

california educator

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2023 VOLUME 28 ISSUE 1

***Trainings,
Conferences,
Events, Oh My!***
PAGE 8

The Right Stuff
How a San Diego
Community School thrives
PAGE 32

**Wise words,
tips and inspo
for the new year**
PAGE 15

**BACK
TO
SCHOOL**



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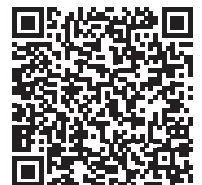


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VOLUME 28 ISSUE 1



#WeAreCTA

OUR VOICE, OUR UNION, OUR PROFESSION

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

MAGAZINE

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

THE RIGHT STUFF

The essential elements that make San Diego's Hoover High work. **PAGE 32**

TEN AWESOME TIPS

How to get your students laughing, connected and engaged. **PAGE 24**

EDUCATOR IS VINDICATED

Wrongful suspension is overturned in case of San Jose teacher supporting LGBTQ+ students. **PAGE 43**

GARDENS OF LEARNING

Sergio de Alba's lessons open worlds for students. **PAGE 13**

DIGITAL

BECOME A MEMBER

Why? Because CTA has resources, trainings — and your back. Because together we can bring about change for our students, communities and each other. cta.org/join

LIT FROM WITHIN

A bumper crop of new-ish works by members. **PAGE 56**
cta.org/lit

NEW MEDIA SPOTS

CTA's new ad spots continue to highlight the transformative powers of community schools, with their shared decision-making process. **PAGE 39**  cta.org/communityschools

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

REFRESH YOUR SKILLS

From classroom management to Canva, CTA conferences and leadership events offer trainings you can put to use immediately. **PAGE 8**
cta.org/conferences

CTA SPECIAL ED CONFERENCE

Peer-led sessions provide strategies, tips and proven research to help you support your exceptional students. Oct. 6-8, Orange County. cta.org/conferences

CUE UP FOR FALL

CUE (Computer-Using Educators) puts on its Fall Conference in Stockton Oct. 21-22. cue.org

MEMBER BENEFITS

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Member discounts on everything from auto and home insurance to dining out and theme parks are available to you. Details at CTAMemberBenefits.org

RETIREMENT SAVINGS PLAN

Ensure a financially secure future with CTA's 403(b) Retirement Savings Plan, created for educators. Visit CTAMemberBenefits.org/rsp

Above: Participants at CTA Summer Institute in July. Mark your calendar for 2024 #CTASI and more trainings — see page 8 for dates. Photo by Chris Robledo.



15

WELCOME BACK!

Tips, resources, insights and inspo for the new year.



32

THE RIGHT STUFF

Essential elements that make this community school work.

47

POWERFUL CHANGE

Natomas teachers organize — and win!



DEPARTMENTS / FEATURES

In the Know

- 7 Calendar
- 9 News & Notes
- 12 Quotes & Numbers

Spotlight

- 13 **HONORED:** Sergio de Alba's gardens of learning

Back to School

- 16 **LIFE HACKS:** For the new year
- 20 **WISDOM:** Wise words from the state teachers of the year
- 24 **10 TIPS:** To get students engaged
- 26 **CULTURES:** Connect with kids who are different than you
- 28 **OPENERS:** Start class strong
- 30 **SOCIAL MEDIA:** Memes!

Social Justice

- 32 **COMMUNITY SCHOOLS:** San Diego's successful model
- 40 **NEA RA:** How community schools are working

Advocacy

- 41 **LEGISLATION:** Bills of interest
- 42 **LAWSUIT:** Temecula educators stand up to district
- 43 **ARBITRATION:** San Jose member vindicated
- 45 **RULING:** State approval of charter school voided
- 46 **AGREEMENT:** A local's first CBA
- 47 **ORGANIZING:** Natomas' big win
- 48 **BARGAINING:** Statewide roundup

CTA & You

- 50 **YOUR VOICE:** Tunnel vision
- 51 **CONTEST:** Classroom layout wins
- 52 **NEWS:** Economic Benefits Trust
- 53 **AVIATION:** Students take flight
- 56 **LIT FROM WITHIN:** New-ish work by members

Photos, from top: The 2023 California Teachers of the Year Catherine Borek, Jason Torres-Rangel, Bridgette Donald-Blue, Lauren Camarillo, Ben Case; culinary class at San Diego's Hoover High (screenshot from video); Natomas Teachers Association members and allies campaign last fall.



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)

Coming in October: Your CTA Membership Card

Look for your annual membership card in the October/November Educator magazine. Use the card to access a variety of benefits and programs to enhance your life and career.



EAST BAY COALITION FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Lafayette Educators Association hopes to join the impressive and growing list of Trailblazer Districts in making students and educators a priority ("Building Together for Students," June/July). We are more committed than ever to the goal of retaining and attracting the most qualified educators for the continued success of our students. Thank you for setting a standard and model for all districts.

KRISTI GINGRICH

Lafayette Educators Association

DYSLEXIA SCREENING

As a multilingual educator and a member of the CTA Language Acquisition Committee, I agree with the position that mandatory dyslexia screening is potentially detrimental to our English learners ("CTA Supports Newly Funded Dyslexia Screening in Budget Trailer Bill," June/July). Often evaluations are done by people who do not speak student languages or student responses are related to language challenges rather than any disability. Over-identification of a disability is harmful.

