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ESP OF THE YEAR **PAGE 17**

california educator

APRIL / MAY 2023 VOLUME 27 ISSUE 5

Finding Their Calling

**MID-CAREER SWITCH
TO TEACHING
BRINGS JOY,
BENEFITS STUDENTS**

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**CELEBRATE
EDUCATORS!**

*Special poster honors
teachers, nurses, ESPs*

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**CTA's Human Rights
Award Winners**

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california educator

VOLUME 27 ISSUE 5



#WeAreCTA

OUR VOICE, OUR UNION, OUR PROFESSION

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

MAGAZINE

SOCIAL JUSTICE WARRIORS

CTA's 2023 Human Rights Award recipients (above) honored for their civil and human rights work. **PAGE 26**
cta.org/humanrights

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bit.ly/3U3Eo6r

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Photo: CTA's 2023 Human Rights Award winners, with CTA officers. Story on p. 26.

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Finding Their Calling

Mid-career switch to teaching brings these educators joy and meaning
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CTA's New Leaders

State Council delegates elect new officers
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Your Social Media Toolbox

New column:
The power of useful information
PAGE 44



Photos, from top: Downey culinary teacher Johnny Zegarra and students in front of their food truck; CTA Officers-elect Erika Jones, David Goldberg and Leslie Littman; graphic courtesy wordwizardsinc.com. Cover: Linda Gonzales, journalist-turned-teacher, Galt Teachers Assn.



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

Jim Klipfel at the rally



March for Our Lives

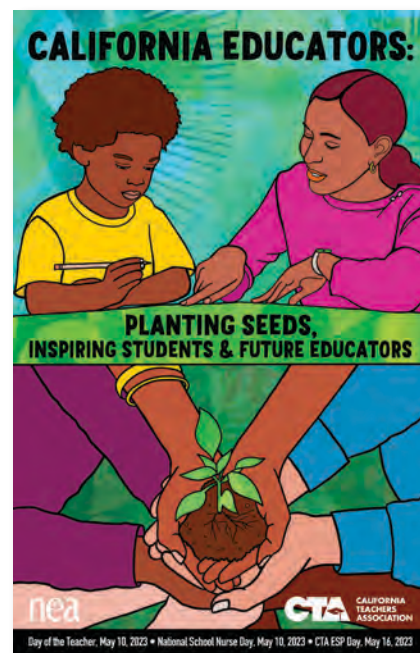
Gun violence at schools and elsewhere shatters lives and communities. Enough is enough! Students and educators rallied at the State Capitol and across the country on March 24 to fight against this scourge. Among the speakers was CTA member and 2021 California Teacher of the Year Jim Klipfel. He was one of the first on the scene after the Saugus High School shooting in 2019 — an event that took the lives of two students and the gunman — and comforted students in the aftermath. To move forward and [#EndGunViolence](https://twitter.com/EndGunViolence), “we must choose strength and love each other,” Klipfel said.

SPECIAL DAYS COMING UP

Three special events in May: **California Day of the Teacher**, May 10; **National School Nurse Day**, also May 10; and **CTA Education Support Professionals Day**, May 16. This year our theme is **California Educators: Planting seeds, inspiring students and future educators**, a nod to educators’ critical role not only in nurturing and inspiring their students, but as mentors and guides for new and rising members of the profession.

Find CTA’s celebratory poster at the back of this issue and post it in classrooms, school hallways — any place where people can see it and be reminded of the essential roles our teachers, nurses and ESPs play. You’ll also find ways you can show appreciation for educators on their special days and year-round.

The poster was created by Oakland-based artist and social justice activist Favianna Rodriguez, who offers a teacher’s guide on creating effective, impactful posters and several other useful classroom tools; find details on the back of the poster.





In Support of Great Teachers

There is nothing more important than a great education taught by wonderful teachers. To obtain and keep those wonderful teachers they need a contract with full benefits, exceptional pay for the exceptional job they do and paid time to prepare what they are teaching in school. I support the Robla teacher’s protest (bit.ly/43o36CM). Fight for what is right and just!!! —Charlotte Hollingsworth

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For our full social media directory, see 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.

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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 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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A Part of Something Bigger



I AM A KINDERGARTEN TEACHER. Even after four years as CTA president, I am and will always be a classroom educator – working with our youngest learners to set the foundation for their educational journey.

When I left a previous career in banking, I knew I wanted to work in education. I was only a short time in before I realized that kindergarten had chosen me whether I liked it or not. And while there was certainly an adjustment period, I found my calling in a room full of wide-eyed, wondering youngsters.

It's a lot like how I view my time as CTA president. I ran for the position to be a voice for all members as we led the fight for the schools our students deserve. And before I finished a full year in office, we plunged into a global pandemic that included challenges never before faced by educators. This required all of us to learn and grow together to be the educators and caring adults our students needed, and some of us to answer the call to be the leaders that the crisis demanded.

As educators, CTA members and Americans, we're all part of something bigger than ourselves, working together for better for our students, our union and our country. By ourselves, we are only capable of so much, but united we are a massive force for progress and justice and the shared belief that the status quo is not good enough.

Each of us is a single star among 310,000 across California – classroom teachers, librarians, education support professionals, community college faculty and instructors, school psychologists, school nurses, speech language pathologists, school counselors and school social workers – shining bright every day to light a path

for our students. And we're all a part of a long legacy of educators who have been rising together to fight for what's right since CTA's founding in 1863.

From fighting for school funding for students of color and successfully ending sexist laws that discriminated against women, to standing against the racist and wrongful internment of Japanese Americans and defeating ballot initiatives that would have allowed teachers to be fired for being gay, time and again CTA has been on the right side of history. And together, we carry on that legacy and fighting spirit today, from proclaiming loudly that Black Lives Matter and rising as one to stop Asian hate and antisemitic prejudice, to defending our right to teach truth and creating schools that are safe and brave spaces for our LGBTQ+ students and educators.

And we're not alone in this fight – united with fellow educators across the country as NEA, we are 3 million strong, leading the movement for thriving public schools as the cornerstone of our democracy. When we lift our voices in unison, there's nothing we can't accomplish.

I hope that every day as you are doing great work in our schools, you feel supported and empowered as a part of the CTA and NEA families, while we continue working to build a brighter tomorrow and fight for a more just society. It definitely helps me stand a little taller on days when kindergarten isn't as easy as 1-2-3.

Thank you for all that you do for our students and our union.

E. Toby Boyd

CTA PRESIDENT

@etobyboyd



Thanks for the Gift!



MY BRIGHTER OUTLOOK on life, now that spring's longer, sunnier days are here, is tempered by the fact that my daughter leaves for college in a few months. I will miss her terribly, of course. But my primary thought is the same as when her sister left a few years ago: How can this child possibly be ready to take on adulthood?

And yet she is. As much as I'd like to claim credit as a parent, a great deal of my kids' confidence, maturity and sheer knowledge have been instilled by their teachers and other educators over the years: Inspiring professionals who have opened worlds for them, coached and guided them, believed in them, helped them back up when they've fallen.

I see examples of educators' dedication to their students in most every story we run in the Educator — this issue being no exception. Allison Medlin became a teacher after a career in high-tech sales and management. "It means everything," she says of being an educator in "**Finding Their Calling**" (page 18). "You live for the magic moment when your kid suddenly gets that 'I get it!' look. It means the little things you do every day make a difference somewhere in their life."

Even after teaching special education for 21 years, Riju Krishna loves her work and her students. "Every day, I wake up excited about what I'm going to do," she says. "The passion has helped me grow and stay curious ... the only way I can be my best for students."

Carol Peek, **CTA's Education Support Professional of the Year** (page 17), is known for her rapport with students. "She treats the kids with love, respect and discipline, and they treat her like a mother — one who will listen and help guide them," says one of Peek's colleagues.

Nalik Davis Jr., a **2023 Human Rights Award winner** (page 26), is a role model with purpose. "Students will always reflect their leadership, so if my leadership in the classroom is showing kids that I care by putting all I can into my work, giving full effort and showing my best to them — that will reflect in them. They will start to care, they will start putting in the effort."

It's educators like these who have given my kids and students everywhere a solid foundation in academics, as well as an understanding of the importance of doing their best, treating others with grace and dignity and making positive contributions to their communities. So that when I and countless other parents and guardians eventually watch their children go off in the world, we rest assured that they have the skills and abilities to handle whatever comes their way.

Thank you, educators, for this gift. What a wonderful job you have done with our children, and continue to do every day.

Katharine Fong

EDITOR IN CHIEF

editor@cta.org

April / May 2023

CALENDAR



A World Worth Saving

APRIL 22

IT'S ESSENTIAL that we "Invest in Our Planet," the theme for this year's Earth Day. The day highlights the urgency of dedicating our time, resources and energy to solving climate change and other environmental issues as soon as possible. Educators and students can mark the day — the year! — through education, awareness and action — such as planting trees, participating in cleanups, ending plastic consumption, practicing climate literacy and championing sustainable fashion. Get more ideas and find events near you at earthday.org.

Autism Acceptance

During Autism Acceptance Month in April, the focus is on increasing understanding and acceptance of people with autism — learning more about their experiences directly from them and building more welcoming and inclusive classrooms and communities to support them. Find information and resources at autismspeaks.org.


 Ronaldo Byrd; autismspeaks.org

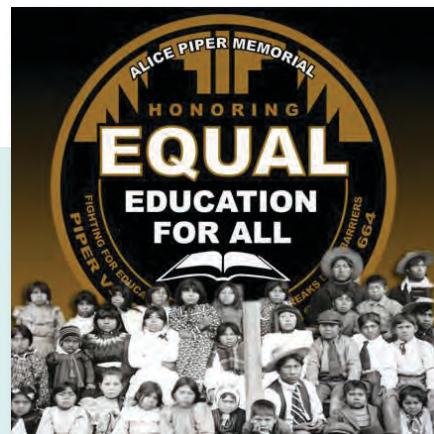


LGBTQ+ Safety in Schools Grants and Scholarships

The **LGBTQ+ Safety in Schools Grant and Scholarship Program** in Honor of Guy DeRosa was created to promote human and civil rights by making our public schools safe for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning+ persons. The program was renamed in 2009 in memory of CTA member and educator Guy DeRosa, who was a lifelong advocate for civil and human rights and LGBTQ+ issues.

- The grant program supports groups, projects and presentations that promote understanding of and respect for LGBTQ+ persons. Grants are used directly with students. Special consideration is given to projects that recognize, promote and celebrate ethnic diversity and other diversity among LGBTQ+ youth.
- The scholarship program supports self-identified LGBTQ+ members enrolled in a teacher/counseling credential or graduate program who are pursuing a career in public education and who understand the importance of LGBTQ+ educators as role models in our public schools.

Active CTA/SCTA members, or public school students sponsored by an active CTA/SCTA member, are eligible to apply. Award amounts are up to \$2,500. Apply now! Deadline is May 31. ► cta.org/scholarships



Alice Piper Day JUNE 2

ALICE PIPER was a 15-year-old Paiute girl residing in Big Pine, Inyo County, who was denied entry to Big Pine High School in 1923 due to her race. (California educational law then prohibited Native Americans from attending a public school if a government-run Indian school was within three miles of the public school.) Piper and six other Indian children sued the district for the right to attend. On June 2, 1924, the California Supreme Court unanimously ruled in her favor in the case *Piper v. Big Pine*, thus opening the door Native American children to attend public schools in California.



MAY: Better Hearing & Speech Month

Better Hearing & Speech Month is an opportunity to raise awareness about communication disorders. "It's a Noisy Planet" offers a teacher toolkit to help educators teach children in grades 2-6 about the causes and prevention of noise-induced hearing loss. The science-based classroom presentation explains what sound is, how sound travels through the ear, how loud sounds can damage hearing over time, and how to protect your hearing. Find it at noisyplanet.nidcd.nih.gov.

NEA Foundation Grants

APRIL 27 APPLICATION DEADLINE

NEA Foundation gives grants in amounts up to \$5,000 for educators to enhance your classroom experience. Find detailed information and applications at the website. Grants include:

- **Envision Equity Grants** let you test new ideas and innovations while advancing students' cultural understanding and appreciation and understanding of civic engagement and democracy.
- **Student Success Grants** let you develop and implement projects to enhance students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills, promote communication and collaboration skills, etc.
- **Learning & Leadership Grants** help you participate in high-quality professional development like summer institutes, conferences, seminars, travel abroad programs, or action research. ► neafoundation.org



CCA Spring Conference

APRIL 28-30 *Hilton Orange County/ Costa Mesa Hotel.* The Community College Association's spring conference highlights membership and features the presentation of CCA's WHO (We Honor Ours) Awards, which recognize CCA local and state union leaders. ► cta.org/conferences

National Teacher Day

MAY 2 EVENT

National Teacher Day is on Tuesday of National Teacher Appreciation Week (May 8-12). ► nea.org/TAW

CTA Communications Awards

MAY 5 NOMINATION DEADLINE

The Communications Awards Program recognizes and honors CTA chapters, service centers and UniSerts that communicate effectively with their members. ► cta.org/awards

CA LMI Summer Institute

JUNE 20-22 *San Diego.* The California Labor Management Initiative Summer Institute brings together labor-management teams to energize partnerships, build community, and navigate the upcoming year together. ► cdefoundation.org/clmi

ISTE Live 23

JUNE 25-28 CONFERENCE

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) holds ISTE Live 23, June 25-28. The virtual conference offers hundreds of presentations and learning experiences by educators and other innovators, and on-demand content that is available to you for six months afterward. Learn more at conference.iste.org/2023.

PBL World 2023

JUNE 26-29 CONFERENCE

Napa Valley. "Sharing Our Stories: Changing the Narrative Through Gold Standard PBL." PBL World, sponsored by the nonprofit Buck Institute for Education, is the premier conference for Project Based Learning. ► pblworld.org

NEA Representative

Assembly JULY 2-6 CONVENTION

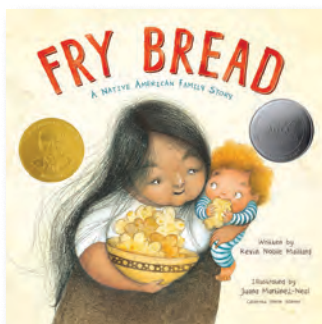
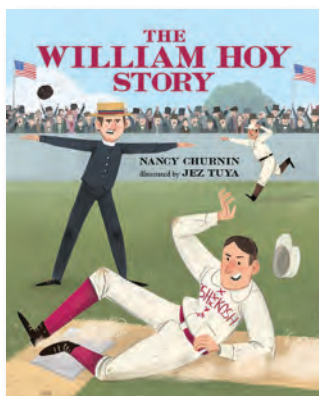
Orlando, Florida. The world's largest democratic, deliberative body, by educators, for educators. Each summer approximately 6,000 educators — including CTA members — meet to debate the vital issues that impact American public education and set National Education Association policy and activities for the year ahead. These delegates represent the 3 million members of the NEA. ► nea.org/ra

Presidents Conference

JULY 13-16 Join CTA for a conference designed to enhance your skills as a local president and help build systems of success for your local chapter. Provides new and returning chapter presidents a foundation to rely upon as we prepare for future challenges. ► cta.org/conferences

CTA Summer Institute

JULY 23-27 *UCLA, Los Angeles.* CTA's premier training offers sessions in areas that assist chapter leaders in the day-to-day representation and support of members. More details TBD, but sessions may include "tracks" such as Communications, Instruction and Professional Development, Emerging Leaders, Bargaining, School Finance, Member Benefits and Community Engagement. ► cta.org/conferences



Children's Day and Book Day **APRIL 30**

El día de los niños/El día de los libros (Children's Day/Book Day), known as **Día**, is a celebration every day of children, families and reading that culminates yearly on April 30. The celebration emphasizes the importance of literacy for children of all linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Among **Día**'s goals are to recognize and respect culture, heritage and language as powerful tools for strengthening families and communities.

