amount of work they've done organizing and planning without yet having one (Note: There is a community school in Montebello, but it is funded by Los Angeles County Office of Education). He can't wait until these efforts come to fruition.

"Our students are who this was made for," Navar says.



## 5

### STEP 5: BUILD STRUCTURES FOR SHARED DECISION-MAKING

Vista Teachers Association (VTA)

Members: 1,255

Keri Avila, president

**Things are moving** fast in Vista Unified, where the district is in the process of implementing five community schools. VTA President Keri Avila says schools at the district had already been providing wraparound services to students and families, so the community school model was a natural fit.



Keri Avila

"It's an aggressive plan, so we're implementing while we're figuring it out," Avila says.

The district's community schools steering committee includes VTA educators, but not education support professionals, parents or community — so Avila says VTA worked to ensure those voices are on site-level

**"Our community school model is an aggressive plan, so we're implementing while we're figuring it out."**

—Keri Avila, Vista Teachers Association



committees. Each of the district's community schools will have a community school coordinator, family liaison, school counselor and an additional full-time position, which Avila says could potentially be used to focus on personalized instruction.

With things moving quickly, Avila met with educators at the soon-to-be community schools to discuss the model and answer questions. VTA accepted an invitation from Anaheim Secondary Teachers Association to visit a community school there, bringing along educators, the district's community schools coordinator and a parent — who has become a staunch advocate for the same transformative experiences in Vista. Now, VTA and the district are building shared leadership structures.

"It really brought it home to see how Anaheim was doing shared leadership," Avila says. "It made us think about how we can build community schools like this in Vista and how can we get people to support them?"

Avila is working with the school board to craft a community schools resolution. She says it's an ongoing effort to get management to share power, noting that "being a part of the conversation is a good place to start." When VTA hit roadblocks with district-level management, Avila says they transitioned to working with school site administrators to share information and collaborate on community schools, building their local movement together.

"We could do a demand-to-bargain for all these things, but if we are working together on shared leadership, then that's not necessary," she says. "We're making sure the boxes aren't just being checked, and the collaboration is authentic and real."

## MONTEBELLO: EDUCATOR ON FULL RELEASE FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

**Elizabeth Kocharian** became fully immersed in the community schools movement last October, transitioning from teaching governance structures to Bell Gardens High School students to organizing and building them as a community schools coordinator for Montebello Teachers Association.

The 20-year history and government educator was on full and is currently on partial release time from the classroom, building relationships between educators and parents, community groups and the school district. Kocharian works closely with fellow teachers to create workshops and sessions to develop the foundational knowledge necessary to create transformative experiences for Montebello students. She's excited to work to build community schools in her hometown.

"We know our students and our families. We know what we need. And this is our opportunity to create schools where every student gets what they need to succeed every day," Kocharian says. "Being on release is really important — this isn't something you can do well if you're working in the classroom."

Kocharian is getting help and support from fellow educators. She attended the community schools strand at last year's Summer Institute, meeting members doing similar work from locals including Chula Vista Educators and United Educators of San Francisco, and joining a Slack channel set up by them to share information about community schools and their efforts.

Kocharian says MTA's adoption of an educational justice resolution in 2021 was the impetus to go further and learn more about community schools.

"It really expanded my view of what a community school can be, and the possibilities are limitless. We don't have to model our school like anyone else," Kocharian says. "How do we create educational justice and what does that even look like for our students?"

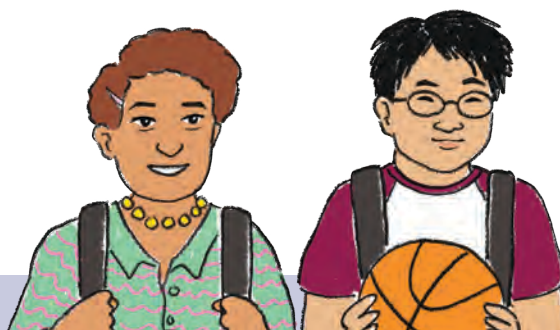
Looking ahead, Kocharian is hoping that one to three Montebello schools apply to be community schools by June, as they continue to develop the structures for shared leadership.

"MTA is building a model for how to meet every student's needs and engage the entire family in collaborative leadership," she says. "I want this to be sustainable, and that's the only way we can guarantee it will continue."



Elizabeth Kocharian

*"This is our opportunity to create schools where every student gets what they need to succeed every day."*





## WHAT IS A COMMUNITY SCHOOL?

A community school is both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources with an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, leadership and community engagement, leading to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. Community schools are collaborative efforts, where school district administrators share decision-making power with educators, parents and community groups to provide the support students and families need every day. Visit [cta.org/communityschools](https://cta.org/communityschools) for more information and previous coverage.

For all CTA videos on community schools, including roundtable discussions with educators, interviews with CTA and state leaders, and more, go to our playlist at [bit.ly/3Hmkmcc](https://bit.ly/3Hmkmcc).

Check out our story on Anaheim Secondary Teachers Association (ASTA) and the work its leaders and members are doing around community schools in Anaheim Union High School District, next page. And view a new video about the effort, with input from ASTA educators, students, school and district administrators and State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond, at [bit.ly/3R7Hmpe](https://bit.ly/3R7Hmpe).



## SECOND ROUND OF GRANT FUNDING UNDERWAY

California has invested \$4.1 billion to support and expand community schools through the California Community Schools Partnership Program. Funding is through grants from the California Department of Education.

A second round of grant funding is now underway: The application period for implementation grants — grants for those districts and Local Education Agencies with an existing community schools program — will close March 17, 2023. Implementation grants are funding for up to five years for up to \$500,000, depending on school enrollment. For details on CDE grants for community schools, go to [cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/hs/ccspp.asp](https://cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/hs/ccspp.asp).

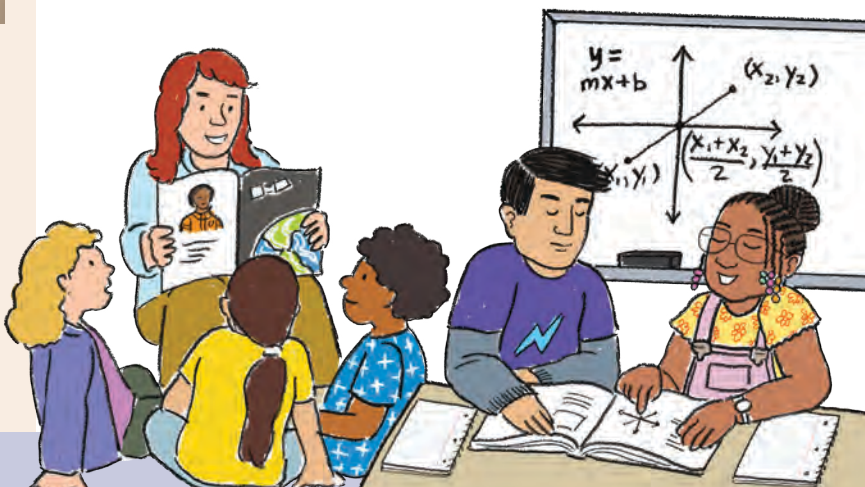
## COMMUNITY SCHOOLS EVENT AT CAAASA, MARCH 17

A special panel discussion will take place at the California Association of African-American Superintendents & Administrators' annual summit on Fri., March 17: "Community Schools: The Roadmap to Academic Success for African American and Other Students of Color." CTA Vice President David Goldberg is one of the featured speakers.

The theme of the summit, at Hyatt Regency Orange County, is "Building a Powerful Equity-Centered Education." Attendees can register for virtual or in-person attendance.

For details, visit [caaasa.org/2023summit](https://caaasa.org/2023summit).

CTA Vice President  
David Goldberg



▼ In September, Anaheim Union High School District opened the first of 13 Community Resource Centers that offer a variety of support services for families and the community.



# LEARNING FROM SUCCESS

## Anaheim union, district a model of community school collaboration By Ed Sibby

**IN EARLY DECEMBER**, CTA Vice President David Goldberg and several board members met with Anaheim Secondary Teachers Association (ASTA) leaders and Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD) officials representing community schools in Anaheim.

For several years, ASTA and the district have been a model of collaboration on community schools, serving some 22,000 students. They have worked with students, parents and the community while making strides to grow their community schools and meet the needs of all students. In May, AUHSD received a \$23 million California Department of Education grant distributed over five years, part of a \$4.1 billion statewide commitment to community schools.

The ASTA/AUHSD model is a study in partnership. Local union leaders were foundational to the institution of the community schools process, with active communication and consensus among all parties as the work progressed. The process has gone so well that it led to the district committing to a program that would include 13 school sites.

At the meeting, ASTA President Grant Schuster explained the all-in approach their local took to ensure the program's adoption throughout the district:

"Through the practices of shared leadership, engaging the community, providing integrated student supports and enriching student learning inside and outside of the classroom, we are focused to ensure the whole child and their

family are supported to thrive. This process has more potential to transform public education than anything I have seen in my 30 years of teaching."

Successful community schools — in Anaheim and throughout the state — are in constant contact with their students and parents to deeply understand the needs and assets of their school community.

"Through those interactions, community-based partners bring resources that help meet these needs in a way that honors the hopes, dreams and

assets of our community," Schuster said. "[For example,] Sycamore Junior High's school community works with North Orange Continuing Education to provide adult English as a Second Language classes Monday through Thursday

*"Through the practices of shared leadership, engaging the community, providing integrated student supports and enriching student learning, we are focused to ensure the whole child and their family thrive."*

—Grant Shuster, president, Anaheim Secondary Teachers Association



▼ ASTA President Grant Shuster talks about Anaheim's community school work.



▼ Part of the day's meeting included discussion with Sycamore Junior High community school staff.



▼ Community organizations sponsor a farmers market at Sycamore Junior High.



evenings; with Healthy Smiles for Kids of Orange County to provide preventative dental care to students and dental health education to parents; with Second Harvest Food Bank to host a monthly, free farmers market, and with Orange County Human Relations to embed restorative justice practices into all aspects of our school operations, from the classroom to the cafeteria, administration and beyond."

The community schools model adheres to overarching principles that invest in systems, not silos. Interventions are tailored to personal student needs, whether those challenges are social-emotional, food insecurity, language acquisition, special needs, or need for other specialized family services. It is both microtargeting and delivery based on specific needs that makes the program transformational, say its proponents.

Presenters at the meeting also pointed out that key to the success in Anaheim is dedicated human resources that help coordinate the program's many moving parts at each site. Community school coordinators work side-by-side daily with site educators and support personnel, administrators, community partners, students and others. They are embedded in the community and most are former students of the local school they serve.