CHERYL ORTEGA

UTLA Director of Bilingual Education

Editor's Note: Our July 6 post on CTA's website, at tinyurl.com/bp64zvex, reported that in June, the California State Teacher's Retirement System (CalSTRS) and the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) were breached in a large-scale cyber-attack affecting hundreds of thousands of current retirees. In the week of June 26, CalSTRS/CalPERS mailed out letters to those affected. See the post for what to do if you are one of them.

One year's credit protection is totally inadequate. Why are CalPERS retirees getting two years free protection and we at CalSTRS are only getting one? Is protecting retired educators less important than other state employees?

SHARON GUNRUD

CTA/NEA Retired

My father who is a beneficiary to his deceased wife's CalPERS/STRS pension [was] notified that his data was stolen. You're offering a year of data security to people who were affected. That does not seem to be sufficient. Millions of retirees' data is now at risk. I am concerned that I may get a notice in the near future also. This could have been avoided if better precautions were taken.

MARTHA LAGUNA

Fremont Unified District Teachers Association

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[WeAreCTA](https://pinterest.com/WeAreCTA) [#WeAreCTA](https://twitter.com/WeAreCTA)

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.

Publication of advertising in the *California Educator* does not indicate CTA approval of the product or of the companies that purchase advertising.

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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.

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Public Schools: Powered by Us

I COULDN'T BE more honored to be your President. I was raised in a union home. Growing up, I saw the power of educators coming together in their union and the impact that can have in our schools and communities. I see that same power today — at the state level and down into every local chapter throughout our state. I believe every single member of CTA is critical to that power and I look forward to working alongside you in the years to come.

Over the summer, many of you took opportunities to sharpen your skills and build our union together at CTA Summer Institute, Presidents Conference and NEA Representative Assembly — it was great to see so many of you there. Whether you spent your break at one of these events with us, on vacation with your family or just sleeping in, I hope that you are refreshed and ready to work together to build a stronger CTA for each other and for our students. We've got an exciting year ahead!

The new year has me thinking about who we are and what we do. Together, we are more than 310,000 union educators across the state, and we power public schools and community colleges in communities from Calexico to Crescent City — northern, central and southern California; urban and rural; small towns and

major cities. CTA is in nearly every community in our state, and we are united in our struggle for public education because we care.

We care that our students, who we dedicate our lives to, aren't getting the resources they deserve.

We care that we live in a state that is the fourth largest economy in the world, while we still rank 37th in the nation for per-pupil spending.

We care that far too many of our colleagues can't afford to live where they work.

We care that we see incredible educators leaving our profession due to stress, low pay, unsafe working conditions and racial discrimination in our schools.

We know that the best way to make real change in our working conditions and our students' learning conditions is to come together and organize at every school site across our golden state. This is how we bargain strong contracts, strengthen our skill sets as educators, and fight for the resources our students deserve.

Just this last school year, we saw local organizing power being used in incredibly powerful ways. In Los Angeles, educators went on a solidarity strike with classified colleagues, while Oakland educators worked with their community to strike for the common good for all students and



families. Educators in Montebello, Richmond, Anaheim, Natomas and more are leading the fight for Community Schools. Every single victory can be traced back to strong school sites — where colleagues are engaged, active and ready to take action. I'm grateful that we know how to win — because the threats facing public education and unions today are simply unprecedented.

As we embark on a new school year, let's commit to not just fighting back against what's wrong in our schools but fighting forward for our shared values — forward for the public education all students deserve; for fair salaries, health-care and affordable housing; for the dignity and respect educators deserve in their classrooms, including the books we use to teach; and fighting forward for racial and social justice for all!

Thank you for all you do to power schools for your students, communities, our profession and our union. Have a fantastic school year.

Onward and upward,

David B. Goldberg
CTA PRESIDENT



Time to Build Trust

BATHROOMS ARE A BIG DEAL at Hoover High School in San Diego. Last year, there were only two-to-three working bathrooms per gender for 2,100+ students.

The issue surfaced as Hoover, a community school, surveyed stakeholders — including students, school staff, parents and community members — to determine their needs. (Bathrooms were students' top issue; more working bathrooms help ensure their health, comfort and ability to focus on academics and other activities). The surveys and focus groups also identified assets that can be used to address the needs.

Our story **"The Right Stuff"** (page 32) shows how these efforts, and solutions being developed, are just one way Hoover is making its community school work. While each community school has different needs and assets, shared decision-making among stakeholders is the common denominator — and imperative to the process. As the number of community schools grows across the state, CTA locals are seeking to codify the shared governance model with school districts, to make sure everyone has an equal voice.

Taking time to build trust among stakeholders is also crucial. "We've learned that listening is critical in building trust," said Anaheim Secondary Teachers Association (ASTA) President Grant Schuster at July's NEA Representative Assembly (**"Talking Community Schools,"** page 40). ASTA has been key in shaping its district's community schools. "We know that progress only travels at the speed of trust."



Trust among educators features strongly in our **Back to School** section. You can have confidence in fellow educators' from-the-trenches tips on teaching, self-care and must-have classroom supplies (**"Life Hacks for the New School Year,"** page 16); advice on connecting with students and overcoming challenges throughout the year (**"Words From the Wise,"** page 20); and helping your students both laugh and learn (**"10 Awesome Tips,"** page 24).

Successful chapter organizing and bargaining rely on trust; see multiple examples in the **Advocacy** section, page 41. Of course, your unwavering belief in students' potential builds trusting relationships with them — especially needed during the uncertainties of college application season, as Michael Steele's high school seniors know (**"Tunnel Vision,"** page 50).