CTA's California Reads program also focuses on this as well as fostering a love of reading among young people. Educators can choose from teacher-vetted books for all grade levels to read to students or have students read. Below are a few of the 2023 recommended books; find the full list and past years' selections at cta.org/careads.

In *The Silence That Binds Us* (by Joanna Ho; grades 9-12), May Chen is *not* the Chinese Taiwanese American daughter her mother expects her to be — May prefers hoodies over dresses and wants to become a writer. When May's brother Danny, newly admitted to Princeton and secretly struggling with depression, dies by suicide, racist accusations are hurled against May's parents for putting too much "pressure" on him. May challenges these stereotypes through her writing, but there are consequences to speaking out: Who gets to tell our stories? Who gets silenced? May must take back the narrative. *Silence* touches on mental health, racism and classism.

William Hoy was a skilled professional baseball player in the late 1800s-early 1900s. *The William Hoy Story: How a Deaf Baseball Player Changed the Game* (by Nancy Churnin and illustrated by Jez Tuya; grades 3-5) tells how he faced prejudice because of being deaf and could not hear the umpires' calls. One day he asked the umpire to use hand signals: strike, ball, out. That day he not only got on base but also changed the way the game was played forever.

Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story (by Kevin Noble Maillard and illustrated by Juana Martinez-Neal; grades Pre-K/TK/K) is told in lively and powerful verse and is an evocative depiction of a modern Native American family. The book takes a staple food of many tribes across the country and uses it to think about family, history, memory and community. Fry bread recipe included!



Draw Together Comes to Classrooms — for Free

When schools shut down during the pandemic, San Francisco-based artist Wendy MacNaughton created online drawing show “Draw Together” for kids learning from home, which included social-emotional learning components and became popular across the country, even in classrooms after schools reopened. “DrawTogether Classrooms” launched in mid-March; the free program gives educators all the tools and support they need to offer fun and engaging art and SEL to their students. These include curriculum, resources, community and individual support in an easy-to-use and adaptable program for all different types of learning environments. For ages 4 and up; Spanish and Chinese translations available. Learn more and sign up at drawtogether.studio/classrooms.



LGBTQ+ Employee, Student Rights

CTA's Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Issues Advisory Committee (SOGIAC) has updated its resource available to members: “Legal Rights for LGBTQ+ Employees & Students.” The pamphlet looks at California law in its protection of LGBTQ+ employees from discrimination and harassment by employers (including school districts and county offices of education) because of gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation, or due to the employer's assumptions about the employee's gender identity or sexual orientation. It suggests ways employees who have been discriminated against can take action.

The pamphlet also makes clear how LGBTQ+ students are protected from discrimination and harassment by state and federal law, and offers comprehensive resources for assistance, support and more information. View it at bit.ly/42yPmVD.

Dates to Remember

National Day of Silence APRIL 14

A national student-led demonstration where LGBTQ+ students and allies all around the country — and the world — take a vow of silence to protest the harmful effects of harassment and discrimination of LGBTQ+ people in schools. Students end the day with Breaking the Silence rallies and events to share their experiences and bring attention to ways their schools and communities can become more inclusive. Get more information and get involved at glsen.org.



Harvey Milk Day MAY 22

A day to educate your school about LGBTQ+ history and an

extraordinary leader whose work to end discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community in the 1970s set the stage for many of the civil rights advances we see today. Find resources at glsen.org.



Harvey Milk Foundation



Inside California Education

Coming up soon is Season 5 of Inside California Education, the award-winning TV series produced by PBS KVIE in Sacramento and NationalEdOnline that features compelling stories about public education from all over the state. Season 5 stories include the new Ethnic Studies curriculum, the expansion of Transitional Kindergarten, the role of Community Schools, Early College or Dual Enrollment programs, Homeless Student Liaisons, and more. Pictured is a scene from Season 4 on farm-to-school food in Fresno. Check out more at insidecaled.org.



Chad Madden/Unsplash

Memorial Day MAY 29

The federal holiday honors U.S. military personnel who have died while serving our country. Teach the significance of Memorial Day, its place in our history, and its meaning today. Find lesson plans and activities for students of all ages at nea.org.



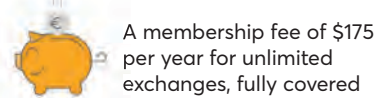
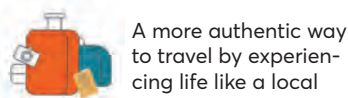
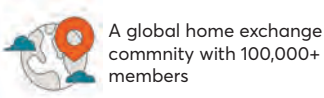
HomeExchange is the best way to travel

"As teachers, we have a limited budget. HomeExchange helps minimize accommodation costs so we can spend our money on having fun when we get to our destination. We have been members since 2020 and have completed 31 exchanges in 3 years. We started using HomeExchange as an economical way to travel. Now, we realize there are many other benefits."



Amy, Doug, and their two daughters. HomeExchange members since 2020

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QUOTES & NUMBERS

Compiled by **Julian Peeples**



"It's so easy to get bogged down with all of these standardized tests, all of these benchmarks that we have to meet with the students, and then lose the essence of what we're even here in school for: to inspire these students to figure out what they want to do in life and give them the tools to chase that."

—OLAOLUWALOTOB "TOBI" THOMAS, United Teachers of Richmond member, in an EdSource story about the science teacher's efforts to become an astronaut

3

States that require media literacy in all K-12 classrooms, with standards integrated into existing social studies, health or language arts curriculum (Delaware, New Jersey and Texas), according to a March EdSource column.

18

Percentage of community college faculty who identify as Hispanic, compared to 47 percent of community college students, according to a recent report from the state auditor's office.

3.6

Times more likely Black preschoolers are to be suspended than white preschoolers, according to federal civil rights data.

41

Years since California Day of the Teacher became an officially recognized state observance, coming out of legislation co-sponsored by CTA and the Association of Mexican American Educators in 1982. (Day of the Teacher this year is on May 10; see CTA's celebratory poster at the back of this issue.)



"To help our students reach their educational dreams, we must move away from overly simplified and politically expedient legislation and toward comprehensive, sustainable and equitable solutions."

—WENDY BRILL-WYNKOOP, College of the Canyons Faculty Association member, in a February EdSource column



"Mental health has always been a need, but it's especially critical coming back from the pandemic. Our students have experienced deaths of loved ones, evictions, family job loss, and now we have newcomers, arriving unaccompanied and experiencing trauma."

—EMILY GRIJALVA, community schools coordinator and member of UTLA, in a February NEA Today story



"NEA members across this nation will fight for our students — of all races and of all places, from preschool through higher education — and for their opportunity to learn."

—NEA President BECKY PRINGLE, in response to a bill proposed in Florida by Gov. Ron DeSantis that would limit what can be taught in Florida's public colleges and universities

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Strike 3, I'm In

A retiring LA educator looks back on her career — including her times on the picket lines

By Susan Massarik Aslan

IT WAS DURING the 1960s that I began my Los Angeles Unified School District journey. After my first day in kindergarten, my mom mentioned that I'd be going back the next day. My response was something that meant "been there, done that." Regardless of what I said, I did go back the following day and countless days thereafter.

I was an LAUSD student from kindergarten through high school. My further studies led me to a teaching credential. I started my teaching career for LAUSD in 1984 (Vermont Avenue, not far from where the Olympics were taking place at the time). I transferred to the San Fernando Valley in 1990 so I could be closer to my newborn and where my husband and I had our home. Through the years I have had the pleasure of teaching all elementary grade levels (TK-5). I will be leaving LAUSD when I retire this year. One of the memories I will always carry with me relates to the picket signs I carried along the way.

In 1970, LAUSD had their first strike. I was only in third grade, but I actually walked the picket line. My dad carried a sign that read "Alumni Care" (he had been an LAUSD student). I made a sign that said, "Future Alumni Care Too!" And as a teacher I have been part of the other LAUSD strikes.

Now, years later, I continue to teach for this school district that has become such an integral part of me. I am honored to be an educator. Whether on the picket line, in a classroom, or from a computer at home during the pandemic, I am always fighting to provide the best for our students - our future!

On the picket line in 2019, I told the students who braved the pouring rain with us how proud I was of them and that they would remember this strike as I remember my first strike.

I wonder how many people can say they were part of every LAUSD strike. (Let the author and the *Educator* know at editor@cta.org.) ■

Susan Aslan is a member of United Teachers Los Angeles/NEA. Shortly after she retired, UTLA went on strike again. She participated in that strike, as well.



UTLA's 4 Strikes

1970:

Organizations representing educators and support service personnel throughout LAUSD came together under the banner of UTLA and its affiliates. A strike in 1970 solidified the union.

1989:

Nearly 20,000 UTLA members joined picket lines for nine days to demand higher pay and more decision-making control. They won a three-year contract of yearly 8 percent salary increases and implementation of school site decision-making and management.

2019:

UTLA members' six-day strike drew 30,000+ educators and supporters to the streets. It forced LAUSD to relinquish its power to raise class sizes unilaterally, added 300 more school nurses and 77 more middle and high school counselors, and secured a 6 percent raise for teachers.

2023:

UTLA members went on strike for three days in March in solidarity with SEIU 99, which represents teacher assistants, custodians, food service workers, bus drivers and other support staff. The day after, SEIU 99 reached agreement with the district on key demands, including a 30 percent wage increase.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Carol Peek, CTA's Education Support Professional of the Year, fights for ESPs

By Julian Peebles



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS — with students as a campus supervisor at Ventura's Buena High School and with fellow members of Ventura Education Support Professionals Association (VESPA) as their president — is a big part of Carol Peek's success, which includes being named the 2023 CTA Paula J. Monroe ESP of the Year.

"I'm just so honored and humbled," Peek says. "This is not just my honor. It's for all ESPs."

Peek's advocacy for her fellow ESPs began when she first started working at the high school in 2005 and escalated until she was elected VESPA president in 2019, where she is released from her job duties to work full-time on behalf of the local. Peek says she misses working with students on campus every day — having forged many special relationships with students over the years while working the school gates. As an ESP, she has unique opportunities to interact one-on-one with students, and offer support, encouragement and guidance.

"Carol is very well known and well-respected as a campus supervisor, and her rapport with the students, faculty and admin is amazing," says fellow VESPA member Kendall Griffin. "She treats the kids with love, respect and discipline, and they treat her like a mother — one who will listen and help guide them."

Peek's interest in union leadership springboarded in 2016 with her participation in the NEA Leaders for Tomorrow program, now called the NEA ESP Leadership Institute, which "pulled out leadership qualities I never knew I had," she says. Peek was elected VESPA vice president and then president, working to provide honesty, transparency and accuracy to all members.

"As an ESP, I love my job and I know I make a difference," she says. "But I never felt like we had the respect we truly deserve, so when I became president, I made that a priority."

The fight for respect reached a crescendo last year when VESPA and Ventura Unified Education Association (VUEA) were locked in a lengthy and difficult bargain with the district. Peek worked to rebuild VESPA's relationship with VUEA, and the two presented a united front against district management that pushed them to the limits. She said the fight for respect meant standing together for each other.

"It wasn't enough to be angry — we needed to organize," Peek says. "The members were fantastic. We all knew we deserved respect, and we were fighting for it!"

The combined efforts of VESPA and VUEA resulted in a major victory for all educators and students in

"It wasn't enough to be angry — we needed to organize. The members were fantastic. We all knew we deserved respect, and we were fighting for it!"

Ventura. Peek has since invited Ventura Unified administrators to meet with VESPA to hear about the needs of ESPs and build together.

"We have a better relationship with the district than before and it's because they saw our strength," Peek says. "When you have a puzzle, every piece is important. If one is missing you can't complete the puzzle. You can't run a school without ESPs!"

As VESPA president, Peek has regular meetings with management to discuss potential issues and ensure ESPs have what they need to provide the services students deserve. She's excited to be able to continue sharing all the ways ESPs are the backbone of public schools with a louder voice, as the ESP of the Year.

"This honor gives me the forum to advocate for each and every ESP, not just in California but across the country," Peek says. "I appreciate that so much because we deserve to be heard." ■

Finding Their Calling

Making mid-career changes into education to be the difference for students

By Julian Peeples

Once I started going back to school and the pieces fell together, it felt like this is where I'm supposed to be," says special education teacher Wendy Matteson, a Temecula Valley Educators Association member. "Like this is my purpose."

The journey to being an educator is often not a direct course, with many landing on campuses later in life, after other successful careers. These educators are vital to our public schools, bringing their varied experiences and fresh passion

to classrooms at a time when they are needed so — the nationwide educator shortage exacerbated by pandemic-related retirements and increasing numbers of teachers who leave for less stressful and better paying careers.

CTA President E. Toby Boyd is one of these educators, having first worked in the financial industry before finding the way to his calling as a kindergarten teacher.

"I wanted to be a child psychologist, but I took a few detours in life and ended up in banking," says Boyd, who decided to

leave finance to spend more time with his newborn daughter. "And I thought, 'I want to work with children.'"

Just like President Boyd, educators throughout CTA and across the country have left careers in the private sector and other jobs to join the dedicated ranks in public schools, each with their own interesting path to the craft. In celebration of all educators who do whatever it takes to reach and teach students every day, here are eight of those members and their stories.





Linda Gonzales

SIXTH GRADE TEACHER

Galt Teachers Association

Linda Gonzales wanted to be a teacher when she was a child, but instead spent more than two decades as a news editor at the Sacramento Bee. About six years ago, the news industry was going through changes and Gonzales says she was getting to the point in her career where she wanted to do something completely different.

"A benefit of my job as a journalist was to read and learn every day," she says. "Teaching was kind of like working in a newsroom. I had a lot of good training to prepare me."

The longtime news and online editor quit her job and went back to school to get her credential, teaching while taking classes for two years. She had a supportive grade-level team who took her under their wings and passed on as much knowledge as they could.

Gonzales says she's really enjoying her new career.

"I just have fun with it. I enjoy the kids and helping them grow socially."

"Sometimes I feel like I'm making a difference and sometimes I don't," she says. "I tell my kids all the time that working with them is way more fun than working with adults. Hopefully, I'm doing right by them."

Gonzales says the heavy workload isn't for the faint of heart, but she says even in the sunset of her career that making a difference for students in her school community is worth all the effort.

"I just have fun with it. I enjoy the kids and helping them grow socially," she says.

When the COVID pandemic forced classrooms online, Gonzales' digital skills allowed her to transfer almost seamlessly.

"And I was able to help my team. It was a nice opportunity for me," she says.

With her previous career spent in management, Galt Teachers Association is Gonzales' first union — and she's proud to be a member.

"My first year, I cast my first union vote. I remember thinking 'this is so awesome!'" she says. "I've come to recognize the immense amount of work that school site reps put in."

Caleb Allen

SCIENCE TEACHER

Redlands Teachers Association



Coming from a family of teachers, it should come as no surprise that Caleb Allen ended up in a classroom. In his first year as a science teacher at the alternative high school he attended, Allen is trying to capture the excitement he had for science in school and convey it to his students, along with some other lessons he's learned along the way.

