

california
educator

JUNE / JULY 2023 VOLUME 27 ISSUE 6

The Future
of Education?
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IN THE
CLASSROOM
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I'M HERE:
**BUILDING SAFE
& BRAVE SPACES**

Educators create classrooms
where LGBTQ+ students
are seen and valued
PAGE 18

MEET DAVID
GOLDBERG:
*CTA's New
President*
PAGE 12



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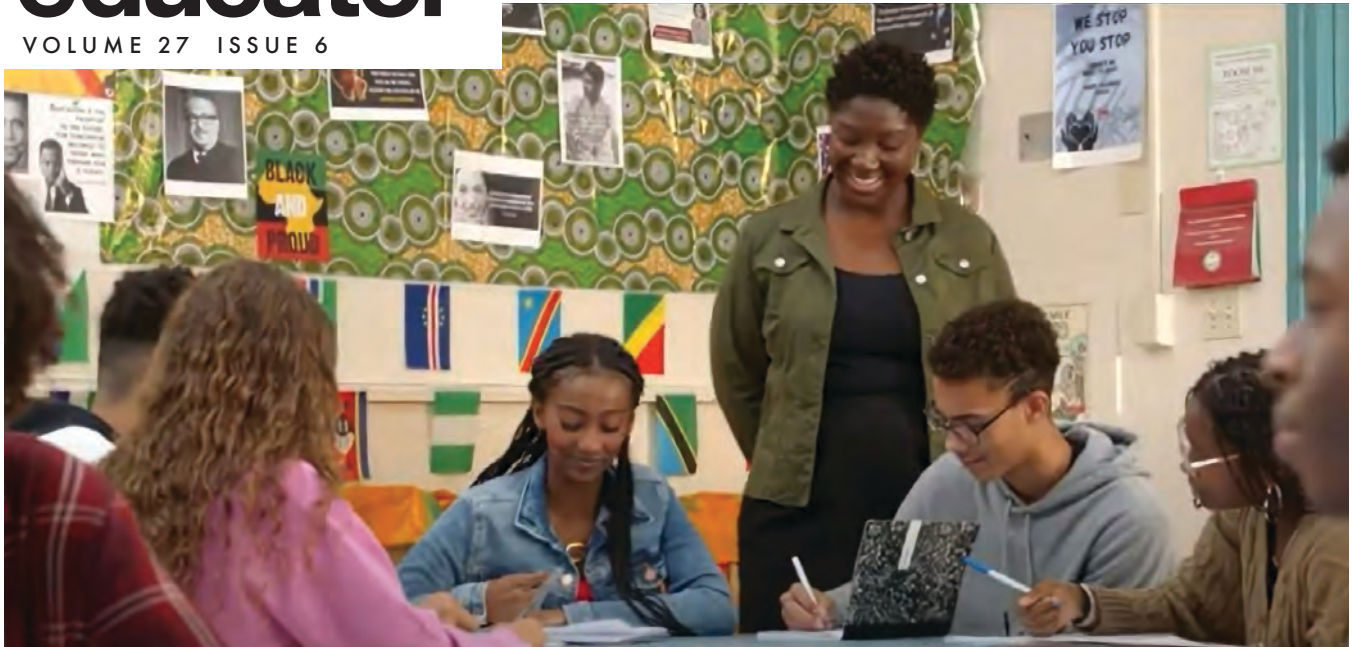


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VOLUME 27 ISSUE 6



#WeAreCTA

OUR VOICE, OUR UNION, OUR PROFESSION

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

MAGAZINE

A WIN FOR THE COMMUNITY

Oakland educators' strike victory for students and the common good. **PAGE 30**

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FORESTRY CHALLENGE

Unique event for El Dorado County students combines career education with academic competition. **PAGE 46**

RELATIONSHIPS ARE KEY

NEA-Jurupa's collaborative work with school district on community schools. **PAGE 36**

STORIES BY, ABOUT MEMBERS

New books, Matty Williams' true self. **PAGES 52, 56**

DIGITAL

PUSH BACK, FIGHT BACK

CTA helps protect members and students while countering attacks against public education **PAGE 28**

[cta.org/legal-beat](#)

CTA ON THE ISSUES

Learn more about the issues we care about, from school funding to special ed. [cta.org/our-advocacy/issues](#)

LEGAL RIGHTS FOR LGBTQ+

CTA's updated guide to what LGBTQ+ employees and students need to know, plus resources. [bit.ly/41sdeIH](#)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CTA SUMMER INSTITUTE

Sign up now for CTA's premier training. From classroom skills to chapter operations, you'll learn it all. July 23-27, UCLA. **#CTASI PAGE 8** [f](#) [t](#) [i](#) [y](#) [cta.org/conferences](#)

FOR LOCAL LEADERS

CTA's Presidents Conference is for new and experienced chapter leaders — send a team! July 13-16, Burlingame. [cta.org/conferences](#)

6,000 DELEGATES TO MEET

NEA's Representative Assembly meets July 2-6 in Orlando, FL. **#NEARA PAGE 8** [f](#) [t](#) [i](#) [y](#) [nea.org/ra](#)

MEMBER BENEFITS

MOVE WITH THE CALM APP

Use your free subscription to the award-winning relaxation app to keep your body and mind in good shape. **PAGE 54** [CTAMemberBenefits.org](#)

FIND YOUR HAPPY PLACE!

Beach? Pool? Roller coaster? Members get deep discounts and great deals on hotels and other travel and entertainment with CTA's Access to Savings. Book now! [CTAMemberBenefits.org/access](#)

Photo: Scene from CTA's new media campaign — TV, radio and digital ads focused on community schools. Story on page 53.

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Educators create classrooms where LGBTQ+ students are seen and valued

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CTA's new president

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Top photo: A display in sixth grade teacher Erica Nuss' classroom in Palmdale. Cover photo of Andrea Reyna, an eighth grade educator in East Palo Alto, by Chris Robledo.

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)

THE FIGHT FOR FAIRNESS

While exceptionally happy for the Twin Rivers United Educators that they finally got a well-deserved agreement ("A True Tale," April/May 2023), I can't help but be saddened that teachers have to fight so hard for a decent cost of living adjustment. We call it a victory but maybe it's a basic human right that should be automatically added to educators' salary schedules without having to beg for it.

For those who belong to weak unions and a revolving door of administrators, the idea that if we are not able to build that solidarity we won't be able to get the COLA is frustrating. My colleagues up the road have negotiated 20% but sadly we will be punished for circumstances beyond our control, receiving only 4.5% over the last three years. The equity pay gap widens. It's disheartening and one more reason educators leave the profession.

SABRINA LAWRENCE

Gavilan College Faculty Association



ADVOCATING ON LOBBY DAY

Educators walked the halls of the State Capitol on Lobby Day in late April, meeting with legislators and advocating positions on important bills making their way through the legislative process. Above: West Sacramento Teachers Assn. members Naqiba Gregory, Carmen Wright and Dr. Amber Bradley met with State Senator Bill Dodd. Read about the bills in play on page 27.





STUDENT CTA ADDRESSES THE BIG ISSUES

Student CTA held its Spring Event in April in San Diego, discussing recruitment, retention and burnout in education. New SCTA officers were elected, pictured at right: Top row, from left — Kiseme Parks, ethnic minority representative, Ethan Collier-Moreno, vice president; Jonathan Oyaga, president, Sarahy Torres, communications editor. Bottom row, from left — Jennifer Kay Garcia, communications editor; K. Sam. Gonzalez-Dean, social justice advocate; Monique Gutierrez, northern regional VP. Not pictured: Jacob Moser, southern regional VP.

For more, see cta.org/studentcta.

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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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Approved by



A Better World — Because of You

A S I REFLECT on my four years as CTA president, I'm filled with a sense of gratitude and pride in our collective accomplishments as a union. I've seen with my own eyes the transformation among our ranks that is breaking through barriers so our students can be proud and comfortable with who they are — as they are; and so all our students have the same right to a quality education and a bright future.

I've realized that the way to bring about real, sustainable, meaningful change was to be part of something larger and far stronger than I could ever be on my own — our union. That collective strength propelled me forward and let me know that all the things we needed to fight for were possible to accomplish.

Even when a worldwide pandemic presented new and unprecedented challenges to educators, to students and to the work of our union, we met that challenge together, and have come out stronger on the other side.

Despite predictions of financial catastrophe for schools when the pandemic began, and in the face of a more recent \$31.5 billion state revenue shortfall, the California state budget going into 2023-24 continues to protect and fully fund public education at record levels. We're not where we need to be — California is the fifth largest economy in the world and our schools should be funded

accordingly — but over the past four years we've seen a steady climb upward. The revised budget includes a historic 8.22 percent cost-of-living increase to K-14 funding. In total, per-student funding is at \$23,706. That means per-pupil funding has gone up about \$1,000 a year since I became president.

During these same years, CTA members and chapters in huge numbers have embraced racial and social justice issues, continuing a mission that goes back to the origins of our union. Members fought for immigrant students and colleagues, marched for the Black Lives Matter movement, stood against Asian hate and antisemitism, and protected students and each other against anti-LGBTQ+ attacks and rhetoric. CTA members have stood up for truth in our curriculum and fought back against insidious attempts to rewrite our nation's history when it comes to race. Social justice issues, including support for community schools, have been at the forefront of the “common good” issues that have driven the most recent educator strikes in California.

I do believe one of our greatest collective accomplishments on the social justice front has been California's historic \$4 billion investment in community schools. These schools have the potential to transform public education in traditionally underserved communities, and embrace shared leadership that includes



educators, parents, students and community members deciding what is best for their schools and communities.

All that CTA has been able to accomplish has only been possible because of you. The simple fact that you're reading this issue of the Educator is a form of member engagement. Many of you have taken the next steps to do even more to keep us strong. Whether it's serving on a local chapter committee, attending a union rally or school board meeting, being a site union representative, or participating in any other CTA or local chapter event, you are the heart and soul that keeps our union strong.

The world is better today for California students because of you. While there are challenges ahead and opportunities to make things even better for public education, with your continued involvement I know CTA and our profession will remain strong.

It has been a true honor and a privilege to serve as CTA president. Thank you.

E. Toby Boyd

CTA PRESIDENT
@etobyboyd



Leading, not Blocking

FACT: Generative artificial intelligence — in the form of ChatGPT, Bard and others — is here to stay. While some educators lament its ability to encourage student “cheating,” there is no denying its potential to help us. In our feature on “**ChatGPT in the classroom**” (page 15) teachers use chatbots for tasks such as writing lesson plans, creating assessment questions and generating presentations. Educator Bill Lemei uses ChatGPT as a research assistant, asking it to find information, clone problems and identify primary sources.

Lemei says educators should be getting in front of the technology to be trusted guides for students in proper use instead of abuse. “We ought to be leading and not blocking. Education is getting the kids as ready as we can. We ought to be teaching it.”

Leading and not blocking is certainly true when it comes to educators creating safe environments for LGBTQ+ students. In “**Building Safe and Brave Spaces**” (page 18), teacher Melanie Bean says these spaces and the caring adults who build them are literal lifesavers for students and often some of the only places where LGBTQ+ and especially transgender youth feel they can be their authentic selves.

“It’s small things that recognize people’s existence that make the difference,” says Bean. She and other educators in the story are intentional in both their curriculum and how they present themselves, including classroom displays and being openly out and proud. Also key to building safe spaces: knowing the rights guaranteed by the FAIR Education Act and state Education Code, and familiarity with laws that protect LGBTQ+ students (page 23).

CTA helps protect educators under attack, too, whether it be for keeping LGBTQ+ students safe, ensuring students receive an education that accurately reflects our nation’s complex history or myriad other hot-button issues. Our **Legal Beat** column (page 28) outlines how CTA counters these attacks while protecting members and students.

Also in this issue: inspiring stories about your colleagues’ work, accomplishments and insights. Among them, **Amara Smallwood’s** students competing in the Forestry Challenge (page 46), the educators who made a big impact on a now best-selling author (pictured), CTA

▼ Author Brent H. Robinson with his K-3 teachers, all members of Apple Valley United Teachers Assn. From left: Shaun Rickerl, Mary Swanson, Robinson, Martha Lopez and Marie Vastine. Story on page 45.



IS THAT ME, OR CHATGPT?

The ChatGPT assignment: Write a 300-word editor’s note about students and educators enjoying a restorative, healthy summer while continuing to learn in different ways.

What I got back: 450 words of florid, verbose prose that sounds very unlike me. Excerpt:

As the summer season unfurls its warm embrace, students and teachers alike embark on a well-deserved break, bidding farewell to classrooms and textbooks. The joyful respite from structured academic routines, however, is far from being a period of stagnation; this time off holds immense potential for growth and rejuvenation.

Did ChatGPT work for me here? No, though as generative AI continues to learn and improve, chatbots will only get better.

Gold Award-winner **Vicki Soderberg** (page 48), **Matty Williams** finding their true self (page 52).

Enjoy the summer.

Katharine Fong

EDITOR IN CHIEF

editor@cta.org

June / July 2023

CALENDAR



Pride Month

EVERY YEAR IN JUNE, the LGBTQ+ community celebrates Pride Month. It's a great time to include LGBTQ+ themes and history in your curriculum, helping LGBTQ+ students feel safer and more affirmed (see our cover story on page XX). And *all* your students will benefit from a better understanding of history and the groups within your community.

Ideas include highlighting historical LGBTQ+ leaders, discussing the LGBTQ+ movement and creating an LGBTQ+-affirming display for your classroom or hallway (find posters at cta.org/our-advocacy/social-justice/posters-shareables). Find lesson plans and other resources at welcomingschools.org.



JUNETEENTH, ON JUNE 19, became a federal holiday in 2021. Since the late 1800s, the day has been celebrated by African Americans to mark the end of slavery in the United States after the Civil War.

On June 19, 1865, about two months after the war ended, a Union general arrived in Galveston, Texas, to inform enslaved African Americans of their freedom. His announcement put into effect the Emancipation Proclamation — which President Abraham Lincoln had issued nearly two and a half years earlier.

PBS offers a lesson plan for grades 6–12 on the history of Juneteenth at tinyurl.com/5947nbc5. Students can also watch the Annenberg Public Policy Center's "Juneteenth: Exploring Freedom's Stories" at annenbergclassroom.org/juneteenth-exploring-freedoms-stories.



AN INITIATIVE OF the American Library Association, June is a nationwide celebration of the authors and writings that reflect the lives and experiences of the LGBTQ+ community. Find ALA's 2023 list of LGBTQIA+ Books for Kids and Teens at bit.ly/3pcEJsh.





Hot PD at Summer Institute

THE PREMIER TRAINING of its kind, CTA's Summer Institute, at UCLA July 23–27, offers professional development that helps chapter leaders in the day-to-day representation of their members. Hands-on sessions hone your skills so you can meet the challenges of the coming year. You'll meet colleagues from around the state — and have fun! Sign up for one of 10 full-week trainings of your choice:

- Building Worksite Power to Win!
- Communications
- Community Schools (Invite-Only)
- Economic Justice
- Emerging Leaders
- Essential Bargaining Skills
- Fundamental Skills for Bargaining Chairs
- Instruction and Professional Development
- Member Benefits
- School Finance

For details, visit cta.org/event/summer-institute-2023-2. Find the agenda, lodging and activities information, and registration at cta.org/conferences.

CA LMI Summer Institute

JUNE 20–22 San Diego

The California Labor Management Initiative institute convenes labor-management teams to energize partnerships, build community, and navigate the upcoming year.

► cdefoundation.org/clmi

Conference on Racial & Social Justice

JUNE 29–JULY 1 Orlando, FL

NEA's conference provides a space for educators, students, parents and families, organizers, community members, and leaders to unite to advance justice in education. Join three days of "Joy, Justice, Excellence: The Strength of Educators. The Brilliance of Students. The Power of Community." NEA's Human & Civil Rights Awards Dinner takes place July 2 (see page 10). ► nea.org/conferenceonracialandsocialjustice

2023 NEA RA

JULY 2–6 Orlando, FL

The 2023 NEA Representative Assembly and the California Teachers Association Caucus, comprising 6,000 delegates from state and local affiliates, meet to debate the vital issues that impact American public education and set NEA policy and activities for the year ahead. ► nea.org/ra

CTA Presidents Conference

JULY 13–16, 2023 Burlingame

Newly developed interactive sessions designed for new and experienced chapter leaders (presidents, vice presidents or local designees) enhance your skills as a leader and help build systems of success for your chapter. The conference includes dozens of skills-building sessions and offers opportunities to build lasting relationships with other CTA leaders. Send a team: CTA will pay travel costs for one person per chapter. ► cta.org/conferences

QTEL Summer Institutes

JULY 17–21 Santa Cruz

WestEd's Quality Teaching for English Learners team offers professional development supporting education for English learners. ► qtel.wested.org/2023-qtel-summer-institutes

California MTSS Professional Learning Institute

JULY 18–20 Anaheim

The theme of this year's California MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support) conference is "Equity in Action: Every Student, Every Day." Educators, administrators, school counselors and psychologists, county offices of education leaders, and community-based organizations come together to support inclusive and equitable learning environments.