"We're looking to serve our children and our families holistically because we know they can't leave who they are at the door," said Araceli Huerta, Sycamore's community school coordinator. "We want to make sure that we're creating the conditions they need to thrive."

Among their responsibilities, coordinators manage the events calendar, direct parents and students to community services, operate on-site food pantries and secure local donations. They co-lead school advisory committee meetings and keep all sides informed on progress and ongoing needs.

Another side of this critical partnership is the community school teacher lead on each site. This relationship ensures that each site has trained, trauma-informed educators who are committed to developing trusting and collaborative

relationships with students, families and community members. They encourage career pathway development with industry experts in and outside the classroom.

Jemma Rodriguez, teacher lead at Sycamore, believes that staff buy-in has been high because the model is making a difference.

"Through the community school strategy, we are taking care of the whole child. For instance, a single student has received on-site services such as mental health counseling,

holiday and winter clothing sponsorship through the school's 'Angel Tree' and conflict mediation through restorative justice practices within the classroom. The same student's family has also been referred to the resource center where they have received guidance and resource connections for legal matters and other basic needs, such as food and school uniforms."

Another axiom in Anaheim is that community school programs should supplement, not supplant, existing city services. Understanding and linking parents and students to local programs strengthens ties and builds community at both ends while avoiding duplication of effort. At Sycamore, parents have access to a small food bank, but provisions for addressing long-term food insecurity, as well as health care, immigration services and other needs, are directed out by staff to local and regional government providers.

Ensuring that every program is a value-added measure makes for more abundant services and is not a means for justifying cuts and reductions. In this way, every site can maximize resources according to their needs.

For AUHSD and the members of ASTA, the commitment to community schools is long-term. District officials see positive signs of progress as parents and students become reconnected to their local schools in the post-pandemic era. And confidence is strong among union members that this shared power model has the potential for transformational change throughout the public school system. ■

**"This process has more potential to transform public education than anything I have seen in my 30 years of teaching."**

**—Grant Shuster**







▼ Marina Santos



"I decided to shine a light on students and asked them to share their stories about the pandemic. I wanted them to tell their truth."

—Marina Santos,  
Fresno Teachers Association

the quarantine. "Everyone was going through the motions and unspoken struggles — when they put it to paper, the students were going through it themselves."

Santos and Patterson led students through the project entirely on Zoom, splitting the class between the two of them and switching off to cover both the written and arts pieces to the assignment. Students were directed to ask someone in their family about a transformational learning experience, such as a time when their education was interrupted. Santos delivered the art supplies (donated by a local business) to the homes of her students who she hadn't yet met in person. The educators also made videos to show students the process for creating their project.

Using a two-foot by two-foot plywood board, students created their project by choosing a butterfly design, drawing it, then cutting and pasting colors and textures from magazines and collaging them into the design. They hand-lettered their story around the butterfly, documenting the whole process using Flipgrid.

The first year, students submitted 30 beautifully designed and written stories about personal transformative experiences, including family immigration stories and relatives who died from COVID.

"The most inspiring transformation was not just their artwork, but their transformation from learner to reader, to writer, and especially to artist during what may become the most challenging experience of their lifetimes, the pandemic," says Santos.

The finished pieces were so inspiring that Santos felt like they needed to be shared. She set up a pop-up exhibit in town to show the work and invited students and their families. Things went so well that she had the pieces installed in front of Fresno High School and shown at the Fresno County Fair, where an attendee was particularly struck by one piece, offering to buy it. Santos says when the student learned of the interest to buy the work, they wanted the person to have it. To learn that their words and art had meaning to others was special, Santos says.

"My students thrived when they knew there was an audience and a purpose. When people wanted to read



▼ Students work on their butterfly designs.



“When people wanted to read students’ stories, it made them feel heard, seen and important. The whole project is a metamorphosis.”

—Marina Santos

their stories, it made them feel heard, seen and important,” she says. “The whole project is a metamorphosis.”

Parent Thea Fabian loves Carrying Stories. The mother of a student who participated in the project, Fabian says the work steps into the space of the power of personal relevance and community engagement.

“It also responds to our need to make school much more than

preparing students’ traditional academic metrics and really teaching them how valuable their own life experiences truly are,” she says. “For me, this helps us reach the deeper levels of what it means to actively work toward social justice and anti-racism in school spaces.”

Patterson is pleased to be a part of the program and help students share their voices and experiences.

## STUDENTS LIFT VOICES, CONNECT AND INSPIRE

The **Carrying Stories** exhibit was on display at the Fresno County Fair when a woman burst into tears while perusing the pieces. One of the creations reminded the woman of the story of her mother’s immigration from Mexico as a young girl, and she offered to purchase the artwork. Here is an excerpt of that story, “Teresa” by student Natalia Galicia:

▼ Teacher Marina Santos with Natalia Galicia in 2021.

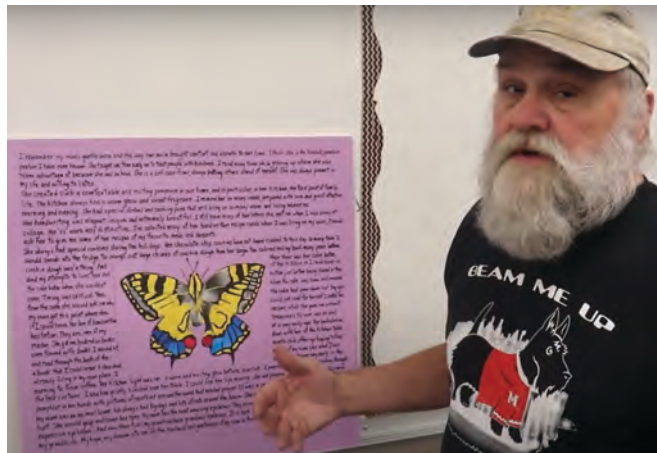




▼ Carrying Stories artwork at the front of Fresno High School.



▼ Marc Patterson



“Carrying Stories resonated with me in such a big way,” says Patterson, an FTA member. “Their stories are treasures.”

Interest in the project has grown over its three years, with Santos welcoming double the students in 2021 thanks in part to a \$2,800 CTA IFT (Institute for Teaching) grant. This year, there are 120 students participating in Carrying Stories, with students writing historical fiction about essential workers who

were impacted and had their education transformed. The work is scheduled for presentation in April.

“What does it mean to be essential and who helped us when we needed,” Santos says of this year’s prompt. “It’s important to see our students and meet them where they are. There really is power in a story.” ■

*Fearful of being deported, Teresa’s mother did not send the girls to school. They lived in their uncle’s ranch. All the girls were in one room, while her parents were in another. Then one day her dad and uncle got into a fist fight over unpaid rent.*

*The conflict was too much to handle at the ranch, so Teresa and her family stayed in a car. Teresa remembered how difficult it was to stay in a car and attend school at the same time. Luckily, her parents moved them into an apartment. Even though it was infested with roaches.*

*After about a month, Teresa and her family moved to Sanger, California. Her parents and brother harvested fields. Since the family was paid by the bags of fruit they filled, the sisters helped after school even though they struggled in school.*

*It wasn’t until the family purchased their first house in Fresno that Teresa began to transform into a butterfly. Teresa met a young girl named Maira. Maira would talk a lot to her when they played outside. Teresa practiced English with Maira and pretty soon Teresa flourished like a butterfly escaping a cocoon. When her parents needed to understand bills or medical bills, Teresa translated English to Spanish. When her parents went to school or the hospital, Teresa translated the doctor or teacher’s speech to Spanish. The experience and knowledge enhanced Teresa’s experience in school and at home. Teresa soared through the sky!*

## STATE BUDGET:

# Governor Prioritizes Education

**Despite \$22.5 billion shortfall, proposed budget keeps promise of equitable access for all students**

By Julian Peebles

**PRUDENT PLANNING** and prioritizing are helping keep the promise of equitable access to a quality public education and resources for all California students in the proposed 2023-24 State Budget, released by Gov. Gavin Newsom in early January.

Despite a \$22.5 billion shortfall, the governor is continuing to invest in education, meaning that local school districts will be able to focus on implementing recent investments, expanding learning opportunities for all students and continuing to recover from the pandemic.

"CTA commends the governor for prioritizing public education, students and families in the face of a \$22.5 billion budget shortfall," President E. Toby Boyd says. "Gov. Newsom has continued his commitment to support California's public schools, from the historic investment in community schools and transitional kindergarten to providing more resources for special education, school meals and social-emotional support."

The proposed 2023-24 Proposition 98 Guarantee for pre-K-12 schools and community colleges is projected to be more than \$108 billion, with no significant reductions and the highest funded cost of living adjustment (COLA) since the late 1970s — 8.13 percent.

Education highlights of the governor's proposed budget include:

- **Proposition 98:** Projected to be \$108.8 billion, a decrease of approximately \$1.5 billion from the current year's budget.
- **Proposition 98 Rainy Day Fund:** Prop. 2, enacted by voters in 2014, established the Public School System Stabilization Account, or Prop. 98 Rainy Day Fund. The budget includes revised payments of \$3.7 billion in 2021-22, \$1.1 billion in 2022-23, and \$365 million in 2023-24 into the Prop. 98 Rainy Day Fund, for a revised balance of more than \$8.5 billion at the end of 2022-23.

## • Per-Pupil Spending for TK-12 Education:

Total funding of \$128.5 billion (\$78.7 billion General Fund and \$49.8 billion other funds) for all TK-12 education programs. Despite a slight decrease in overall funding, per-student spending increases to its highest level ever, due to declining enrollment. TK-12 per-pupil funding totals \$15,261 Prop. 98 (\$2,258 above the 2022 Budget Act) and \$20,855 per pupil when accounting for all funding sources (\$2,868 above the 2022 Budget Act).

## K-12 Spending Proposals

- **Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF):** The Governor's budget includes \$4.2 billion in ongoing Prop. 98 funding to provide an 8.13 percent COLA. This increase brings total LCFF funding to \$80.1 billion. The Governor's budget proposes \$300 million in ongoing Prop. 98 to establish an equity multiplier as an add-on to the LCFF. These funds will be allocated to local educational agencies (LEAs) based on school-site eligibility and will be targeted to support the highest-needs schools in the state.
- **Literacy:** Includes \$250 million in one-time Prop. 98 funding to build on the existing Literacy Coaches and Reading Specialists Grant Program, which funds high-poverty schools to train and hire literacy coaches. Also includes \$1 million to create a Literacy Roadmap to help educators navigate these resources.
- **Arts and Cultural Enrichment:** The Arts and Music in Schools Funding Guarantee and Accountability Act (Prop. 28) requires \$941 million to be allocated to schools to increase arts instruction and programs in public education beginning in 2023-24. Also includes \$100 million in one-time Prop. 98 funding to provide high school seniors with access to cultural enrichment experiences across the state by facilitating museum







Gov. Gavin Newsom

**"Gov. Newsom has continued his commitment to support California's public schools, from historic investment in community schools and transitional kindergarten to providing more resources for special education, school meals and social/emotional support."**

—CTA President **E. Toby Boyd**

visits, access to theatrical performances or other enrichment activities.