"Getting through my class is one thing, but it's not everything," Allen says. "Being able to share my experience alongside biology is giving them skills to succeed outside my classroom."

Prior to becoming an educator, Allen worked in a variety of jobs, including medical administration, in a cabinetry workshop and for a satellite television company before becoming a stay-at-home dad for six years. When his kids began entering school, Allen took the time to finish his teaching credential, knowing that teaching would give him more time off when his kids were on break from school, allowing them to spend as much time together as possible.

Allen says being a first-year teacher at 39 is "terrifying," bursting into nervous laughter. All jokes aside, while certainly daunting at times, Allen says being able to help kids who need help is everything.

"I'm enjoying what I'm doing. There's a lot of stress, but the benefits and rewards make it all worthwhile," Allen says. "I went to the alternative school, so I identify with my students. Being able to show them there's more out there is good for my heart."

A major priority for Allen this year is to support students who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and reach kids who may have fallen through the cracks.

"I think COVID did a number on everything," he says.

A freshly joined member of Redlands Teachers Association, Allen has already attended his first CTA professional conference: New Educator Weekend, late last year, which he says was a valuable experience.

"It was good to get a couple new ideas for the classroom and learn about retirement and self-care," Allen says.

"Being able to show students there's more out there is good for my heart."



Sylvia Harmon

INTERVENTION
TEACHER, ART

Oceanside Teachers
Association



After 16 years as a substitute teacher, Sylvia Harmon is a first-year intervention teacher, joining her father and husband as educators.

She previously worked at a credit union — a job she didn't enjoy and decided not to return to after taking leave to care for her father during his final months. When her husband suggested substitute teaching, Harmon was not interested at all.

"I said 'no way.' I remember what we used to do to substitutes," she says, though when she finally took the plunge, her attitude changed. "I started subbing and I absolutely loved it. I felt like I was really making a difference."

Harmon had a number of long-term substitute assignments, so she was kept pretty busy — and lucky for her, primarily at the school her kids attended. When she was considering what she wanted to do, it was almost an easy decision.

"I knew that I didn't want to go back to the rat race of banking. I didn't feel like I was making a difference at all," Harmon says. "I used to dread going to work, and I don't have that at all now. I'm excited to see the kids and I'm happier overall."

Harmon is proud to be a first-year educator at 55 years old, especially since there were plenty of times

she was overwhelmed and wanted to give up. But that was never an option for Harmon.

"I had a lot of people ask me why I was doing all of this work when many of my friends are retiring," she says. "But I

don't think I'm just starting — this is the natural next step in my career."

As an intervention teacher, Harmon sees every student in the school, grades TK-5, once a week. In addition to fun art projects over the holidays, Harmon is now teaching students about different artists, differentiating based on grade level. She also teaches benchmark English Language Arts to a 4/5 combo class for 45 minutes every morning.

"I started subbing and I absolutely loved it. I felt like I was really making a difference."

Riju Krishna

SPECIALIZED ACADEMIC
INSTRUCTION TEACHER

Association of County
Educators (ACE)



When Riju Krishna immigrated to the United States

in 2000, she worked as a system administrator in the technology industry. After 21 years as a special education teacher, Krishna wonders how she ever did anything else.

"Every day, I wake up excited about what I'm going to do," Krishna says. "The passion has helped me grow and stay curious. I have grown every moment, and this is the only way I can be my best for students."

As a single mother, Krishna needed a job that would allow her to take care of her family. She was driving by a Santa Clara County Office of Education

(SCCOE) job fair when balloons they had put out caught Krishna's son's attention, necessitating a stop. She talked with SCCOE staff about potential job opportunities — Krishna had a master's in mathematics, was a math professor in India and was looking for a change. She and a friend agreed they would both try out teaching special education.

When Krishna first arrived, it was challenging. But after the first week, she found her passion.

"Before, I didn't know where I was heading, but after the first week in my class, I wondered why it took me so long to be here in special education. I was meant to be here," she says. "It was magical."

ACE is Krishna's first union, and she immediately discovered that it was about so much more than contracts and rights.

"A union is not just where you go when you are in trouble — it's a place where you become a better educator," she says. "Having a union is having a collaboration of like-minded people who can truly help each other grow and do the best for our students."

Krishna especially appreciates tapping into the collective knowledge and vast experience of her colleagues to bounce ideas and grow as educators.

"All of us have different motivations, but all of us have a passion for the students we serve," she says. "That like-mindedness unites us."

"Every day I wake up excited about what I'm going to do. The passion has helped me grow and stay young."

"I'm helping students learn to think and to be adults who can effectively be a part of society."



Wendy Matteson

SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER
Temecula Valley Educators Association

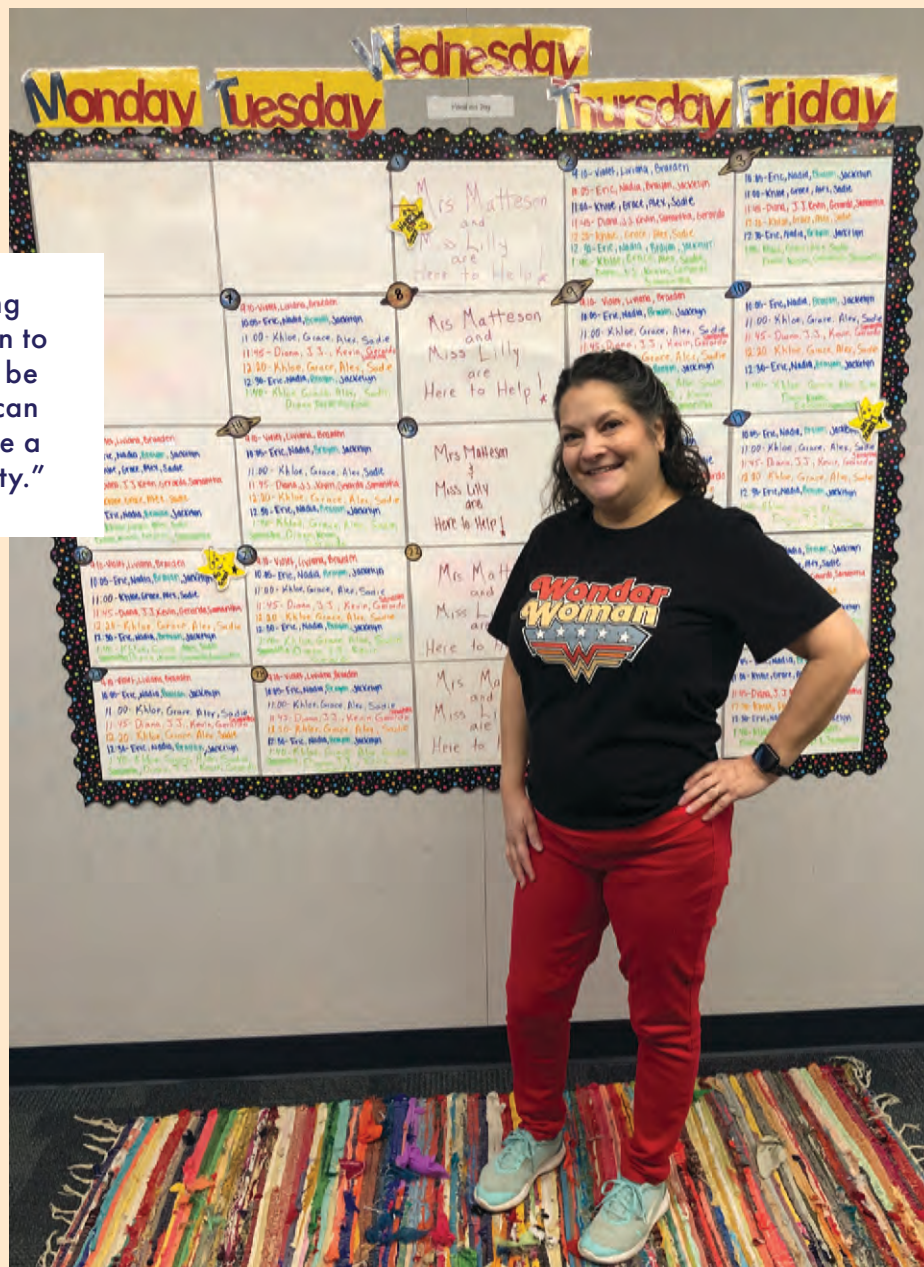
Wendy Matteson says that a lot of the tools she learned as a waitress for 18 years have been useful since she became a special education teacher in 2019.

"When someone orders a salad, you have to list all of the salad dressings: ranch, Italian, thousand island, blue cheese. And then you go to the next person and even though they just heard all the dressings, they want to hear them again. And then the next person and so on," says Matteson. "There's a lot of repeating things in both jobs!"

Matteson had plans to earn her degree multiple times, finishing two years of college before she needed to quit school to take care of two kids as a single parent. When both of her kids grew up and moved out, Matteson thought about what she wanted to do.

"Waitresses don't have a retirement plan, so I thought 'I'd really love to go back to get my degree,'" she says, returning to school in 2015. "It was an amazing journey and the doors kept opening and the path led me here."

As Matteson progressed through college, she realized that she already knew a lot of the material through her own life experiences — she was filling in the knowledge with the book work. Raising multiple children with conditions like ADHD, autism and emotional issues helps inform her practice today as she supports students who face a lot of the same issues.



"I'm helping students learn to think and to be adults who can effectively be a part of society in the best way they choose," Matteson says.

Matteson is an active member of her local, serving as chair of the Special Education Committee. She said she had a lot of preconceptions about the union before becoming a member — some of which have been confirmed but most have been dispelled.

"I have been able to use my voice on both sides: at union meetings and to correct people outside the union when their assumptions are wrong," she says.





Johnny Zegarra

CULINARY INSTRUCTOR

Downey Education Association

By his own description, Johnny Zegarra is intense in the kitchen. After preparing culinary masterpieces in some of Los Angeles' most popular restaurants as a Le Cordon Bleu-trained chef, the transition to teaching wasn't easy.

"If you've ever watched (the television show) 'Hell's Kitchen,' that's how it is," laughs Zegarra. "So, it was an adjustment."

While cooking at Los Angeles mainstays like Bottega Louie and Napa Valley Grille, Zegarra decided to go back to school to get his teaching credential. He started as an after-school culinary arts instructor in Downey one day a week at first. One class became two became three, and after two and a half years, he became a full-time teacher in 2014.

Zegarra teaches and trains his students the skills they'll need to work at a restaurant from his real-world experiences. Zegarra and his students work catering jobs, with Zegarra making sure every student gets paid \$20 an hour when they work private events.

"The kids are doing five-star meals out of a food truck to guests," Zegarra says. "A lot of my students

get hired at local restaurants. Even if it's not what they want to do in life, cooking will get them through college."

Zegarra eats, sleeps and breathes the culinary arts — until five years ago, he would get off work as a teacher, change aprons and go work on the line cooking dinner at Fox Studios. He teaches students about safety, cooking techniques and process, knife

work, certifications and why all of it is important to the final product of a good meal.

"If I can give them confidence to cook for themselves, that means something to me," Zegarra says. "At first I thought it was just a job. But, then a kid told me the best he ate all week was in my class, and I knew I had to teach all of them how to cook for themselves so they're not hungry."

Zegarra truly appreciates the rights and protections afforded by his union contract, like defined hours, decent working conditions and holidays.

"That doesn't exist at the restaurant," he says. "On Mother's Day, you're cooking for everyone's mother but your own."

"If I can give them confidence to cook for themselves, that means something to me."

Deidre Robinson

THIRD GRADE TEACHER

Oakland Education Association



Deidre Robinson took a big pay cut when she left accounting 20 years ago to teach in her hometown of Oakland, forcing her to work multiple jobs to make ends meet.

"It was hard, but I was determined to give back to my city," Robinson says. "I only wanted to come into the teaching profession for 10 years so that I could be an advocate for teachers and students."

While Robinson was an accountant and auditor at Kaiser, she took courses toward a teaching credential here and there, finding that she enjoyed it more than her actual job. When she told some of her family members who are educators that she was going to become a teacher, they asked her why. Robinson's answer was to focus on helping kids in her community to have a voice.

"At the end of the day, children need consistency, and they need to know a person cares about them and wants them to succeed in school," she says.

Before she became an educator, Robinson says she had a lack of understanding about what teachers encounter on a daily basis.

"Everyone has a thought about what we do, and it's

**"It was hard,
but I was
determined to give
back to my city."**

not unless you've been in the trenches that you can truly understand it," Robinson says.

Robinson says her first year teaching was difficult, and she almost left after seven years due

to what she calls "post-traumatic stress disorder from teaching in a neighborhood with economic and crime issues." The pandemic has added additional daunting challenges, she says.

When she first became a member of Oakland Education Association, Robinson says she didn't get involved, just "paying my dues and keeping it moving." But after attending NEA Representative Assembly as a delegate, she wanted to learn more and began getting involved. Today, she serves as a member of the bargaining team and on the executive board.

"Once I got involved, that was it," Robinson says. "You have to know your contract because people will try to make you do things that are not OK."

Allison Medlin

FOURTH GRADE
TEACHER

San José Teachers
Association



Allison Medlin was a stay-at-home mom

when she decided to start substitute teaching. Following a previous successful career in high-tech sales and management, Medlin had always planned on returning to work 10 years after leaving in 2000.

"I really enjoyed working with kids and I didn't know that about myself, so I decided to get my credential," Medlin says. "It's so rewarding to work with kids every day. It just felt purposeful."

**"You live for
the magic moment
when your kid
suddenly gets that
'I get it!' look."**

Shifting from a substitute to a classroom teacher in 2008 was a bigger adjustment than Medlin had anticipated — working in someone else's classroom and being handed a lesson plan is a lot different

than creating one yourself in your own classroom every day, she says. But Medlin persevered and excelled in the classroom, powering her day with how happy teaching made her.

"The perks of working in tech just don't size up to the way teaching makes me feel," she says. "I was lucky because I was in a place financially to make that choice."

Medlin says it's a dream come true to help children learn what they are capable of and see what's possible.

"It means everything. You live for the magic moment when your kid suddenly gets that 'I get it!' look," she says. "It means the little things you do every day make a difference somewhere in their life."

Medlin serves her local as an elementary director on San José Teachers Association's executive board. A first-time union member, she's proud to speak out on behalf of other teachers and be a part of something bigger than herself.

"We are stronger together and we are here for each other," Medlin says. "The job is really hard with many demands. Having a union — that group who you walk in step with — is everything."

REPRESENTATION MATTERS

Heritage months in April & May By Julian Peeples

RECOGNIZING ARAB AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS

Celebrating the rich culture and contributions of the diverse population of Arab Americans, National Arab American Heritage Month has been observed during the month of April since 2017. Observed in California since 2018, Arab American Heritage Month received federal recognition for the first time in 2021, with President Joe Biden penning a message to commemorate the occasion — the first sitting U.S. president to do so.

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

Last year, Congress, the U.S. Department of State and 45 state governors issued proclamations commemorating the Arab American Heritage Month.

For more information, curriculum, and other Arab American Heritage Month resources, visit



Arab America Foundation

arabamericafoundation.org. Resources to help educators celebrate Arab identity, counter negative stereotypes, teach about Arab history and cultures, and ensure an inclusive environment that supports Arab American students during this month and throughout the year are available at LearningForJustice.org.



National Archives

LIFTING THE VIBRANT JEWISH AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

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

"The Jewish American experience and our nation as a whole have always been held together by the forces of hope and resilience," former President Barack Obama said in 2016. "During Jewish American Heritage Month...let us carry forward our mutual legacy, grounded in our interconnected

roots, and affirm that it is from the extraordinary richness of our bond that we draw strength."