► camtsspli.ocde.us



Summer Reads

LET STUDENTS KNOW that reading for pleasure is a great way to spend the break, opening new worlds as exciting as — if not more than — the latest summer blockbuster. Here are suggestions from CTA's California Reads program; to find the complete 2023 list, as well as past years' recommendations, go to cta.org/careads.

In *Danbi Leads the School Parade* (by Anna Kim, grades Pre-K/TK/K) Danbi is thrilled to start her new school in America. She wants to join in the games but doesn't know the rules and can't get anything right. Then she makes up a new game and leads her classmates on a parade to remember. Danbi learns to navigate her two cultures and realizes that when you open your world to others, their world opens to you.

The Girl From the Sea (by Molly Knox Ostertag, grades 6-8) is a graphic novel about 15-year-old Morgan, who is full of secrets — including wanting to kiss another girl. One night, Morgan is saved from drowning by a mysterious girl named Keltie. The two become fast friends. But Keltie has secrets of her own. As the girls start to fall in love, everything they're each trying to hide will find its way to the surface....

The Kite Runner (by Khaled Hosseini, grades 9-12) came out in 2003, but its story — of the unlikely friendship between a wealthy boy and the son of his father's servant, caught in the tragic sweep of history — has become a classic of contemporary literature. The book transports readers to Afghanistan at a tense and crucial moment of change and destruction. A powerful story of friendship, it is also about the power of reading, the price of betrayal and the possibility of redemption.



Updated Student Loan Debt Info

At presstime, President Biden was preparing to veto a Congressional Review Act (CRA) resolution that would block his plan to cancel student loan debt for people of modest means. The CRA would unwind the pause on federal student loan payments and possibly reinstate loans forgiven through the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program. Get the latest information at nea.org/mystudentdebt.



▼ Add the caption here.



ESP Leadership Academy — Class of 2023

Strengthening our schools means strengthening everyone who works within a school system, including ESPs. The second half of CTA's 2023 ESP Leadership Academy took place in Burlingame at the end of April (the first half was in March in LA). Academy participants learned skills to help them be effective leaders in their chapters and are now better prepared to help their local organization deal with current educational and other issues. Congrats!

Pictured left to right: CTA Board Member Chris Bushée, Pan Arciniega, Heather Cade-Bauer, Ashley Middlebrook, Bonnie Marsh, Kirsten Brink, Michael Dunnington, La Vada Hall, Anthony Dunaway, La Tonia Tarver-Lopez, Antonio Orozco, and Vanessa Vancil.

Learn more about the ESP Leadership Academy at cta.org/esp.

Antisemitism Awareness Campaign

To ensure all students — including Jewish students — are able to attend schools free from discrimination and harassment, the Biden-Harris Administration issued the U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism in May. It includes the Department of Education's (ED) Antisemitism Awareness Campaign. As part of the campaign, ED's Office for Civil Rights released a letter reminding schools of their legal obligations to provide all students a school environment free from discrimination based on race, color or national origin, including shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics, or citizenship or residency in a country with a dominant religion or religious identity. Schools are required to take immediate and appropriate action to respond to harassment that creates a hostile environment. For more information, go to tinyurl.com/2fy8hxtb.



Human & Civil Rights Awardee Arlene Inouye

NEA will present its 2023 Human and Civil Rights Awards at a gala dinner in Orlando, FL, on July 2. Among the awardees is Arlene Inouye, recipient of the Ellison S. Onizuka Memorial Award.

Inouye, an integral member of UTLA leadership in recent years, is a longtime educator, labor leader and community activist. Her family was incarcerated in the World War II internment camps; because of this she has spent most of her life fighting racism and injustice and uplifting the contributions of Asians and Pacific Islanders. Inouye has worked to transform public education and the union into a force for societal change and as catalysts in the movement for racial, educational and social justice. She has used her voice and talents to bring voice to her students and community.

Inouye has served as UTLA treasurer and secretary. As bargaining team co-chair during the UTLA 2019 contract negotiations, she helped lead one of the most historic educator strikes in national history, securing a plethora of social justice wins for students across the district. She is currently working with the UCLA Asian American Studies Center on the AAPI Multimedia Textbook project.

For other NEA Human and Civil Rights awardees, visit nea.org/hcrawards.

QUOTES & NUMBERS

Compiled by **Julian Peeples**



"Our goal ... is to bargain a contract that will help the (district) recruit and retain good teachers and provide our ... students with much-needed services. We're not going to just go along to get along. If the district won't respect and fulfill the urgent needs of students and teachers, they should expect resistance."

—Oakland Education Association President **ISMAEL ARMENDARIZ**, in a CNN story on OEA's unfair labor practice strike in May.



"I know from my own challenges with dyslexia that when we help people read, we help them succeed. You do that every day. The value of a librarian is inestimable — you go beyond books, and even beyond knowledge. You open the doors to possibility, to opportunity, imagination and the pursuit of freedom."

—Gov. **GAVIN NEWSOM**, in an EdSource column during National Library Week.



"Teacher voice is alive and well at the Department of Education ... Their perspective helps drive what our commitments are: to not only work on teacher salary but working conditions, making sure teachers have appropriate professional development ... (and) making sure we're supporting schools as the hub. These are all things that were influenced by AFT and NEA."

—Secretary of Education Dr. **MIGUEL CARDONA**, in a May EdWeek story on providing more resources to educators.



"We must see these bans as part of a larger plot to destabilize public education, sow distrust in America's belief in it, and make Black and queer students feel as if they do not belong in schools or this nation. The end goal is to pick up where Reagan left off and privatize education. To achieve that aim, people must believe that public education is failing their children, that the institution is so corrupt it can no longer serve the people."

—Author and professor **BETTINA LOVE**, on bans on books, curricula and critical race theory across the country in EdWeek in April.



66

Percentage of LGBTQ+ teens and young adults who said that hearing news about banning people from discussing LGBTQ+ issues at school made their mental health a lot worse, according to a recent survey by The Trevor Project.

23.1

The gap between a living wage in California and the average pay for education support professionals, according to a recent NEA survey.

26 BILLION

Amount of annual federal funding in 2012 for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) — 11 years later, federal special ed funding is just over half that, at \$15 billion.

97

Percentage of men's faculty earnings at community colleges that women faculty were paid in 2022, according to the 2023 NEA Higher Education Faculty Salary Analysis — the closest to pay equity in higher ed.



READY TO LEAD — AND SERVE

David Goldberg, CTA's new president, is both dedicated educator and fierce advocate for equity and social justice

WHEN DAVID GOLDBERG becomes president of CTA on June 26, it will be a natural progression of what he has been doing since he was a kid: speaking up for the disenfranchised, trying to right wrongs, being of service to others and acting and leading collectively to make change.

It's in his blood — and his roots in Echo Park in Los Angeles, where he grew up and lives today. His mother and grandmother, both educators, were LA union strike captains. His father has been a community lawyer in Echo Park for 50 years. In elementary school, Goldberg organized other children and marched as "Kids Against Nukes." In high school he was arrested when he and fellow high school activists took over the South African consulate to protest apartheid.

"I've been an activist my whole life," Goldberg says. "For my parents, that was their whole lives, that's why they moved to Echo Park, an area known for its history of activism back in the '40s and '50s."

Lessons from his family's advocacy work were deeply ingrained. From his mother's participation in the United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) strike in 1989, for example, "I learned what it means to be accountable to each other and what it means to lay it all on the line for your coworkers, your

profession and your students — and what it means to be part of a broader struggle to create the world we deserve."

He became a teacher through an LA Unified School District intern program when the district was seeking bilingual educators. This was during the mid- and late 1990s, when immigrant students and bilingual education in California were under attack. Goldberg's activism, of course, kicked

in, first at UTLA and then at CTA, as he worked on myriad education and social issues and rose steadily through the leadership ranks.

Leading CTA offers a bigger stage and — especially during these times — a bigger challenge than Goldberg has experienced before, but he's ready for it.

"Leadership is service, it's not a position.

So, while it is my life's professional honor to be your president, it's really about service," he says. "I am honored to be a part of an organization that has such capacity and potential to impact the lives of our members in a way that we deserve — and to be part of a struggle for what our students deserve."

In a short interview in May, Goldberg spoke about CTA and his vision for the union going forward:

"Our most basic needs are not being met. Funding for schools impacts our members' ability to have the middle-class lives that they, and all workers, deserve."

"I'm committed to democratic, bottom-up leadership. Sometimes it's easy for us [at CTA] to skip steps that take a bottom-up look at what we're doing to meet member needs."

On the importance of connecting with members:

I'm committed to democratic, bottom-up leadership. Our CTA local presidents are the backbone of our organization, and we have to figure out better ways to be connected and responsive to them. For presidents to be more responsive to members at their work sites, we must be more responsive to them.

One way we're doing that is through CTA organizing grants around site visits, etc. — [this helps ensure we have] a place where members and leaders can debrief, discuss lessons learned and what support they need from CTA. I'd like to have deeper democratic conversations about the direction of our union, at State Council and in the regions. CTA is such a big, incredible, finely tuned organization but sometimes it's easy for all of us to skip steps that take a bottom-up look at what we're doing to meet the needs of our members.

On CTA and community schools:

Goldberg is spearheading CTA's work with community schools, a partnership with the state, school districts, students, families and communities (see cta.org/communityschools).

The model of community schools is a bottom-up, anti-racist model, a democratic model. It's a model that builds power with community, that brings broader issues of the common good to the table. And it's a model that breaks down a lot of silos within CTA and in our locals so we all work together in ways that allow us to recalibrate our relationship with each other.

For me it has been an important way to see the value that CTA can bring to locals. I'm trying to figure out how to use the community schools model, where people connect to and support each other, throughout all of CTA.

DAVID B. GOLDBERG



BORN, RAISED AND LIVES:

In Echo Park, in northeast Los Angeles

FAMILY: Wife Karla Alvarado-Goldberg (psychiatric social worker with LAUSD and UTLA member); children ages 16, 19 and 22

CAREER AS AN EDUCATOR: Most of his 25+ years in the profession have been as a bilingual teacher at Murchison Elementary in LAUSD

UNION ACTIVITY: Multiple leadership positions, including UTLA Treasurer, CTA Director, CTA Secretary-Treasurer, CTA Vice President

EDUCATION: B.A., Community Studies, UC Santa Cruz

RANDOM FACTS: Practices Transcendental Meditation twice a day; trilingual including Spanish and sign language; briefly played pro basketball overseas; relaxes through beach bike rides with Karla

On CTA's strengths:

At CTA, our real power is broader than just one local. We have a gift — a union where we come together, have conversations, have political disagreements, and come up with a plan and action to build power and win what our members and students deserve. We represent different communities. We come from all walks of life, we come from different racial backgrounds, gender backgrounds, who you choose to love. We have a place where we can bring all that in as an asset, as a real strength.

Educators overwhelmingly are still respected and even revered in many communities. So we are uniquely situated to stand up not only for ourselves, but we have the capacity to lead broader struggles. Because we are in every community across the state [we can work to] change our schools, and through schools, change our society. Connected as we are to a broader vision of a common good,* we can organize and lead around issues



* "Common good" is the advantage or benefit of all people in society or in a group. Common good issues such as hunger, homelessness, racial and social injustice, and more must be addressed at the advocacy and bargaining levels to ensure students and educators' teaching and learning conditions are equitable and optimal. Addressing these issues lifts entire communities, benefiting all.



◀ Goldberg with CTA President E. Toby Boyd at a March rally in Los Angeles supporting UTLA and SEIU local 99.

that resonate with people. And that's what has changed: The fight for issues of the common good, such as equity and social justice, is huge.

For us to really win what we deserve will take a movement. Our biggest asset is our members.

On his objectives as CTA president:

There are a few overarching goals: I want to continue to engage with and make common good issues the core of CTA work, where we bargain not just around salary and healthcare but around issues that impact our students and communities.

We've got to deal with funding for public education — we can't continue to meet any of our goals for members and students with devastating cuts and generations of disinvestment. And we must work on respect for our profession, especially with salaries and teaching and learning conditions.

But the bigger goal that helps us get there is CTA building a deeper connection with our members at every local, every level, every school site. As CTA has grown over the decades, some of these connections, our bottom-up vitality, got lost. We need to make our union resonate and have relevance around the everyday issues that our members confront at school sites. This includes curricular issues, disrespect from supervisors or principals, the ability to connect and work in coalition with families and students to get what they deserve.

The democratic disagreements and working through issues that we have at CTA State Council should mirror what's going on at our work sites. The business we take up

"I've done enough to both be humbled and to have some ideas on how we can work together in new and exciting ways."

at State Council should be driven by that work. We all must think this out together.

On the challenges:

Our most basic needs are not being met. Funding for schools impacts our members' ability to have the middle-class lives that they, and all workers, deserve. It's particularly intense in California because after Prop. 13 so much of our state income doesn't come from property taxes, which are more stable, but from income tax, which is sporadic. So when the economy goes bad we make devastating cuts that set back our workers, families and communities.

We need to make corporations pay their fair share, which they do not. We also need to extend or make permanent initiatives such as Prop. 30 and Prop. 55 — the latter of which expires in 2030.**

Regarding the teacher shortage, I look forward to recommendations from CTA's New Educator Pipeline and Support Workgroup for concrete steps we can take to both bring folks into this profession and create an environment where members who have dedicated their lives to [teaching] want to stay.

Beyond that, we must be part of the movement to fight back against attacks on us as workers and unionists, and targeted attacks on, for example, trans students, librarians and our members.

I'm sure I'm going to be humbled on day one as president. The struggle is so big, the scale is so big. But I've spent years building connections to members and member leaders as a local leader, board director, officer, etc. I've done enough to both be humbled and to have some ideas on how we can work together in new and exciting ways.

I look forward to continuing to engage with you — our members — to lead with you, not in a position of power over you but in power with you. Onward and upward, let's keep building the union that we deserve and our students deserve. ■

** Propositions 30 and 55 were ballot measures to fund schools and healthcare. Prop. 30 (approved in 2012) increased the state's personal income tax rate on earnings over \$250,000 (expired in 2018) and the states sales tax rate (expired in 2016). Prop. 55 (approved in 2016) extended the personal income tax rate on the wealthy through 2030.

The Future of Education?

ChatGPT in the Classroom

By Julian Peeples



WHEN SOME SCHOOL DISTRICTS across the state banned the use of ChatGPT shortly after its release in late-2022, there were widespread fears of the impact on education. Only eight months later, many educators are lauding its applications in the classroom and encouraging colleagues to accept and embrace generative artificial intelligence (AI) as a teaching and learning tool.

ChatGPT, which stands for Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer, is an artificial intelligence chatbot that is not only able to have a (semi-) human conversation with users, it can write and debug computer programs, compose music, write essays, answer test questions and translate and summarize text, among other applications. Calling it the “Industrial Revolution of Education,” instructional coach Brenda Richards says the technology will redefine how education looks and feels.

“There is no going back to a pre-ChatGPT time,” says Richards, a member of El Centro Secondary Teachers Association. “I think we truly need to embrace ‘how are we going to prepare students for the future?’”

A 31-year veteran educator, Richards supports fellow educators in her current role and is excited about generative AI’s potential as a tool to help teachers. While she understands the valid concerns about ChatGPT being used by students to cut corners or cheat,

Richards says many educators are using the emerging technology to redefine teacher productivity, utilizing generative AI to perform tasks that don’t fill their cups so there’s more time for those that do — AI for self-care, she says.

“A lot of teachers are concerned AI will replace them as an educator, but you can’t replace human interaction with a machine,” Richards says. “It’s important that we invest in learning more about AI and how to use it.”