- **Reversing Opioid Overdoses in Schools:** Includes \$3.5 million in ongoing Prop. 98 funding for all middle and high school sites to maintain at least two doses of medication to reverse an opioid overdose.

## Early Childhood Education

- **Transitional Kindergarten (TK):** Includes \$690 million to continue to expand eligibility for TK, increasing access to all children turning five-years-old between Sept. 2 and April 2, beginning in the 2023-24 school year. Proposes \$165 million to provide an additional certificated or education support professional to every TK class, maintaining student-to-adult ratios of 12 to 1.
- **State Preschool Program:** Includes \$116.3 million to increase the State Preschool Program adjustment factors for students with disabilities and dual language learners. In 2023-24, students with disabilities will be required to make up at least 7.5 percent of State Preschool program providers' enrollment.
- **Preschool, TK and Kindergarten Facilities:** Delays the planned \$550-million investment in 2023-24 for the California Preschool, Transitional Kindergarten and Full-Day Kindergarten Facilities Grant Program until 2024-25.

## California Community Colleges

The Governor's budget provides a total of \$13.7 billion in Prop. 98 funding and property taxes for California community colleges (CCC), an increase of \$113.9 million from the current budget year. Specific spending proposals include:

- **Apportionments:** Includes an increase of \$652.6 million in ongoing funding for an 8.13 percent COLA for Student Centered Funding Formula (SCFF) apportionments and \$28.8 million for 0.5 percent enrollment growth.
- **Student Enrollment and Retention:** Provides an

additional \$200 million in one-time funding to continue to support community colleges' efforts and strategies to increase student retention rates and enrollment, building on the one-time investments of \$120 million in 2021-22 and \$150 million in 2022-23.

- **Enrollment Monitoring:** The administration will be monitoring district-level enrollment trends and will consider options to adjust district budgets should a district not display that they are regaining enrollment lost during the COVID-19 pandemic, entering the 2024-25 academic year.
- **Dual Enrollment:** The budget summary "requests community colleges establish dual enrollment agreements with all applicable local educational agencies within their community college districts' service area, if they have not done so already. Further, the administration requests that all community colleges develop and offer a one-unit service-learning course that all high school students would have the ability to access through dual enrollment opportunities. These service-learning opportunities would serve to encourage and enable high school students to volunteer in their local communities and to participate in civic engagement."

"CTA looks forward to working with the Legislature and Governor in the coming months to finalize a budget that reflects the will of California voters, educators and parents to prioritize public schools and colleges," Boyd says. ■

*The Legislative Analyst's Office and the State Legislature review Gov. Newsom's proposed budget over the next few months; Gov. Newsom submits his May Revision by May 14. The Legislature has until June 15 to adopt the budget.*



## SCHOOL LAYOFFS:

# What Educators Should Know

**Steps you can take to prepare and protect yourself** By Jean Shin

**SCHOOL LAYOFFS** are a difficult and, unfortunately, all-too-common feature of the spring semester. Although nobody likes thinking about reductions in force (RIFs), it's important to know the basics in order to protect your rights. Below is a summary of the rules of school layoffs and the steps that you can take to prepare and protect yourself. This summary is focused on certificated employees in K-12 (non-charter) schools and community colleges, but much of it applies similarly to classified employees.

### *The Basics of School Layoffs*

If a school district faces budgetary shortfalls or declining enrollment, or if it decides to cut services, it may lay off part of its staff. But when conducting the layoff, the district must follow certain strict rules.

First, layoff notices have to go out by March 15. If March 15 passes and your employer has not yet sent out a layoff notice addressed to you, that means that you cannot be laid off this year.

Second, districts must follow certain rules in deciding whom to lay off. In most cases, the order of layoff must be based on credentials and qualifications; seniority dates;

probationary vs. permanent status; and experience. In some circumstances, the district may also consider specialized training and education.

In general, this means that once a district decides to reduce a service area, it must — with a few exceptions — first lay off the most junior probationary employees who work in that service area. So, for example, if your district decides to reduce multiple subject classes, it will lay off the most junior probationary teachers who teach in multiple subject classrooms.

The district will hold a hearing before a judge, who will evaluate whether the district followed the rules in deciding whom to lay off. If the district laid off a teacher out of order — for example, by laying off a senior English teacher while retaining junior English teachers — and no exception applies, the judge will decide that the senior teacher cannot be laid off. Importantly, since the hearing takes place after March 15, it is too late for the district to correct its error by laying off the junior teachers. By attending the hearing and asserting their rights, the senior teacher will thus be able to save their own job, without endangering their junior colleagues.

Many RIFs settle without the need for a hearing. If this is



an option, your local union and advocate will discuss settlement with the affected teachers. In either event, throughout this process, it's important for you to be proactive. That means keeping track of layoff-related notices, turning in your paperwork on time, and staying in communication with your local union. Below is a timeline of the notices and paperwork that you should anticipate and the steps that you can take to protect yourself.

## Steps to Take to Protect Yourself

**As soon as possible:** As soon as you can — and definitely before March 15 — review your personnel file. Because layoff order is based on seniority dates and credentials, you should make sure that the district has this information correct. If you are working toward further credentials, try to complete them and, if possible, get them on file before March 15.

**If you receive a layoff notice:** If your district is conducting layoffs this spring, it must send out layoff notices by March 15. If you receive a notice, **you must turn in your Request for Hearing** form within **seven days**.

**When you receive the statement of reduction in force:**

*“Work closely with your local union. Your union will provide an advocate who will assist members through the hearing, provide information, and guide you through this difficult time.”*

After you turn in your Request for Hearing, the district will send you a document called the Statement of Reduction in Force. Once you receive this document, **you must turn in your Notice of Participation** form within **five days**.

**When you receive the notice of hearing:** The district will then set a layoff hearing and send you a notice of hearing.

At the hearing, you will have a chance to find out whether the district followed the rules when it laid you off. If the district got something wrong — for example, if it used the wrong seniority date for you, or if it did not credit you with all of your credentials — the hearing is your opportunity to challenge the layoff. It is common for districts to make mistakes. Every

year, teachers who attend their layoff hearings catch their employer making mistakes and are able to save their jobs.

Finally, you should work closely with your local union. Your union will provide an advocate who will assist members through the hearing, provide information, and guide you through this difficult time. ■

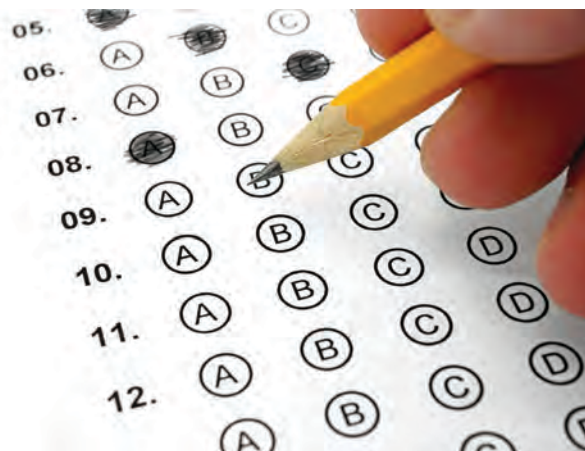
*Jean Shin is a CTA Staff Attorney.*

## STANDARDIZED TESTS & OPTING OUT

### Know your rights when communicating with parents

**STATE LAW ALLOWS** parents to opt out of state-mandated testing for their child. (The federal Every Student Succeeds Act affirms this right.) However, California also has specific regulations about what an educator can say to parents about opting out: **Educators can inform parents of their right to opt out of high-stakes testing for their child, but cannot solicit or encourage parents to do so.**

The state's system of mandated and optional assessments is known as CAASPP (California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress) and includes Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments, California Alternate Assessments, and the California Science Test. CTA believes tests should be used to inform instruction and improve student learning. A true assessment of student



achievement and improvement is always done through multiple measures and can never focus on just one test score. To learn more about CTA's position on testing and opting out, and to access resources to help educators have conversations with parents (including materials in multiple languages), go to [cta.org/optout](https://cta.org/optout). ■

# BARGAINING ROUNDUP

Compiled by Julian Peebles



## VENTURA:

### Unity powers contract victory

Ventura educators and education support professionals stuck together during a protracted and difficult bargain, winning a contract in December that will help keep Ventura schools strong.

After six months of negotiations, Ventura Unified Education Association (VUEA) and Ventura Education Support Professionals Association (VESPA) ratified an agreement that increases pay by 10 percent on-schedule, includes a 2 percent one-time payment and does not include a cap on health insurance. This will help Ventura Unified attract and retain the educators and ESPs their students deserve.

The final terms were very close to VUEA's and VESPA's initial proposal — and a long way from the district's initial proposal of 1 percent on-schedule and a 3 percent bonus.

The locals organized together, holding informational pickets and rallies, and even putting a message on a billboard downtown to build support for the people who make Ventura schools run.

"I'm very happy with the agreement," VESPA President Carol Peek told the Ventura County Star. "It was a long, exhausting process, but I'm very grateful that it's done."

## IMPERIAL BEACH:

### Additional supports for students

After a lengthy bargain, Southwest Teachers Association (SWTA) members won big for teaching and learning conditions in South Bay Union School District, reaching a contract agreement in December.

The agreement netted educators an 8 percent on-schedule pay increase in January along with 3 percent on-schedule and 2 percent off-schedule in July, raising the minimum salary for a starting educator to \$57,000 a year. Educators also won improved staffing ratios for school counselors, a hard cap on special day class enrollment, additional prep time for special education teachers, and improvements to safety language, combo classes and workload for school psychologists.

SWTA also won an increase in the district's health care contribution, as well as an early retirement incentive.

Members organized throughout the lengthy bargain, rallying at school board meetings and building support in their community. [#SWTACares](#)





#### MILLER CREEK:

### More prep time and student supports

Unity powered Miller Creek educators as they won a contract that expands supports for students and strengthens their schools.