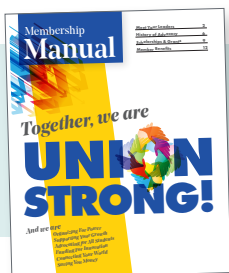
Other stories in this issue showcase members' ingenuity in designing their classroom (**"A Space That Sparks Passion,"** page 51), helping students take flight — literally (**"Sky's the Limit,"** page 53), and creating works that you and students can enjoy (**"Lit From Within,"** page 56).

Welcome back.

Katharine Fong

EDITOR IN CHIEF

editor@cta.org



2023–24 Membership Manual

YOUR GUIDE TO YOUR UNION is inside this magazine. It has everything you need to know about CTA's collective work for students, educators and public education, plus the many resources and essential services available to you as a member. Save this for reference throughout the year.

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2023

CALENDAR

Welcome Back to School!

Patssi Valdez, Room on the Verge (1993), Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art & Culture of the Riverside Art Museum



HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

The month, Sept. 15–Oct. 15, is a time to recognize and celebrate the many contributions, diverse cultures and extensive histories of the American Latino community. Involve students in relevant activities and lesson plans; find resources at nea.org and hispanicheritagemonth.gov/for-teachers.

AUGUST 26
NATIONAL
WOMEN'S
EQUALITY DAY

WOMEN'S
EQUALITY DAY

AUG. 26

The day celebrates the 19th Amendment, passed in 1920, which guarantees American women the right to vote. Today, we fight on for pay equity, women's choice and autonomy, and much more. Talk to students about the meaning of equality and the work needed to achieve it. Find resources at aclu.org (under "women's rights") and seejane.org.



LABOR DAY SEPT. 4

The holiday honors the struggles and contributions of working people. CTA has advocated for educators' (and students') rights since our founding in 1863. Teach students about the importance of labor unions — find resources at pbslearningmedia.org, zinnedproject.org and learningforjustice.org.



CTA Regional Leadership Conferences

Aspiring and current chapter leaders can learn the ropes and increase skill sets at regional leadership conferences. Details at cta.org/conferences.

Region 1

"Leading a Revolution: Transforming Public Education"

SEPT. 8-10 Hyatt Regency SFO, Burlingame

Region 2

SEPT. 22-24 Grand Sierra, Reno

Region 3

"Your Flight to Transformative Leadership, Organized Members & a Stronger Union"

SEPT 29-OCT. 1 Westin Bonaventure, Los Angeles

CTA Special Education Conference

OCT. 6-8 Hyatt Regency OC, Garden Grove. Workshops are geared for educators working with students with IEPs. Dive into classroom pedagogy as well as specific strategies for collaboration, communication and best practices. Details and registration at cta.org/conferences. #CTAsped

CCA Fall Conference

OCT. 13-15 Hyatt Regency, Burlingame. The Fall Conference highlights bargaining, negotiations and grievances. CCA Fall Council, the semi-annual business meeting where budgetary changes and action on a variety of issues occur, also takes place. ▶ cca4us.org/conferences

LGBTQ+ Issues Conference

OCT. 27-29 Margaritaville, Palm Springs. This year's theme: "The State of the Movement: The Fight for LGBTQ+ Justice in Schools." Sessions will focus on Awareness, Capacity & Skill Building, Taking Action &

Organizing. Open to all CTA members. ▶ cta.org/conferences

Voluntary dues contribution

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

American Education Week

NOV. 13-17 American Education Week is celebrated the week prior to Thanksgiving week and includes special days to honor parents, education support professionals and substitute educators. ▶ nea.org/aew

CTA Events:

THE YEAR AHEAD

Locations are TBD except where noted. Visit cta.org/conferences for more.

Region 1 Leadership Conference

SEPT. 8-10, 2023 Burlingame

Region 2 Leadership Conference

SEPT. 22-24, 2023 Reno

Region 3 Leadership Conference

SEPT. 29-OCT. 1, 2023 Los Angeles

Special Education Conference

OCT. 6-8, 2023 Garden Grove

CCA Fall Conference

OCT. 13-15, 2023 Burlingame

State Council of Education

OCT. 20-22, 2023 Los Angeles

LGBTQ+ Issues Conference

OCT. 27-29, 2023 Palm Springs

New Educator Weekend (North)

NOV. 3-5, 2023 Santa Clara

Issues Conference

JAN. 12-14, 2024 Las Vegas

State Council of Education

JAN. 26-28, 2024 Los Angeles

Good Teaching Conference (North)

FEB. 2-4, 2024 TBD

New Educator Weekend (South)

FEB. 23-25, 2024 Orange County/Costa Mesa

CTA/NEA Retired Conference

FEB. 29-MAR. 1, 2024 TBD

Read Across America

MAR. 2, 2024

Equity & Human Rights Conference

MAR. 1-3, 2024 TBD

Good Teaching Conference (South)

MARCH 22-24, 2024 Garden Grove

State Council of Education

APRIL 5-7, 2024 Los Angeles

California Day of the Teacher & National School Nurse Day

MAY 8, 2024

CTA ESP Day

MAY 14, 2024

State Council of Education

MAY 31-JUNE 2, 2024 Los Angeles

NEA Representative Assembly

JULY 3-7, 2024 Philadelphia, PA

Presidents Conference

JULY 18-21, 2024 Orange County

Summer Institute

JULY 24-28, 2024 Los Angeles

State Council of Education

OCT. 18-20, 2024 Los Angeles

LGBTQ+ Issues Conference

NOV. 15-17, 2024 TBD

New Educator Weekend (North)

DEC. 6-8, 2024 TBD



Ready? Set? READ!