“There is no going back to a pre-ChatGPT time. We truly need to embrace ‘how are we going to prepare students for the future?’”

—BRENDA RICHARDS,
El Centro Secondary
Teachers Association

AI saves teachers’ time

So far, Richards has enlisted the help of ChatGPT to write learning targets in student-friendly language, create assessment questions, provide examples and non-examples of concepts, and other applications that allow educators to focus on the relational aspects of teaching. She’s eager to see educators build professional learning groups and networks about generative AI to share, inform and support each other in learning how to use this technology to support students.

“Some of our best learning occurs when we teach each other,” she says.

San Jose high school government teacher Jayson Chang is also focused on ChatGPT’s use in professional development and teacher retention.

He says the chatbot is a powerful tool for getting ideas about topics or lessons, and the potential applications



that can help educators with tasks and responsibilities could mean the difference between a happy and burned-out new teacher.

“I think this could really help teachers,” says Chang, a member of East Side Teachers Association. “Especially in the first two years, so much time is spent on lesson planning — I definitely had a struggle with work-life balance. We really have to reimagine education in the era of generative AI.”

Chang says the technology is evolving every day, with new applications and possibilities to help educators. He says another generative AI app called Gamma (gamma.app) generates presentations, fliers and websites, handling all the tedious formatting that requires sometimes advanced knowledge and eats up precious time.

“Generative AI is not a substitute for educators, but it can save education by reducing burnout rates in new teachers,” he says.

Coronado High School AP physics teacher Bill Lemei is embracing generative AI to make his job easier — even if he has to do it from home since the school district administrators banned its use on their network. Lemei uses ChatGPT as a research assistant, asking the chatbot to find information, clone problems and identify primary sources. Chat GPT also



“Generative AI is not a substitute for educators, but it can save education by reducing burnout rates in new teachers.”

—JAYSON CHANG,
East Side Teachers
Association

provides feedback on student assignments based on a rubric he provides the chatbot, and Lemei even asks it to use “Elements of Style” to suggest improvements to his words (“ChatGPT is improving my writing”).

“It’s just a huge time saver for me,” says Lemei, a member of the Association of Coronado Teachers. “I can’t believe this is a free tool!”

Educators as trusted AI guides

Lemei’s advice to educators on ChatGPT: Jump in! With generative AI here to stay, he says educators should be getting in front of it to be trusted guides for students in proper use instead of abuse.

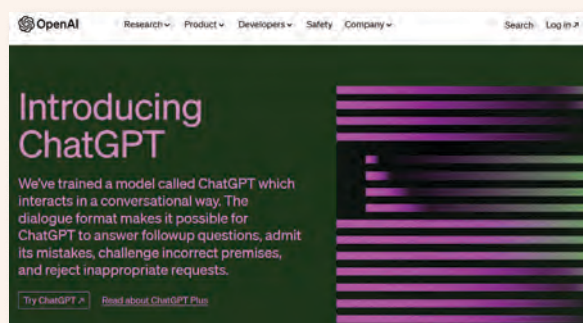
“We have forced adoption of this tool underground. We ought to be leading and not blocking. Delaying will only make it harder to break bad habits and tendencies,” Lemei says. “Education is getting the kids as ready as we can. We ought to be teaching it.”

The CTA Curriculum and Instruction Committee is currently researching generative AI and its potential uses and impacts on education. The topic was featured at last year’s Good Teaching Conference and New Educator Weekend, led by educators Ricardo Recinos and Teresa Magpayo Castro, members of Hacienda La Puente Teachers Association, who have a YouTube channel called TRansformational Tech. Their session explored

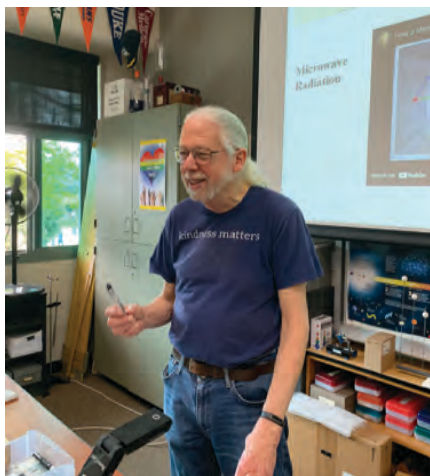
Resources

- Chat GPT Online: openai.com/blog/chatgpt (free registration required)
- ChatGPT Educator Considerations: platform.openai.com/docs/chatgpt-education
- ChatGPT through an Education Lens: bit.ly/ChatGPTinEdu
- TRansformational Tech Video Sessions: youtube.com/@transformationaltech
- Brandeis University Center for Teaching and Learning: brandeis.edu/teaching/chatgpt-ai/resources.html

For “Six Ways to Use ChatGPT to Save Time,” see page XX.



▼ Coronado physics educator Bill Lemei says using ChatGPT saves a lot of time and makes aspects of the job easier.



▼ Hacienda La Puente Teachers Association members Teresa Magpayo Castro and Ricardo Recinos have explored generative AI in the classroom in presentations and on their YouTube channel "TRansformational Tech."



"We have forced adoption of this tool underground. Education is getting the kids as ready as we can. We ought to be teaching it."

—BILL LEMEI, Association of Coronado Teachers

practical applications for incorporating ChatGPT and generative AI in the classroom.

"Think about the possibilities when it comes to personalized learning and language instruction," says Recinos. "I can see it helping me enhance student engagement and motivation."

Richards says if there are persistent concerns about students using ChatGPT to cheat, educators can adapt to minimize abuse of the tool, including going "old school" and requiring essays to be written by hand. Chang says another idea is to have students ask the chatbot to write an essay and then edit it or write four of their own sentences for every one that the AI writes. He says a student who wants to cheat will find a way, so it's more important to provide support on how to responsibly use this technology.

Richards adds that it's natural for educators to be wary of generative AI and its potential impact.

"I think it's OK for teachers to kind of be on the pendulum swing and alternate between fear and excitement," she says. "But embrace the change." ■

ChatGPT: Your AI Conversation Partner

This sidebar and headline were written entirely by ChatGPT

ChatGPT is an advanced language model that engages in natural language conversations. Powered by deep learning, it generates human-like responses, revolutionizing customer service, virtual assistants and educational platforms. Unlike traditional chatbots, ChatGPT uses a neural network to understand context, provide relevant responses and maintain conversation flow. It continually learns from new data to improve its performance.

While ChatGPT offers personalized interactions and enhanced user experiences, it has limitations. Occasionally, it may produce incorrect or nonsensical responses and can be sensitive to input phrasing. Ongoing research aims to address these challenges.



◀ Having an inclusive class library with LGBTQ+ books, as Andrea Reyna does, is a way to show all students they belong.

"In these especially difficult times when LGBTQ+ students are under attack, it's imperative that people be outspoken in their support."

—Andrea Reyna (she, they),
Ravenswood Teachers
Association

I'M HERE: BUILDING SAFE AND BRAVE SPACES

Educators create classrooms where LGBTQ+ students are seen and valued By Julian Peeples

"BY BUILDING AN inclusive, safe environment, you create a space where students can be their authentic selves and be brave to take risks," says Sacramento City Teachers Association member Melanie Bean. "By creating that space, we're allowing students to grow."

While some politicians across the country push laws attacking LGBTQ+ youth and taking away their rights, educators in California are creating equitable and inclusive classrooms and schools where all students feel seen, supported, protected and valued. Bean says these safe spaces and the caring adults who build them are literal lifesavers for students who are being targeted by schoolyard bullies and governors alike, and often some of the only places where LGBTQ+ and especially transgender youth feel like they can be their authentic selves,

"It's small things that recognize people's existence that make the difference," says Bean, an out educator who wears

a NEA-created "I'm Here" badge signifying her support for LGBTQ+ students. "Students come up to me and thank me for wearing it." (For more about "I'm Here," see page 24.)

In East Palo Alto, eighth grade teacher Andrea Reyna is big on visibility as part of a multi-level path to build safe and brave spaces at school — she distributes Pride flags, Safe Person badges and CTA-produced posters to fellow educators at César Chávez Ravenswood Middle School to help show all students they belong. She says being visible lets students know an educator is a trusted ally.

"One way I do that is by being out and proud — I think it's so important to have educators who are," says Reyna, who is openly pansexual and married to a trans woman. "In these especially difficult times when LGBTQ+ students are under attack, it's imperative that people be outspoken in their support."

First-grade teacher and Orinda Teachers Association

President Charles Shannon shares stories and pictures of his partner and family with his class, working to demonstrate different types of relationships and family structures for his students. Shannon shows his students the value in learning about each other, the things they have in common and the differences that make everyone unique. Using lessons from Welcoming Schools and GLSEN (see sidebar, page 22), he works to make sure his students know they are all important, cared for and supported.

“You can’t shy away from what’s good for kids,” says Shannon. “Our kids are always watching and listening. The influence you have is so powerful. Think about every word you say, everything you do — all of it impacts students.”

Defending LGBTQ+ Youth

Even in California, the vast majority of LGBTQ+ students report that school is a hostile environment. According to GLSEN’s 2021 National School Climate Report, 96% of California students reported hearing anti-LGBTQ+ remarks at school, with nearly half hearing school staff make homophobic remarks and two-thirds hearing negative remarks about someone’s gender expression. The report also found that most LGBTQ+ students reported being harassed or victimized at school, and half said their school had discriminatory practices toward students who are LGBTQ+. While Equality California’s 2022 Safe and Supportive Schools Report Card (safesupportiveschools.org) showed more than two-thirds of school districts have policies that explicitly prohibit bullying on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, 68% of LGBTQ+ students nationally felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, according to GLSEN.

According to the Trevor Project’s 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health, 45% of LGBTQ youth seriously considered committing suicide in the past year, with less than a third of transgender and nonbinary youth finding their own home to be gender-affirming. The survey showed that LGBTQ youth who found their school to be LGBTQ-affirming reported lower rates of attempting suicide, underscoring the importance of supportive educators.

West Sacramento art teacher Naqiba Gregory has a former student who is transgender and has been hospitalized for suicide watch three times since being outed at his new school. Gregory said the student shared that he felt unsupported by his educators, many of whom refused to use his preferred name,



▲ Melanie Bean (she, her) supports educators who are working to build inclusivity in their schools throughout the Sacramento area.

and said he did not see LGBTQ+ people represented in his class lessons and curriculum.

“The challenges he faces daily are not something any child should be dealing with,” says Gregory, a member of West Sacramento Teachers Association and CTA Human Rights Cadre trainer. “Students aren’t asking us to agree with their decisions or give them special treatment, they simply want to be accepted. They desire that one aspect of themselves won’t make them less deserving of support or advocacy when it comes to bullying or teasing.”

The targeting of LGBTQ+ youth by conservative lawmakers across the country over the past five years (see sidebar, page 20) is amplifying the rising tide of hate — the Trevor Project report found that four in five nonbinary or transgender youth said they are concerned about being prohibited from playing sports due to state or local laws, while 93% said they are worried about transgender people being denied access to gender-affirming medical care. ➔



Charles Shannon

“LGBTQ+ students have some of the highest rates of depression, suicide attempts and self-harm,” says Reyna, a member of Ravenswood Teachers Association and CTA Human Rights Cadre trainer. “The open culture wars have almost made it OK to express one’s homophobia or transphobia, and it’s very difficult for LGBTQ+ students. It’s becoming borderline genocide with the denial of gender-affirming care.”

Inclusion Matters

Sixth grade teacher Erica Nuss runs the Equality Club at her school in Palmdale’s Westside Union School District; the club is a safe place for students to discuss issues in their lives. She has developed a deliberately inclusive curriculum, such as having

her students research and present on prominent and historical figures who were LGBTQ+ or disabled.

“For all my time in the education system, we have highlighted people who are mostly white and mostly straight. We know we don’t mirror that most of the time,” says Nuss, a member of Westside Union Teachers Association. “I want to make sure my students see themselves in the curriculum.”

As an out lesbian educator, Nuss says it’s important for her to have a more inclusive and equitable classroom than what she experienced as a sixth grader. Nuss has the Progress Pride flag displayed in her class and often discusses tolerance topics with her students — recently the class learned about soccer star Megan Rapinoe and discussed the role LGBTQ+ athletes can have on society.

“I am one of the only LGBTQ educators in the district, so a lot of times I am the first LGBTQ person my students meet,” says Nuss (she, her), a CTA Human Rights Cadre trainer. “I had a student ask me if lesbian is a bad word, and we had a very good conversation about it.”

Being an out educator and creating safe spaces can draw unwanted attention, even in California. Earlier this year, Nuss was verbally attacked for her LGBTQ+ advocacy by members of the public at school board meetings. Unfortunately, her district management played both sides, equating hateful opinions with the need to protect and affirm the rights of LGBTQ+ people.

“There’s a whole lot of ‘we support you, but ...’ The sentiment of homophobia and transphobia is shared by



LGBTQ+ Rights, People Under Attack in Statehouses Across Country

OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS, LGBTQ+ rights and people have been under attack in states nationwide, especially transgender youth. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is currently tracking 469 active pieces of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation across the country — more than double the number last year and 10 times as many as in 2018.

According to ACLU, 220 of these are related to schools and education. State lawmakers are proposing laws to prevent students who are transgender from participating in school activities

like sports, and to force educators to “out” their students and censor school discussions of LGBTQ+ people and issues. Fifty of these bills are in Texas, while one — CTA-opposed AB 1314 (Assayli, R-Riverside) — is in California. As of April, 24 bills have passed in 11 states targeting LGBTQ+ rights in healthcare (including gender-affirming care), education and even banning drag performances in public places.

According to the Movement Advancement Project, eight states currently have laws censoring discussions of LGBTQ+ people or issues in schools

— so-called “Don’t Say Gay” laws that started in Florida last year with the support of Gov. Ron DeSantis.

Federal lawmakers are also taking aim at LGBTQ+ rights and youth with Congress considering House Resolution 734, which would exclude transgender students from participating in activities and opportunities that should be available to all students. NEA is opposed to HR 734 in defense of transgender students, calling on lawmakers to reject the proposed law.

For an example of a pro-LGBTQ+ student bill in California, see page 24.



How to Create an Inclusive Classroom and School

Educators shared the following tips and best practices for creating safe and inclusive spaces at school:



- Know the rights guaranteed by the FAIR Education Act and state Education Code 233.5 (see sidebars).
- Be familiar with Seth's Law (Education Code 234-234.5) and other laws in place to protect students who are LGBTQ+.
- Prominently display rainbows and Pride flags in classrooms and on campus.
- Include people who are LGBTQ+ in your lessons and curriculum.
- Follow the California History-Social Science Framework, which includes LGBTQ+ History and LGBTQ+ Americans specifically in second, fourth, fifth, eighth, 11th and 12th-grade history curriculum.
- Say your pronouns when you introduce yourself to a student or the class.
- Recognize students' preferred names and use them in class.
- Always advocate for better inclusion policies at your school.
- Negotiate binary language out of your collective bargaining agreement.
- Request a training from the CTA Human Rights Cadre.
- Request a School Board Proclamation for Pride Month and a ceremony to raise the Pride flag.
- During the district's textbook adoption process, make sure the materials comply with the FAIR Act.
- When your local association interviews school board candidates for potential endorsement, ask how they will support students and staff who are LGBTQ+.
- Make sure your class and school library have LGBTQ+ books. Stonewall Book Award winners and the California Department of Education are a good place to start.
- Ask yourself "If any student walked into my classroom, would they see themselves in it?"
- Apply for a CTA LGBTQ+ Safety in Schools Grant in Honor of Guy DeRosa, which supports LGBTQ+ groups, projects and presentations that promote understanding and respect for people who are LGBTQ+ (see cta.org/awards).
- Find out if your local association has an LGBTQ+ Advocacy Coordinator and if not, ask why?
- Attend the CTA LGBTQ+ Issues Conference.



▼ Naqiba Gregory (back row, center, dark hair) and Melanie Bean (third from left in blue shirt) with fellow members of the Capital Service Center at the Sacramento Pride March.

“Students aren’t asking us to agree with their decisions or give them special treatment, they simply want to be accepted.”

—Naqiba Gregory,
West Sacramento
Teachers Association



some people in our community. It’s 2023 and I never thought I’d hear some of the things that are being said about me,” says Nuss. “I am extremely passionate about this work, and while it is hard most days, it is worth it. I believe my class of 32 kids is becoming more tolerant, so we have to keep pushing.”