The month exists to empower communities across the country to celebrate the inspiring history of Jewish people in America; educate diverse public audiences about Jewish culture; and spark crucial conversations about the American Jewish present and future.

Educators can access relevant primary sources and document-based activities spanning the course of American history, created by the National Archives and teachers around the world, at jewishheritagemonth.gov/for-teachers.

CELEBRATING ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE

May was permanently designated as Asian Pacific American Heritage Month in 1992 to mark the arrival of the first known Japanese immigrant to the U.S. on May 7, 1843, and to honor completion of the transcontinental railroad — built by as many as 20,000 Chinese workers — on May 10, 1869. Today, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) are a diverse population of 23 million Americans, including roughly 50 ethnic groups with roots in more than 40 countries. Educators can use the month to celebrate AAPI histories and cultures, build empathy and understanding, and fight xenophobia and discrimination.

"During Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, California pays tribute to the irreplaceable legacy of our AAPI communities, and their many contributions to strengthen our state today and into the future," Gov. Gavin Newsom said in last year's proclamation of the



Mural in LA Chinatown by Lauren Youngsmith

observance. "Since our state's founding, AAPIs have been instrumental in writing the California story and building our state as we know it."

The Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC) announced that the 2023 theme for the observance is "Advancing Leaders Through Opportunity." Primary sources from the Library of Congress, the National Archives, the Smithsonian and other resources are available at asianpacificheritage.gov/for-teachers.

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CTA's 2023

HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD WINNERS



NINE EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATORS from across California are this year's winners of CTA's annual Human Rights Awards for their outstanding commitment to social justice and for promoting and protecting human and civil rights, both in the classroom and in their wider school communities. In addition, CTA chapter Anaheim Secondary Teachers Association received an award for its exemplary work on community schools.

"I'm proud to honor these educators for the truly extraordinary work they're doing," said CTA President E. Toby Boyd at the awards ceremony in Santa Clara on March 18. "There isn't a student who goes unseen in the communities of these exceptional educators. Their individual commitment to inclusiveness and to celebrating every student's uniqueness will have a lifelong impact on our students, as well as on our schools and our communities." Congratulations to this year's winners! (Photo caption on p. 31.)

Vanessa Yava

Pittsburg Education Association

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



Vanessa Yava is Hopi, Navajo and Tewa on her father's side, and her Native roots have always been a big part of her identity. Because of her father's alcoholism, her parents divorced and Yava was raised by her mother. Yet her Native culture, tribal involvement and Indian education were a constant.

She has been active in the Bay Area Native community for years. Prior to her current position teaching science to 7th graders (and previously math and art), Yava was the coordinator for the Native American Studies Program for Fremont Unified School District and

worked with Native children to improve their academic skills, with an emphasis on Native culture and identity.

Now, Yava infuses science with Native studies and helps make updated Native resources, including historically accurate curriculum, videos and land acknowledgments, accessible to her peers. She tries to imbue her culture in her teaching, so students understand there are different viewpoints. "In science, they'll say that things are living and non-living. I'll follow the curriculum, but I'll add that 'in our culture, there are not things that are dead and alive."

Nalik Davis, Jr.

Rialto Education Association

**AFRICAN AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD
IN HONOR OF LOIS TINSON**

Nalik Davis, Jr., has been a leader in supporting African American and other students and educators of color in his school district and throughout the Inland Empire. Davis teaches history, AVID and ethnic studies at Eisenhower High School in Rialto and said it's all about modeling the work and building relationships.

"Students will always reflect their leadership, so if my leadership in the classroom is showing kids that I care by being on time, putting all I can into my work, giving full effort and showing my best to them—that will reflect in them," he told his college alumni publication a few years ago. "They will start to care, they will start putting in the effort, and they will start investing in their education. If you can get to that kid for a good five to 10 minutes and build a relationship with that kid, then they will trust you forever."

Davis has coordinated and moderated an African American Inland Empire Educator virtual roundtable for the past two years, uniting teachers, administrative leaders and staff to discuss issues they have faced as African American educators and how we can better support our African American students.

With other Rialto Education Association members, Davis has also presented at CTA conferences on what is possible with ethnic studies. In February, he received a Bridge Builders Award from Rialto Unified School District for "excellence in equity & access toward students and community."

"I want us to continue the work," Davis says. "Let's continue to push forward, to work together, to be a stronger community and to find ways to highlight our African American students and staff."

Everything has a spirit, everything is sacred."

She creates Native videos for her students and peers and works on a Native curriculum task force. A participant in CTA's 2022-23 Ethnic Minority Early Identification Development (EMEID) program, she is also a certified California naturalist and strong LGBTQ+ advocate.

Yava is also an artist whose Native-themed work has been exhibited at local museums and whose murals grace several public buildings. She believes in giving back to her students and community by sharing her passion for education, the sciences, the environment and Native history by sharing herself and her art.



Ron Espiritu

Camino Nuevo Teachers Association

**CÉSAR CHÁVEZ "SÍ SE PUEDE"
HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD**

As the catalyst for and creator of the K-12 Ethnic Studies 4 All Initiative at Camino Nuevo Charter Academy, Ron Espiritu embodies advocacy and community building around curriculum and materials that highlight educational and academic equity.

He has spoken repeatedly and forcefully about why ethnic studies matters. "Ethnic studies is empowering, liberating and transformative for our young people," he said in a TEDx Talk, pointing to studies proving its positive academic and social results for students of *all* races and ethnic backgrounds.

Espiritu's leadership includes raising awareness of and celebrating cultural heritage, providing consistent training and leadership programs, and exemplifying the nonviolent philosophy of César Chávez. In his decade-long lobbying of the State Legislature to incorporate Ethnic Studies into curricula, he has diligently promoted educational equity for Hispanic students. He has also been dedicated to promoting, designing and implementing training programs for teachers of Hispanic students.

On an interdisciplinary level, Espiritu facilitates workshops in which teachers share experiences and best practices for breathing life into ethnic studies pedagogies, such as ethnic studies in the STEM classroom.

"The whole goal of ethnic studies is for students to come back into the communities where they are from, to contribute positively to social justice movements, to organizations that promote health and wellness, racial justice and immigrant rights, to become educators and artists."

Espiritu's work also encompasses staff, creating space to confront the ways racism serves as a continuous barrier against diversifying the teaching force and offering tools to support educators who identify as Black, Indigenous or People of Color on both a systemic and interpersonal level.



Stacey Yakimowich Chavez

UTLA/NEA

CTA MEMBER HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

Stacey Yakimowich Chavez is an instructional leader at her school site, an advocate for racial justice, and a union activist who has consistently fought for human rights throughout her career. She has been a leader on the United Teachers Los Angeles Equity Team for the last five years. In this capacity, she has actively organized to recruit BIPOC educators into leadership positions in her local.

She also has worked with members of Student CTA, promoting the teaching profession with an emphasis on teaching with fairness, inclusivity, justice and freedom integrated in her mindful curricula and pedagogy. She led the way in planning and implementing a three-part "Brave Space" series in 2020. In collaboration with fellow educators, the series sought to eradicate discrimination within her school site, local and beyond. Hundreds of educators participated in how to engage in courageous conversations about race. Through a project to educate union members in Los Angeles on ways to support students and families with housing insecurity, Chavez is striving to build more effective school, family and community partnerships.

Chavez has demonstrated leadership at the state level, including as a CTA State Council delegate, and nationally as part of the NEA Board of Directors At Large.

As an educator, Chavez creates curricula that are anti-racist, culturally responsive and that aim to abolish the oppressive systems that plague traditional schooling. Her students engage in social justice-focused learning opportunities on a regular basis.

She is committed to furthering human rights for all. "As educators, we're always fighting for our students and our communities," she says. "I'm also a fighter for unionization and workers' rights. Unionization is a human right. Workers' rights are human rights."



Anaheim Secondary Teachers Association

CTA CHAPTER HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

Anaheim Secondary Teachers Association (ASTA) has been leading the charge in Orange County in the successful implementation of community schools. In so doing, ASTA has broken down barriers that existed within Anaheim's communities of color that kept stakeholders from being active participants in their students' education.

ASTA has developed a collaborative community school model that has buy-in and participation from educators, district administration, parents and community. The shared decision-making means power is equally distributed in planning, implementation, rollout and coordination to better serve students.

ASTA has also used this model to develop leadership opportunities within their membership by creating school leads at each site to help carry out the ideals and principles of community schools in the classroom.

ASTA members and leaders' community school work allows the chapter to highlight the needs of *all* schools in the district and to put a system in place where the appropriate resources and tools can be dispatched where they are truly needed.

In addition, ASTA has been a strong advocate for human and civil rights. Among other examples, as a union ASTA has created better access to leadership opportunities for teachers of color; created social justice committees; and promoted their members' involvement in CTA's Ethnic Minority Early Identification & Development program.

Pictured above: ASTA's Community School Teacher Leads and the ASTA Organizer.



Frank Palad Mata

Corona Norco Teachers Association

CTA PEACE AND JUSTICE HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

Frank Palad Mata has been in the classroom for more than 18 years. Currently teaching high school AP language & composition and expository reading & writing, he recently developed a 12th grade course focusing on social justice and equity.

Mata makes all his students feel welcome and represented in the classroom. He understands that many of them are torn about their identity and have received little education on what true equity is, and that to promote peace and move forward we need to all understand each other's issues. His ability to connect with people — particularly students — helps him facilitate dialogue on challenging topics such as race, gender, class, etc. In his teaching, he includes the history of influential BIPOC people and the amazing contributions they have made. He does this in a way that uplifts *all* his students and empowers them to believe that they too can accomplish so much, no matter what obstacles they may encounter.

Of the environment he creates in his classroom, he says, "My students know that when they come in here, I want to get them closer to the truth — closer to your truth, what is not defined by your social categories."

Mata was the first teacher to form a social justice club on campus in Corona Norco Unified. This has given students the confidence to take active roles in their school and more importantly in their community. He also has supported fellow educators who are trying to create more socially just and equitable classrooms. He has formed book clubs and has led by example and shown peers and students how to have difficult conversations around racial and social justice.

Jeanna Tang

Ontario-Montclair Teachers Association

STUDENTS WITH EXCEPTIONAL NEEDS

HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

Jeanna Tang has more than 15 years of solid experience in the field of special education. As a co-teacher, resource teacher, special education department chair, and instructional coach she has upheld — and continues to uphold — the rights of special education students and educators. In addition, she works to eliminate the discrimination that these students and educators often face.

Tang currently works for the Ontario-Montclair School District as a Teacher on Special Assignment and Home and Hospital Administrator Designee. In this role, she ensures that students are prepared to return to their regular day class or an alternative education program at their former level of performance.

With patience and understanding, she works on making sure that her students are successful.

By presenting at conferences to share best practices in delivering equitable instruction to meet students' needs, Tang has inspired many aspiring educators as they begin their careers — particularly in special education.

As an instructional coach, she is a great mentor to new and veteran teachers. Tang goes out of her way to help teachers plan, help them with classroom coverage, create differentiated materials for specific students, model instruction, support teachers with IEPs at all levels, and to offer professional development at specific school sites.

Tang is a compassionate professional who accepts all she crosses paths with. "The best way to teach is to actually know the students, know them for who they are, and meet their needs," Tang says. "I'm just doing my best to make sure the children feel loved, welcomed and that they can be successful."





Gretel Rodriguez

Sweetwater Education Association

HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD FOR WOMEN'S ADVOCACY

High school English teacher Gretel Rodriguez is a longtime social justice and women's advocate at the local, state and national level. She was the NEA Women's Caucus Treasurer and is the current CTA Women's Caucus chair. In both caucuses she has liberated the space for BIPOC women to lead, expanded the idea of feminism and created a more inclusive atmosphere.

Recently, she coordinated a women's consortium for her service center. She also created an ethnic studies consortium working with a women-led equity team and with other women from Southern California.

Rodriguez's activism expands to broader racial and social justice issues, from leading a Black Lives Matter hunger strike to refugee marches, from collecting donated supplies for Bridge of Love to creating workshops and support for LGBTQ+ parents and community, and to participation in the Association of Raza Educators and Union del Barrio. In an all-women-led event this past summer, she traveled to Mexico to build a coalition with teachers.

She has participated in ICE patrols, leafletting neighborhoods about peoples' rights and where to seek help if ICE agents separate parents from children. She collaborated on a women-led march for families to stay together during a mass deportation and detention and co-chaired a hunger strike for mothers separated from their children. She has held accountable politicians who accept detention center money.

"It was important that I do whatever I can to support other mothers who don't have a voice, don't have documentation to speak out," Rodriguez said. "I have to do this work. I cannot look into my children's eyes, my students' eyes, and not do anything."

Dr. Phe X Bach

San Juan Teachers Association

PACIFIC ASIAN AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

What sets Dr. Phe X Bach apart as an educator — specifically as a chemistry teacher in the San Juan Unified School District since 2002 — is his ability and willingness to instill mindfulness into his teaching practice and to create programming around mindfulness to benefit his students, colleagues and the AAPI community.

Dr. Bach starts his classes with a 5-minute meditation — a "vacation for your mind" — and discussion before jumping into academic work. He points to studies that find mindfulness as key to many students' success in school. He has created and led professional development training around concepts of mindful leadership and mindfulness in the classroom, and he has founded several organizations that teach mindfulness to various AAPI communities.

Dr. Bach worked on social emotional learning before it became an educational buzzword because his philosophy and approach as an educator and an advocate is grounded in mindfulness. The pandemic and other recent events have underscored the need for mindfulness as a foundational piece of educational equity. His goal is to help educators become healthier and better teachers, which in turn benefits their students.



With his work focusing on bringing effective and usable strategies directly to students and educators, he is keenly aware that often students with the highest needs for these resources have the least access. He recognizes and advocates for the mental health of educators as a key component to effective teaching and positive school environments. His mantra to his workshop participants is "You cannot give what you do not have."

He explains, "All the peace in the world starts with inner peace, so [I want] them to cultivate that inner peace — the awareness, understanding and compassion."





Skye Tooley *UTLA/NEA*

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

Skye Tooley, who goes by Mx. T with their students, has helped to achieve significant equity and equality for the LGBTQ+ community and in school. A teacher of 5th graders at Saturn Elementary, Tooley pushes to create safe and brave classroom spaces for students. They facilitate Saturn's "Rainbow Club," which serves more than 20 gender non-conforming and/or queer students and is a space where children can be free to be themselves.

"Putting out books, making space, having Rainbow Clubs — little things like that show my students and other teachers that this can be possible in Pre-K through 5th grade, and not just something for high or middle school," Tooley says.

As a white, trans non-binary neurodivergent educator, Tooley is an example to students and fellow teachers of being able to present as our authentic selves. This comes with great risk and vulnerability in our society. Their courageous navigation of the

transphobic aspects of the public education system has allowed students who identify to see parts of themselves in Mx. T.

As co-founder of "Growing Outside the Binary", an educator duo committed to racial and social justice through liberatory teaching and learning practices, Tooley curates and creates resources on LGBTQ+ inclusion and equity in education. These texts, activities and movement connections provide more than 100 teachers with tools to help students feel seen, heard and understood at school.

Tooley has worked to expand the definition of diversity both within and outside the community through centering BIPOC and neurodivergent LGBTQ+ voices, narratives, issues and movements in collective organizing efforts. They use their voice and efforts as a political activist to advocate for safety, inclusion and representation of LGBTQ+ youth and adults.