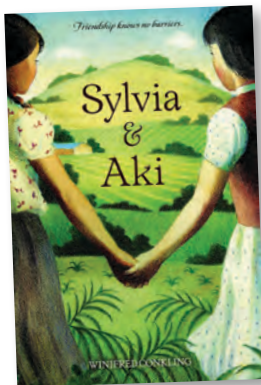


START THE SCHOOL YEAR with books from CTA's California Reads — an annual list of engaging, teacher-vetted books for all grade levels. Find them all at cta.org/careads, plus find links to buy the books at a 20 percent discount. Among this year's selections:

Buffalo Bird Girl: A Hidatsa Story (written and illustrated by S.D. Nelson; grades 1–2), is a stunning picture book biography of a 19th century Hidatsa woman. Buffalo Bird Girl learned the ways of her people living along the Missouri River on the Great Plains. She planted crops, tended fields and joined in the harvest. She prepared animal skins and dry meat. She also played games, trained her dog and saw all sorts of fascinating things at the white man's settlements when she visited the trading post. Nelson, a Standing Rock Sioux, interweaves actual words and stories of Buffalo Bird Woman (ca. 1839–1932) with artwork, archival photos and a historical timeline of the Hidatsa.



Featuring nearly 50 iconic oil paintings and a dramatic double-page fold-out, *We Are the Ship: The Story of Negro League Baseball* (by Kadir Nelson ; grades 3–5) shares the story of the league from its beginnings in the 1920s through its evolution, until after Jackie Robinson crossed over to the majors in 1947. Children will learn about gifted athletes and determined owners, racial discrimination and international sportsmanship, and triumphs and defeats on and off the field. A mirror for the social and political history of Black America, these are stories of unsung heroes who overcame segregation, terrible conditions and low pay to do one thing they loved most: play ball.



Sylvia & Aki (by Pam Munoz Ryan; grades 6–8) is a remarkable story based on true events around *Mendez vs. Westminster Schools District*. This California court case desegregated schools for Latino children and set the stage for *Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education* at the national level. Aki Munemitsu and her family run an asparagus farm in Westminster, Calif., until they are summarily dispatched to an internment camp in Arizona for the duration of World War II. Sylvia Mendez' family leases Aki's family farm but must fight for Sylvia to attend a neighborhood school instead of the "Mexican" school. The girls meet unexpectedly and correspond. Discover who Sylvia and Aki were, and why their stories still matter.



PATRIOT DAY, on September 11, is an annual day we pay tribute to the heroes and victims who lost their lives on September 11, 2001. While it is not a federal holiday, it is a National Day of Service and Remembrance.

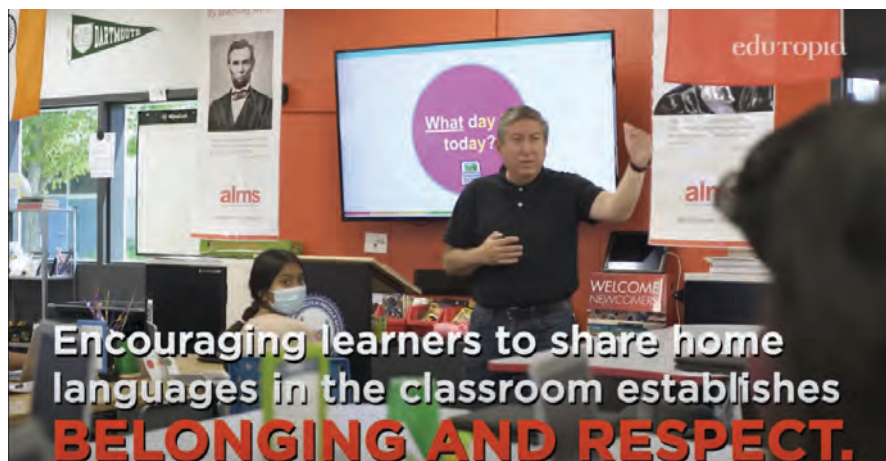
Making Space for Native Languages

At Abraham Lincoln Middle School in Selma, English language development teacher **Efraín Tovar** creates a vibrant classroom community for newcomers — immigrant students who have limited English proficiency. Tovar, a member of Selma Unified Teachers Association, is an advocate for translanguage, the practice of encouraging students to use all their linguistic resources, including their heritage languages, to learn academic content and ultimately be able to move fluently between two or more languages.

"Typically, anywhere from five to eight languages are represented in my classroom," Tovar says in a new video from Edu-topia. He finds that when English language learners are given consistent opportunities to practice their home languages in class, their English proficiency flourishes — along with their sense of belonging and identity.

"The goal is to be bilingual and bi-literate so that you'll not only be a contributing citizen but also be a bridge maker when you speak multiple languages with multiple communities."

Watch the video at tinyurl.com/27a283he.



National Arts in Education Week

National Arts in Education Week, this year Sept. 10–16, celebrates the transformative power of the arts in education. Comprising an array of disciplines including dance, music, theater, media arts, literature, design and visual arts, arts education is a core academic subject and an essential element of a complete and balanced education. Use the week to bring attention to the arts — particularly in supporting equitable access to the arts for all students. Find ways to celebrate, participate and advocate at AmericansfortheArts.org. **#ArtsEdWeek**



Native American Day

The 56th annual **California Native American Day** is Sept. 22 — a state holiday established in 1968 to honor Native American cultures and contributions to the state and the United States. A celebration, with the theme "Protecting Our People With Sovereignty: Past, Present and Future," is planned at the State Capitol; related events will take place around the state. Find teaching resources and information at nativeamericanday.org.