The 104-member Miller Creek Education Association (MCEA) reached an agreement in December that provides instructional aide support in K-5 and combination classrooms and secures art, music and P.E. for students, which guarantees prep time for educators.

MCEA also won an 8 percent raise for 2022-23 and 5 percent for 2023-24. This will help the small Marin County school district to attract and retain the educators that Miller Creek students deserve.

MCEA educators rallied at school board meetings along with community members, showing the school district they were united in support of the bargaining team. [#MCEAForOurStudents](#)



#### SANTA CRUZ:

### Impasse declared as United PCS organizes

Members of United Pacific Collegiate School (UPCS) declared impasse as they fight for a contract that will change an environment where 34 percent of faculty left the grade 7-12 charter school last year.

Since last March, educators have been calling on management and the PCS Board of Directors to preserve a student-centered mission, provide fair compensation, and collaborate and be transparent with the community, so they too can have a voice in important school decisions and processes.

"Fourteen faculty left PCS during, or at the end of, the last school year. After the tumult of the last three years, our students need a stable, supportive learning environment," said UPCS President Mary Gardner. "What makes PCS such a special place to teach and learn is its small, close-knit community; we don't want to lose that."

Mediation began in January. Stay current and show support for United PCS educators on Instagram at [instagram.com/unitedpacificcollegiate](https://www.instagram.com/unitedpacificcollegiate).



#### RICHMOND:

### Strike-ready after authorization vote

As protracted negotiations worked through the fact-finding process, United Teachers of Richmond (UTR) members overwhelmingly authorized a strike if West Contra Costa Unified School District management continues to refuse to provide the resources their students and educators deserve.

With more than 90 percent of members voting, 97.3 percent approved direct, concerted activities to urge district officials toward a fair settlement, up to and including a strike.

In mid-November, the Legislative Analyst Office of California announced additional guaranteed, ongoing funding for the 2023-2024 school year. Despite that projection, the district declared impasse. Educators responded with passionate solidarity to ensure competitive compensation that keeps outstanding educators in the community — and brings the next generation of educators to West Contra Costa.

"We stand at this moment with love for our students and community, with solidarity for our colleagues and coworkers, and the wherewithal to fight for the schools our students and community deserve," UTR President John Zabala said.

Follow and support UTR on Facebook at [@unitedteachersofrichmond](https://www.facebook.com/unitedteachersofrichmond) and Instagram at [@united\\_teachers\\_of\\_richmond](https://www.instagram.com/united_teachers_of_richmond). [#WeAreUTR](#)





## SAN DIEGO:

### High Tech Education Collective wins first contract ever

In an historic victory, High Tech Education Collective (HTEC) members ratified their first-ever contract in January, ending a lengthy two-year struggle that saw educators organize a union at the successful San Diego-area High Tech High charter school network and rally to win a guaranteed voice for their students.

About 400 High Tech High (HTH) educators formed HTEC during the early part of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, unionizing 16 schools at four campuses in San Diego County. High Tech High management dragged their feet throughout the organizing and bargaining process, but the unity of HTEC members powered the local to the win.

"Our schools were founded on liberatory design principles, but the history of HTH has excluded the voice of educators in ensuring these principles exist in practice," said HTEC President Hayden Gore. "We realized that we can't truly have equity without the ability to organize and collectively advocate for our classrooms through our union."

Formerly at-will employees subject to immediate dismissal with virtually no recourse, HTEC educators won "for cause dismissal" language after a three-year probationary period. HTEC won a 10.28 percent pay increase retroactive to July of last year, as well as a retroactive retention bonus to help address the longstanding problem of educators leaving HTH. HTEC also won contract language guaranteeing lunch breaks and 10 days of sick leave that carries over year-to-year, as well as three days of personal necessity leave.

High Tech educators won caps on class sizes, including special education caseloads.

The new contract also provides a wage replacement benefit that offsets the gap between State Disability Insurance and a member's salary for up to six weeks, effectively creating a six-week paid maternity leave program for educators.

Finally, HTEC will participate in a joint committee to create a process for evaluating educators, as no official system existed previously.



## TWIN RIVERS:

### Commitment to students fuels contract win

Twin Rivers United Educators (TRUE) ratified an agreement in January that invests in student supports and the recruitment and retention of educators.

With massive staffing shortages impacting every school in the district, TRUE members knew that the outcome of the bargain was critical for every Twin Rivers student and their families. In that vein, TRUE showed an unwavering commitment to their students and love for education with every decision they made.

During the campaign, TRUE held massive rallies with the Twin Rivers community to win the resources their students deserve, and even garnered a supportive message from Twister Sister front man Dee Snider, who encouraged educators "not to take it anymore."

Highlights of TRUE's victory include:

- 18 percent salary increase over three years
- Additional 10 percent increase to early childhood educators
- Salary schedule parity for Adult Education
- Increases to district contributions for all health care plans.
- Removal of 10-year cap on experience credit
- Miscarriage and stillbirth codified as part of bereavement leave
- Increase in overages payment to incentivize smaller class size



# OAKLAND EDUCATORS KEY IN STOPPING SCHOOL CLOSURES

**Collaborative effort led to victory for students, community**



**IN A VICTORY** for Oakland students, families and community, the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) board voted on Jan. 11 to stop five schools from being closed and one from being scaled down.

Last February, the board had voted to close 11 schools only a week after making the proposal public. The schools marked for closure would affect Oakland's most vulnerable students and communities. Massive community outcry followed, including a rally/march in downtown Oakland in February and a hunger strike by two Oakland educators.

Despite the pleas of students, educators, parents and others, the board reaffirmed its decision to close schools as soon as the end of this school year, refusing to consider alternatives or delay the decision.

But subsequent actions under the leadership of Oakland Education Association, among others, prevailed and convinced the board to change plans.

"After months of protests, advocacy and a hunger strike by two district employees, Oakland educators are proud of [the board] vote," said OEA President Keith Brown. "This win is a culmination of the power of educators, parents, students and community members joining together to do what is right for the future of Oakland."

OEA and allies' actions included organizing the huge February march that demonstrated parent and community support, a one-day unfair labor practice strike, and helping elect new school board members in the Nov. 22 election who voted against closures. OEA was supported by multiple partners; NEA contributed financial support.

CTA President E. Toby Boyd praised the collaborative work. "This is a victory for Oakland public schools and

testament to what happens when educators, parents, students and community ... band together to advocate for the public education Oakland's students need and deserve."

He also said that regarding major decisions and proposals, the district should allot more time for input and discussion by stakeholders. "Parents, educators and community members must be given the opportunity and time to provide input on important decisions that impact OUSD students without having to go on hunger strikes or organize protests to be heard."

Brown admonished district officials and the school board for ignoring stakeholder opinion, saying "it should not have taken this long for our leaders to listen to our voices and do what is right for students." He called for measures to heal the resulting rifts.

"As educators, our mission is always to protect students' lives and be pillars of our communities. This is why we cannot ignore the harm this has caused to our most vulnerable, whose lives were upended since this debate began. The next step is to repair the pain and stress our students and communities feel and continue the fight for racially and socially just schools."

Boyd said in support, "Speaking on behalf of 310,000 CTA members, we stand with Oakland's educators in their fight for equitable resources and equal access for all students."

At press time, a fiscal trustee is requiring OUSD to adjust its budget to recognize the costs in keeping the schools operating. Also, the state Public Employee Relations Board said in a proposed decision that the OUSD board's vote last year to close or merge schools violated labor law, as it was made "without providing notice and the opportunity to bargain the effects of that decision" with OEA. ■

**"This is a victory for Oakland public schools and testament to what happens when educators, parents, students and community members band together to advocate for the public education students need and deserve."**

—CTA President **E. Toby Boyd**

# THE POWER OF DATA

## Building Your Social Media Toolbox

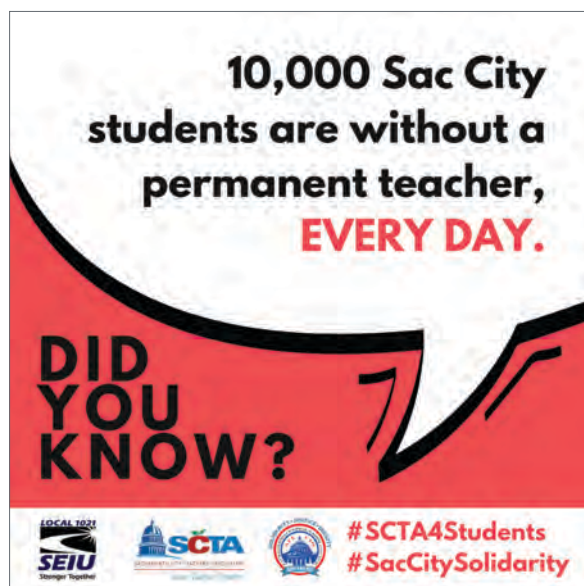
By Elizabeth Barcelos

**WHENEVER I TELL** someone about my job as a social media manager, I'm often asked things like, "How do you think of what to post?" or "Where do your ideas come from?"

Over the years, I've built what I like to call my content toolbox: a collection of communications tools that work for every social media platform. They're changing all the time, but what sticks with people and makes them pause instead of scrolling onward is consistent and translates across platforms.

This issue, we'll be walking through how you can add **data** to your content toolbox.

My English and language arts educators will know that three elements of a compelling argument are logos, pathos and ethos. For those of us whose Greek is a little rusty, that's the appeal to logic, appeal to emotion, and appeal to the writer's credibility. Using data is a great way to hammer home the logos part of the equation. Let's break down some examples.



## SAC CITY STRIKE: Every Student Deserves a Teacher

**Reports are a gold mine** of data. You just have to dig up the best nuggets, present them within a compelling frame and turn them into a treasure trove of social media content. When the Sacramento City Teachers Association (SCTA) was gearing up for a strike in Spring 2022, their frame was simple and compelling: Every Student Deserves a Teacher.