WATCH AND LISTEN

Videos of CTA's 2023 Human Rights Award winners feature the awardee talking about their work and what it means to them, their students and community. Watch the videos at bit.ly/429ytAr.

Group photo caption from page 26: Back row, standing from left: Melissa Fitzgerald (ASTA [Anaheim Secondary Teachers Assn]), CTA Secretary-Treasurer Leslie Littman, Geoff Morganstern (ASTA), Ron Espiritu, CTA Vice President David Goldberg, Grant Schuster (ASTA), Vanessa Yava, CTA President E. Toby Boyd; front row seated: Frank Palad Mata, Nalik Davis Jr., Skye Tooley, Gretel Rodriguez, Stacey Yakimowich Chavez, Jeanna Tang, Dr. Phe X Bach. Photo by Chris Robledo.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

By Julian Peebles



CTA is co-sponsoring five bills this legislative session. Follow these bills as they move through the legislative process, and be ready to contact lawmakers during critical moments. Find the latest news at cta.org/our-advocacy/cta-bill-positions.

AB 260 (Santiago)

Requires that people who are employed to teach adult or community college classes receive compensation in at least an equivalent ratio to the amount provided to full-time employees with comparable duties; and imposes this pay requirement upon the expiration or renewal of existing collective bargaining agreements. This bill has been referred to the Assembly Committee on Higher Education.

AB 483 (Muratsuchi)

Establishes new requirements on the Department of Health Care Services regarding the agency's audit processes, assistance and training provided to local educational agencies on appeals, specifying medical necessity for beneficiaries under 20 years of age, and other related items. AB 483 passed out of the Assembly Health Committee and is currently awaiting hearing by the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 535 (Irwin)

Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction, on or before July 1, 2024, to select an applicant county office of education to serve as a Statewide School Library Lead to work with the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence and to establish library and literacy services supporting the statewide system of support. AB 535 specifies the Statewide School Library Lead's duties include enhancing the state's investment in literacy and aligning those efforts with the California State Literacy Plan and working directly with local educational agencies, including county office of education, to build capacity to develop excellent school library services and accelerate literacy and learning. This includes coordinating support, providing direct technical assistance and delivering professional learning.

AB 535 is scheduled for hearing by the Assembly Education Committee.

AB 730 (Lowenthal)

Requires public agencies to provide written notice to an employee within 21 days if there is a Public Records Act request to disclose their personnel, medical or other private information. AB 730 is currently awaiting hearing by the Assembly Judiciary Committee.

SB 551 (Portantino)

Amends the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) and the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission requiring each county to use a percentage of their prevention and early intervention (Proposition 63) funds to provide direct services on school campuses in collaboration with local education agencies (LEAs). SB 551 establishes direct services on school campuses as a priority for prevention and early intervention funds. It also requires each county's mental health board to include one youth with lived experiences and one LEA representative, and prohibits more than 50 percent of the members of a county's mental health board from owning or operating an organization or business that financially benefits from a proposed or adopted MHSA plan.

The bill is scheduled for hearing by the Senate Health Committee in April.

SB 691 (Portantino): CTA Opposes Unfunded and Unworkable Mandate

CTA State Council approved an "oppose" position on SB 691, which would require all kindergarten through second grade students to be screened in school for dyslexia. While CTA supports the overarching intent of SB 691, the implementation is currently unworkable as written in the bill, which also includes no funding for the herculean effort universal screening would require. For the intent of SB 691 to be achieved, there would need to be a comprehensive redrafting and not one or two simple amendments, which is why CTA is opposing the bill.



Uninvited Guests

Far-right group Project Veritas caught trying to crash CTA State Council

TWO OPERATIVES from documented disinformation peddler Project Veritas made repeated unsuccessful attempts to access CTA's State Council of Education meeting at the Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles in late January.

The duo appeared to be known Project Veritas operative Christian Hartsock and a female companion — Project Veritas and Hartsock have a lengthy history of using secretly obtained video to lie and deceive. They approached numerous CTA members and staff at the hotel over the State Council weekend, attempting to obtain credentials to enter secured meeting areas by misrepresenting their identities and intentions. Among the lies they told: Hartsock and friend said they worked for the Arizona Education Association and claimed the woman was a teacher in Arizona, even attempting to register and obtain badges — where they were turned away by staff.

The Project Veritas operatives also spent some time in hotel common areas, approaching members as “teachers from Arizona” and then asking pointed questions about LGBTQ+ and gender issues. Hartsock and the woman were identified after approaching a CTA member and staff in the lobby and asking questions that seemed suspicious. Upon consulting data available on Project Veritas, it was confirmed the two were targeting CTA State Council and possibly secretly recording members. All members of State Council were notified of the threat, while leaders and staff stepped up vigilance in protecting members and securing our meeting.

Project Veritas is a far-right activist organization, founded by video provocateur James O’Keefe. Project Veritas operatives secretly record individuals, produce deceptive, heavily edited videos and commentary, and launch negative campaigns aimed at targeted institutions and individuals. Project Veritas

Project Veritas has a history of targeting teachers unions and educators in its smear campaigns to foment distrust in public education systems and spark culture wars in schools nationwide.



has a lengthy history of targeting teachers unions and educators across the country in its smear campaigns, including infiltration and gotcha videos, in an attempt to foment distrust in public education systems and spark culture wars in schools nationwide.

Project Veritas targeted a Natomas teacher in 2021, posing as a parent and asking to meet for coffee while secretly recording the conversation. The deceptively edited video package was designed to create a chaotic and dangerous situation, and it did — resulting in the teacher receiving death threats, being harassed at his home, and ultimately having to leave the district.

Project Veritas is a multimillion-dollar disinformation and propaganda machine. While most of its donors have not been publicly disclosed, the Koch-related DonorsTrust (called the “dark money ATM of the conservative right”) contributed more than \$8.4 million from 2014-18 (according to the Center for Media and Democracy). Since its founding in 2010, Project Veritas and its employees have been found guilty of multiple crimes and paid fines and sums to settle lawsuits related to their deceptive practices (list on [SourceWatch.org](https://www.sourcewatch.org)).

Last year, the FBI searched the homes of Project Veritas employees including O’Keefe as part of a U.S. Justice Department investigation into the theft and publication of the diary of Ashley Biden, a daughter of President Joe Biden. And in February, O’Keefe was placed on leave by the Project Veritas board due to his poor treatment of staff and “financial malfeasance.”

Please be aware that Project Veritas and similar disinformation operatives may be lurking at our conferences — be wary of anyone you don’t know who approaches you and starts asking questions, especially about social justice and related issues. In conjunction with NEA, CTA leaders and staff will continue to be vigilant at our meetings and gatherings to ensure they are safe spaces for members to build and learn together.

Visit [ProjectVeritas.exposed](https://projectveritas.exposed) for information about the organization, including photos of their known operatives. ■

Protecting Yourself and Others from Hidden Cameras

- If you are approached by someone at a CTA event and it feels weird or suspicious, end the conversation immediately and report the incident to conference staff.
- Make sure people are who they say they are. These operatives use false identities and made-up stories to gain confidence/ access and exploit trust. At conferences, all members and attendees wear badges — if someone does not have one, do not assume they are a trusted conference attendee. Badge or not, end any conversation that makes you uncomfortable.
- Look out for each other. If you see a fellow member talking to someone suspicious, interrupt the conversation and ask to speak to them privately.
- If you encounter one operative, assume there is a second — they often work in pairs.
- Be wary of anyone who asks you to help them gain access to a CTA event or workshop for any reason.
- Be mindful of your surroundings after hours and outside of conference sessions, where operatives lurk to build confidence and secretly record conversations.
- Trust your instincts and report any suspicious encounters or situations to leadership and/or staff immediately.



Maritza Ávila and Tara Jeane

Congratulations!

Two CTA member leaders were recently elected by NEA board members as delegates to Education International (EI), the Global Union Federation that comprises 383 member organizations, including NEA. EI represents more than 32 million teachers and education support personnel in 178 countries and territories.

MARITZA ÁVILA, *Oxnard Educators Association*, CTA State Council delegate and NEA Board Director

TARA JEANE, *West Placer Teachers Association*, NEA Board Director, Sacramento City School Board member



Richmond Educators Win Community Schools Agreement

UTR, district agree to shared leadership to build schools students need By Julian Peeples

UNITED TEACHERS OF RICHMOND (UTR) asked West Contra Costa Unified School District management to take a leap of faith together on building the community schools their students deserve, and the district agreed — outlining the process for shared leadership in a new article in their recently ratified contract.

The result is five new pages of the UTR contract (in effect through June 2027 or until state funding expires) that lays out how the district will move forward in collaboration with educators, students, parents and community to build transformative community schools that are tailored to student and family needs. The contractual agreement on shared governance is one of the most robust in the state, which is appropriate for a district that was just recognized by the state as a model for community schools work.

“I’m really excited for us to be leaders in the state in building community schools. People really care about it because they know education is more than just math and reading lessons,” UTR President John Zabala says, explaining that the community schools model aligns well with long-established and embraced district values. “We also believe in this wholeheartedly. It was one of the cornerstones of our campaign.”

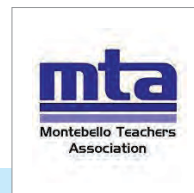
UTR set out when it started bargaining last year with a three-pronged strategy: physically and emotionally safe schools; permanent, certificated educators in every classroom; and uplifting community voice through shared decision-making (see bargaining recap on Page 43). Zabala says UTR leaders knew that it was going to be a tough bargain and they built a structure to engage and mobilize their members, and organize to win.

Utilizing resources from the NEA Strategic Campaign Institute for Community Schools, UTR executed a three-phase campaign that included engaging their membership and mobilizing, increasing public pressure and building



Continued on Page 37

◀ UTR members held massive rallies and organized to win a comprehensive community schools article in their contract.



Local Associations Win Community Schools Agreements

While local associations statewide are working to negotiate community schools power-sharing agreements into their contracts, many are memorializing their collaboration with school districts through a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

Natiomas Teachers Association reached a Community Schools MOU with the district in March, outlining basic parameters to prepare for implementing community schools. NEA-Jurupa signed a Community Schools MOU the same month, while their work continues to bargain shared decision-making language into the contract. Highlights of the MOU include the agreement that community schools site coordinators will be part of the bargaining unit and details about the community schools steering committee.

In January, Montebello Teachers Association won a new community schools article in their contract, which outlines the formation of a steering committee to guide community schools work in Montebello. While the article is not as expansive or detailed as UTR’s, it’s a major achievement for MTA that memorializes the commitment to community schools while allowing for flexibility moving forward.

Contract Enforcement Round-Up

ENFORCING COLLECTIVE BARGAINING RIGHTS AT SCHOOLS AND OTHER WORKSITES

By Jesús Quiñonez

THE PROCESS OF collective bargaining means that you and your colleagues have a collective say in the employment conditions of school employees. That could mean securing fair salary increases, better access to health care, workplace safety enhancements, additional paid leave rights and more reasonable and predictable hours. It could also mean lower class sizes and fair assignment procedures that protect educators from arbitrary actions by administrators.

Once a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) is reached, CTA local leaders and staff — including the Legal Department — work with employees to make sure that the rights and obligations spelled out in the agreement are honored. In fact, many of our local agreements contain “final and binding” arbitration provisions that guarantee a fair and neutral process for the resolution of disputes over contract provisions that cannot be settled by management and the union. Arbitration is a form of alternative dispute resolution under which a neutral third party, called an arbitrator, resolves the dispute by rendering a decision. “Final and binding” means that management and the union are legally bound by the arbitrator’s decision, which can be enforced by a court, if necessary.

By this agreed-upon process, collective bargaining gives workers a say in employment terms and security in knowing that procedures are in place for handling and solving work related grievances. Indeed, member dues are utilized to cover the expenses of negotiating contracts, improving and enforcing member rights under the CBA (and under state and federal laws), and resolving contract disputes.

Two examples of recent contract enforcement victories are:



“Collective bargaining gives workers a say in employment terms and security in knowing that procedures are in place for handling and solving work related grievances.”



Sanger Vacancy Dispute

On Feb. 18, 2023, an arbitrator ruled in favor of the Sanger Unified Teachers Association in a case where a currently employed teacher was denied her application to transfer to a vacant Transitional Kindergarten (TK) position. The aggrieved teacher was a 30-year employee with two master’s degrees who had most recently served as a teacher on special assignment, providing reading intervention to elementary school children. Instead, the district gave the position to an external candidate

who was a student teacher with no experience as a fully credentialed teacher.

The contract language said that when filling vacancies, qualified internal candidates must be given “first consideration” prior to employing an external candidate, and that external candidates should only be chosen if their qualifications were “clearly superior.” The district argued that they gave first consideration to internal candidates by simply giving every internal candidate an interview. They also relied heavily on the rankings of members

of an interview panel, who gave the grievant low rankings; however, during the panelists' testimony, they could not articulate any understanding of the contract language on preference for internal candidates or explain how they had applied it.

The arbitrator ruled that the teacher had not been given "first consideration" and that the external candidate could not properly be deemed "clearly superior." The district was ordered to offer the grievant the next available TK or K vacancy at the school where the vacancy had been filled.

Mt. Diablo Class-Size Dispute

On Jan. 31, 2023, the district agreed to settle six grievances related to class size that were scheduled for arbitration the following day. The Mount Diablo Education Association had grieved that the district violated the CBA by exceeding class size limits and failing to remove excess students when teachers objected to the overage. As part of the settlement, the district acknowledged the contractual violation, agreed to remove excess students, agreed to compensate the affected teachers for overages to date, and agreed to pay the arbitrator's entire cancellation fee that resulted from the last-day settlement.



Be familiar with the employment conditions that are most important to you, as well as the agreed upon process in your own CBA for the resolution of any disputes that might arise during the life of the agreement. Your CBA is power!

Jesús Quiñonez is CTA Legal Director.

Continued from Page 35

relationships with parents and the community, and preparing for the possibility of a job action to achieve their goals. In November 2022, after the district declared impasse, UTR took a strike authorization vote — with more than 90 percent of members voting, 97.3 percent voted to authorize a strike. They continued building power, culminating in a January rally outside the school board meeting that attracted more than half of UTR's 1,500 members.

"That made the difference," Zabala says. "In many ways, our strategic plan played out almost exactly as we anticipated."

For community schools, Zabala says there was conceptual agreement going into negotiations, especially since the district was already providing many similar services. He says a big moment was helping management to see that collaboration on community schools is a victory for the school district, its students and everyone who supports them.

"We told them, 'This is about building on the success we already have.' It's a win for the district, not just in engaging families but in providing these services," Zabala says. "We had to take the leap of faith together that this is justice."

Just as the community schools model requires stakeholders to

step out of their traditional roles to collaboratively identify and support student and community needs, Zabala says UTR's work to reach agreement with district management also required both to break out of their roles as labor and management, and work together toward an end goal.

"There's something really liberating about that," Zabala says.

As UTR organized to win community schools and other resources, Zabala says it was moving to see how CTA worked to bolster their efforts, whether it was neighboring locals and leaders joining UTR rallies, CTA staff providing advice and

support, or weekly phone calls with United Teachers Los Angeles leader Alex Caputo-Pearl, who serves as a coach through NEA..

"We're not alone. If we need something, we can reach out and we will have help. It's really powerful," Zabala says. "We were fighting not only for the students in this community, but across the state as well, and people were lifting us up." ■

Questions about UTR's community schools article or how they won agreement? Contact Zabala directly at president@unitedteachersofrichmond.org.