Mathematics Framework Gets an Update

CTA supports the K-12 Mathematics Framework adopted in July by the State Board of Education, which incorporates new concepts to teach the California Common Core State Standards for Mathematics.

This includes integrating rather than isolating standards by organizing lessons around “big ideas”; sparking student curiosity through inquiry and open tasks; adding relevancy and authenticity to lessons; and integrating data use into math instruction. The framework provides guidance around a range of instructional options, including personalized learning, differentiated instruction, and acceleration to meet the needs of high-achieving learners, as well as those in need of greater assistance.

In a statement, CTA President David Goldberg said that while “impressed with the tone that was set prioritizing social justice and equity and access for all students, including pathways for acceleration,” CTA urged integrating the framework with teacher preparation. “We are concerned with the lack of deep and engaging professional development opportunities to help deepen the knowledge of our teachers in teaching math equity. ... We hope to partner with the California Department of Education and key math partners.”

Plans for the rollout of the framework are forthcoming.



NEA Foundation Grants — Apply by Sept. 15!

The NEA Foundation offers grants to support educators in their work with students and their own professional development this year. Envision Equity Grants, Student Success Grants and Learning & Leadership Grants range between \$1,500 and \$5,000, and fund activities for 12 months from the date of the award. Find details at neafoundation.org. Application deadline is Sept. 15, 2023.

The Latest on Student Loan Repayment

To help mitigate the financial stress felt by borrowers when federal student loan payments resume in October, the federal government launched the Saving on a Valuable Education (SAVE) program on July 31. Applications for the income-driven repayment (IDR) plan — which the Biden Administration calls “the most affordable repayment plan in history” — are now open.

SAVE was finalized shortly after the Supreme Court struck down President Biden’s student debt forgiveness initiative in June. It replaces the Revised Pay as You Earn (REPAYE) plan (those already enrolled will be automatically switched to SAVE) and is expected to help borrowers by decreasing monthly payments, limiting interest accrual and reducing the amount borrowers would pay back over their lifetime.

IDR plans are designed to lower monthly loan payments based on income and family size. In addition to SAVE, three other IDR plans are currently offered: Pay as You Earn (PAYE) Income-Based Repayment (IBR) and Income-Contingent Repayment (ICR).

Find out which plan may best suit your needs. Both new and returning applicants can apply or manage a plan on the Federal Student Aid website (studentaid.gov/idr/).





36,000

16

\$2.57 BILLION

"We are not just asking about needs. What are our community's assets? We have to ask that question because we want to have our babies experience the absolute joy of a thriving place to grow and learn."



"It was wonderful. I was shaking. I cried. Mostly because as teachers we are not in this work for the recognition, and because all teachers work so hard and do good. I knew this would mean stepping into a space to uplift that and make sure every teacher's work is given the attention, respect and celebration it deserves."



"Educators have champions in the White House. I know the last three years have been so difficult — we asked so much of you. I want you to know I see you, we see you, and we thank you."

"California's educators are beyond disappointed with the latest rulings from an out-of-touch Supreme Court. Striking down affirmative action nationwide is a blow to racial justice. The ruling in *303 Creative v. Elenis* is nothing less than legalized discrimination against LGBTQ+ Americans. An injury to one is an injury to all and we are more committed than ever to protecting all our educators, and loved ones against these attacks on their civil rights."





"I grew up in same type of environment and conditions as my students. I want to give them every opportunity to get to the next level, that's how I see my role as an educator."

—SERGIO DE ALBA,
Los Banos Teachers Association

Growing Gardens — AND STUDENTS

Sergio de Alba's lessons open worlds beyond his Los Banos elementary school

SERGIO DE ALBA was at Home Depot recently when a former student — now 32 years old — ran up to him. "Mr. de Alba!" he recalls her saying. "How is our garden? Are my handprints still there?"

She was referring to what is now one of 16 ecosystem-themed gardens on the grounds of R.M. Miano Elementary School in Los Banos, where de Alba teaches and has overseen an expansive garden project researched, designed, planted and maintained by students. Participating students leave handprints in surrounding cement and get their names memorialized on a plaque.

"For the past 22 years she had remembered the garden," says de Alba, who conceived the project and uses the gardens to teach subjects including environmental science, agriculture, economics, math and engineering as well as to bring students and families together.

"That's my biggest motivation — I want these kids to see their school as their own."

De Alba has a long list of recognitions for his innovative approaches to learning — the most recent including the

2023 Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators, administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in partnership with the White House Council on Environmental Quality. He also just won a CTA Institute for Teaching 2023-24 grant — his second — that builds on Miano's garden project to focus on climate change and other environmental issues, money management while running an on-site plant nursery business, and deepening learning around STEM and art.

A member of Los Banos Teachers Association, de Alba teaches mostly 4th-6th grades and says his lessons are grounded in social studies and science. "If you use whatever you're most passionate about it comes out in the lesson — so for me math, language arts, everything goes through science and social studies."

The gardens, of course, teach much more than academics. In addition to serving as a hub for student-parent engagement and a business operation where students market and sell plants to the community, they're a showcase for student creativity. One garden designed by a 6th



grader is in the shape of a tree, with the trunk and branches forming walkways and the the abundant “leaves” being the plants; it’s visible on Google Earth. Another has a circular table in the center, with triangular areas for fruit and vegetable plants shooting out so they resemble sun rays.