In Ravenswood, Reyna says management is supportive for the most part, balanced with the need to acknowledge students who have different beliefs. She says some students are not open to learning from or having an LGBTQ+ educator, adding that a parent filed a complaint with the district against her this year for having a classroom that is “too gay.” Shannon says these experiences illustrate the need to create brave spaces, for students and educators alike.

“My greatest gift to the profession is that I am not afraid. They want our voices to be silenced,” says Shannon (he, him), also a

CTA Human Rights Cadre trainer. “In any state that’s trying to pass anti-LGBTQ+ laws, we have to show solidarity and stand with each other. We didn’t get this far as LGBTQ+ people by being afraid and not taking risks.”

Supporting Each Other and Our Students

A wealth of resources exist through CTA and NEA (available on both websites) to build inclusive classrooms and support our most vulnerable students, including important legal rights at the state and federal levels that outline responsibilities and protections for educators and students.

“If you don’t know what your rights and your students’ rights are, you can’t begin to create a safe space for anybody,” Nuss says.

She adds that statistically speaking, there are three students who will identify as LGBTQ+ in every California



Resources for Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth

- GLSEN — [glsen.org](https://www.glsen.org)
- GenderSpectrum — [genderspectrum.org](https://www.genderspectrum.org)
- The Trevor Project — [thetrevorproject.org](https://www.thetrevorproject.org)
- Learning for Justice — [learningforjustice.org](https://www.learningforjustice.org)
- GSA Network — [gsanetwork.org](https://www.gsanetwork.org)
- Human Rights Campaign Welcoming Schools — [welcomingschools.org](https://www.welcomingschools.org)
- NEA LGBTQ+ Resources — [nea.org/resource-library/nea-lgbtq-resources](https://www.nea.org/resource-library/nea-lgbtq-resources)

▼ A display in Erica Nuss' classroom; she also often discusses tolerance topics with her students.



classroom — those students have a 40% reduced suicide risk with even one supportive adult in their lives, which is why educator allies are so important.

“Our students are still figuring out who they are, and we can be the neutral, accepting party on their journey,” says Gregory (she, her). “As educators, we have the unique privilege to be able to help society adapt to a changing world where we are more inclusive and celebrate people as they are.”

Support and training are also available through the CTA Human Rights Cadre, comprised of educators who are passionate about broadening and developing the racial and social justice perspectives of other CTA members. Shannon says getting involved with the Human Rights Cadre helped him find his voice and connect with like-minded members to share information, support educators statewide and help students. He recommended educators look to their local associations and CTA for assistance when working to create inclusive schools that value all students.

“Don’t give up. Be who you are. Be the voice in your district,” Shannon says. “I tell anyone who is dealing with race or LGBTQ+ issues, get involved with CTA — it will help you grow.” ■



“I want to make sure my students see themselves in the curriculum.”

—Erica Nuss, Westside Union Teachers Association

The FAIR Education Act

Signed into California law in 2011, the FAIR Education Act amended California Education Code to include the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive and Respectful reference to contributions by people with disabilities and members of the LGBTQ+ community in history and social studies curriculum.

The FAIR Act ensures that historical contributions of people who identify as LGBTQ+ are accurately and fairly portrayed in instructional materials by adding them to the list of under-represented cultural and ethnic groups included in the state’s inclusionary education requirements.

FAIR Act protections include the prohibition of instruction or activities that promote discrimination on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation. Textbooks and instructional materials that reflect adversely on people who are LGBTQ+ are expressly prohibited, while all materials must accurately portray the cultural and racial diversity of society, and include contributions in all types of roles to the development of California and the United States.

California Education Code 233.5 — Teachers’ Duties

“(a) Each teacher shall endeavor to impress upon the minds of the pupils the principles of morality, truth, justice, patriotism, and a true comprehension of the rights, duties, and dignity of American citizenship, and the meaning of equality and human dignity, including the promotion of harmonious relations, kindness toward domestic pets and the humane treatment of living creatures, to teach them to avoid idleness, profanity, and falsehood, and to instruct them in manners and morals and the principles of a free government.

(b) Each teacher is also encouraged to create and foster an environment that encourages pupils to realize their full potential and that is free from discriminatory attitudes, practices, events, or activities, in order to prevent acts of hate violence ...”



California Bill Supports LGBTQ+ Students

CO-SPONSORED BY CTA, AB 5 (Zbur) is currently making its way through the legislative process. The bill requires public schools serving students in grades 7 through 12 to provide educators with the tools and training they need to support and meet the needs of LGBTQ+ students.

As our “Building Safe and Brave Spaces” shows, some California educators have created environments where LGBTQ+ students can be their authentic selves. But many LGBTQ+ students still experience harassment, violence and lack of affirmation in school settings, harming their self-esteem, mental health and performance in school. Training can help educators recognize the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ students, know their rights and provide support when needed.

AB 5 has been approved by the Assembly (64-4), and at press time, is awaiting hearing by the Senate Rules Committee for assignment. —*Julian Peeples*



I'm Here

THE NEA-LGBTQ+ CAUCUS

provides educators, ESPs and students with safe schools free of anti-LGBTQ+ bias and intolerance as well as education programs for all students.

The caucus offers the “I’m Here” badge, which educators and other supporters can wear to let people know that you are a safe person with whom to discuss LGBTQ+ issues. A QR code on the back of the badge accesses the I’m Here Toolkit with links to a variety of LGBTQ+ issues, organizations and resources. Order your badge at nea-lgbtqc.org/whatisimhere.html.



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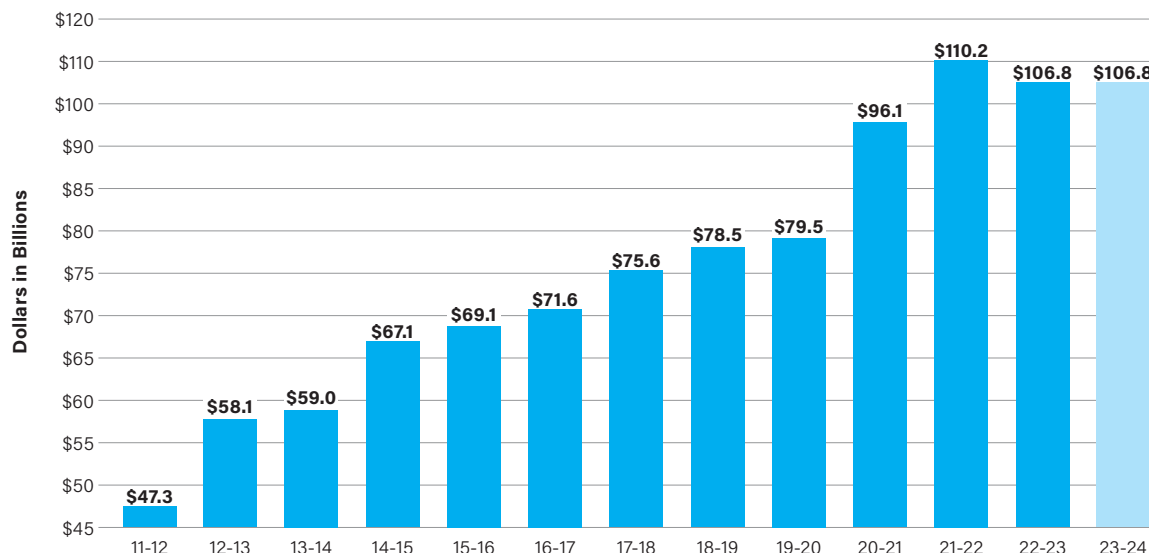
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Call [916-235-9800](tel:916-235-9800) or
visit <https://rb.gy/tpjnif>

▼ Prop. 98 requires a minimum percentage of the state budget to be spent on K-14 education. Gov. Newsom's May Revision proposes \$106.8 billion in Prop. 98 funding for 2023-24.

PROPOSITION 98 FUNDING, 2011-12 TO 2023-24



Governor Renews Commitment to Public Education

May Budget Revise provides funding for proper dyslexia, early literacy screening By Julian Peeples

DESPITE A PROJECTED \$31.5 billion shortfall, Gov. Gavin Newsom renewed his promise to fully fund public education in the May State Budget Revise.

"We appreciate Gov. Newsom's ongoing commitment to California's public schools and colleges considering the growing budget deficit," said CTA President E. Toby Boyd. "The proposed revision to the state budget reflects our values, ensuring that our students have the resources they need to succeed regardless of their race, Zip codes or backgrounds. We must protect the progress we have made in recent years and commend the governor for fully funding the cost-of-living adjustment for the Local Control Funding Formula."

Here are the highlights of the budget proposal:

Proposition 98 Funding: Estimated to be \$106.8 billion in 2023-24, equal to approximately 38 percent of General Fund revenues, plus local tax revenues.

Per Student Spending for TK-12: Proposed at \$23,706, slightly lower than projected in the January budget.

Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA): Provides an 8.22% COLA, slightly higher than in the governor's January budget. This would bring total Local Control Funding Formula funding to \$79.3 billion. The budget proposes an additional \$300 million to establish an equity multiplier to support the highest-needs schools in the state.

Universal School Meals: Includes \$1.5 billion in ongoing Prop. 98 funding for the Universal School Meals Program, which provides two free meals a day to all public school students. The May Revision includes an additional \$301 million due to greater demand in the program.

Literacy: Proposes requiring local educational agencies to begin screening students in kindergarten through second grade for risk of reading difficulties, including dyslexia, by the 2025-26 school year. Provides



"The proposed revision to the state budget reflects our values, ensuring that our students have the resources they need to succeed regardless of their race, Zip codes or backgrounds."

—CTA President **E. Toby Boyd**

funding to develop screening instruments for the assessments, with the intent to fund professional development for this purpose in future budgets.

"We appreciate the governor hearing the concerns educators have expressed for the last few years and for including funding to properly address early literacy screening, including dyslexia in a manner that provides a realistic implementation timeline, professional development for educators and thoughtful policy that benefits students," Boyd said.

Educator Workforce: Allows teachers who were unable to finish their credential because they could not take the Teaching Performance Assessment during the COVID-19 pandemic to meet this requirement through completion of a Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC)-approved induction program, or through two years of satisfactory teacher evaluations. Requires the CTC to evaluate how transcript reviews can be conducted to assess basic skills and subject matter competence for teaching candidates to complete their credentialing requirements without the need to take state-mandated exams.

Early Childhood Education: Maintains the commitment to expand transitional kindergarten. Provides an 8.22% COLA for the State Preschool Program.

California Community Colleges: Provides a total of \$12.3 billion in Prop. 98 funding for the California community colleges (CCC) in 2023-24. Includes \$678 million in ongoing Prop. 98 funding for an 8.22% COLA. Proposes \$545.4 million in one-time General Fund monies over the next two years for community college affordable student housing projects.

The May State Budget Revise is a proposal and must be negotiated through the Legislative process.

"We look forward to working with the Legislature and the Governor in the coming weeks to finalize a budget that reflects our shared values," Boyd said. ■

▼ Second and third from left: CTA Vice President David Goldberg and State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond discuss funding for arts and music in California schools.



ARTS & MUSIC:

The Promise of Proposition 28

ON MAY 23, CTA Vice President David B. Goldberg joined State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond to launch the Promise of Proposition 28. Passed by voters in 2022, Prop. 28 provides nearly \$1 billion annually in funding for arts and music throughout California schools so students in all grades can participate in arts and music programs.

At the event, which took place at the Music Center in downtown Los Angeles, Goldberg, Thurmond and other participants discussed how \$933 million in funding will be rolled out for the 2023-24 school year. Present were former Los Angeles Deputy Mayor Austin Beutner, artists Aloe Blacc and Will.i.am, SEIU 99 representatives as well as philanthropists, school administrators, current arts and music educators and aspiring arts educators.

"California voters overwhelmingly voted to support this nation-leading investment, the largest investment in arts and music education in the country," Thurmond said. "The arts are a necessary part of a well-rounded education. We know the arts help kids connect with school and have a positive impact on student attendance and school climate."

The *Educator* will continue to cover Prop. 28's implementation.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The Good and the Bad

CTA members advocate on Lobby Day By Julian Peeples

EDUCATORS WALKED the halls of the State Capitol in Sacramento in late April, advocating positions on six important bills making their way through the Legislative process.

CTA Supports

For **AB 5 (Zbur)**, see page 24.

AB 938 (Muratsuchi):

This bill proposes significant increases in school funding and educator salaries by increasing Local Control Funding Formula monies. Higher salaries would help attract and retain quality educators and encourage them to remain in the profession, supporting the success of students in California and ensuring they receive a quality education. AB 938 would also help close the wage gap between educators and other professions with similar education and training.

Status: Approved by Assembly Education Committee; awaiting hearing by Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 1604 (Bonta):

This bill gives the community a voice in how publicly funded facilities are used after a charter school closes. AB 1604 would require any process for selling such surplus property to mirror existing processes and give priority for education and public uses. These proposed reforms will promote transparency and the responsible use of public funds,

helping eliminate the potential for waste, abuse or fraud.

Status: Approved by the Assembly Education Committee; awaiting hearing by Assembly Appropriations Committee.

CTA Opposes

SB 426 (Niello):

This bill seeks to rename non-classroom-based charter schools in an effort to rebrand them while a moratorium exists on establishing new such charter schools. AB 426 creates loopholes in existing law that names these schools “college-ready” or “personalized learning” schools that could be universally applied. Rather than add clarity to existing law, these changes would create confusion.

Status: Approved by Senate Education Committee; awaiting second reading before State Senate.

SB 739 (Alvarado-Gil):

This bill unravels the 2019 deal made to rewrite charter school law and transition to using the California School Dashboard as the state accountability system for all public schools — district and charter. SB 739 would extend all

charter school renewals by a year — this is in addition to the two-year extension all charters were granted when Dashboard data was unavailable (2020 and 2021). If charter expirations are extended by another year, most charter schools will have gone eight years without oversight of their student outcome data, finances and governance system.

Status: Approved by Senate Education Committee; awaiting hearing by Senate Appropriations Committee.

SB 810 (Alvarado-Gil):

This bill abandons local control and oversight and dilutes the quality of public education at a new category of charter schools that would be exempt from jurisdictional limitations. SB 810 would also exempt this new category of charters from the requirement that average daily attendance be generated by students who live in California. Ultimately, this bill would prevent charter school authorizers from ensuring that their charter schools are financially stable and academically successful.

Status: Schedule Senate Education Committee hearing cancelled at the request of the author.

PUSH BACK, FIGHT BACK

CTA helps protect members and students while countering attacks against public education

By Theresa Witherspoon

MORE AND MORE, educators are at the center of current political attacks on public education, whether it be for supporting and keeping LGBTQ+ students safe or ensuring that students receive an education that accurately reflects our nation's complex history and promotes their critical thinking skills. Even in California where we have strong laws and governmental entities that support honest and culturally responsive education, our members are being misrepresented and blamed for inaccurate accounts of their efforts. These attacks are popping up in various forms, such as:

- In Chico, a parent represented by the “Center for American Liberty” has sued the district for failing to report to her that her child had briefly used a different name and pronoun at school. The district has a policy consistent with California Department of Education (CDE) guidance that states if a student does not want their parent/guardian to know they are using a different gender identity at school, the school shall not inform the parent/guardian over the student's objection. A CTA member who had appropriately supported the student has been caught up in the litigation and had her name used in the media.
- In Clovis, the district has flouted the CDE guidance on this issue and is requiring employees to inform parents if they are supporting students with respect to their gender identity; and if the student objects, the student will not be able to receive this support.
- Also in Clovis, a teacher who has for years had a rainbow pride flag up in his classroom was directed to take it down because it allegedly violates the district's policy regarding personal items that reflect “controversial issues.” No one ever complained about the flag and, in fact, numerous students had thanked the teacher for it over the years.
- In Paso Robles, the district adopted a resolution banning certain concepts related to racism and the role of slavery in our country's history, resulting in a broad erasure of historical events and essential concepts from the curriculum that are necessary to understand and learn about U.S. society and racial justice.
- In Temecula Valley, the school board passed a resolution aimed at “Critical Race Theory” which prohibits teachers from instructing on concepts such as racism existing in our society or that the preservation of slavery had any influence on our country's move for independence from England.
- Throughout California, Public Records Act requests have been used to identify individuals engaged in equity education. In some instances, those teachers have then been targeted for harassment, either through social media or in mainstream media.
- In Glendale, a candidate for local office requested documents from the district related to LGBTQ+ curriculum. The records included emails that identified a teacher who had shown a gay pride video. The teacher was subsequently doxxed, placed under investigation, and subjected to death threats on her home voicemail.
- In San Ramon Valley, teachers who ran their schools’



“If you find yourself at the center of one of these controversies, there are many strategies that can help with avoiding negative outcomes.”