▼ A few of the 800-strong members at an October 2022 rally.



▼ TRUE bargaining team member Diana Franklin, President Rebecca LeDoux, Vice President and lead negotiator Jackie Howard.



A TRUE Tale

How to build power through open bargaining

FOR YEARS, Twin Rivers Unified School District in Sacramento has struggled to attract and retain educators, which has had an impact on every school in the district despite unprecedented funding and resources to hire and retain educators. It had also allocated increasingly less to student services and support, resulting in poor learning conditions.

Twin Rivers United Educators (TRUE) leadership knew that the outcome of their bargain in 2022 was critical for every Twin Rivers student and their families.

"Our students should be able to count on having teachers in the classroom when they come to school," said TRUE president Rebecca LeDoux.

"Our district spent years disinvesting in educators. They dedicated less and less to educator salaries and benefits and direct support for students. We saw the

powerful impact of expanded bargaining teams, including our neighbors in Sacramento City Teachers Association, and decided to try it in Twin Rivers."

TRUE leaders and members were determined to win transformative change in their district. On Jan. 23 of this

year, members voted in historic numbers to ratify their tentative agreement with the district. The victory came after an arduous bargaining process and remarkable campaign to build solidarity among its members — some 1,500 strong — as well as families and community.

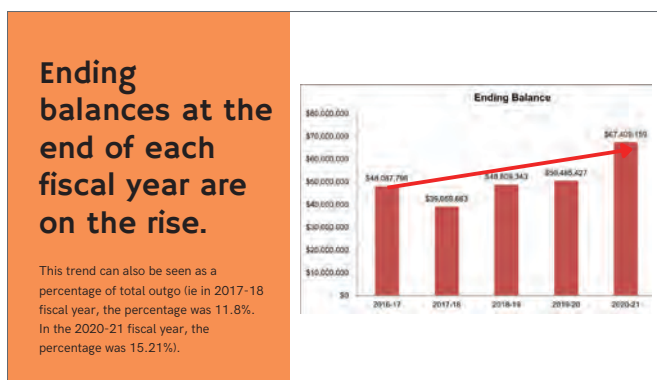
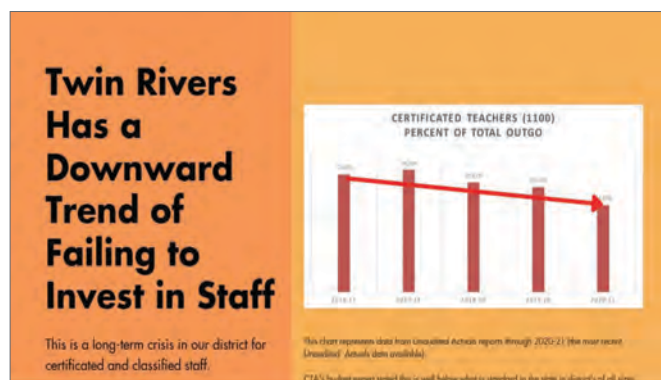
The campaign was a casebook study of traditional and new methods of bargaining to build power. TRUE's open and transparent bargain and

often adversarial relationship with the district did not include the old, confidential dealings with management

"Our district dedicated less and less to educator salaries and direct support for students. We saw the powerful impact of expanded bargaining teams and decided to try it in Twin Rivers."

—TRUE President **Rebecca LeDoux**

▼ TRUE leadership used data and numbers to tell clear and compelling truths about district budgeting. At left, declining educator wages over the years; at right, rising district funding over the years.



that excluded the rest of the bargaining unit. Instead, TRUE used extensive, inclusive site-based organizing, community outreach, and employed data, earned media, technology and social media to update the entire bargaining unit and community.

This included:

- An expanded bargaining team from 5 to 27 members and counting (TRUE is aiming for 1 rep from all 55 sites).
- Bargaining sessions that met on Zoom and after school so more members could participate at the table.
- Continuously informing members/parents/community of what was going on through
 - Immediate bargaining session recaps (Zoom and Facebook Live videos livestreamed into a members-only Facebook group);
 - Emails that reinforced the livestreamed videos and shared all proposals from both the district and the chapter, including financial analysis (data from EdData and MIT living wage statistics combined with real-world examples of members not being able to make ends meet [from a member bargaining survey]);
 - All-member text message blasts ahead of all bargaining updates;
 - Site-based bargaining discussions led by site reps and TRUE leaders who visited half of all school sites in the

first two months of the school year;

- Clear, concise data and visuals showing district disinvestment in students/educators over time, wage/income gaps, locals and management demands/responses, etc.;
- Virtual parent forums, school board meetings, and earned media during a historic school board action.

TRUE's transparent approach and focus on organizing won hearts and minds and built a formidable team that showed up and spoke out in huge numbers time and again at rallies, picket lines, school board meetings and more. One rally in October 2022 at a school board meeting drew 800 members as well as community allies, who demanded that the district invest in educator recruitment and retention and support for students. Members were organized and committed to striking; this strong structure ensured a victory with an unprecedented settlement in January.

Jackie Howard, TRUE vice president and lead negotiator, said, "At every stage of our bargain, TRUE members turned out to show our power and raise our voices together. We opened up our bargain and brought all members along from day one. This created a solidarity we have never experienced before in our union. That's how you win for students, educators, and public education."

Salary: Where it Started.

The District's First Proposal in April:

- 3% in 2022 with a 2% one-time bonus
- 2% in 2023 with a 2% one-time bonus

Highlights of TRUE's Victory

- 18 percent salary increase over three years
- Additional 10 percent increase to early childhood educators, in effect a 28 percent raise.
- 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

BARGAINING ROUNDUP

Compiled by Julian Peeples



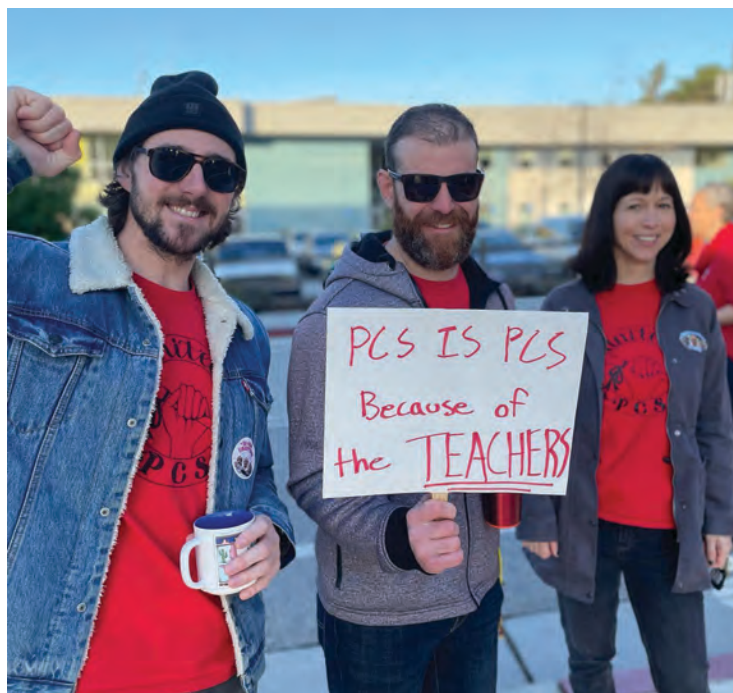
SANTA CRUZ:

United PCS educators organize and win

Educators at **Santa Cruz' Pacific Collegiate School (PCS)** organized around three bargaining platform goals and won a contract in early March that satisfies all three. It took a lengthy bargain, but United PCS members showed solidarity with each other, their students and the school community to win an average 15.72 percent pay increase over two years, eight weeks of paid parental leave and language clarifying the meaning and intent of "temporary employee."

The victory is hoped to help stem the high turnover that has plagued the well-known charter school — United PCS educators were among the lowest paid in the county, causing many to leave every year for other districts. United PCS President Mary Gardner says the contract agreement has made an immediate impact.

"I see an incredible boost in morale among our faculty," Gardner told the *Santa Cruz Lookout*. "The school wants to build with us and grow with us — and cares about us as a community. That has an immediate positive impact on our students."



United PCS' bargaining platform was:

1. Preserve our student-centered mission: We seek to steward inclusive access to high quality education that protects our class sizes, classroom autonomy and a culture of learning in which all departments and disciplines are supported.
2. Fair compensation for educators: In order to retain and attract a diverse group of the best educators, PCS teacher salaries must be competitive with other schools' and commensurate with the cost of living in Santa Cruz.
3. Community collaboration & transparency: Faculty and all other community stakeholders must have meaningful participation and voice in important school decisions and processes.

Read more at unitedpcs.org.



SALINAS:

Historic resources to attract and retain educators

In March, members of **Salinas Elementary Teachers' Council (SETC)** organized and won historic resources to attract and retain quality educators, including a 13 percent pay increase retroactive to July 1, 2022.

"What we achieved will help attract and retain quality educators, and ensure our students have access to the best resources with dedicated educators and diverse experiences," SETC President Pamela Conner said.

Other highlights of the new contract include:

- Additional assignment rate of pay: Increase of 19 percent for a total of \$55 per hour.
- Student support time: Changes in hours to allow student support educators more time for additional student intervention support.
- Restructured salary schedule for preschool educators resulting in an average raise of 17 percent.

PORTOLA VALLEY:

Equitable Pay System

The small but mighty **Portola Valley Teachers Association (PVTa)** organized over the past six months and won, successfully moving from a divisive pay system to a more equitable salary schedule, like most school districts statewide.

PVTa was able to reach agreement to jettison the outdated salary system, which was dependent on an arbitrary evaluation process. PVTa members had monthly actions, including twice a month board meeting rallies, to support their bargaining team and adopt a traditional salary schedule. Their efforts took PVTa from the lowest paid educators in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties to the second highest.

PVTa fought off numerous threats of impasse and intimidation from management to win a \$2,000 off-schedule payment, an average 20 percent raise for 2022-23, and a 7.36 percent pay increase and salary reopener for 2023-24. They also won increases to the health care benefits.



SCOTTS VALLEY:

Prep time, healthcare among wins

Members of **Scotts Valley Education Association (SVEA)** won a new contract in March that includes a salary increase that will allow more educators to live where they teach, helping to end ongoing turnover issues. The agreement also includes additional prep time, healthcare benefit increases and family-friendly practices.

SVEA Co-President Cheryl Ruyle said the contract "focuses on everything critical for students to succeed in the classroom, without having a rotating door of educators."

"The wins we bargained for are a true testament to how much we care about the students we teach," Ruyle said. "They deserve nothing but the best, and I am proud we were able to accomplish this and so much more."

Highlights include:

Retroactive to July 1, 2022:

- An average raise of 15.76 percent.
- Expansion of bereavement language to include miscarriage and stillbirth.

Beginning 2023-2024:

- A change in benefit language that improves clarity and self-advocacy, while protecting members from spikes in healthcare increases.
- Maintaining one of the most competitive healthcare benefit packages in Santa Cruz County.
- Adjustments to the evaluation process to simplify and streamline.
- Pilot language to secure fourth/fifth grade prep time for educators.





TAHOE-TRUCKEE:

Agreement reached in state mediation

After months of frustrating negotiations, in February the **Tahoe Truckee Education Association** (TTEA) won a one-year agreement that provides a competitive salary increase, maintains lower class sizes and helps Tahoe-Truckee Unified School District staff build community with students and their families, all priorities for the 285 TTEA members.

“Our focus has been on getting a fair settlement that provides the best educators for our students and respect for teachers,” said TTEA President Nik Fertitta. “We all have similar priorities, and TTEA members look forward to meeting with school board members to discuss what’s best for our students and our schools.”

The contract includes an 8 percent salary increase, retroactive to July 1, 2022, when the current contract was to start. Fertitta expressed deep gratitude for Tahoe Truckee parents and community.

“We saw how much this community values and supports its teachers. That means the world to us and strengthens our resolve to make TTUSD an even better school district as we move forward.”

The two sides settled at the end of the second day of a state mediation. The sometimes-contentious bargain centered on allocating the resources of the richest school district in Placer County and one of the richest districts in the state, into the classroom to attract and retain quality educators, maintain class sizes, and improve in-person student instruction.



SAN FRANCISCO:

Edison Charter teachers net victory

Edison Charter Teacher’s Union (ECTU) members organized in their school community and won a contract that will help attract and retain educators and benefit Edison students.

When negotiations started in November 2022, management only offered a 2.5 percent pay increase over three years. After months of building support with parents and community, and rallying at school board meetings, ECTU in February won a more than 15 percent salary increase over three years — 4.5 percent for 2020-21 (retroactive to July 1, 2020), 4.5 percent for 2021-22 (retroactive to July 1, 2021), and 6 percent for 2022-23 (retroactive to July 1, 2022).

ECTU represents certificated staff at Thomas Edison Charter Academy in the Mission neighborhood of San Francisco. Educators there unionized in 2006 — the first charter school in the state to do so.

SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO: *Increased compensation, improved contract language*

In mid-March, **Capistrano Unified Education Association** (CUEA) members reached agreement on a new contract that increases resources to attract and retain quality educators.

CUEA members won a 10 percent raise retroactive to July 1, 2022, and a 0.25 percent increase to their health and welfare benefits. CUEA also won improvements in transfer, evaluation and service credit language in the contract. [#WeAreCUEA](#)



GLENDALE: *Unity powers victory, no strings attached*

Glendale Teachers Association (GTA) members showed solidarity and won a hard-fought agreement in late February that will improve the district's ability to attract and retain quality educators.

GTA won a 4.5 percent one-time payment for 2020-21, as well as a 3.5 percent on-schedule raise effective July 1, 2021, and 5 percent on-schedule raise effective July 1, 2022. GTA also won contract language improvements, including smaller class sizes in TK, improved working conditions, and increased stipends and special salaries.

GTA members are now ready to begin negotiations for 2022-23.

RICHMOND:

Building a movement for parent and community voice

After a difficult 12 months of negotiations, **United Teachers of Richmond** (UTR) reached a tentative agreement in February that prioritizes safety and increases educator pay, and includes one of the first guaranteed, comprehensive community schools structures in the union contract of a CTA local.

The agreement includes community schools shared decision-making through at least 2027 (see story on Page 35), a 14.5-percent pay increase by July 1 of this year, and the maintenance of maximum class sizes.

The victory came after a historic 97.3-percent strike authorization vote and more than 1,500 members rising in solidarity to fight for their students and each other.

"This was only possible through the incredible organizing efforts that our union demonstrated this year. New leaders have emerged and stepped up, giving up their nights and weekends," said UTR President John Zabala. "It has been an honor to meet and work with our zone captains, our organizing team, and our picket captains. We owe them so much."



Highlights include:

- Physically and emotionally safe schools
- MERV-13 or HEPA filters in all workspaces.
- Procedures for educators to document safety concerns.
- Provide educators with trauma-informed, de-escalation strategies.
- Maintenance of class size caps and class size from 2021-2022 extension contract.
- Permanent, certificated educators in every classroom
- Salary increase of a combined 14.5 percent by July 1.
- Removal of service credits caps for new employees starting from July 1, 2022.
- Contractual language for preschool educators for the first time.

THE POWER OF USEFUL INFORMATION

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 you get 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 change 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 walk through how you can add **useful information** to your content toolbox.

When you're responsible for putting out a lot of social media content on a regular basis, it can feel overwhelming. It's easy to panic and think, "I have to come up with something new every day?" Well, let me ease your anxiety a bit. Oftentimes, the most effective thing you can do is take information that already exists and break it down into social media-sized pieces.