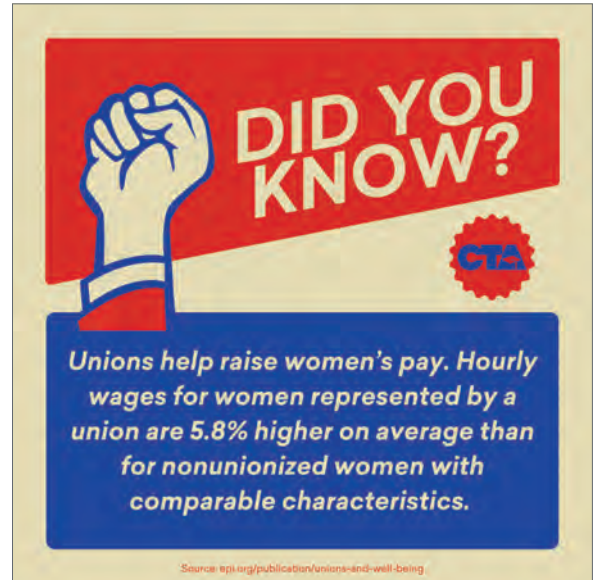
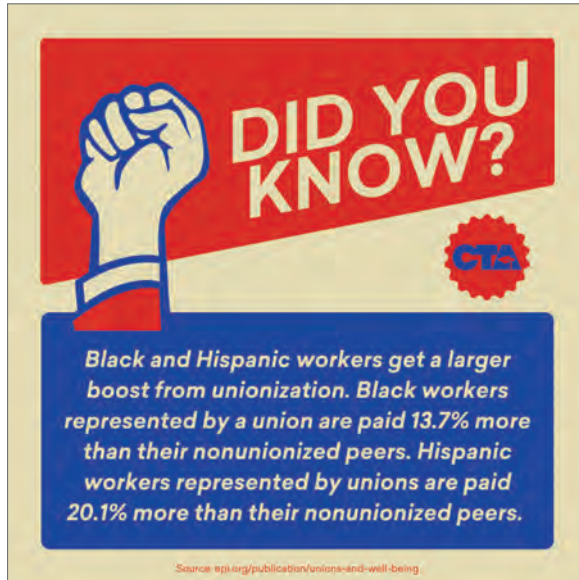
With that frame in mind, we had a post ready to go every

day, each featuring a different statistic about the staffing shortage in the district that supported our frame.

Social media thrives on quick pieces of content (think about how short a Tweet or TikTok is), so rather than posting a link to a long report that people may not even read, we were able to create a several days of compelling posts that fit our frame, all from the same document.



"The most shareable social media posts are concise, consistent and informative. Our posts featured quick facts, had a consistent look so you knew they were about the labor movement, and you came away feeling like you learned something."



## LABOR DAY: The Power of a Union

For Labor Day in 2022, I didn't want to just post a graphic in honor of the holiday and check that box off my list. I saw it as an opportunity for us to highlight the power of our movement and its ability to bring about equity in the teaching profession and beyond.

The Economic Policy Institute did a great report ([epi.org/publication/unions-and-well-being](https://epi.org/publication/unions-and-well-being)) on how unions improve not just the lives of workers, but our communities and democracy as a whole. But I knew that just posting a link to this and calling it a day wasn't going to cut it.

Instead, I created a series of posts leading up to Labor Day, each one highlighting the power of unions with a different piece of data each day. Here are some examples:

These labor facts ended up being some of our most shared social media content that month. Why? Because the most shareable social media posts are concise, consistent and informative. These posts featured quick facts, had a consistent look so you knew they were about the labor movement, and you came away feeling like you learned something. Who wouldn't want to share that, especially union members?

With everything you post, data-driven or not, keep that idea in mind. Would you want to share what you're putting out there? ■

*Elizabeth Barcelos is CTA's social media editor.*



Our new column  
**"Building Your Social Media  
Toolbox"** will appear  
in every issue.

### TOOLBOX TOPICS COMING UP:

- Member features
  - Memes
- Useful Info



“Start with a key lesson, break it down into segments, and create short videos to ease students into the activity.”

# 6 REASONS

## *to Record Important Lessons*

By Youki Terada

**A**FTER TEACHING high school math for years, Kareem Farah realized that lecturing in front of his students wasn't working particularly well — he was a bottleneck, he had come to realize, a talking head who was reaching, at best, a handful of students at any given time. Worse, pacing was a problem that a simple change of speed wouldn't solve: Slow it down and the lecture would bore most of the kids; go too fast and other students would fall behind.

Farah, a teacher at a Title I high school in Washington, D.C., also noticed that when his students missed a few classes, it set them up to fall behind for the rest of the year. In response, he began recording his lessons on video to give his students a way to access the material from anywhere.

Getting in front of the camera intimidated him at first, but Farah quickly realized that readily available tools made the process fairly painless and didn't require much tech savvy. He created his first instructional videos by using a mic and a screen-casting program — such as Explain Everything — to record his lecture over informative slides. He then uploaded his video to Edpuzzle, which allowed him to embed questions to check for understanding.

The strategy was so effective that he taught whole units this way. “Once the lecture bottleneck is removed,” Farah says, teachers can “rethink many of the other rigid constraints that have defined most instructional delivery models.” His students could even watch his lectures at home and proceed to the next lesson once they mastered a concept, allowing them to move at their own pace while freeing him up to roam the classroom and tailor instruction to students' individual needs.

In the end, is it worth the time investment? You can keep it simple at first, according to Farah: Start with a key lesson, break it down into segments, and create short videos to ease students into the activity. Meanwhile, a growing body of research suggests that using instructional videos to supplement or replace class lectures is a powerful approach, largely because it allows students to pace their learning, can be chunked into easier-to-comprehend segments, inherently facilitates retrieval and review for students, and leverages visual cues to reinforce the material.

Here are six research-backed reasons why you should consider recording (at least some of) your lessons.



## SHORT VIDEOS ALIGN WITH KNOWN ATTENTIONAL LIMITS

In school, and in life, we tend to overestimate attentional limits. In fact, studies suggest that young kids' attention begins to lag after 10 minutes, and older students often struggle to remember material covered later in a lecture.

Instructional videos allow you to break up a longer lesson into several smaller ones — increasing the likelihood that students will be able to sustain attention and commit what they're learning to memory. They also provide natural breaks during study time.

There is an optimal duration for an educational video, though you should think of it as general guidance. In 2014, a team of researchers from MIT, Harvard and Berkeley analyzed millions of video sessions and concluded that “median [student] engagement time is at most 6 minutes,” with video length being “by far the most significant indicator of engagement,” outweighing other characteristics like instructor presence and production quality. In a related finding, when university professors simply split a 55-minute instructional video into several 8-minute ones, viewing time increased by 25 percent, and academic performance improved, a 2022 study found.

Think about where to break your lessons. “It is recommended that teachers should make the videos as short as possible, but one complete knowledge point should be contained in one video,” the researchers in the 2022 study suggest.

## VIDEO LIBRARIES ENABLE SELF-PACED LEARNING

The asynchronous, always-on nature of video libraries solves many of the sequencing issues that plague teachers: how to reincorporate students after absences, what to do with kids who need to revisit a foundational concept, or how to differentiate between students.

Accessing a library at different entry points — skipping ahead

“Video learning allows students to self-pace while freeing the teacher to circulate and troubleshoot with individual students.”

or revisiting previous lessons — is a built-in advantage of video learning, and it allows students to self-pace while freeing the teacher to circulate and troubleshoot with individual students. In a 2019 study, researchers concluded that students “learn better when multimedia instructions are presented in (meaningful and coherent) learner-paced segments, rather than as

continuous units.” That’s because the ability to control the pace of videos provides more time for processing or reviewing information, allowing students to “adapt the presentation pace to their individual needs.”

Being able to control a single video’s play-back in real time, meanwhile — by pausing and rewinding — allows “students to regulate their cognitive load, leading to better learning,” researchers concluded in a 2021 study. “This ability to self-pace has been previously identified as a key feature contributing to the success of online learning, more generally.”

## VIDEOS SUPPORT RICH FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT — ASYNCHRONOUSLY AND AT SCALE

Modern tools for video creation and distribution take advantage of built-in auditing systems that collect valuable data about what’s working for your students, and what’s not. Better, they can do it asynchronously, and they often provide ready-made charts and graphs that simplify formative assessment — like trying to determine a student’s on-task behavior.

Other tools allow you to test for specific knowledge. “Embedding questions in your instructional video using programs like Edpuzzle can improve student interaction and provide you with invaluable formative assessment data,” explain Farah and educational technology expert Robert Barnett.

College students who watched videos with embedded pop-up questions earned “significantly higher test results compared to the group without pop-up questions,” boosting their test performance by almost half a letter grade, according to





a 2020 study. Research from 2015, meanwhile, concluded that college students who watched videos with embedded questions were more likely to take notes, experienced less anxiety about the final test, and felt as though watching the videos was less “mentally taxing.”

Meanwhile, classroom-friendly video-creation tools such as Edpuzzle and Screencastify provide usage-based auditing trails for teachers, which can inform feedback, instruction and even grading. Which students watched your videos? Did they watch the entire video or just a part of it? Which lessons got little screen time and might be improved or discarded?

## VIDEOS SUPPORT FLEXIBLE REVIEW (AND RE-REVIEW)

Decades of research support the power of review and retrieval practice to reinforce learning. Inherently, video learning provides “a cost-effective, location-free method of flexible study, one that is available at all hours” and allows students to “view material repeatedly if necessary,” researchers explain in a comprehensive 2018 analysis that encompassed 270 studies on instructional videos. Live lectures are linear, by contrast, and can’t be replayed, rewound or paused to consider a point more deeply.

That last point is a significant one. A 2011 study found that even when students were encouraged to ask questions, they frequently avoided raising their hands and interrupting the teacher, largely out of politeness and a desire to keep the classroom running smoothly.

A video library gives students “the ability to access the content when it is needed, such as when they are reviewing and preparing for exams,” a time when the need for retrieval of information is particularly crucial, explains Nisha Malhotra, a professor of economics at the University of British Columbia. After creating a series of instructional videos based on his lectures, he surveyed his students and discovered that a majority of them watched the videos at least twice — a strong signal that a single lecture would not have sufficed.

## VIDEOS ALLOW KIDS TO REPLAY ‘THE MUDDIEST POINT’

“Sometimes it’s helpful to see if students understand why something is incorrect or why a concept is hard,” writes educator Laura Thomas. Asking students to explain “the muddiest points” is a common way to address “where things got confusing or particularly difficult.”

In practice, though, students may not feel comfortable raising their hand to ask the teacher to go over the concept again during class time.

Failing to master a challenging but foundational concept, meanwhile, can wreak havoc on the rest of the quarter. When students watch videos at home, they can rewind as often as necessary, reviewing concepts they find confusing while jotting down questions to discuss with their peers or teacher. A 2022 study concluded that even a simple pause button helped students to “prevent cognitive overload,” significantly easing the task “of paying continuous attention to a steady stream of new information that has to be integrated with existing knowledge structures.”