"If you find yourself at the center of one of these controversies, there are many strategies that can help with avoiding negative outcomes."

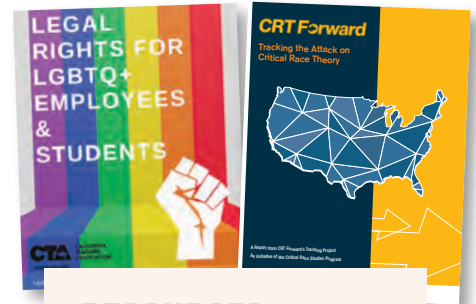
Genders & Sexualities Alliance (Prism) clubs were secretly recorded speaking about these efforts and then misleadingly showcased on Tucker Carlson.

CTA is working in coalition with NEA and other organizations to fight back against these attacks on educators and public education. The coalition is urging the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the California Attorney General to issue guidance to prevent the censorship of accurate and inclusive education.

CTA's Legal Department has worked with other CTA staff to prepare internal resources that discuss members' and students' many rights in this area, as well as districts' legal duties to provide a safe workplace. For example, California

requires that schools be a safe and welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ students, which can be the basis for pushing back against anti-inclusive policies. Your local union can work with your district to ensure that the union is made aware of Public Records Act requests and any responsive documents that name a member, so that your privacy can be protected. If you find yourself at the center of one of these controversies, there are many strategies that can help with avoiding negative outcomes. Contact your union representative or CTA staff person to find out more about the help that is available. ■

Theresa Witherspoon is a CTA staff attorney.



RESOURCES

Legal Rights for LGBTQ+ Employees and Students
(CTA's Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Issues Advisory Committee, or SOGIAC, cta.org/sogiac): bit.ly/41sdeIH

CRT Forward: Tracking the Attack on CRT (UCLA): bit.ly/42EjFcD

CTA Supports Newly Funded Dyslexia Screening in Budget Trailer Bill

MANDATORY SCREENING for dyslexia and other reading disorders for all California students in kindergarten through second grade will soon be a reality if Gov. Gavin Newsom's proposal becomes a reality.

In his May State Budget Trailer, Newsom proposed \$1 million for teacher training and the requirement that schools screen all children beginning in 2025-26. CTA President E. Toby Boyd applauded the governor's approach to the issue.

"We appreciate the governor hearing the concerns educators have expressed for the last few years and for including funding to properly address early literacy screening, including dyslexia, in a manner that provides a realistic implementation timeline, professional development for educators and thoughtful policy that benefits students," he said.
—Julian Peebles

"We appreciate the governor hearing the concerns educators have expressed for the last few years and for including funding to properly address early literacy screening, including dyslexia."

—CTA President **E. Toby Boyd**

▼ OEA's bargaining team, led by Vilma Serrano and Timothy Douglas (seated with pens), signing their historic agreement at 3 a.m.

▼ OEA President Ismael Armendariz, left, with OEA member Olivia Udovic.



Credit: Brooke Anderson

A WIN FOR THE COMMUNITY

Oakland educators' victory for the 'common good'

By Gabriella Landeros

IN OAKLAND, public schools are the hubs of communities. They are centers of enrichment, belonging, engagement and safe spaces for our families. Educators are invested in their students' overall well-being, which includes mental health support and access to resources that help them thrive in and out of the classroom.

In preparation for their new contract negotiations, Oakland educators — among the lowest-paid educators in the area and statewide — organized with families and communities to demand living wages and develop common good proposals, similar to what occurred recently in Chicago and Los Angeles.

Oakland Education Association (OEA) teacher leaders along with parents and community members knocked on the doors of and called 8,000 families and held meetings at schools. They worked with families to identify shared decision-making in community schools, safe schools, support for Black thriving community schools (schools with 40% or more Black students) and housing for unhoused students as top priorities. These became OEA's "common good" proposals at the bargaining table.

"It was so empowering to have families and the community behind us [all] seven days we were on strike."

—SAMIA KHATTAB, OEA bargaining team member

"The fight wasn't just about teachers being able to earn enough to put a roof over their heads in high-priced Oakland," said OEA President Ismael Armendariz. "The fight was also about students and their families having a roof over their heads and a more holistic approach to meeting our students' needs."

Negotiations with Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) began in October of last year. OEA bargained with an expansive team of more than 50 educators from almost every school in the district. The team engaged in a fully transparent and open bargain — sharing proposals with the community on the website, sending daily emails and text blasts to all members. (This was the first time OEA had a such a large team; it hopes to expand it so that every site is represented next time.)

OUSD district administrators demonstrated bad-faith negotiation tactics for months. Negotiators didn't show up to sessions, canceled late, and when they did arrive, they were often severely underprepared to bargain.

On May 1, International Workers Day, OEA announced an Unfair Labor Practice Strike to demand the district negotiate in

▼ Picket lines grew stronger every day of the strike; thousands marched.



▼ "This has never simply been about us being able to put food on our own tables, but making sure we are able to provide not only services but shift the way we provide instruction, to feed the minds of these students," said OEA 2nd Vice President Kampala Taiz-Rancifer.



Credit: Brooke Anderson



▲ Said Samia Khattab, teacher librarian and OEA bargaining team member, "We were advocating for more school psychologists, more counselors, secondary teacher librarians, a workload model [addressing] increasing responsibilities of special ed teachers, smaller class sizes, and common good language that puts power in the hands of families, students and community to make decisions that impact them every day."

▲ "Being able to form friendships and relationships is what brought us to the finish line with the strongest agreement possible," said Rachel Martin (above, center), elementary school educator, OEA bargaining team member and communications co-chair. "We went into this with a big dream to make Oakland better, and I feel we planted the roots to continue to grow."



good faith and come to an agreement. Picket lines grew stronger every day of the strike, with allies, families, students and elected officials coming in support. Writer/director Boots Riley made an appearance. Thousands marched; the streets were filled with music and talent courtesy of OEA music and dance teachers.

After seven days on strike, OEA won an historic agreement that includes a 15.5 percent salary increase for most teachers with an even greater percentage increase for new teachers to prioritize recruitment. Included are retroactive pay and bilingual

stipends for teachers with dual language aptitudes. The agreement also addresses the social and educational reforms that are common good priorities, and calls for more school librarians, guidance counselors and school nurses. For the first time, OUSD will employ guidance counselors at the elementary school level.

On May 23, the 2.5-year tentative agreement was ratified with a 90% yes vote, with 72% of OEA members participating. Find details at oaklandea.org. ■

▼ CTA Board member Angela Normand speaks at the launch of the East Bay Coalition for Student Success.



Building Together for Students

Coalition of 20 CTA locals is making a difference in San Francisco Bay Area By Julian Peeples

EMBRACING THE BELIEF that we are stronger together, 20 CTA local associations in the San Francisco Bay Area have united in a coalition, working together and collaboratively with management to ensure that students and educators have the resources they need to succeed and thrive.

Formed in September 2022, the East Bay Coalition for Student Success (EBCSS) is committed to ensuring local school districts continue to prioritize funds to provide the best for student learning and educator retention and attraction. Locals and district management teams in the coalition have been working hard at the bargaining table to win agreements that focus resources on students and educators.

“Since we launched the EBCSS, we have been calling on East Bay decision-makers to do right by students and ensure

their success is a priority,” says Laura Finco, president of San Ramon Valley Education Association (SRVEA). “Educators deserve a voice at the bargaining table to ensure that each of our students get their needs met and the individualized attention they deserve.”

The student-centered collaboration between local unions and districts has strengthened their relationships and set strong foundations for continued partnership. The EBCSS is a movement with the guiding principle that all students deserve the best. With challenges like the ongoing educator shortage crisis, EBCSS and district

management teams are fighting back with strategic action and shared trust to focus on the safety, health and overall well-being of every student. The hope is that these collaborations are a model, with others following these successful partnerships and truly putting students and educators first.

“California students deserve the best and educators from every chapter in this coalition are committed to delivering it.”

—VALORIE LUKE, president, *Antioch Education Association*

▼ EBCSS Media Conference in Concord in March.



East Bay Coalition for Student Success Locals

Antioch Education Association
Association of Piedmont Teachers
Association of Pleasanton Teachers
Benicia Teachers Association
Byron Education Association
Brentwood Teacher Association
Clayton Valley Classified Association
Clayton Valley Education Association
Contra Costa County Schools Education Association
Dublin Teachers Association
John Swett Education Association
Lafayette Education Association
Liberty Education Association
Livermore Education Association
Martinez Education Association
Moraga Teachers Association
Mt. Diablo Education Association
Orinda Education Association
Pittsburg Education Association
San Ramon Valley Education Association

The Coalition Pledge

TO MAXIMIZE the coalition's settlements for student success, member locals pledge full support to the following proposals at the bargaining table:

- Salary: Minimum of statutory cost-of-living adjustment
- Employer contribution to health, dental, vision and life benefits: Minimum of state average
- Out of district service credit: Unlimited (no cap) with current members placed on schedule where they should be if no years were lost

In addition, members pledge to:

- Meet often
- Keep coalition members informed of progress at the bargaining table
- Share bargaining proposals with the coalition

"We believe student success is everyone's success," says Valorie Luke, president of Antioch Education Association. "Setting aside differences is possible and it is what keeps our communities thriving and working together for the greater good."

Many coalition member locals have been able to win significant improvements in educator attraction and retention by increasing salary competitiveness and improving health benefits. These include Antioch Education Association, Brentwood Teachers Association, Dublin Teachers Association, San Leandro Teachers Association, San Ramon Valley Education Association, Association of Piedmont Teachers, Martinez Education Association, Benicia Teachers Association, John Swett Education Association and Orinda Teachers Association. Other locals have also been successful in making gains that will help districts attract and retain educators.

"We want to make sure students, regardless of their ZIP code, have access to the best resources," says Celia Medina-Owens, Pittsburg Education Association bargaining chair. "When educators stay in the community, they help improve the emotional and mental well-being of their students."

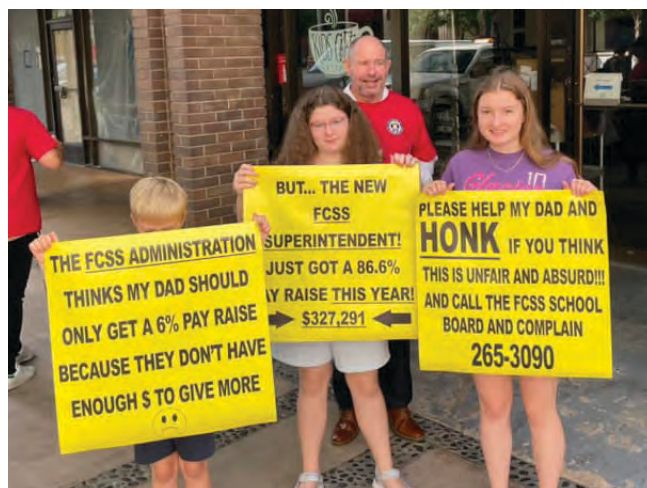
The coalition also took time to celebrate school districts that are working as partners in successful student-centered collaboration with educators – this year's winners of the first-ever Student Success Trailblazer Award are Antioch, Benicia, John Swett, Martinez, Moraga, Pittsburg and San Ramon Valley school districts. Finco presented the award to San Ramon Valley Unified leaders during a school board meeting.

"California students deserve the best and educators from every chapter in this coalition are committed to delivering it," Luke says. ■

BARGAINING ROUNDUP

Compiled by **Julian Peebles**

▼ AEOTE president Deisy Bates at the rally.



HAYWARD:

ESPs demand benefit relief

Members of the Association of Educational Office and Technical Employees (AEOTE) rallied in late May as they continue to fight for a monthly stipend to help offset the cost of Hayward Unified School District's expensive healthcare plan.

Along with paraeducators and maintenance & operations workers represented by SEIU 1021, AEOTE members showed that ESPs in Hayward are united for the affordable health benefits they deserve.

"What we're asking for is fair and reasonable, when our members' struggle just to make ends meet is exacerbated by district healthcare costs passed on to them and their families," said AEOTE president Deisy Bates. "The classified employee units in this district are united in standing up for what is right."

AEOTE members are paying exorbitant out-of-pocket costs for health benefits. Library media tech Ailssa Pigman pays \$1,025 a month to insure herself, but her husband and daughter go uninsured because the total cost of a whopping \$3,700 is unaffordable for her family. Office manager Martha Castro pays \$900 a month out of pocket every month.

"When there's only one income, it hurts you really bad," she says. "After rent and insurance, your paycheck is gone." AEOTE has declared impasse and negotiations are ongoing.

FRESNO COUNTY:

Educators organize and win

Fresno County Schools Office of Educators Association (FCSOEA) organized during a lengthy contract campaign and won an agreement in late-May that will help attract and retain quality educators.

FCSOEA won an 8% pay increase for 2022-23 and a 6% raise for 2023-24. Additionally, educators won \$2,200 more for their healthcare over the two-year period.

The agreement came after a scant 20 hours of negotiations occurred between September 2022 and April 2023 before FCSOEA and Fresno County Superintendent of Schools (FCSS) headed into mediation.

FCSOEA members organized to fight back against the lack of respect that was having an impact on county office educators: a poll found that more than 35 percent reported they were considering looking for employment elsewhere, citing pay and feeling valued as the major reasons. FCSOEA members held numerous rallies, building support and strength that powered them to victory.

A group of six women are smiling and posing for a photo. They are arranged in two rows. The women in the front row are making heart gestures with their hands. The woman on the far left is wearing a red floral patterned top. The woman in the center is wearing a black jacket over a patterned top. The woman on the far right is wearing a red top. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Impasse mediation leads to agreement

Educators won a 15% salary increase over two years, in addition to 50 minutes of prep time for all TK-5 educators, an increase in health benefits and a return to providing conferences for all students in the fall and spring. Additionally, SRTA won increased stipends for bilingual educators and for positions that have been difficult to fill.

A large crowd of people, mostly women, are gathered in front of a building with a classical facade. Many of the individuals are holding up white signs with black text that reads "FAIR SETTLEMENT NOW!". Some signs also include the phrase "FAIR SETTLEMENT" and a small logo. The crowd is diverse in age and appearance, and the atmosphere appears to be one of a large-scale protest or demonstration. The building in the background has a prominent entrance with columns and a pediment.

BURBANK: Class-size improvements, stipends

The contract also provides school nurses with a \$10,000 retention bonus, improves contract language in a number of areas, and includes an agreement from the district to analyze the feasibility of an early retirement program.



Negotiations continue to drag

Outstanding issues at the table include class size, compensation and work year. CTAB has been organizing and working to settle a contract that provides the best for Berryessa students, including attracting and retaining the best-qualified educators, ensuring the best learning environments to help students thrive and providing the best support for student success. Currently, Berryessa ranks 24 out of 34 in salary when compared to other districts in Santa Clara County with 10 years of experience and 60 post-bachelor credits.

"CTAB's priority is what is best for Berryessa students," said CTAB President Joe Hermann. "Our students deserve the best educators, learning environment and support."

▼ Left to right: NEA-Jurupa Bargaining Chair and President-elect David O’Rafferty, JUSD Assistant Superintendent Daniel Brooks, CTA District K Board Member-elect and NEA-J past-president Wendy Eccles, and JUSD Superintendent Dr. Trent Hansen.



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

In Jurupa, relationships are key to community schools success

By **Ed Sibby**

AS JURUPA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT (JUSD) continues its community schools journey, Inland Valley school districts can learn much about the importance of effective relationship-building. With significant input from the NEA-Jurupa (NEA-J) chapter, JUSD has begun implementation of their community schools program in a 20,000-student district in north Riverside County: Six schools have adopted the model and an additional six are in the application process.

How this has come about is testament to the collaborative relationship between NEA-J and JUSD.