“Kids are so imaginative,” de Alba says. The gardens let students “leave a mark in a positive way. Kids can see our trust in them — ‘here are our ideas and you [adults] allow them to come to fruition.’ That’s powerful for them.”

De Alba’s overall teaching is centered on developing the whole child and helping learners discover their gifts and talents while focusing on relevant issues in their community — *his* community. Born and raised in Dos Palos, “I grew up in same type of environment and conditions as my students.” While Los Banos, a short distance away and now his home, has become a bit of a Silicon Valley commuter town, Miano Elementary serves a high number of socioeconomically disadvantaged and English language learners, whose lives mirror de Alba’s as a child of Mexican immigrants.

He has spent the past 22 years teaching at Miano, and also researching and developing STEM and social studies programs focused on rural communities. The gardens combine education with the livelihood and expertise of many students’ families in mind, furthering his aim to reduce inequities in K-12 STEM education. “I want to give these kids every opportunity to get to the next level, that’s how I see my role as an educator,” he says.

De Alba, who with his wife and fellow Miano teacher Eliane have two daughters (Linda and Ema), spends a lot of his own funds to keep the gardens running. In addition to securing occasional grants, he and his students pick up extra cash by recycling bottles and cans. Organic fertilizers and amendments alone, he says, cost almost \$1,000 a year. The gardens are open to all Miano educators and their students

▼ “I want these kids to see their school as their own,” de Alba says.



but since it is a teacher-led project and not maintained by the school district, de Alba relies on teachers, students and parents to help care for them.

To him, it’s all worth the time and money. He notes that the former student he ran into in Home Depot runs a landscaping business — an outcome influenced, perhaps, by her time at Miano.

“When I was a kid, my mama used to make me water all her plants and I hated that daily chore,” he recalls. “Then when I went to college, I missed it and bought plants to care for. This is a perfect example of the power of experience; you never know when something you may have not wanted to do changes your perspective and provides unexpected joy.

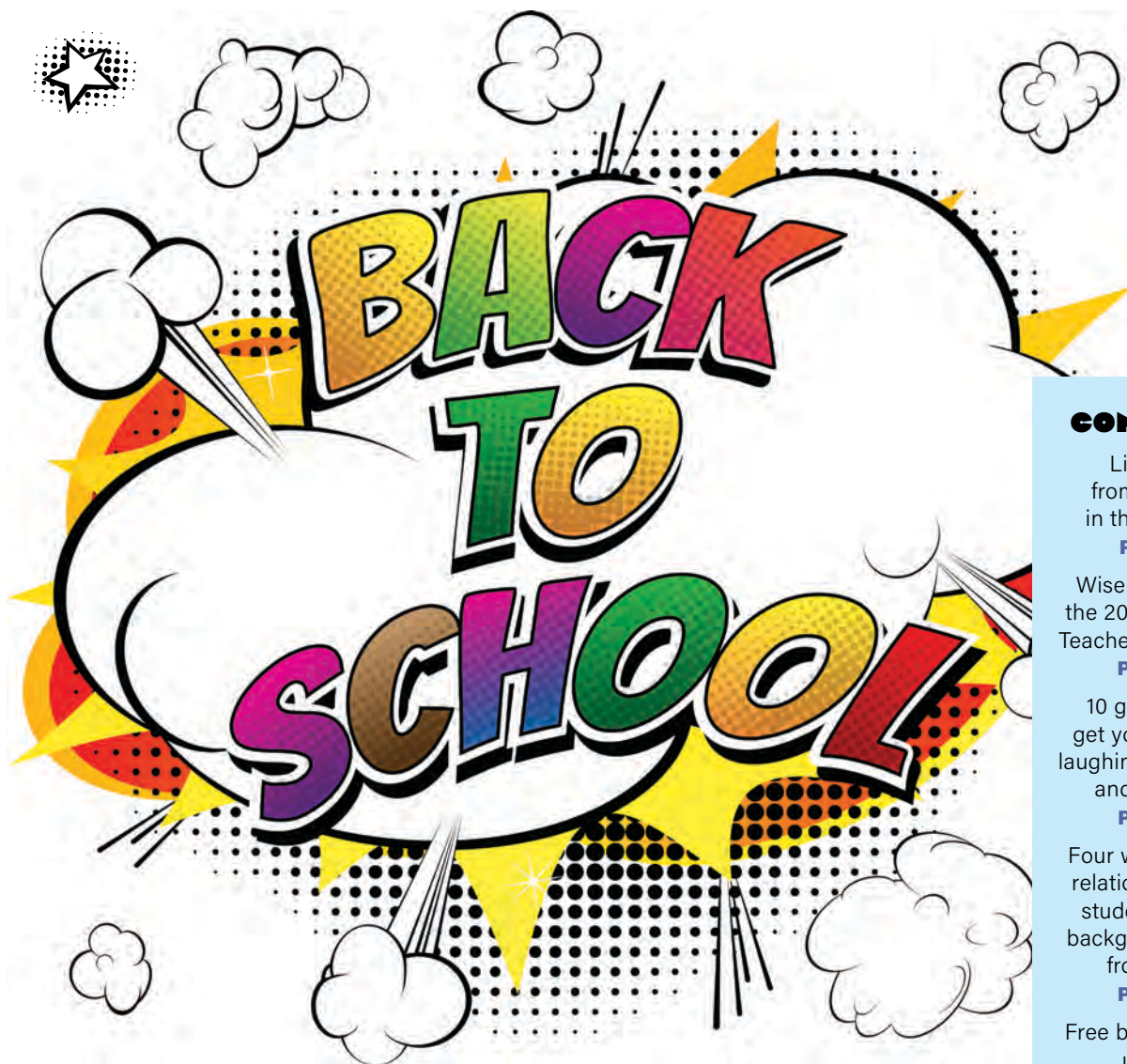
“The gardens now bring happiness to my life, and I hope to instill this same emotion in the students I serve.” ■