## VIDEOS DRAMATICALLY IMPROVE CONTENT CLARITY AND IMPACT

You think you’re giving a brilliant, off-the-cuff example that ties everything together, but when you see yourself on video, you realize that the connections you made aren’t as clear as you thought. Videos tend to improve lectures because they give you plenty of time to organize your thoughts and allow you to watch yourself and fix the inconsistencies and logical leaps that are often sprinkled through an in-person lecture.

While in-person lessons can be thrown off-track by digressions and distractions, videos are more time-efficient and allow teachers to “make content more coherent, and add design principles that they would not perfectly execute in class (e.g., timing key points with slides; highlighting important information),” researchers explain in a 2021 study. They discovered that teachers were more likely to “prioritize core content” when making videos, editing out irrelevant details that diverted students from the learning objectives.

But don’t aim for perfection, insists Farah, who said that making mistakes and letting your “authentic personality shine through” work best as you create videos, a point that the learning-video pioneer Sal Khan seconded when we interviewed him in 2020. “Research shows that videos in which the instructor speaks in a natural, conversational manner, with an enthusiastic tone, are the most engaging,” Farah and Barnett conclude. “In our experience, students really appreciate knowing that it’s their actual teacher behind the video.” ■

*This story originally appeared in Edutopia.*

# BREAK OUT THE BOOKS!

## Use digital escape rooms to enhance literacy with elementary students

By **Ivonne Miranda**



**AT SOME POINT** in their careers, nearly all teachers ask themselves, “How do I get my students to read? All they want to do is play computer games.”

This overstimulation of technology can prevent students from developing reading stamina and critical thinking skills. However, technology can be used in innovative ways to motivate students as they learn to read. One creative idea is using digital escape books — similar to escape rooms — to get K–5 students engaged in reading. Escape book stories, missions and riddles can take about two hours to create, but once done can take only minutes to make changes when needed.

### BENEFITS OF ESCAPE BOOKS

An escape book, or a breakout book, is based on the same principle as escape rooms, where players are locked in a room and can only break out by solving various puzzles in a set amount of time. Using the platform Genially ([genial.ly](https://genial.ly)), breakout books challenge students to solve various puzzles and complete missions.

Genially offers a variety of easy escape templates you can use to design a breakout book game that resembles scenes from a book. I built an escape room based on the book *The Day You Begin*, by Jacqueline Woodson, which is about finding the courage to connect even when you feel scared

and alone. After students read or listened to the book being read, they participated in a digital escape room to help them process the vocabulary and concepts from the book. Like escape rooms, the breakout book game must begin with a story. The story is the hook that will engage students in the breakout book. I used an example of the first day of school, encouraging students to get to know one another.

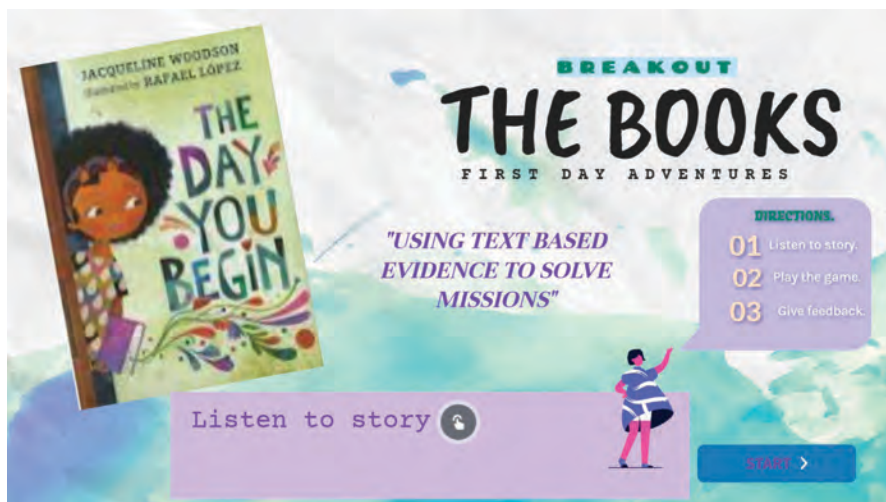
The story will then lead to the first mission. Each mission has a story, riddle and interactive element that leads to a related activity, hint and choices that students can select or input answers. Mission stories are teacher-created based on events from the book and then connected to a literacy skill or strategy that is being reinforced — for example, vocabulary.

Riddles are also teacher-created and structured so students can understand. The breakout book game can include interactive websites

that enhance students’ level of engagement, all the while targeting different parts of the story to create missions. For this game, I used [jigsawplanet.com](https://jigsawplanet.com) to create a puzzle about a place someone visits in the book and Wordwall ([wordwall.net](https://wordwall.net)) to create a vocabulary matching game.

An escape book can have two to four missions, which can range from easy to complicated. These missions will eventually lead to the “breakout” of the book. A congratulations

**“The breakout book game must begin with a story. The story is the hook that will engage students in the breakout book.”**



◀ The author's breakout book, based on the book *The Day You Begin*.



◀ Part of the author's breakout book included a word-matching game.

slide will show the students that they have won the game. Students can play with a partner or in a team of four. The fun will make 20 minutes go by quickly.

## PLANNING A BREAKOUT BOOK GAME

These puzzles reinforce key skills such as comprehension strategies and text-based evidence. The games can also promote learning skills such as communication, critical thinking, collaboration and creativity. Not only can breakout books be used to reinforce essential literacy skills, but teachers can tailor the difficulty level to meet the needs of all learners so that all students can be engaged and focused with books.

The first step is to base the game on the book your K-5 students are reading. It's extremely important that students read the book prior to completing the breakout book. Children's books can be hard copies or links to online versions that can be attached to the breakout book game. As you go through the book, decide which literacy strategy or skill students will use in the breakout book game. Select tier 2 or tier 3 vocabulary words and text-based evidence details that can be used to answer riddles.

You can adjust the difficulty level to ensure that students receive the right amount of challenge and stay engaged. For young students, text-dependent questions can be asked where students can easily find the answer in the book, such as what letter makes the /f/ sound in the word friend. For

older students, ask inference questions where students would have to use context clues from the book to answer.

The next step is thinking about the hints students can use. For every mission created, hints are embedded to support students who might find a mission too difficult. Hints are used to guide students with either information or a visual. Hints are easily spotted and are linked to animated elements.

## PILOT THE GAME AND ASK FOR FEEDBACK

When the planning process is over, test the game to make sure that all the links work and the missions open as you progress through the game. Make sure that the riddles make sense and are appropriate for your grade level. When your students complete the first game, ask for feedback that can help make the breakout book better. Some example questions for them could be: Were the hints obvious, or were they difficult to recognize? Did you need the read-aloud book to complete the missions? Did you find yourself rereading the story?

Creating a breakout book game can promote reading and engagement with books. Students will enjoy working with books as they analyze parts of the story to figure out the riddles. Expect students to ask you for breakout book games for other stories. ■

*This story originally appeared in Edutopia.*





◀ This was the first time that executive officers for both CTA and NEA were on stage at State Council together. From left to right: CTA Vice President David Goldberg, NEA Secretary-Treasurer Noel Candelaria, NEA Vice President Princess Moss, NEA President Becky Pringle, CTA Secretary-Treasurer Leslie Littman, CTA President E. Toby Boyd.

# Lifting Up Students, Protecting Public Education

## CTA State Council of Education sets course for year ahead

By **Julian Peeples**

**CALIFORNIA EDUCATORS** are leading the fight for the schools all students deserve and walking the walk when it comes to equity and social justice, CTA President E. Toby Boyd told the State Council of Education at its first meeting of the calendar year.

“We keep marching forward for our students and each other,” Boyd said. “And we never, ever turn back.”

During his report to State Council, Boyd addressed the recent rash of tragic mass shootings in Monterey Park, Half Moon Bay and Oakland, stating unequivocally that we cannot and will not accept gun violence as normal.

“We must continue to demand that lawmakers rise to the challenge to keep our schools, colleges and communities safe,” Boyd said. “We have to move beyond the ‘tragedy of it all’ and elect leaders who will take action.”

This sentiment was echoed by NEA President Becky Pringle, who visited CTA State Council for the first time since 2019. Pringle delivered an inspiring speech, highlighting victories powered

by CTA members during the past year and underscoring our collective power as educators.

*“We keep marching forward for our students and each other. And we never, ever turn back.”*

—CTA President  
**E. Toby Boyd**

“It’s all of us, three million strong, with righteous indignation, fighting for the freedom to be our authentic selves; for the freedom to make decisions about our own bodies and health; fighting for the freedom to teach and the freedom to learn,” she said. “We will always stand up for our students, for each other and for what is right. Onward, CTA!”

Joining Pringle in Los Angeles were fellow NEA officers, Vice President Princess Moss and Secretary-Treasurer Noel Candelaria. It was the first time that executive officers for both CTA

and NEA were on stage at State Council together.

“Working together, CTA and NEA will continue to be unapologetic and relentless in our fight for students, public education and our members who fight for them all,” Moss said.

This was Candelaria’s first visit to CTA State Council as NEA Secretary-Treasurer, and he congratulated CTA for leading the way nationally on important education issues like



- ▼ CTA's Racial Equity Affairs Committee (REAC) presented a video at State Council celebrating Black History Month.



- ▼ NEA President Becky Pringle addresses State Council delegates as CTA President E. Toby Boyd looks on.



community schools and the educator pipeline.

“As educators, we are curators and creators of hope and community,” he said. “Our children are depending on each and every one of us. Our future demands it.”

State Council members elected new leaders to CTA and NEA leadership positions. Kindergarten teacher and United Teachers Los Angeles member Erika Jones was elected as the next CTA Secretary-Treasurer by acclamation (Jones was unopposed and elected by a voice vote). Jones will take office on June 26.

State Council representatives elected a new member to the CTA Board of Directors — Angela Der Ramos, a member of Alisal Teachers Association, who fills an At-Large seat for an unexpired term ending June 25, 2023.

Also elected at the meeting:

- Naqiba Gregory, a member of West Sacramento Teachers Association, to NEA Board of Directors, California District 1;
- Paula Merrigan, a member of Castro Valley Teachers Association, to NEA Board of Directors, California District 3;
- Nichole DeVore, a member of Sacramento City Teachers Association, to NEA Board of Directors, District 12.