“Our success is a shared one,” said Wendy Eccles, CTA District K Board Member-elect and immediate past-president of NEA-J. “By taking a solutions-oriented approach to problem-solving, we are building a community schools model that will meet the learning and social-emotional needs of the community through our local public schools.”

BEGINNINGS

NEA-J’s partnership with the district has been built and solidified over the years.

In the 2016-2017 school year NEA-J’s member engagement/organizing team began an active campaign to support shared decision-making, and built a local campaign called #AskAnEducator. It was a challenge to the former model that largely ignored the voices of those closest to and most knowledgeable about issues related to students — parents, educators and support personnel.

NEA-J next began educating teachers, district officials and parents about community schools and how their structure differs from simply offering wraparound student services. True community schools are based on a shared decision-making model that determines each school’s needs separately. NEA-J called for a district equity audit and a shift to the community schools model, where services are

delivered only after educators, parents, community advocates and administrators have collaboratively determined those specific local needs. In this way every school community can build a model unique to their needs, whether the emphasis is educational, social-emotional, economic or some other locally determined one.

While COVID closures slowed some elements of that educational evolution, NEA-J and JUSD used the time to work through the challenges school closures created for administrators and educators. Those partnerships and the collaborative problem-solving they required became

foundational to the work they would do after the pandemic.

“Having been a member of NEA-Jurupa during my teaching career, I have seen firsthand how important it is to have a strong partnership between the district and NEA-Jurupa,” said Daniel Brooks, now JUSD assistant superintendent. “We have developed an effective and collaborative culture that allowed us to weather many storms during the pandemic shutdown and all that followed. The relationships we have built with NEA-Jurupa’s leaders sustain and drive so much of our work.”

“By bringing all our education stakeholders together to determine how to meet the community’s needs, we are discovering our true transformational power to change our public schools.”

—DAVID O’RAFFERTY, NEA-Jurupa President-elect

THE PARADIGM SHIFT

JUSD hired superintendent Dr. Trenton Hansen upon full return to instruction in the 2022 school year. He restructured some district departments to create a Pupil Services Department and Educational Equity Division. The shift toward JUSD's "Collaboration, Community Schools, and Equity" — espoused for years by NEA-J leaders — was now enthusiastically embraced by district leadership.

Hansen explained, "One of the areas of focus in Jurupa Unified's vision is employee relations. We have made it a priority to build relationships with NEA-Jurupa's leaders so that we can keep the lines of communication flowing and work through issues together on a monthly basis."

NEA-J took the lead by passing official school board resolutions in support of community schools, which were presented to JUSD leadership. Because of JUSD and NEA-J's earlier collaborative successes, many of the pieces needed to successfully implement community schools (see cta.org/educator/five-steps) were already in place. That included JUSD's expanded Parent Involvement/Community Outreach (PICO) Department, an ongoing effort with NEA-J input meant to enhance parent feedback and encourage positive interventions to meet site-identified community needs.

BUILDING COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURES

NEA-J partnered with JUSD in applying for a community schools implementation grant from the state Department of Education. That partnership included joint meetings to educate NEA-J site reps on community schools and any structural changes.

A Memorandum of Understanding between NEA-J and JUSD codified new committees, including the District Community Schools Council and site-based councils, and made provisions for Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSAs) on each participating campus. The mutual goals set at each participating site have also positively influenced contract negotiations.

Newly elected NEA-Jurupa President David O'Rafferty is pleased that collaborative relationship building is paying positive dividends for JUSD students. "It's exciting and rewarding. By bringing all our education stakeholders together to determine how to meet the community's needs, we are discovering our true transformational power to change our public schools."

For more information about CTA's work on community schools, see cta.org/communityschools. ■



SANTA CLARA COUNTY:

Educators call for better safety

Members of the Association of County Educators (ACE) and SEIU 521 converged on a Santa Clara County School Board meeting in May to shine a light on widespread hazardous working conditions at Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE).

Educators and education support professionals shared difficult stories of being attacked and seriously injured by their students. ACE leaders said responsibility for these dangerous conditions falls solely on SCCOE's excessive understaffing, high turnover rates and lack of sufficient training, which leaves workers and students at risk of injury.

"To be clear, we do not blame the students for anything," said Tara Guerrero, ACE president and special education teacher. "This situation is not the students' fault, but instead is a result of management's failures to provide appropriate student-specific training, student-specific supports, and resources, including staff, to meet our students' needs and to ensure everyone is safe at school. When anyone experiences a preventable injury and no additional support is provided after the incident, we are violating our students' and staff rights to safety."

ACE and SEIU 521 leaders issued a joint statement calling on SCCOE to provide safe classrooms for every student and demanding that management implement Cal-OSHA directives to ensure student and staff safety. ■

▼ Mural on the campus of Hoover High School, one of five community schools in San Diego; 10 new community schools have been added for the 2023-24 school year.



COMMUNITY SCHOOLS AGREEMENT IN SAN DIEGO

Educators, district put their commitment in contract article

IN A VICTORY for San Diego students and communities, San Diego Education Association educators reached agreement with the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) in April on a contract article that stipulates an ongoing and expansive commitment to community schools.

The “SDUSD Community Schools Initiative” acknowledges and supports the proven community schools model to advance racial justice and quality education in high-need school communities. In addition to articulating school site and district processes such as conducting needs and assets assessments, hiring full-time community schools coordinators and establishing shared decision-making and governance teams that involve all stakeholders, the article specifies several other items to ensure success:

- State and federal grant funds can be used for ongoing investment in, among other things, parent/community/youth organizing, outreach and training; and curriculum training time for educators, specifically around culturally responsive and community-based curriculum;
- Community school initiatives will be sustained “to the fullest extent possible” if grant funding expires;
- Establishment of community schools site coach project resource teacher positions, initially part-time but individual sites can expand to full-time if needed; site coaches are educators who work with school staff, site governance teams and community schools coordinators to support expanded

and enriched learning and collaborative leadership;

- Establishment of community schools district coach positions, who build the capacity of site coaches and site governance teams.

“This new community schools article in our contract is the product of five years of continuous advocacy by SDEA union educator leaders in partnership with the San Diego Community Schools Coalition,” said Dr. Kyle Weinberg, SDEA president and middle school special education, English Language Development and social science teacher. “Our SDUSD transformative community schools model is now enshrined

in what will soon be a legally binding agreement that provides accountability and resources to sustain the initiative.”

He anticipates that the contract article will be ratified by SDEA members and SDUSD soon after a yearlong SDEA contract campaign that includes pickets at over 140 schools, school board actions and a community rally to support a demand for expanded after-school opportunities.

The contract article ensures that educators, parents, students and community have a say in school site-level decisions for community schools. It also ensures that the community schools initiative is integrated and aligned with other racial justice, edu-

cation justice and equity initiatives at the district and school site levels.

For more on CTA’s work with community schools, see cta.org/communityschools. ■

“Our SDUSD transformative community schools model is now enshrined in what will soon be a legally binding agreement that provides accountability and resources to sustain the initiative.”

—DR. KYLE WEINBERG, president,
San Diego Education Association

10

POWERFUL WAYS TO END YOUR LESSONS

Creative activities that can help students make sense of new material—and have fun in the process

By **Andrew Boryga**

WHILE CLEANING UP and going over homework assignments often take up those final moments of class time, effective closing activities allow you to make better use of them by checking for understanding, correcting misunderstandings and putting a little fun into the process to motivate your students to make sense of what they've just learned.

Closing activities don't need to happen every day, and they don't always require lots of advanced planning. They can occur at the end of a chapter, or even at the end of a large learning unit, and can also take various forms — incorporating movement, technology and even components of social and emotional learning to build a stronger classroom community.

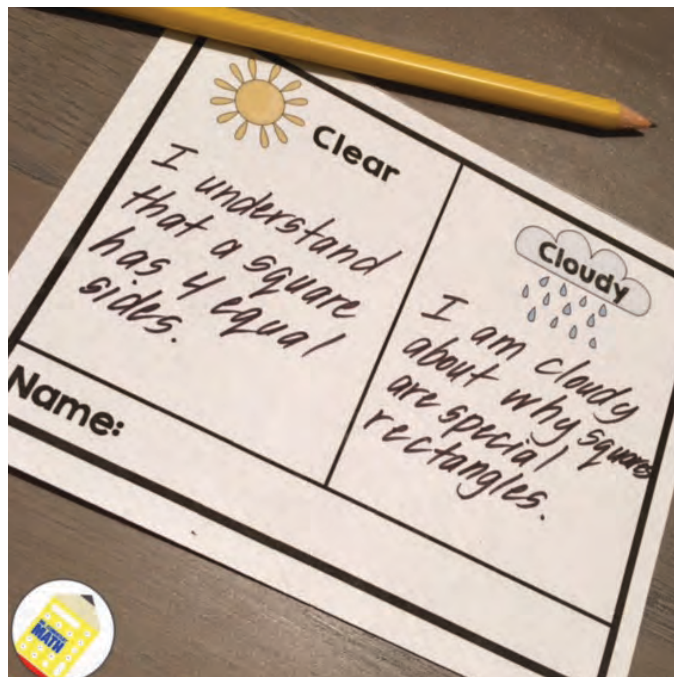
Here are 10 creative and fun closing activities from experienced teachers that you can try:

1. TWO-DOLLAR SUMMARY:

Ask students to write a **two-dollar (or more) summary** of the lesson they've just learned. Each word they use is worth 10 cents. For extra scaffolding, ask students to include specific words in their statement. Or ask students to explain something as if they were teaching it to a first grader. This will push them to simplify complex ideas for themselves and therefore understand them better.

2. CLEAR OR CLOUDY:

Ask students to identify what is clear about what they've learned (what they understand) and what is cloudy (what they're having trouble understanding). Try creating a simple "Clear or Cloudy" handout that students can use to record something clear and something cloudy before turning it in on their way out.



Mr Elementary Math

“Write reflective questions on a beach ball using dry erase markers, such as ‘What is one thing you learned during today’s lesson?’ or ‘What was challenging about today’s lesson?’”

3. APPRECIATION, APOLOGY, AHA!

Students sit or stand in a circle to reflect on their day. They can identify something they’ve appreciated that day, an apology they’d like to deliver, or an aha moment they’ve experienced during the course of the day. The activity can surface important insights about lessons (particularly during aha moments) and can also help build stronger social bonds in the classroom.

4. CREATE NEWS “HEADLINES” OR “SIX-WORD SUMMARIES”:

Pair students off and tell them to imagine **they’re writing news headlines** that summarize what they’ve learned. Challenge each pair to write at least two headlines, then come back together to review the headlines. Alternatively, do this as an entire class activity, writing the headlines suggested by students on your whiteboard.

For a different spin, try a “six-word summary” of the most important idea or concept. Because students are limited in word count and choice, they must think about what is most crucial to say.

5. TRAFFIC LIGHT:

On **Twitter**, an educator shared that they’ve affixed a picture of a traffic light on the door as a quick check for understanding at the end of a lesson. Before students leave the room, they take sticky notes and write one thing they learned in the lesson and place it on the green light, one thing they’re still mulling over and place it on yellow light, and one thing they’re struggling to understand and place it on the red light. The activity takes a minute to do, and after students leave, teachers can easily discover important insights about their students’ grasp of the material at hand.



6. VIDEO JOURNALS:

Use the free app **ChatterPix** to get students creating and sharing video journals describing what they’ve learned. Because this can take a little time to create, this strategy might be best suited as a wrap-up activity at the end of a unit. The videos are playful and fun, and can easily be posted to classroom platforms like Seesaw.

7. ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS:

Flip the familiar game on its head to create a simple reflection **worksheet** students can use to think deeply — and critically — about the content they’re learning. The “rock” of the content asks students to identify the hardest part, the “paper” asks them to distill the main idea of a topic, and the “scissors” asks them to think about less important details that they might discard as they consolidate their learning.

8. QUIZ THE NEXT CLASS:

Have students use the free platform Kahoot! to come up with quiz questions and multiple choice answers to give to their peers studying the same material in other classes. Recent **research** suggests that generating good questions promotes deeper engagement with content and improves retention.

9. MAKE YOUR CLASSROOM A BEACH:

This activity will get students out of their seats and sharing with the whole class. Write reflective questions on a beach ball using dry erase markers. Questions might include things like: “What is one thing you learned during today’s lesson?” or “What was challenging about today’s lesson?” As the ball bounces around the room, you can come up with a mechanism for deciding which question they have to answer out loud — such as the question their left thumb is touching, or the very first question they see. Use the responses to generate further discussion about the day’s lesson.

10. OPTIMISTIC CLOSURES:

These are **simple ways** to get students reflecting on the day’s learning, identifying next steps, and strengthening their classroom community at the same time. Try the One Word Share, which asks students to stand in a circle and respond to a prompt like, “What’s one word to describe how you’re feeling about the day?” or “What’s one word that stands out to you from our lesson?” Capture responses in a word cloud and do a quick debrief to see where the class landed.

The Human Bar Graph is another twist that gets students moving. Label points along a line drawn on the floor or across a wall that show different levels of mastery: I’m confused, I’m okay, I got this. Ask students to stand where they feel most comfortable. This exercise requires a certain level of vulnerability, so it’s best to try it once you have built some trust with students. ■

This story originally appeared in Edutopia.



6 Ways to Use ChatGPT to Save Time

Teachers can use the artificial intelligence tool to automate some routine tasks By Todd Finley

CHATGPT, an artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot trained to understand typed prompts and generate content that sounds human, is the fastest-growing web platform ever. For a couple of months, I've assessed how ChatGPT handles dozens of common teacher tasks. It's not perfect, but the chatbot can reduce the 10 hours and 40 minutes a day (Primary Sources, 2012) that the average teacher works by automating the first drafts of our most time-consuming professional writing.

In the paragraphs below, I've divided these tasks into the following categories: *planning instruction, handouts and materials, differentiation, correspondence, assessment, and writing instruction and feedback*. Welcome to the revolution.

1. PLANNING INSTRUCTION

With its mighty language processing and generation capabilities, ChatGPT can streamline planning when you're developing the following:

- **Unit outline:** When you align its output with the Common Core State Standards, the AI tool is able to craft a unit outline for any grade level, subject or timeline.
- **Lesson plans:** Ask ChatGPT to write a lesson plan on, say, Westward Expansion. The tool composes assessments, activities, scaffolding and objectives. Want that in the form of problem-based learning or revised for a flipped classroom? ChatGPT can adjust the lesson plan according to your instructions.
- **Slide shows:** When directed to outline a slide show for any topic and grade level, ChatGPT creates an intuitive organization and adds formative assessment questions if requested.
- **X-factor instruction:** When I asked ChatGPT to devise a "challenging and creative approach to teaching metaphors" to students, the tool described an activity that involved integrating student-created metaphors into original stories conveyed through visual genres (e.g., a comic strip, a storyboard).
- **Simplify topics:** Having difficulty articulating an advanced concept? Ask ChatGPT to "explain the topic to a first grader." Here's the tool's simplified explanation of chloroplasts: "Chloroplasts are little green things inside plant leaves that help the plant make its own food. They are like tiny factories that use sunlight, air and water to make the plant's food."
- **Discussion questions:** Use ChatGPT to write engaging, higher-order prompts for a class discussion on any topic.

2. HANDOUTS AND OTHER MATERIALS

Perhaps ChatGPT's biggest time-saving feature is that it can generate text for materials and handouts that target your specific instructional needs. It can:



- Develop instructions that describe cooperative learning roles and expectations;
- Generate assignment directions with a detailed overview, grading criteria, a description of the required format and task details;
- Create solved examples of math problems, chemistry equations, etc., with explanations of each step;
- Build a prereading or advance organizer by extracting critical and unfamiliar vocabulary from a chapter and listing keywords with their definitions;
- Provide word problems — for example, using ratios: ChatGPT gives the problem, the formula for solving it and a full explanation of the procedure;
- Compose a syllabus (boilerplate) that includes a course schedule, late-work policies and a description of how assignments will be graded;
- Make flash cards with questions and answers;
- Produce posters that list classroom rules, 10 reasons why algebra is important to the students' future, or the 20 most common writing errors of high school students, with short definitions and examples included.

3. DIFFERENTIATION

Need a choice board for an art activity? Boom, done. Ask ChatGPT to create a passage, chapter or book summary for students who need support. The tool can also function as a text compactor that analyzes readings and creates more concise and condensed versions. Furthermore, the AI will generate differentiated rubrics for an assignment so that each method/procedure emphasizes customized expectations and levels of challenge.

4. PROFESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE

Using ChatGPT, teachers can streamline communication with parents, colleagues and administrators via AI-composed welcome-to-class letters, newsletter copy, volunteer and donation requests, supply lists, grant and field trip proposals, assembly programs and permission sheets.

5. ASSESSMENT

With careful oversight, teachers can use ChatGPT to quickly create a variety of assessment materials:

- **Quizzes:** Ask ChatGPT to create tests on specific topics using any type of question format. Paste a passage into the chatbot or identify the title and chapter of a classic

piece of literature, and the AI will produce a test bank and answer key.

- **Rubrics:** ChatGPT will compose a rubric for any type of student performance. Depending on the needs of the user, examples include analytic, holistic and developmental rubrics, as well as rating scales.
- **Checklists:** The tool can develop an observation checklist to document students' academic, social, emotional and physical progress.
- **Cloze tests:** ChatGPT can create a Cloze comprehension test, where words are removed from a passage, and the reader is asked to fill in the blanks to test their understanding of the main ideas, vocabulary and sentence structure of the passage.

6. WRITING INSTRUCTION AND FEEDBACK

With ChatGPT's assistance, teachers can improve their students' writing skills through a range of tools and features:

- **Prompt generator:** The tool can compose writing prompts for any genre and include a corresponding rubric.
- **Essay improvement:** Submit sections of student writing to ChatGPT and it will suggest enhancements.
- **Grammar feedback:** When kids make grammar errors, teachers can direct ChatGPT to define, describe and identify how to improve the error and also provide examples.

Caveat: While ChatGPT amplifies our pedagogy and automates rou-

tine tasks, it's easy to overlook its greatest weakness: The tool *always* sounds authoritative, even when disseminating inaccurate content. Erroneous and polished bloviation pops up in human communication as well. Nevertheless, we must check all AI-produced information for accuracy and usefulness before it reaches students.

The chatbot's prose represents another shortcoming. Without clear directions from the user, it comes off as canned, like it was written by an algorithm, when a prerequisite for uplifting, informing and empowering students and school stakeholders is correspondence that sounds like you, not Wikipedia. Using ChatGPT responsibly means always viewing its compositions and curricula as first drafts. ■

This story originally appeared in Edutopia.



CTA Vice President-Elect Leslie Littman, President-Elect David Goldberg and Secretary-Treasurer-Elect Erika Jones. The incoming CTA officers will officially take office on June 26. Below, CTA President E. Toby Boyd.



FIGHTING FOR JUSTICE, WORKING FOR BETTER

CTA State Council welcomes new officers, bids farewell to E. Toby Boyd

By Julian Peeples

THE FINAL CTA State Council of Education meeting of the school year in May was filled with emotion as members expressed their gratitude for outgoing President E. Toby Boyd and excitement for the incoming officers team led by CTA President-Elect David B. Goldberg.

Boyd steps down in late-June (due to term limits) after four years at the helm, guiding CTA through unprecedented challenges including the COVID-19 pandemic. His calm leadership has been a reassuring constant for CTA's 310,000 members during tumultuous times.

In his final report to State Council, Boyd thanked educators for their strength and dedication in the face of extraordinary circumstances. "They say that what doesn't destroy you makes you stronger and I really do believe we are stronger today than we have ever been," Boyd said. "There will be new and ongoing challenges to meet. We will continue to battle attacks on public education, on educators, on marginalized groups and on teaching truth in our classrooms. But I believe we're in a good place to face that future. CTA is in good hands."

"We are stronger today than we have ever been. There will be new and ongoing challenges to meet. But I believe we're in a good place to face that future."

—CTA President **E. Toby Boyd**

Goldberg, a bilingual elementary school teacher and member of United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA), was sworn in as the new CTA President at the meeting's close, along with incoming CTA Vice President Leslie Littman and CTA Secretary-Treasurer Erika Jones. Littman is a high school history, economics and government teacher and Hart District Teachers Association member, while Jones is an elementary educator and member of UTLA.

"Leadership is service, it's not a position. So, while it is my life's professional honor to be your president, it's really about service," Goldberg said. "I look forward to continuing to engage with you, to lead with you — not in a position of power over you but in power with you. Onward and upward, let's keep building the union that we deserve and our students deserve."

NEA President Becky Pringle joined State Council representatives this weekend, bringing the strength and energy of 3 million educators to Los Angeles, where she surprised Boyd in his last meeting as president.



▼ With his family standing on the dais behind him, David B. Goldberg is sworn in as CTA's next president.



"I look forward to continuing to engage with you, to lead with you and in power with you."

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

Pringle brought down the house with a powerful speech Sunday morning, saying that she knows CTA members will never shrink away from protecting public education and standing with courage.

"When we are up against powerful forces with you, the mighty CTA, leading the way and joining with 3 million members across this nation, our hearts will be filled, our soul will be replenished and our strength will be renewed," Pringle said, bringing the entire room to its feet. "Our resolve will never be broken!"

HONORS, OBSERVANCES AND RECOGNITIONS

State Council took time this weekend to recognize some of CTA's outstanding members. Dr. Chris Cruz-Boone, a member of Kern Community College District Community College Association, was honored as the 2023 Higher Educator of the Year. Members also recognized the statewide winners of the WHO (We Honor Ours) award, as well as State Council representatives who are stepping down after years of service.

Educators were moved to tears during two powerful video presentations by the Pacific Asian American Caucus and the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Issues Advisory Committee (SOGIIAC). A similarly emotional video tribute to Boyd featured messages from Gov. Gavin Newsom, Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond and musician Gregory Porter.

The following members were elected to leadership positions:

- **Shelly Gupton**, member of Elk Grove Education Association, was re-elected to the CTA Board of Directors, representing District E.
- **Mel House**, member of UTLA, was elected to the CTA Board of Directors, representing District J.
- **Grant Schuster**, member of Anaheim Secondary Teachers Association, was elected as the CTA/NEA Coordinating Director.
- **Frank Mata**, member of Corona Norco Teachers Association, was elected as NEA Alternate Director, Seat 1.
- **Connie Verhulst**, member of Fontana Teachers Association, was elected to the CTA/ABC Committee, representing District K.
- **Loretta Arenas**, member of Corona Norco Teachers Association, was elected to the CTA/ABC Committee, representing District M.

THANKS FOR EVERYTHING

In his parting message to State Council, Boyd expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to serve as CTA president.

"Thank you all for allowing me to spend the past four years in this brave space with you," said Boyd, who is returning to teach kindergarten after leaving office. "Thank you for working side by side. Thank you for entrusting me. Thank you for the work I know you will carry on well into the future. You're a fantastic body of educators and activists; the future of public education is in good hands."

State Council of Education will meet next Oct. 20-22. ■

▼ NEA President Becky Pringle



▲ Dr. Chris Cruz-Boone was honored as the 2023 Higher Educator of the Year.

▼ Robinson flanked by his former kindergarten through third grade teachers (from left): Shaun Rickerl, Mary Swanson, Martha Lopez and Marie Vastine

▼ Every first grade student received a signed copy of Robinson's new book on Read Across America Day in March.



Bestselling Author Returns Home

Brent H. Robinson credits educators for supporting him as budding writer By Julian Peebles

THE LIFELONG IMPACT of caring educators was on display in Apple Valley earlier this year when a New York Times Bestselling author returned to his elementary school to read his new children's book to students from his hometown.

Brent H. Robinson visited Desert Knolls Elementary School on Read Across America Day (March 2) to read from "Ferguson's Forest," delivering a signed copy to every first-grade student at the school. Robinson said the experience was surreal.

"Returning to my hometown to read my first children's book to students who were sitting in the same spot I sat as a child was a dream come true for me," he says. "I was truly honored."

Robinson was invited to read at Desert Knolls by his former second-grade teacher, Martha Lopez, a member of Apple Valley Unified Teachers Association

(AVUTA). She says the event was a treat for her students and heartwarming for her as well.

"The kids were excited to meet a real live author and get a signed book and bookmark, and I was a very proud teacher that day knowing one of my students was not only successful, but generous and kindhearted to return to his hometown, give back and share his life experience," says Lopez. "He is an inspiration."

Robinson says he remembers Lopez fondly, explaining that her unique personality and special sense of humor stayed with him throughout his life.

"Mrs. Lopez made me realize as a child that if you're comfortable being

yourself, you can achieve whatever you put your mind to in life," he says.

Lopez had a surprise for Robinson, bringing his kindergarten, first and third-grade teachers — Shaun Rickerl, Mary Swanson (retired) and Marie Vastine, members of AVUTA — for a touching moment.

"When I saw each of them standing there, my entire world shifted with delight," Robinson says. "These are the teachers who started my educational journey and made

me appreciate how important education is in a child's life."

An accomplished author of mystery novels and screenplays, Robinson's "Ferguson's Forest" is his first

"These are the teachers who started my education journey and made me appreciate how important education is in a child's life."



Continued on Page 47

▼ Golden Sierra Junior Senior High School students from the 2023 Forestry Challenge championships.



▼ Students measure trees as part of the Forestry Challenge.



Skills Building in Our Forests

A unique challenge combines career education with academic competition By **Karmen Lee Ortloff**

IN SMALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS, teachers wear many hats and teach a variety of unrelated subjects. Amara Smallwood, a member of Black Oak Mine Teachers Association and a teacher at Golden Sierra Junior Senior High School, is no exception. Smallwood teaches AP Environmental Sciences every other year, Biology, Health, Food Science, AVID and more.

After hearing about the Forestry Challenge from a colleague at another school, Smallwood has fostered two teams to compete in the program for the past six years. The annual event started in 2003 and is held in different forests across California each year; students spend four days competing in five categories. Competitors not only learn the basic skills and principles of forestry, but they make connections with foresters, hydrologists, wildlife biologists, soil and fire scientists, and more for future career opportunities.

In a world of increased fire danger with a need for enhanced forestry management skills, Smallwood is preparing students for academic challenges and providing invaluable career exploration.

"Forest fires are part of our consciousness, especially in fire-prone areas, such as El Dorado County. The Forestry

Challenge is important for spreading awareness," says Smallwood. (For the record, she notes that her last name suits her perfectly, as she admits she is "more at home in a 'wood' or forest than anywhere else!")



Amara Smallwood

Working in teams of three to five, students measure trees, calculate basal area to determine how much wood is on a specific plot of land, determine how much money could be made on the assigned plot of land, and collect necessary data to make forest management decisions. Students' use of math, science, data collecting and other skills contributes to 60% of the team's final score.

"The program is intense and is very academic," explains Smallwood. "Every year, our students are given a different problem to solve. They went out to the forest and collected data on an area where salvaged logging was done after the Caldor Fire, and their mission was to create a reforestation plan. Students counted seedlings and made determinations about whether or not to plant new seedlings and allow current seedlings to grow, determined if herbicides should be used or not, and more. These are real-world skills forestry personnel use in their career."

The remaining 40% of student teams' scores come from

▼ Amara Smallwood's students prepare for the challenge in class.



a presentation before a panel of judges, which requires students to develop public speaking skills and learn how to collaborate with a team.

Students are enthusiastic about the Challenge.

"Participating in the Forestry Challenge was one of my most memorable experiences in high school. Not only did it spark my interest in forestry and teach me so much about managing our forests, but I developed friendships and close bonds with my teammates," says 12th grader Adan Mendoza.

"The youth of our generation are blind to the truth about our forests. Bringing knowledge to the public and revealing the sad truth can prevent under-management from happening again. The Forestry Challenge is a way of doing this — implementing a fun time into learning," says 10th grader Austin Cole.

"Through the Forestry Challenge, students find out they are really good at solving complex problems and learn they are capable of more than they expected."

—AMARA SMALLWOOD,
Black Oak Mine Teachers Association

Smallwood points to the larger student benefits. "Often kids don't know what they want to do and through the Forestry Challenge, they find out they are really good at solving complex problems and learn they are capable of more than they expected," she says.

In a competition of 24 teams, Smallwood's two teams from Golden Sierra placed 4th and 7th, with nearby perennial champion and appropriately named Foresthill High School winning the championship.

"I am not super competitive, but I love that our kids enjoy pushing themselves.

That's the best part of the Challenge for me." ■

For more information about the Forestry Challenge, visit forestrychallenge.org.

Bestselling Author, Continued from Page 45

children's book, about animals and nature. He and his family run the non-profit Robinson Foundation, focused on spreading environmental awareness, fighting animal cruelty and assisting struggling communities. The book is the first in a series he plans to pen on the adventures of the main character, Ferguson.

Robinson is grateful for the support, guidance and love he received from his primary educators.

"To Mrs. Lopez, Mrs. Rickerl, Mrs. Swanson and Mrs. Vastine, thank you for giving me the knowledge and resources that built my skills



A young Brent H. Robinson

and characteristics to create my art that inspires the world and future generations to come," says Robinson, whose books are available at brenthrobinson.com. "I am thankful for each of you and every educator that came after in my life. I am truly blessed for all of you."

Lopez was excited to see the successful life her former student has built since leaving her second-grade classroom.

"Teachers will always be your biggest cheerleaders, even when you're fully grown," she says. ■

A Friend Indeed

Vicki Soderberg receives the 2022 CTA State Gold Award

By Amy Peruzzaro

VICKI SODERBERG has been honored with the 2022 CTA State Gold Award, which recognizes individuals or organizations whose leadership, acts and support show they are true friends of public education.

Soderberg, now retired, is former president of Capistrano Unified Education Association. During her time as CUEA president she learned invaluable strategies to protect public education from financially powerful organizations as well as build relationships with local politicians, winning highly contested elections.

Soderberg remains active in CUEA and is an integral part of the chapter's political action plan. She continuously reaches out to her contacts to share ideas and encourages others to get involved. Her tireless efforts have helped to maintain a public education-friendly majority on the school board. She also attends other local board meetings to advocate for a public education all students deserve.

"She is upfront and honest about the fact that we need a school



system that is inclusive, diverse, multifaceted and teaches all students," said CUEA President Joy Schnapper. "She uses her own classroom experiences, of which she has over 36 years, to explain her position. You would be hard-pressed to find anyone who can say 'no' to Vicki."

Congratulations to Vicki Soderberg!

For more information on the State Gold Award, go to cta.org/awards.

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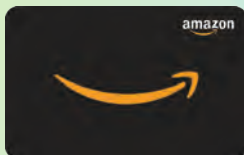
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How to Balance Resting, Reflecting and Learning This Summer

Take time to rest and engage in collaborative learning that reconnects you with what you love about education

By **Rachelle Dené Poth**

AS THE SCHOOL year draws to a close, it's important for educators to take time for themselves to recharge and reflect, and to find learning opportunities. Summer provides a valuable opportunity for educators to explore collaborative professional development on their own schedule. By investing in ourselves and our ongoing learning, we can better serve our students and colleagues, as well as stay connected to our profession so that we can grow and thrive as educators.

Focusing on our well-being is essential, especially at the end of each day and when we have longer breaks to really take some time for ourselves. Our days as educators are so busy, and we invest so much in others, that finding time for our own self-care and rest can be difficult. However, recharging is essential for balance and wellness.

There are simple things we can do, such as starting each day with reading, walking, time spent outdoors and just relaxing. Reconnecting with family and friends will help us to recharge and be more present in our time together, leaving us feeling rested and ready to reengage in our work.

One of the reasons why I value the summer break is the added

flexibility it offers. I have more time to reflect on my work, set new goals and push myself to grow professionally. I also know that taking advantage of summer learning opportunities not only benefits me but also enables me to better support my students and colleagues.

"In the summer, taking time to write down ideas and note our experiences in a journal can be very beneficial for planning our next professional learning steps."

For myself, starting each morning by reading and reflecting on what I have read has led me to be consistent and intentional in my reflective practice. Also, by staying connected with colleagues and members of my professional learning through virtual or in-person meetups or using social media, I can reflect and hold myself accountable by practicing reflection with others.

Five learning ideas for the summer

In addition to the benefits of personal growth, summer offers a chance for more collaboration and connections. During a busy school year, it can be easy to keep ourselves isolated, despite best intentions. However, with technology available to access professional development and flexible schedules in the summer, we can find time and space to connect with



other educators and engage in meaningful collaborations and networking. Here are some ideas to engage in learning on your schedule.