Wisdom Wednesday: Empowering Members to Know Their Contract

Think about your contract with your district. If you posted it directly to your social media platforms and asked colleagues to read it so that they're informed of their rights, chances are you wouldn't get very many clicks.

Instead, think of each article as a social media-sized chunk of information. Folks are far more likely to read something short and sweet and you get the added bonus of weeks' worth of content ready to schedule out and post on a regular basis.

I've seen several chapters do this on their social media, but I want to give a particular shoutout to the Wisdom Wednesday feature from the Chula Vista Educators Facebook and Instagram pages.

A consistent series like this checks off several boxes. Because it keeps the same look over time, followers know that this is their weekly reminder of what's in the contract. On the creator side, instead of having to design new graphics all the time, you have a template that is easy to reuse.

“Instead of just posting the link and hoping people will read, think about what will hook people and turn that into a social media-sized hook. *Then* ask them to click a link to learn more.”

NEA.ORG/PENSIONS

YEARS OF SERVICE
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FINAL AVG. SALARY
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**Pensions provide
better retirement
benefits for about
half the cost of
401k-styled defined
contribution plans.**

nea NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION Do the math. Plan your retirement.

Pensions: Using Useful Info as a Hook

Sometimes these social media-sized bites of information aren't enough. I get it, I know a tweet or even a twitter thread isn't enough to help folks understand how something as complex as a pension works. But we can use social media as a hook to drive people to check out more complex content. Think of these kinds of social media-sized bites less as a full meal and more as an appetizer that makes you hungry for more.

For example, NEA puts out social media toolkits that I share in our CTA Social Media Curators Facebook group ([facebook.com/groups/ctacurators](https://www.facebook.com/groups/ctacurators) - please consider joining if you do social media for your chapter!). Let's look at some of the content they created about pensions.

High-level posts like these are a great way of reminding everyone, regardless of their attention span that day, of their

pension benefits. But more than that, they're a great hook to get people to visit the NEA pensions page to learn more and get more specific questions answered.

At some point, you'll likely need to get people to click a link that leads to a ton of information. Instead of just posting the link and hoping people will read, think about what will hook people and turn that into a social media-sized hook. *Then* ask them to click a link to learn more.

With everything you post, keep in mind that social media thrives on concise and shareable information. Think about what you would want to click and share to be empowered with the knowledge of your rights and benefits as an educator.

Elizabeth Barcelos is CTA's social media editor.



Credit: wordwizardsinc.com

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

TOOLBOX TOPICS COMING UP:

- Member features
- Memes

Making AI Tools Work for Your Classroom



Use new technologies to encourage student voice and enhance learning

By Hedreich Nichols

OUR CURRENT EDUCATIONAL MODEL was created in the industrial age — it certainly wasn't designed to support the speed-of-light technological innovation we see today.

With apps like ChatGPT and Photomath, our measures of literary understanding or even writing and mathematical ability no longer mean what they once did. Photomath and counterparts like Cymath, and even Google Homework Helper (found by pushing the Google search bar camera button on any Android phone with the Google Lens function), can render the need for understanding advanced math fairly unnecessary when it comes to completing assignments. Of course, students still need the skills learned for diverse career paths, but for those just trying to get through K–12 math, it's unlikely that they'll see a reason not to use these workarounds.

This may lead you to think that this is the time to put stricter bans on phones in the classroom or having IT block the sites altogether, as was done recently in New York. However, that's akin to shutting down cars or planes in the early 1900s. Instead, take a look at these new tech tools and how you can incorporate them into your teaching.

USE TECH TO RECONSIDER HOW WE ASSESS STUDENT UNDERSTANDING

How can we embrace technological innovation and use these tools to amplify student voice and enhance learning? The first thing is to realize that quantifying academic understanding is not the same as measuring an inch or a centimeter. Standards of measurement are human-made and based on the kinds of skills that we, as a society, value. Good writing has traditionally been used as a tool to measure academic acumen, college readiness and employability.

This new wave of tech tools gives us an immense opportunity to rethink what talents and skills we value in students and which ones we overlook.

For example, according to historical evidence, Harriet Tubman was nonliterate; however, she was obviously highly intelligent and successful. Likewise, your struggling reader or writer may be able to exquisitely express concepts verbally but not on paper, just as an engineering student may understand physics but struggle to write about it academically.

In short, there's a difference between knowledge and mastery of the tools used to show knowledge. In that difference lies the great classroom potential of tools like ChatGPT and others.

PREPARE STUDENTS BEYOND PEN AND PAPER

Often, the reaction in K–12 is to keep students from their phones, lock down browsers, and use computer access in a privilege-punitive loop. If you're so inclined, Princeton senior Edward Tian has designed an app to detect AI writing "assistance." But the reality is that pen-and-paper assignments aren't preparing students for the world we live in. When was the last time you used paper and pen for anything important?

Computers, phones, and apps are here to stay, so have honest conversations with students about time management, focus and integrity. Teach students how to use their phones and computers to connect with the plethora of learning resources available online. Having an encyclopedia in your hand is a beautiful thing!

Teach media literacy and how to vet sources. Then allow students to learn the self-management necessary to navigate our digitally centered world. Finally, teach the value of honesty and integrity by rewarding progress, hard work and innovation as much as you reward the work of academically gifted students with As.

FIND CREATIVE WAYS TO USE TECH

Your students will find ways to use all the tools out there, and some will succeed in cheating the system. Those few won't be moved by speeches on integrity, no matter how good yours is. However, for most students, finding creative, honest ways to help them use technology will get you cool points:

- Use ChatGPT like Google.
- Have students put their essays in ChatGPT and ask it for a rewrite; then have them explain why the changes are better.
- Have ChatGPT summarize a text that students are reading and allow them to discuss and debate the validity of the given answer, supported by evidence from the text.
- Use WolframAlpha like an encyclopedia.
- Allow two students to use a math app to solve two problems but have them each write down only half of the work and then switch papers. Each student finishes their partner's problem before discussing the solutions and processes together.

Asking students how these tools can augment the learning experience is another effective way to use any new tool.

"If we lean in, our classrooms will be the places that influence learning in digital spaces so that students will be better prepared for an increasingly digital world."

Allow exploration, but as with Google, an app answers all kinds of questions, and you can guess what your students will ask it. Take necessary precautions, and know that with or without these tools,

students have access to unlimited information, so having a conversation that lets students know that it's OK not to go down every rabbit hole is also a great way to teach kids digital responsibility and integrity.

Thirty years ago, we couldn't yet imagine how much information would be at every student's fingertips. Our phone bans, our whitelists, and even our book bans can no longer prevent our young people from exploring the world in their own time, whether we're ready for it or not. This can be a bit scary, but it's also exciting.

Get to know the tools that are out there so that you can use them to become a better practitioner. If we lean in, our classrooms will be the places that influence learning in digital spaces so that our students will be better prepared for an increasingly digital world.

This story originally appeared in Edutopia.



We're here to help you plan and save for a better retirement.

At the heart of the CTA Retirement Savings Plan is a team of experts guiding you on your journey to retirement. We are the only 403(b) plan endorsed by CTA. Your union, your plan.

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▼ Set to take CTA office in June 2023:
Erika Jones, David Goldberg, Leslie Littman.



▼ The El Sol Caucus Observance
featured a performance by Circulo Ajolote.



Charting Our Course, Fighting for Our Students

Newly elected officers **David Goldberg, Leslie Littman and Erika Jones** ascend to positions in late June By **Julian Peebles**

STATE COUNCIL OF EDUCATION set a path for CTA's future at its meeting this weekend, electing a team of officers to lead more than 310,000 California educators in the fight for the schools all students deserve.

Members elected David Goldberg and Leslie Littman to lead CTA as the next president and vice president, respectively. In January, Erika Jones was elected as the next CTA secretary-treasurer. Goldberg currently serves as CTA vice president, Littman as secretary-treasurer and Jones sits on the CTA Board of Directors. The leadership team will take office on June 26 and serve two-year terms.

"Students and their needs are at the center of everything we do as educators and union leaders. It's a core value that drives the work we do in our schools and colleges and at the bargaining table. As a veteran educator and long-time union activist, I've learned that to get things done, there must be bottom-up participation and decision-making by educators across our

classrooms and communities," President-elect Goldberg said.

"I am humbled by the support of our union. Leslie, Erika and I stand ready to create opportunities for educators and families, confront the challenges ahead and put it all on the line for all California students."

CTA President E. Toby Boyd, who will leave office on June 25 after serving four years at the helm, congratulated the incoming officers and said their combined passion, commitment and knowledge of the teaching profession will serve the union well.

"At a time when corporate special interests and anti-public education forces are actively trying to undermine educators, truth in history and the safety of LGBTQ+ students, I know this leadership team is ready to tackle the challenges ahead and remain focused on providing all students with the resources and support they need for the quality education they deserve."

It was a business-packed meeting, held at the Westin Bonaventure in Los Angeles, with State Council reviewing and

▼ The five 2023 California Teachers of the Year were honored at State Council. From left: Catherine Borek, Jason Torres-Rangel, Bridgette Donald-Blue, Lauren Camarillo and Ben Case. Torres-Rangel, California's nominee for National Teacher of the Year, followed up a week where the UTLA member walked the picket line for three days with an inspiring speech to State Council.



“Leslie, Erika and I stand ready to create opportunities for educators and families, confront the challenges ahead and put it all on the line for all California students.”

—CTA President-elect **David Goldberg**

taking positions on more than 300 bills currently winding their way through the California Legislature. In his report to State Council, President Boyd thanked members for all their efforts to support students, build the union and work for a more just society.

“We’re all part of something big! Something bigger than ourselves,” Boyd said. “We’re all part of a long line of disrupters who have been doing this righteous work for the sake of students, educators and working families all throughout California.”

The meeting had a palpable buzz and energy following the three-day strike last week by SEIU Local 99 (which represents educational support professionals) at Los Angeles Unified School District. The 30,000 members of United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) honored the picket line in an inspiring show of solidarity resulting in a tentative agreement for SEIU Local 99 on Friday.

“When 30,000 UTLA members refuse to cross a picket line in support of their colleagues, they raise the bar on what solidarity means for all of us,” CTA Executive Director Joe Boyd said during his report to State Council. ■

State Council members also elected the following members to leadership positions:

CTA Board of Directors

VanCedric Williams, District A
Jesse Aguilar, District H
Wendy Eccles, District K
Denise Bradford, District N
Angela Der Ramos, At-Large

CTA/ABC Committee

Luciano Ortiz, District G
Hillary Hall, District I
Ed De La Vega, District H
Anthony Garcia, District O

NEA Board of Directors

Ever Flores, District 2
Matthew Seymour, District 4
Irene Amezcua, District 10
Robbie Kreitz, Alternate
Director, Seat 1

The next CTA State Council of Education meeting will be held May 19-21.

Honors for Political Action

CTA members, chapters recognized

ON MARCH 25 at CTA State Council of Education, members and chapters who made extraordinary contributions to the education profession through effective political action in 2022 were honored. Award categories recognized individual members — The Member-in-Politics Awards in Honor of Ted Bass — and chapters — The Chapter-in-Politics Awards in Honor of Joyce Fadern.

Recipients of The Member-in-Politics Award:

Overall Award Winner — Karen Sher, *Oxnard Education Association.* A member of CTA's Political Involvement Committee, Sher is now on her third term as a trustee for the Oxnard Union High School District, and currently serves as the board president for the second time. In 2022, she devoted many hours to defeat Proposition 30 (taxing the wealthy to fund wildfire management and electric vehicle incentives/infrastructure). Sher has been instrumental in recruiting public school teachers to run for local school boards — four in total, and all were victorious. Sher also served as a mentor for CTA members running for school board seats across the state. She spearheaded voter registration efforts

▼ Left to right: Nicholas Vaccaro, Natomas TA; Michael Jordan, Farmersville TA (FTA); an FTA representative; Eric Mayer, Nevada Joint Union High School TA; Margie Black, Capistrano Unified EA; Stacey Willett, Sacramento City TA(SCTA); Krissie Goetz, SCTA; CTA President E. Toby Boyd; Vanessa Cudabac, SCTA; Karen Sher, Oxnard EA; Tara Jeane, SCTA.



with more than 10,000 students registered while in school.

Getting Others Involved Winner — Anthony Fuentes, *Kern High School Teachers Association.* Fuentes advises three school clubs, an academic team, and the "Youth for Justice" club, encouraging students to become involved in the political process and stressing the importance of registering to vote. He served on the local Political Action Committee (PAC), and has logged hours canvassing for union-endorsed school board candidates and recruiting members to get involved. Fuentes was elected as a Bakersfield City School District trustee.

State Priorities Award Winner — Holly Lederle, *Carmel Teachers' Association.* Lederle has a proven track record of educating members about statewide political issues and successfully mobilizing them to become involved in supporting these efforts. Her efforts have empowered teachers, making them more effective advocates for their students and profession. As a result of her leadership, her chapter has become more politically active and has been successful in advancing its political priorities.

Local Priorities Award Winner — Ila Nelson, *Los Banos Teachers Association.* Nelson is the chapter secretary and chair of the chapter PAC.

Her involvement in political action started because the elected school board was not in favor of educators. She has been instrumental in flipping the school board and led an effort that resulted in an adversarial board member resigning. Nelson has also helped in local redistricting to make sure voters were not disenfranchised.

Partisan/Non-Partisan Activities Award Winner — Vanessa Cudabac, *Sacramento City Teachers Association.* Cudabac is a 5th grade educator and member of the SCTA bargaining team. In 2022, she spearheaded the field campaign for three school board races in the Sacramento City Unified School District. Under her leadership, the field team knocked on every likely voter's door — 44,000 doors in total. As a result, all three candidates won, and two incumbents were defeated.

Coalition Building Award Winner — Nicholas Vaccaro, *Natomas Teachers Association.* Vaccaro just completed his first year as the PAC chair for NTA and is the NTA representative at the local central labor council. In 2022, NTA endorsed two candidates who were running against candidates supported by "parent's rights" organizations and outside charters. Vaccaro formed a coalition of parents and community members to beat back these efforts and NTA's candidates won by over 60 percent.

Recipients of The Chapter-in-Politics Award:

Rookie Chapter — Farmersville Teachers Association

FTA in the Central Valley, where the population is predominately conservative, has 143 members. FTA was able to mobilize about 80 percent of them to form a chapter PAC in 2022 for the purpose of winning local school board elections. Members participated in community events and precinct walking and managed to speak with half of the voting population in their area. All FTA-endorsed candidates won their elections and successfully flipped the board into a teacher-friendly board.

Small Chapter — Nevada Joint Union High School Teachers Association

NJUHSTA has 149 members. Roughly 75 percent of them were politically active in 2022, when two of five school board trustee seats were up

for election plus a third was vacated. The previous board had engaged in a series of escalating anti-association actions, targeting union leadership and undermining the chapter's negotiations with the district. NJUHSTA actively recruited and endorsed candidates and was very engaged in social media, meet-and-greet events, and precinct walking. All three endorsed candidates won their elections.

Medium Chapter — Capistrano Unified Education Association

CUEA has over 2,000 members and is located on the Orange County coast. The political volatility in South Orange County is well known, and in 2022, CUEA used CTA/ABC funding to support activities such as mailers and a social media campaign. Members were engaged throughout the district; the chapter mobilized almost 400 volunteers. Chapter-endorsed candidates won three out of four

school board seats.