**“It’s all of us, three million strong, fighting for the freedom to be our authentic selves; for the freedom to make decisions about our own bodies and health; for the freedom to teach and the freedom to learn.”**

—NEA President  
**Becky Pringle**

There were numerous events outside of general sessions and committee meetings, including a forum hosted by Community College Association members about opportunities for K-12 educators to work in higher education. The CTA African American Caucus observance was wildly popular and featured Dr. Xavier Buck, who spoke on the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and how educators can use it to support movement-building. It was a poignant and timely discussion with the release this weekend of video of Tyre Nichols’ murder by Memphis police.

“I know we are trying to understand the painful video released of police beating and killing another Black man, Tyre Nichols,” Boyd said during his speech to State Council. “The pain, the fear, the anger – it’s exhausting. We have to make room to support each other with care, compassion and strength. Let’s keep each other united and determined for justice. We cannot be silent.”

The next State Council of Education meeting will be held March 24-26 in Los Angeles. ■



# New CTA Member Benefit

## Free Calm subscription for members

**YOU CAN NOW** access Calm, an award-winning, top-ranked app for guided meditation, relaxation and sleep, for free. You can also add up to five dependents to your account so they can take advantage of all Calm offers.

Millions of people are experiencing lower stress, less anxiety, improved focus and more restful sleep with Calm. Whether you have 30 seconds or 30 minutes, Calm content is made to suit your schedule and needs.

Here's a sneak peek of what you can expect:

- Calm's Masterclasses taught by world-renowned experts;
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- Music tracks designed to promote focus, relaxation and sleep;
- 100+ guided meditations that cover anxiety, stress, gratitude and much more;
- Brand new daily meditations and movement sessions as part of their Dailies series;
- The entire library of Sleep Stories which contains soothing bedtime tales suitable for both adults and children (new stories added every week!).

The Calm app has 100+ guided meditations that cover anxiety, stress, gratitude and much more.

As a CTA Member (active or retired), you can activate your free Calm subscription by:

- Logging into [CTAMemberBenefits.org/calm](https://CTAMemberBenefits.org/calm) to access the unique CTA Calm link;
- Follow the instructions on the CTA Member Benefits page;
- Your 10-digit CTA member ID is required. You can also find your member ID on the mailing label of this magazine;
- Download the Calm app and register your new account;
- Once you've signed up, you can add up to five dependents (age 16 years or older) via the "Manage Subscription" page inside your Calm account at [calm.com](https://calm.com).

For questions, please reach out to CTA Member Benefits at 650-552-5200 or email [Memberbenefits@cta.org](mailto:Memberbenefits@cta.org). ■





## Resources, tools for your health and wellness

**WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK.** CTA's Instruction & Professional Development department offers live webinars this spring to help you cope with stress, heal and replenish your energy and spirit. Presented by our community partners.

### MARCH:

## Burnout & the stress response

**Thurs., March 9, 4-5:30 p.m.**

In part one of this two-part workshop, we will define burnout and introduce the ABCDs, learn more about the causes of burnout: how to identify it, how to balance it, and how to combat it. We will also discuss awareness, become more aware of stress response patterns by tuning into the '3Bs' (body, behavior, beliefs) and take away strategies for fostering empathy and awareness of others.

### APRIL:

## Finding balance through boundaries & connection

**Thurs., April 13, 4- 5:30 p.m.**

In part two of the two-part workshop, we will focus on finding balance through boundaries and holistic well-being, and dive into the topic of balance: finding a happy medium between your have-to-dos and your can-dos and using a boundary-setting strategy to help achieve balance. We will build connection and a safeguard against burnout by learning to effectively communicate and connect to your needs.

Register for both webinars at [cta.org/events](https://cta.org/events).

Can't make the specific date? Both live webinars will be recorded and can be found at **CTA's Wellness Center** ([cta.org/wellness-center-recorded-webinars](https://cta.org/wellness-center-recorded-webinars)). The Wellness Center offers multiple additional resources for members as well as for educators to use with students and in the classroom. A live webinar from early February that is recorded and available:

## Mental Health Awareness

School staff well-being is essential to a healthy and resilient school community. With this in mind, Healthier Generation, through the support of Kaiser Permanente, developed this engaging training which is packed with tools and resources to help school staff focus on their own well-being. The training includes the following topics:

- Defining burnout and Introducing the ABCDs
- Awareness
- Balance through boundaries and holistic wellness
- Connection



- ◀ Kathryn Winn, center, with CTA President E. Toby Boyd to her right along with the California Casualty team.
- ▼ The Staycation contest information that appeared in the *Educator* magazine.



# Staycation Winner!

## Garden Grove educator wins California Casualty contest

**KATHRYN WINN**, a kindergarten teacher for 25 years, was the lucky winner of \$10,000 in California Casualty's 2022 Education Staycation Giveaway. The Garden Grove Education Association member was randomly chosen out of 23,000 eligible K-12 public school employees across the country.

"Shocked. Humbled. It brought me to tears," said Winn upon receiving the award on the last day of school in 2022.

Winn found out about the contest through the *Educator* magazine. Members could enter from March through October 2022. California Casualty created the Staycation Giveaway for educators to focus and treat themselves, after working hard and putting so much of their time and energy into their students, schools and community.

Staff at Morningside Elementary, where Winn teaches, said, "This could not have gone to a more deserving educator, who makes such a difference in the lives of students."

"What a better job than the teaching profession? My students are awesome. All my students are like a family."

Mark Pitchford, California Casualty executive vice president and chief marketing officer, agreed. "The whole mission of California Casualty is to serve those in our community who are heroes and serve others - an educator is the perfect example of that."

When asked why she became an educator, Winn said, "What better job than the teaching profession? My students are awesome. All my students are like a family."

"I put together a book with their pictures and told them that when I retire, I don't need any gifts. That's the reward. I'm walking away with this book, and all the little notes that [they] have written me throughout the years. That's the only payment I need." ■

*California Casualty provides auto and home insurance to educators, firefighters, law enforcement and nurses across the country. Learn more at [calcas.com](https://calcas.com) or call 800-800-9410.*





## Redding: Promoting Literacy

**On the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday** on Jan. 16, CTA's Shasta Cascade Service Center Council conducted a hot chocolate and free book distribution at the Martin Luther King Jr. Center in Redding. The combination proved irresistible to many children — and their parents. Dr. King would be proud!



▲ Lisa Ferguson, left, a Shasta Secondary Education Association member, and Vicki Ono, a Redding Teachers Association member.



## Do you know the cost of your current 403(b)?

You aren't alone if you don't! Most educators struggle to dig up the answer. We have built an easy to use tool comparing other 403(b) products with the cost of the only CTA endorsed 403(b) plan. Let's connect, you might be surprised!

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## Find Your Passions

**Manuel Bonilla**, president of Fresno Teachers Association (FTA), nerded out when he saw FTA member and Fresno High teacher Jessica La Borde's classroom desk area. They bonded over her Funko Pop collection and love for Lord of the Rings.

Bonilla's social media post went on to make a wonderful point: "This is a reminder that education is all about people. It's not just the what, but also about the who. Being passionate about something, anything, gives permission to others to find their unique passions."

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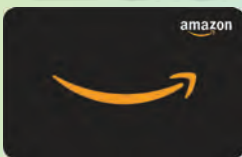
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Candidate for CTA President

David B. Goldberg

Member, United Teachers Los Angeles CTA;  
current CTA Vice President

As a third-generation teacher, it is the biggest professional honor of my life to declare my candidacy for CTA President. I have spent more than a decade serving CTA members. Witnessing the incredible work that CTA members do, guided by the love for our students, in every corner of our state inspires me to no end. As a CTA officer, I have worked hard to ensure that the voices of everyone have been included in CTA's democratic processes and will continue that work. It is at our schools and worksites, after all, where our real power lies, and I have been committed to uplifting how critical it is that our resources are used to build on our collective power. My work as Vice President has included: working with my fellow officers and CTA board to invest millions of dollars in local union organizing grants, building coalitions with other unions and the community to win just school funding with Proposition 15, and committing 100% to local unions who believed in themselves as catalysts for creating the changes needed in education. Most recently I have worked tirelessly with members wishing to create truly transformational community schools.

As President I will stay committed to modeling Responsive Leadership, developing Strong Locals, Fighting for Improved Classroom Conditions, and Building Strong Community Alliances for Economic and Racial Justice from the smallest chapters to our largest urbans. The last few years have reminded us of the enormity of the struggles ahead. Together we can build a union that increases work-site power, solidarity and collective action across locals, and road multi-racial coalitions within our communities in order to win what we all deserve. Now it is up to us to continue to win over our colleagues to becoming active members in our union. Let's build this union together!



Goldberg

Candidate for CTA President

Sergio Martinez

Member, Hacienda-LaPuente Teachers Association;  
CTA Board of Directors member

I am a proud son of California, a product of its public school system and have a path to a greater CTA as the next president.

Originally from Northern California and the son of immigrants who legally entered the United States through my father's participation in the U.S. Mexico Farm Worker Braceros Program. It enabled him to bring our family to the United States in exchange for labor.

We crisscrossed the dirt roads of California, following the seasons of the crops. The family worked collectively to survive. My earliest memories are at age 3, picking prunes in the orchards and struggling to carry my bucket. Often times we experienced mistreatment and abuse, deplorable working and living conditions, low pay and constant threats of deportation.

Fortunately, my family was able to settle in Princeton, Ca where we lived and worked the fields until I graduated from Chico State. My first teaching position was as a bilingual first grade teacher in the Alisal Union School District in Salinas. I returned to Chico in the summer of 1985 where I helped build the bilingual program. In 1989, I moved to southern California to teach with LAUSD. The following year, I signed with my current district, Hacienda-La Puente Unified School District where I began my union involvement and eventually served as local president.

As a member of CTA, I have been on multiple committees, and held leadership positions including budget, negotiations, civil rights in education, caucus chair, service center chair and vice chair, and political action committee member as well as NEA and CTA Board of Directors" Relying on my life's experiences throughout the state I have always sought to elevate the respect for our profession.

In advancing racial and social justice and equity in public education, I am committed to ensuring that every member, regardless of race, zip code, or economic status has access to safe working conditions and resources to thrive.

As the District K Board of Director I have built relationships and regularly supported all my chapters from largest to smallest, from rural to urban, near or far. Along with providing support to chapters outside of my district.

In order to achieve our full potential we must come together to address the concerns that challenge our profession. As the next president of CTA, I am committed to suiting up, showing up and speaking up for all members!



Martinez

Candidate for CTA Vice President

**Greg Bonaccorsi**

Member, Fremont Unified District Teachers Association;  
CTA Board of Directors member

As public-school educators, we hold the key to unlocking the hopes and dreams of our students and in engaging our communities in a way that is truly transformative. This is why I became a classroom teacher. Like you, I wanted to make a difference.