IFT Grants

The mission of CTA’s Institute for Teaching is to enhance, support and sustain high-quality teaching and public schools for all California students. IFT awards grants directly to CTA members and local chapters to help fund their innovative ideas and projects that are teacher-driven and based on what is working and successful in our schools and classrooms.

To date, IFT — through CTA members’ dues — has funded 569 grant projects totaling more than \$6.7 million. All CTA members are eligible to apply for an Educator grant (up to \$5,000) or an Impact grant (up to \$20,000). Applications for next year open Dec. 1, 2023. See more at cta.org/IFT.



SCHOOL IS IN SESSION — and we have you covered! On the following pages are tips, resources, insights and inspo as the new year unfolds and students look to you for guidance and learning.

Want more intensive or specific teaching and learning opportunities? Check out CTA's conferences and other events, packed with trainings and workshops to refresh skills, hear from experts, network with colleagues, and much more. Visit cta.org/conferences.

CONTENTS:

Life hacks
from teachers
in the trenches

PAGE 16

Wise words from
the 2023 California
Teachers of the Year

PAGE 20

10 great tips to
get your students
laughing, connected
and engaged

PAGE 24

Four ways to build
relationships with
students whose
backgrounds differ
from yours

PAGE 26

Free books for kids
under 5

PAGE 27

How to grab
students' attention
as soon as they
enter the classroom

PAGE 28

Social Media
Toolbox

PAGE 30

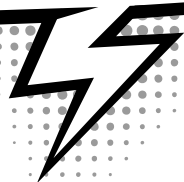
New UDL resource

PAGE 31





LIFE HACKS



FOR THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR

By Julian Peebles

EVERY NEW SCHOOL YEAR is a blank slate, waiting for students to make their unique marks on the whiteboard. It's also an opportunity for educators to adjust their approaches and polish their skills, as lifelong learners and students of the craft.

We asked CTA educators for their thoughts, tips and hacks on must-have classroom items, student engagement and self-care. Here are some of their wise words:

What classroom supplies can you not do without and what makes them so great?

"Dry erase boards and markers to work out math problems, pre-write or take a brain break."

—KENYA UMPHENOUR, fourth grade teacher, *Anaheim Elementary Education Association*



"As a second-year teacher (long term sub for 10 years before that) I cannot do without pencils, colored pencils and Expo markers. We use the colored pencils for rainbow writing."

—ANNE MCCLELLIAN, third grade teacher, *Fontana Teachers Association*



"Learn to be flexible. No pencils? Pair share and take oral answers. Whiteboard marker dead? Find a crayon or pencil. No paper today? Oral pair share. In my 23 years I've probably experienced it all. No internet? No lights? They happen every year. Find a book. Go outside. Make it work."

—MACKENZIE FERREIRA, sixth grade teacher,
Los Banos Teachers Association



"Find out which digital tools are available and which your district may try to discontinue. Sacramento City Unified leadership was going to discontinue a district license for an online supplemental program because their interpretation of the numbers made it seem unwarranted, when several teachers are still using it and want it to stay."

—MARY RODRIGUEZ, high school special education teacher,
Sacramento City Teachers Association



What self-care tips do you have for educators to help make it through the long year?

"After 27 years of teaching, I have come to the conclusion that what is best for my mental health is to put my school bag in another room when I get home at the end of the day. I no longer feel that I must open my bag in the evening, and I take comfort in knowing that it is there for me if (and only if) I want to get it later. A lot of teachers say "Don't take work home with you". I agree and I don't feel guilty if I don't do anything at home."

—JENNIFER DEWEERDT, fourth grade teacher,
Martinez Education Association



"Keep to your contract time as much as possible. If you must work on something, create boundaries like don't stay more than a half hour late (set a timer), don't take work home or absolutely no work on the weekends. Put after-hours auto-notifications on all parent communication. Don't put school mail or apps on your personal devices."

—SARAH VIERRA, elementary school teacher,
Los Banos Teachers Association



"Schedule and plan time for yourself, whether that be an enjoyable activity or exercise class weekly, a coffee date with a friend, or planning a trip for that next three-day weekend or break! Our 'to-do' lists are impossible to complete but become even more overbearing when we don't take time to focus on ourselves."

—CHRISTINE PINGOL, first grade teacher,
Irvine Teachers Association



"Prep five days of sub plans in advance and put them where your admin can easily find them. You never know when a surprise will keep you away."

—WHITNEY WEDDELL, continuation high school teacher, *Kern High School Teachers Association*





"The best self-care tip is to not take on too many tasks, learn to say no and find a type of exercise that you love. Mine is yoga."

—JENNIFER KURFESS, high school teacher, *Rosamond Teachers Association*



"Teaching is really a lonely job so make a couple of close teacher pals. If they're on your grade level, even better, because you can have lunch together and vent or just enjoy adult conversation. Touch base in the morning, support each other. It's too easy to just come in right before school starts and leave right after it ends so you can go home to your families, but these colleagues will be your family as well. Develop and nurture those relationships."