1. Learning from anywhere: Consider enrolling in an online course or virtual conference that you can complete at your own pace, from wherever you are, giving you the flexibility to balance learning with relaxation. There are many free conference options for educators this summer. The Sparc conference (in person or virtual in July) is a free event for teachers, administrators, technology staff, and anyone interested in using educational technology. Also coming up in July is a free multiday event hosted by educator/leader Holly Clark and the AI Infused Classroom, which will offer 10 sessions focused on artificial intelligence.

2. Education podcasts: Podcasts are a great choice for learning on the go and for reflection. I started my own podcast ThriveinEDU a few years ago and have found it to be so helpful for my professional growth and for helping to support others. Some of my favorites include Teaching Keating, Carl Hooker, Dr. Will Deyamport, The Edufuturists, Learning Unleashed, Easy Edtech Podcast, Leading Equity, and Rethinking Learning. Find one and listen while walking, in the car, or during lunch — on your schedule.

3. Book studies and summer professional learning communities: Engaging in a book study, either via videoconference or in person, is a great way to connect as well as to stay accountable and motivated in ongoing learning. There are many books to choose from, and sometimes having a list to start with is helpful. Search for the 25 of the books I recommend to educators at gettingsmart.com.

4. Blog reading and writing: For educators, reflecting on our work is essential. In the summer, taking time to write down ideas and note our experiences in a journal can be very beneficial for planning our next professional learning steps. Sharing our blogs with others is even more beneficial, as we may have the answers to some challenges that others are experiencing. There are also many individual educator blogs and publications like Edutopia. A great way to dive into blogging is to have one of your summer goals be to pitch an article of your own!

5. Social networking: Choose a space or spaces on social media to connect with other educators to share resources and ask questions. Platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter offer opportunities to connect with educators from around the world and share tips, tricks, and resources in a variety of ways. There are always Twitter chats to join or simply hashtags to

follow conversations. LinkedIn and Facebook have communities for educators of specific content areas, grade levels, roles, and even focus areas, such as STEM and emerging technologies.

Balancing, recharging, reflection and learning

Choose one thing at a time: There are so many activities that are worthwhile for our mental and physical well-being to choose from. Our days become quite full, and the worst thing we can do is overwhelm ourselves by trying to do everything. Simply choose one thing, one activity per day, that will be good for your well-being and learning, and set a time to do so.

Have a routine: One way to find balance is just by having a bit of consistency added in each day. Set aside a specific time to read or take a walk in the morning, listen to music or a podcast, or respond to emails. Planning a routine helps to balance a busy day. I have found that having consistency in these activities during the day is one way to keep myself more focused and less stressed.

Disconnect: We all know that we need to take a break from all of the technology, but it can be tough. Technology can keep us connected and informed, but it can also pull us away from being truly present in the moment. If you can't leave your

device at home, try to mute notifications at specific times during the day, or only answer emails and messages in the morning and evening.

Final tips for a worthwhile summer

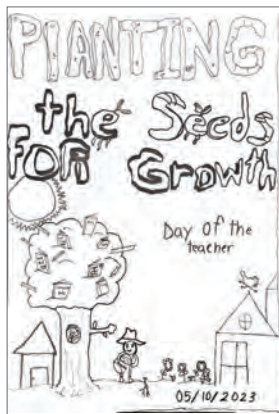
When we are intentional about a plan that includes time for rest and time to learn, we can maintain a healthy work-life balance while continuing to grow and improve as educators.

With the help of technology, we now have the ability to network with other professionals, stay up-to-date with the latest trends in education, and become a part of supportive communities. The variety of options available has revolutionized how we can connect and learn as educators.

But we have to remember that even with so many opportunities and extra time available for a few months during the summer, educators must prioritize taking breaks and focusing on self-care to avoid burnout. When we step away and take time to rest, recharge and reflect, we will start the next school year feeling refreshed and ready to dive into learning and growing. ■

This story originally appeared in Edutopia.

▼ By Ollie Torres,
2nd grade



▼ By Katelynn Nguyen,
7th grade



▼ Grand Prize winner by
Haley Tran, 6th grade



Poster Kids

Day of the Teacher contest inspires winning work

WOODBURY ELEMENTARY TEACHER Jennifer Townsend and fellow Garden Grove Education Association members came up with the splendid idea to hold a Day of the Teacher poster contest in their school district (Irving Unified). Students based their work on CTA's 2023 theme "Planting the Seeds for Growth" and submitted black-and-white drawings. Artwork by grand prize winner Haley Tran will become a poster for each school and a bookmark for each teacher in the district. A few of the winners, above. —Amy Peruzzaro



A Guide to Pronouns

IN AN EFFORT to be more affirming of all, NEA has developed a Pronoun Guide to better understand and use pronouns in a respectful way. Find it at tinyurl.com/k43kysz7.

More and more, people are indicating what pronouns they use.

The guide includes the most common pronouns, though you may see more outside of this list.

Plural pronouns can be used as gender-neutral singular pronouns — it is grammatically correct to use singular "they" to refer a singular person of unknown gender or to a non-binary person who does not feel gendered pronouns work for them. Some people also use more than one set of pronouns. For example, "she/they" or "he/them." This could mean they are fine with either one being used, or that they accept both. But don't assume that they can be used interchangeably — ask if they use one set in particular contexts versus another.

Finding One's True Self

Humanities teacher transitions to nonbinary

By **Ashley Que**

"I JUST KEPT feeling out of place, kept feeling wrong, and kept feeling uncomfortable in almost any situation. It got to the point where I figured there was something else going on." This is how Mx. Williams, humanities teacher at MIT Academy Middle School, felt before they transitioned to nonbinary.

On October 11, National Coming Out Day, Mx. Williams formally announced their transition from the male gender to nonbinary. In doing so, Williams requests that the pronoun "they" be used when referring to them. They also changed their first name from Matt to Matty and have requested that students refer to them as Mx. Williams. (Mx. is pronounced "mix.")

It is important to know that Mx. Williams has transitioned socially and not physically. They have no intention of taking hormones or having surgery.

Since middle school, Williams remembers not feeling like they fit in, especially with other boys their age. It wasn't until they were in college that they realized the way they felt had to do with the gender with which they identify. While at Chico State, they took classes on gender and sexuality, almost earning a minor. During those courses, Williams realized that "nonbinary" fit them better than "male" or "female."

Williams' thinking about clothing has evolved. The key is for them to dress in a way that makes them feel confident. They have given a lot of thought to their new look, and described their process this way:

"At first, I did a lot of experimenting in terms of colors, patterns, clothing items, because I was trying to figure out what I liked and did not like. Over the past few months, I have settled into this look that I like to call 'masculine feminine.' While I almost always wear dresses to work now, I tend to choose dresses that have more of a 'masculine' cut/fit/color/pattern. I feel this does a good job of honoring both the masculine and feminine parts of my identity. This is also one of the main reasons I have retained my beard."

When Williams thought about coming out, they were terrified at the prospect that people would reject them. As they got older, they stopped worrying so much about what other people were thinking and started to focus on how they felt themselves. They realized that it wasn't worth it for them to go through their life feeling



uncomfortable and out of place just for the sake of keeping other people happy.

It was during COVID that Williams had time to think and realized they needed to come out. They first started coming out to close friends and family. They were hesitant about coming out at work for a long time. In the end, they felt like it was a good opportunity to lead by example and be a role model for students who might be feeling the same way that they did.

During COVID I decided to identify as nonbinary. It makes me happy to have a teacher that is nonbinary like Mx. Williams. I feel more comfortable in school seeing myself in my teachers and knowing that my gender is represented in my classroom. It is also inspiring to know that a teacher didn't like their gender — just as I

didn't — and decided to be true to themselves.

My classmates were also supportive of Mx. Williams' transition. When they came out to their third period class, they were "genuinely surprised" when the class applauded.

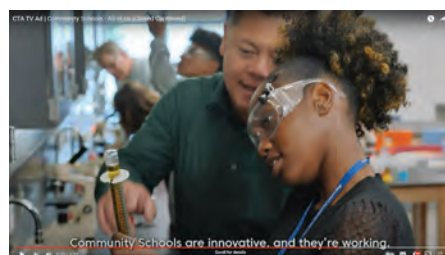
Williams now feels great at school. And, they said, "I now get to dress in a way that honors all of the parts of my identity." ■

"I feel more comfortable in school seeing myself in my teachers and knowing that my gender is represented in my classroom."

—student **Ashley Que**

Ashley Que is a student at Mare Island Technology Academy Middle School. This story originally appeared in the MIT Academy News (mitanews.org). Matty Williams is a member of Griffin Education Association who will teach in the West Contra Costa Unified School District this fall.

▼ The community schools model allows for shared decision-making among educators, parents, students, community stakeholders and school and district administrators. Watch the ads at youtube.com/@CaliforniaTeachers.



MEDIA SPOTLIGHT ON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

CTA's new ad campaign focuses on shared leadership and decision-making

ON CALIFORNIA DAY OF THE TEACHER, May 10, CTA launched a series of TV, radio and digital ads spotlighting community schools – a campaign that will continue throughout the year. “Planting Seeds: Inspiring students and future educators” is the theme, which parallels California’s growing and thriving community schools movement.

The ads focus on the importance of the shared leadership and decision-making governance model that allows community schools to create new and successful opportunities for students and local communities.

“Community schools lift the voices of folks who traditionally have not been heard, whether they are parents, students, community groups,” said Anaheim Secondary Teachers Association President Grant Shuster in one of the ads.

“It’s shared decision-making with parents,” said United Teachers of Richmond President John Zabala in the same spot. “They’re saying that these are the priorities that they want to see for their kids.”

Both Anaheim and Richmond school districts, as well as other districts across the state, are well along the path to growing their community schools in partnership with CTA chapters, parents and community. With the support of the State Legislature and Governor Gavin Newsom, California is now leading the nation with a \$4 billion investment in the development and expansion of community schools.

Community schools have proven to foster lower rates of absenteeism, better work habits, grades, test scores, and behaviors, high graduation rates and higher enrollment in college-prep courses.

“Educators, parents and students are reimagining public education in their local communities through community schools,” said incoming CTA President David Goldberg. Watch the ads at youtube.com/@CaliforniaTeachers. Learn more about CTA’s work with community schools and ways to reimagine public education at cta.org/communityschools. ■

Get Moving!

CTA and Calm can help you tap into the power of daily movement

IT CAN FEEL DIFFICULT to make time for exercise and movement when we're deep in work mode. But we all know that moving daily benefits our physical and mental health in the long term.

Regular exercise that gets your heart rate up and/or builds strength is great. But you can also integrate small mindful movements into your workday — whether that's a quick stretch when refilling your cup or a tension release session at the end of the day. This will help you reconnect with your body and lower your stress level.

CTA's partner, Calm, has a whole section dedicated to movement in their mobile app and web browser. Here are some Calm activities to check out:



Mindful Walking Series

- Guided meditation for you to start walking mindfully.

Daily Move

A daily movement series guided by yoga and mindfulness teacher Mel Mah. New, short exercises are released every day. Examples:

- **Jump Start Your Day** —
A lying down exercise helps you gently wake up your body, followed by light stretches in a seated position on your bed.
- **Your Daily Relaxation** —
A sitting exercise relaxes your upper and lower body with light stretches and mindful breathing techniques.
- **Shaking Off the Workday** —
A standing exercise eliminates tension in your body after working all day by incorporating full-body movement.

Check out the Calm app for more options.

Exclusive for CTA Members: Your free Calm Premium subscription

Haven't activated your free Calm Premium subscription yet? Start by logging in to CTAMemberBenefits.org. Once on the CTA Calm page:

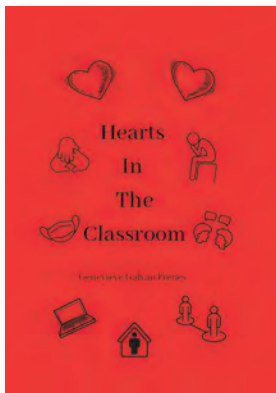
- Sign in to your existing Calm account or create an account.
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- Download the Calm app and log in to your account to access the premium content.



Continued from Page 56

Poems Deeply Personal and Universal

Hanford Secondary Educators Association member Genevieve Galvan Frenes is a 26-year teacher who has just published *Hearts In The Classroom*. The book is a poetry collection of student and teacher images before, during and after COVID, and offers genuine reflections of everyday students from an educator's perspective. *Hearts* is dedicated to working and retired teachers in the Central Valley and to Frenes' colleagues at Hanford High and throughout the school district. On Amazon. Excerpt at right:



Fear the Dentist!

What terrible secret does Dr. Sharp hide behind his shiny smile? Eleven-year-old Jase and his new friend Braxton come to believe the dentist and his assistant have kidnapped two young patients and brainwashed their parents into thinking their children have gone to "Colorado." But if the missing middle-schoolers aren't there, where could they be? UTLA member and author Evan Baughfman, a middle school theater and creative writing teacher, has published his first novel, *Bad for Your Teeth*. On Amazon and Barnes & Noble.



A Teacher's Heart

*A teacher's heart
Gathers the remnants of each child.
She tucks the stories, the smiles,
And many times, the sorrows,
Into the layers of a delicate organ:
Her heart,
To warm her and remind her
That she is gifted by each child
Making them an added blessing
To her soul.*

*Delving into the vast chambers of her heart,
She finds everlasting joys,
Which surpassed exceeding obstacles
And still remain strong.
She witnesses the ragged edges of muscle,
Torn and tattered in spots,
Where harsh words of meanness caused suffering,
Undeservingly.
She sees the strength
Of the fast-moving beat of the pumping blood
As it worked for endless hours,
Unpaid and unseen.*

*Her heart is a treasure,
An amazing organ buried deep within her
Holding its secret grail:
To serve children in only her way.
It has grown a thousand times over
Since the first student
Stepped into her room.*

*A teacher's love
Extends from its encompassing experiences,
And its lifelong-learning mode.
Resilience and courage
Carry her through each year
With a new set of students,
Whom she chooses to love
And guide in her unique way
And method of teaching.*

*Her heart,
With its cherished memories,
Will beat on enduringly
In the lives
Of her students.*

—Genevieve Galvan Frenes



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

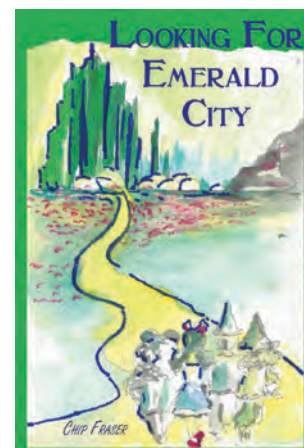
Navigating college admissions stress

Sweet Appeal finds high-achieving high school senior Leo Iskrine struggling under the pressures of college admissions and others' lofty expectations for him. Author Michael J. Steele, an Elk Grove Education Association member and high school math teacher, captures the intense stress many seniors experience. But the novel also reassures young people that things can turn out all right even when they don't go according to plan. Younger students and families can use the book to help develop healthy mind-sets about college admissions before the process starts to influence self-worth and damage relationships. On Amazon.



Lessons on how to grow up

In this 2021 book, CTA/NEA-Retired member Chip Fraser takes on the deeper meaning within *The Wizard of Oz* — the need for children who are now adults to become grownups. With humor and wit, Fraser's "lessons" on how to grow up include learning to live in the present, ceasing to criticize others, eating healthy (mostly), smiling regularly, exercising patience, practicing meditation, and volunteering whenever possible. A California educator for almost 30 years and former president of Ventura Unified Education Association, Fraser wrote the script for the 2020 movie *Timecrafters: The Treasure of Pirate's Cove*. On Amazon.



The newcomer experience

René Colato Laínez is a bilingual teacher at Fernangeles Elementary School in LA County, where he is known as "the teacher full of stories." The El Salvador-born educator and UTLA member has written multiple, award-winning bilingual children's books such as *My Shoes and I/ Mis zapatos y yo* and *Mamá the Alien/ Mamá la extraterrestre*. His new book, *Do I Belong Here? ¿Es este mi lugar?*, explores the experiences of newcomers in U.S. schools, from the first days of confusion and alienation to the gradual understanding of language and customs and making of new friends. On Arte Público Press and Amazon.

Continued on Page 55

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

Take Along a Friend!



This summer, give friends and family big thrills —

and give yourself big savings — at California's great theme parks. Just one of the many benefits of membership in CTA, NEA and your local union. CTAMemberBenefits.org/Access





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