Large Chapter — Sacramento City Teachers Association

Coming out of tough bargaining campaigns, SCTA's 3,000 members voted to increase their PAC contributions from \$5 to \$95 annually. This made SCTA-endorsed candidates competitive in races that up until 2022 were dominated by business-friendly candidates. The funding helped support direct mail and digital campaigns. SCTA called 75,000 likely voters during phone banks and visited 90 percent of likely voter households during precinct walks. Over 3,500 educators hand-wrote letters to key voters highlighting why they supported SCTA-endorsed candidates. SCTA-endorsed candidates now hold five of seven seats on the district school board.

For more information about these and other CTA awards, visit cta.org/awards.

37 Years of Supporting California Public Education

With the support from players, retail partners and our local communities, the California Lottery has contributed over **\$41 billion** to California public schools since 1985. Lottery funding goes to K-12 public schools, community colleges, the California State University, the University of California, and other school jurisdictions.



For more information on the Lottery's contributions to California public schools, please visit: www.calottery.com/who-benefits

▼ Great presentations, networking and fun at CTA/NEA-Retired's annual conference in mid-March in Santa Clara.



CTA/NEA-Retired

Everything you need to know about the benefits of joining CTA's chapter for retired members

By the **CTA/NEA-Retired Communications Committee**

WHETHER YOU ARE retiring in a few weeks or years from now, there are reasons you'll want to continue your membership in CTA and NEA. CTA/NEA-Retired is the active and robust branch of CTA/NEA that belongs to our retired educators.

As a retired member you continue to stay connected, be protected and enjoy the benefits you had as a CTA/NEA Active member.

Retired members offer invaluable perspectives and institutional knowledge. They provide a strong voice for education retirees in California and the nation, promoting the interests of retirees by working to set policy that will affect current educators into the future. We represent retirees on CTA's State Council of Education and nationally on the NEA Board of Directors and at the Representative Assembly.

STAY CONNECTED & HAVE FUN

The *CTA/NEA Retiree Advocate* newsletter, published quarterly and available on the CTA/NEA-Retired webpage

(cta.org/retired), keeps members up to date on the activities, issues and accomplishments of the state organization and its local chapters. Local CTA/NEA-Retired chapters offer opportunities for members to socialize with former colleagues and make new friends (e.g., interesting informative speakers, happy hours, museum tours, movie nights, concerts, etc.). When there is an interest, our local chapters provide opportunities to become involved in elections and legislative campaigns at the local, state and national level. Staying connected includes visiting our webpage and Facebook page (facebook.com/ctanearetired).

BE PROTECTED & ADVOCATE FOR EDUCATORS

CTA/NEA-Retired devotes much of its time to serving the combined interests of retired teachers, educators, higher education instructors and education support professionals. In concert with CTA and NEA, CTA/NEA-Retired maintains a watch on federal and state legislation that may affect

"CTA/NEA-Retired devotes much of its time to serving the combined interests of retired educators, higher education instructors and ESPs."

retirement benefits. We monitor the CalSTRS and CalPERS board meetings and their actions to protect the retirement security of current and retired educators. Our members also play an active role in lobbying for legislation that benefits educators and retired workers.

This past year CTA sponsored — and CTA/NEA-Retired helped push through — legislation to bring changes in CalSTRS by supporting two bills protecting retired educators. The governor signed into law AB 1667, which protects promised benefits by establishing a process to improve accuracy and transparency. The bill ensures that retired members are not held liable for prior overpayments to them in cases caused by employer or administrative error. It helps ensure the accuracy of reporting compensation to CalSTRS by employers and will minimize financial harm to retirees. Also signed was SB 868 to establish equitable use of excess CalSTRS funds in the Supplemental Benefit Maintenance Account to help the oldest members of the STRS, those left out of later pension enhancements.

This advocacy includes working with NEA and NEA-Retired to repeal the unfair Social Security penalties known as Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), opposing efforts to privatize Social Security, and working to strengthen Medicare.

ENJOY BENEFITS

If you are retired or retiring, you don't have to lose your CTA/NEA benefits. Membership in CTA/NEA-Retired, the only retiree organization affiliated with CTA and NEA, includes receiving *NEA Today for Retired Members* and *California Educator* magazines. These provide updates on the education scene and tips on Medicare, taxes, investing and more. Membership allows individuals to continue to participate in the many economic benefits available to active members including:

- **\$1 million professional liability insurance**, when substituting after retirement
- **CTA Disaster Relief assistance**, which gives grants, not loans
- **Discounts and special rates through CTA & NEA Member Benefits**, including Medicare supplements, dental and vision options, auto and home insurance, hearing aids, car rental and a host of retail purchase perks.
- **CTA Group Legal Services (GLS)**, which annually provides retired members one hour of free legal consultation about health and welfare benefits, substitute employment, and one-half hour for personal matters.

Join Today

Membership in one of CTA/NEA-Retired's 31 chapters (organized by region) provides something for everyone. What do you want to accomplish during your retirement years? Travel? Volunteer or work part-time? Pursue hobbies? Membership will deliver its rewards throughout your lifetime, but first you must join.

Dues go up on September 1!

Active members, those still working, may join as Pre-retired Lifetime members. A one-time \$550 payment covers your dues so that when you retire your dues are already paid for life. (Effective September 1, 2023, one-time Lifetime dues will be \$600.)

Once you retire, in addition to Lifetime, you have two options, annual or monthly pension deduction. Annual by check or credit card is \$80 and pension deduction is \$5.40 monthly (deducted from CalSTRS or CalPERS pension). On September 1 these increase to \$85 and \$5.70, respectively.

Joining is simple. Go to cta.org/retired. Scroll down to "Join CTA/NEA-Retired" to join online. Or you may download the brochure with the printed application form to be completed and mailed to CTA at 1705 Murchison Dr., Burlingame, CA 94010.

Make no mistake. Retirement is a new adventure. Keeping links to CTA and NEA makes navigating that adventure a bit more comfortable professionally, socially and economically.

For membership questions or more information, call 650-552-5439 or email CTA-Retired@cta.org.

Bring Calm To Your Classroom

New CTA member benefit can help students, too

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

Educators can use Calm with students as well as themselves. Download Calm's 30 Days of Mindfulness in the Classroom at calm.com/schools/resources. Then, discover what's possible if every school day began with a few moments of mindfulness. From breathing exercises to meditations to relaxation activities — including "Sky Gazing" and "Ocean Breathing" — each day is a new mindful exploration complete with a lesson plan.

Here's what CTA members are saying about Calm:

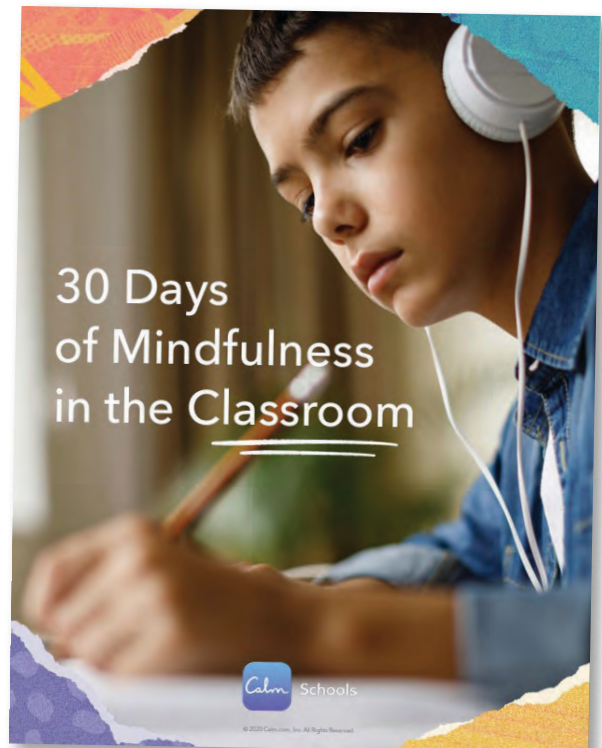
"This honestly has been life changing for me personally and for me professionally. I have used Calm to help me unwind and calm down after very high stress days at work. I use the Calm app every day in my class for mindfulness meditation time with my students after their longer recesses when they are very dysregulated and emotional. I honestly wish our school families would have access to Calm since it's a great strategy to help calm down and readjust due to an increase in emotional stress and trauma post-Covid for our whole school community/students. Thank you so much for offering this to us and to teachers!"

"I'm using it in class for me, my aides, and my special needs students! It's so helpful. Love this benefit, all teachers need it IMO!"

"I use it every morning in my classroom to meditate before my students arrive. It keeps me calm all day and I can teach better because of it."

"Sleep is so important for both physical and mental health. Calm app helps me decompress from the stresses of the teaching day and fall asleep quickly."

"Since I started using the Calm (premium) app I have been able to really feel the difference in my stress levels! I can say that it has helped pull me back from the burnout ledge a bit. I think I will be able to not only make it to the end of the year but actually enjoy this job again!"



"Calm [is] a great strategy to help calm down and readjust due to increased emotional stress and trauma post-Covid for our whole school community and students."

ACTIVATE YOUR SUBSCRIPTION

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

- Logging into 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.

For questions, please reach out to CTA Member Benefits at 650-552-5200 or email Memberbenefits@cta.org.

Tax Deductions for Educators

- **EDUCATOR EXPENSE DEDUCTION:** For tax year 2022, eligible educators can now deduct up to \$300 (\$600 if married filing jointly and both spouses are eligible educators) of unreimbursed trade or business expenses. These include classroom supplies, professional development courses, books, computer equipment (including software and services) and other equipment. Qualified expenses also include the amounts for personal protective equipment, disinfectant and other supplies used to prevent the spread of coronavirus. For details, go to irs.gov/taxtopics/tc458.
- **EARNED INCOME TAX CREDITS (EITC)** are tax credits for working people who have earned a low to moderate income. You may be eligible to receive a cash refund or reduce the amount of tax you owe.

There are two EITCs: the California Earned Income Tax Credit (CalEITC) and the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). To learn more about both and to check your eligibility, visit caleitc4me.org.

- **CalEITC:** The amount of CalEITC you get depends on your income and family size. You may be eligible for up to \$3,417 for tax year 2022 as a working family or individual earning up to \$30,000 per year.
- **Federal EITC:** Unlike the CalEITC, only people with Social Security numbers qualify. You can claim the credit whether you're single or married or have children or not. The main requirement is that you must earn money from a job.

CalEITC might also enable you to qualify for the **Young Child** and **Foster Youth** tax credits. For the former, you may qualify for up to \$1,083 cash back if you had a child under the age of 6 at the end of the tax year.

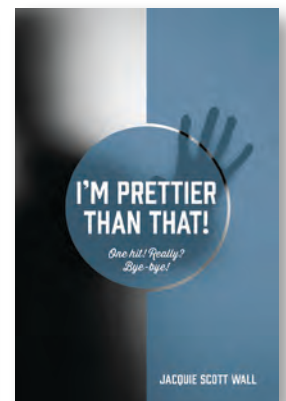
For Foster Youth tax credits, you may qualify for up to \$1,083 cash back if you were in California foster care when age 13 or older. Learn more about both tax credits at caleitc4me.org.



Continued from Page 56

PROFESSOR TURNED AUTHOR

Jacqueline Wall retired as a Chaffey College professor in 2015. Since then, the CTA/NEA-Retired member has published two self-help books based on her life experiences. *A Happy Kid Is Not a Bully* is a guilt-free plan for parents' greatest legacy, with tips, steps and suggestions to raise a happy kid, not a bully. *I'm Prettier Than That* depicts how Wall survived domestic violence, and how others can end abusive relationships. Both are on Barnes & Noble and Amazon.



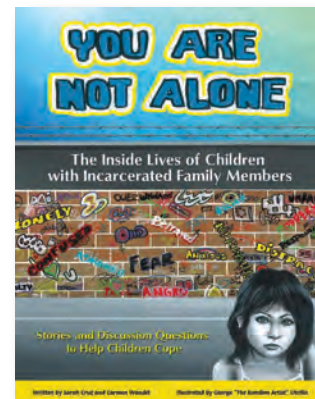
Got something for Lit From Within — a book, blog, album, video series, podcast or something else? Tell us at editor@cta.org with "Lit From Within" in the subject line. We lean toward new(ish) work that can be used in the classroom.



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

HELPING KIDS COPE

Fifth-grade teacher Sarah Cruz and school counselor Carmen Wandel, both member leaders of Wright Educators Association, found few resources that deal with the thoughts and feelings children go through when they have a family member who is incarcerated. So, they did something about it by writing *You Are Not Alone*, a new book to support those students and families going through this unique experience. Stories and discussion questions help children cope with loneliness, anger, worry, shame and more, and let them understand that there are others who are going through what they are and feel the same. On Amazon.



CINEMATIC VAMPIRES

Forrest Pearson, a high school English teacher and member of Grizzly Education Association, has written *Hollywood Vampire*. In the fast-paced short story, John Van Cruz is an aspiring actor who receives the opportunity of a lifetime until he discovers a secret cabal of vampires. *Hollywood Vampire* satirizes the predatory nature of the movie industry and explores themes such as individuality versus conformity. On Amazon and Barnes & Noble.



THE ART OF TEACHING

When COVID hit in 2020 Art McMahon, a Lake Elsinore Teachers Association member, had to teach his middle school art class entirely on Zoom. The semester of lessons and artwork he created became a series of three books in the summer of 2021. The books, all titled *Art: Methods and Techniques: A series for teachers, parents and students* contain 18 middle school lessons that can be taught in any order in person or online and equal a semester of learning. McMahon, who has more than 30 years' experience integrating art, science and math, stresses variety, a focus on differing methods and techniques and on using a minimum of resources. On Amazon, and also Teacher Pay Teachers as a complete semester course or as individual lessons.



Continued on Page 55

CELEBRATE EDUCATORS!

Planting seeds, inspiring students and future educators

Celebrate our educators on **California Day of the Teacher**, May 10; **National School Nurse Day**, also May 10; and **CTA Education Support Professionals Day**, May 16. Our 2023 theme is **California Educators: Planting seeds, inspiring students and future educators**.

Show your appreciation for the work educators do to teach, nurture and inspire our students, and to keep our schools safe and healthy. A few ways to demonstrate support:

- Post this poster in your classroom or school hallway!
- Have students make and deliver cards to their school educators.
- Consider food, gift cards and other items to make the days special.
- Use hashtags in school and chapter social media messages of gratitude: **#DayoftheTeacher**, **#SchoolNurseDay** and **#ESPD**.

Find resources and more ideas at cta.org/dayoftheteacher.

Oakland-based artist and social justice activist Favianna Rodriguez created this year's poster. Educators can find related content from the artist to teach students about art, design, messaging and communications at cta.org/dayoftheteacher, including:

- A poster template that students can download and make their own;
- A teacher's guide on instructing students in creating effective, impactful posters;
- Example slides of dynamic work on topical issues (environment, social justice, gun violence, women's rights, etc.);
- A video on how the artist decided on the poster's design, colors, etc.

See more at favianna.com.

CALIFORNIA EDUCATORS:



PLANTING SEEDS.



INSPIRING STUDENTS & FUTURE EDUCATORS

nea



CALIFORNIA
TEACHERS
ASSOCIATION

Day of the Teacher, May 10, 2023 • National School Nurse Day, May 10, 2023 • CTA ESP Day, May 16, 2023



COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Transforming local schools to meet the rising needs of students.

Improved student learning. Stronger families. Healthier communities.

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cta.org/communityschools