I have been active in my local from the very start of my career. From Site Representative, Executive Board member, Vice President, and President, I have dedicated myself to working hard on behalf of our dues-paying members. This has expanded into Service Center Chair, NEA Director, and now CTA Director. This has helped to prepare me to be your next CTA Vice President.

Our members are the life blood of CTA and the power behind our union. I have always advocated for member engagement and listening to diverse voices. Together, we can create a stronger, more effective CTA - where every member has access and opportunity to grow professionally and to become effective leaders. We can strengthen our resolve by committing to the union values underscored in the CTA Organizing Plan. This is how we build stronger local chapter governance, organize our members, and build bridges within our communities.

For my community, I am a life-long resident of Fremont in the East Bay of the San Francisco Bay Area. My father taught Social Science in the Fremont Unified School District, my mother was a Registered Nurse, and my older brother and I attended our public schools. After earning both a degree in Biology and a teaching credential from Cal Poly Humboldt in Northern California, I returned home and was hired by my hometown school district as a middle school science and math teacher where I have been for 34 years. I am looking forward to my daughter graduating this June from my very own high school.

As your CTA Vice President, I will fight for our vision of a strong union and be an active proponent for public education. I will use my energy and enthusiasm for our profession to do whatever it takes to get the job done. I am passionate about advocating for our members and our students. I will fight against anyone whose goals are to destroy public education. Lastly, I commit to building a cohesive team with the Officers and the Board of Directors to meet the challenges that lie ahead. From north to south, east to west, I will represent you.



Bonaccorsi

Candidate for CTA Vice President

**Leslie Littman**

Member, Hart District Teachers Association;  
current CTA Secretary-Treasurer

It has been an honor to serve as your CTA Secretary-Treasurer these past four years. While experiencing a global pandemic was not in my expected list of challenges when I took office, I am proud of the work done to flip CTA into a virtual setting and not only preserve our democratic processes but fight to protect students and educators. During that time, we protected school funding, ensured that schools did not reopen unless safe to do so, and provided profession development to help educators face this new reality. With the support of our governance and tech staff, we held several virtual State Councils, two NEA Representative Assemblies and countless committee meetings. In addition, we used virtual platforms to hold our annual conferences and to provide almost 200 bargaining, professional development, and social justice trainings. College unit credit was offered free of charge to members, allowing many to advance along their salary schedule.

Working with the Budget Committee, I made the membership engagement grants, created when David Goldberg was Secretary-Treasurer, permanent and increased the funding to \$750,000. Knowing the importance of elected pro-educator school board candidates, we increased member contributions to the ABC fund by one dollar. Seeing the need for a concentrated focus on Special Education issues, funds were allocated to create an annual Special Education Conference.

We are at a pivotal moment in public education. While education funding has increased in years, it by no means is enough. Educator workloads have become unmanageable, resulting in burnout and few willing to enter the profession. We need to improve educator compensation, reduce workloads, and change the public narrative about our profession. Knowing that our ability to fight against the toxic anti-public educator narrative rests with our collective power, over \$30M dollars was allocated for chapters to organize school sites and build community coalitions. Strengthen our collective power will help us build upon past victories and set up new ones.

If elected Vice President, I hope to continue to fight for equity and equality in public schools, engage and empower locals, transform our schools into community schools, and develop new leadership pathways. Together with you, I hope to build an even stronger CTA, one that maintains a balance between organizing, advocacy, and member engagement.



Littman



## Candidate for Secretary-Treasurer

### Erika Jones

Member, United Teachers Los Angeles;  
CTA Board of Directors member

I am excited to be running for CTA Secretary-Treasurer. I began teaching kindergarten in 2005. Union membership runs in my family and my dad is still active in NEA. I have held various leadership positions and am proud of the work I have led as a CTA director representing all members. Centering the needs of our profession and the communities we serve has been at the core of my leadership style. I was the only teacher on the Governor's Charter School Task Force, which led to long overdue accountability and transparency laws for the charter industry. I uplifted your voice and concerns on State Superintendent Thurmond's Reopening Taskforce as we developed best practices for reopening schools during the pandemic. During these difficult times, I have been a proven leader.



Jones

I became active in my local association and CTA as a young educator who kept getting "reduction in force" notices at the height of the last recession. That coupled with massive unregulated corporate charter growth within my district caused an environment where cuts and closures impacted students tremendously. My class of kindergarteners at the time, would go through their entire K-12 schooling with increased class sizes, no school library, no access to arts or music programs, and massive staffing cuts reducing support professionals, counselors, custodians, etc. No student should have to deal with a learning environment like that, and educators deserve a working environment where they are NOT overworked and underpaid. Making things better for all of us drives me.

I have the experience and background to continue the strides that have been made in ensuring that the budget is accessible. As we find ourselves in economic uncertainty once again, the fiscal health of CTA is critical and will be my priority. Access and understanding are key to member education and member inclusion.

There is a saying, *show me your budget and I will show you your priorities*- I want each of you to look at the CTA budget and see a strong, clear budget that reflects your priorities and voices, all while interweaving programs, departments, governance and staff support.

I want to be part of making CTA relevant to every member, finding real solutions for local struggles and investing in ourselves where it is felt from the worksite up. I want to partner with you and work alongside you for our profession, for our communities and for CTA.

*\*NOTE: At January 2023 State Council, Jones was elected as the next CTA Secretary-Treasurer by acclamation (since she was unopposed, she was elected by a voice vote).*



# Calling All Civics Teachers

**Award opportunity for government and civics educators** By Amy Peruzzaro

**EDUCATORS WHO TEACH** students about the rights and obligations of citizens in society — or civics — should consider applying for a prestigious national award. The American Civics Education Teacher Award (ACETA) program is currently accepting applications from exemplary elementary and secondary civic education teachers. The deadline is May 1, 2023.

The National Education Association, the Center on Representative Government at Indiana University, and the Center for Civic Education sponsor the award, which recognizes three teachers each year for their expert instructional practices in civics, government, and related fields.

An ACETA committee selects teachers not only for their excellent work in the classroom, but also to represent their profession. The goal is to recognize K-12 educators who teach civic education for democracy, the diverse populations of today's schools, and the different geographic regions of the United

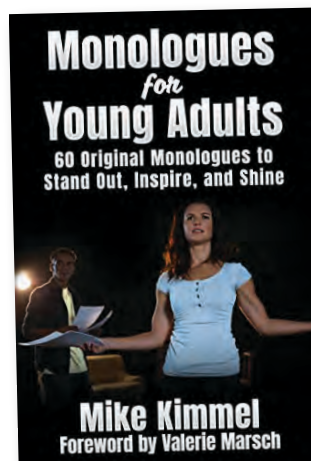
States. The selection committee considers teachers with a broad range of teaching styles, methods and types of students. In this way, the award showcases the work of excellent teachers who contribute to the civic education of the American student.

To be eligible, applicants must be full-time K-12 classroom teachers. There is no fee to apply. Applicants must submit a resume, personal statement, and two letters of recommendation: one from their school principal and one from a teaching peer. Winners will have the opportunity to travel to the National Council for Social Studies annual conference in December, where they will be recognized as well as participate in a panel presentation on promising practices in civic education.

To learn more and to apply, visit: [civiced.org/american-civic-education-teacher-awards](https://civiced.org/american-civic-education-teacher-awards). ■



Continued from Page 56



## FOR YOUNG ADULT ACTORS

Mike Kimmel, on leave with Burbank Teachers Association, has come out with his 10th book in the performing arts. *Monologues for Young Adults* is an original collection of family-friendly, gender-neutral, stage and screen scripts to help up-and-coming actors nail their college drama program auditions and professional performances. With relatable, real-world topics applicable to those in their 20s and 30s, these scenes discuss ethical questions ideal for deep thinkers to explore. Available at Amazon.

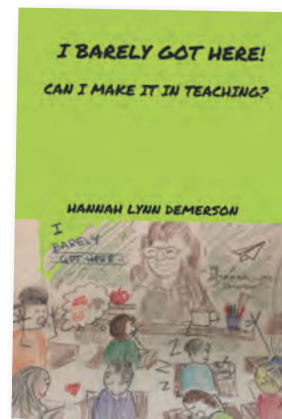


Often educators' creativity spills over into a book, blog, app or other work. We're happy to showcase members' talents.

## MEMOIR OF A TEACHER

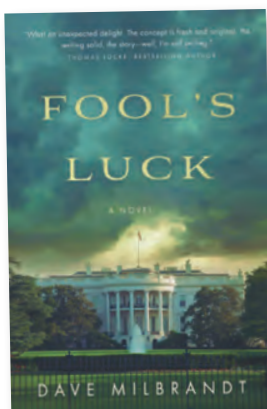
Hannah Lynn Demerson spent 34 years as an educator and has written a memoir of her experiences showing what it's really like to be a public high school teacher. The CTA/NEA-Retired member, whose grandmother and mother were educators as is her daughter now, hopes *I Barely Got Here! Can I Make It in Teaching?* appeals to young people considering a career in public education. Veteran teachers will see themselves in her stories, and the general reader will gain insights into educators' lives and work.

"You never know until you have classes of your own just how much your students can surprise, terrify, and delight you," Demerson says. "We need more great teachers to meet the challenges of the 21st century! These stories may help you understand the depth and complexity of a noble profession." On Amazon.



## LIFE-CHANGING CONNECTION

Alison Peoples, a member of Santa Rosa Teachers Association, has a new book out in hardcover: *Trinidad's Garden*. Homeless Trinidad and his faithful German Shepherd, Rascals, have been living in an abandoned house owned by Jake. The two African American men strike up a connection that gives Trinidad a job and a place to live (and create his garden!) and gives Jake a solid worker. For ages 9-12. A Spanish-language version is coming out as well. On Amazon.



## PRESIDENTIAL AMBITIONS

When not teaching government and economics to high school seniors, Dave Milbrandt, Bonita Unified Teachers Association member, is writing. He recently released an award-winning novel, *Fool's Luck*, which he is converting into a screenplay. The plot: When high school teacher Myles Bradford wins the Powerball lottery, he decides to - run for President of the United States. His family is not thrilled as Bradford is thrust into running a nationwide campaign, complete with nonstop travel, and staffing and security issues. He faces attacks and false accusations from newfound political enemies. Meanwhile, danger lurks on the home front. Will his thirst for power come at a tremendous cost? Available at Amazon, Barnes and Noble and other booksellers.

Continued on Page 55

Got something for Lit From Within — a book, blog, album, video series, podcast or something else? 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.



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