—STACY FEARY, elementary school teacher, *Compton Education Association*

"After 38 years in education, 35 in Pomona Unified, use your days, meet with CalSTRS to plan, and love what you do. If you don't have anything to give and your heart isn't in it, the students know."

—VIVIAN MEASTAS, elementary school teacher, *Associated Pomona Teachers*

"I am a K-12 French and Spanish teacher. My favorite grade span is middle school. I taught for three years in elementary and hated every minute of it! At lunch, I would watch funny videos on YouTube to try to keep myself in a good mood: laughing babies, pet videos, America's Funniest Videos, etc. Laughing releases serotonin in the brain."

—TRINA GONZALES-ALES, K-12 French and Spanish teacher, *Desert Sands Teachers Association*

"Any time I write an email out of contracted hours, I always schedule it to send at 8 a.m. the next day. This allows me to compose emails when I can, but families don't need to know I'm available all hours of the day. It's made a big difference!"

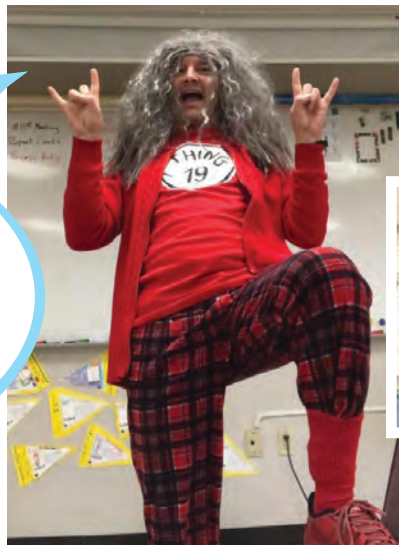
—MARIAH MONROE, elementary school teacher, *Harmony Unified Teachers Association*



What are your best techniques to keep students engaged and on task in classrooms?

"I allow my students to get up from their desks about every 20 minutes to share their work with each other."

—THOMAS HENRY, third-grade teacher, *Stockton Teachers Association*



Thomas Henry keeps students engaged.



"My students earn 'Basin \$Bucks' for doing their schoolwork, homework and for getting along. They have a 'Shop 'til You Drop' opportunity three times a year. We also have 'Fun Friday' for students who complete all of their schoolwork during the week. It's a great motivator!"

—TERESA BASIN, elementary school teacher, *Murrieta Educators Association*



"Engage students with realia and their senses. Regardless of their ages, students are able to associate with their experiences. And if you go on tangents, go for it. Deviation from the norm will get their attention and may become an enrichment lesson."

—CARLOS RIVERA, TK-second grade special education day class teacher, *South Whittier Teachers Association*



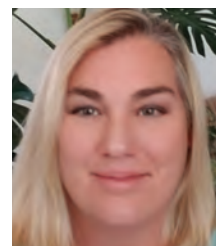
"First priority is set classroom protocols ASAP. Second priority is to establish relationships with the kids. Nothing else is as effective with behavior issues. Third is to always insert some fun and silliness! My students not only learn quickly if it's funny, they also remember it! Finally, read 'Teaching with Love and Logic.' It's a total game changer!"

—RUTH ELLER, elementary school teacher, *Cupertino Education Association*



"Engagement pieces that I cannot do without: 'Education Through Music' (Richards Institute) and 'Whole Brain Teaching.' Both are game changers backed by solid brain research."

—STACEY WELCH, third grade teacher, *Pleasant Ridge Teachers Association*





WORDS FROM THE WISE

**California's Teachers of the Year share advice
as new school year begins** By Julian Peeples

AS EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS across California head back to classrooms for the new school year, there is a feeling of limitless potential (even if summer was too short). We checked in with the five 2023 California Teachers of the Year to get their thoughts as the new school year begins and advice for fellow educators looking to kick off the year right.



Jason Torres-Rangel

AP ENGLISH TEACHER

United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA)

California nominee for
National Teacher of the Year

What does it mean to you to be an educator?

Being an educator means the world, it means everything. You get to help prepare the next generation of participants in our democracy, you get to help students become the best version of themselves, you get to help create a humanizing experience for your students, and you get to let them change and alter you. That all carries with it great honor, responsibility and privilege that I think few professions in this world can come close to.

Advice about making connections with students?

Do what feels right in your heart, be authentic to who you are, lead with love and make space for play and games and humor. Sometimes it's right to ditch the content lesson you had planned and go outside and engage in some fun community-building activities. And no student is too old for play and games and fun — even high schoolers love activities designed for elementary students. Especially after Covid, all students are still just craving the basic things: friendship, camaraderie, connection, safety, trust and love. Start there, the rest will follow.

What do you wish someone had told you when you were a new educator?

I wish someone had told me to slow down, be gentle with myself and allow myself to make mistakes. Father Greg Boyle, founder of Homeboy Industries, came and spoke to our faculty, and he reminded us of a few things if I can paraphrase him here:

- If you go to the margins to make a difference by fixing or saving someone, it's about you, and you will burn out, but if you go there to have the folks make *you* different, then it's eternally replenishing.
- If we don't welcome our own wounds then we may be prone to despising others for theirs. The measure of our compassion lies in our ability to see and welcome our own wounds.
- All behavior is a language. The task is to find out what language the students' behavior is speaking. For students who might be acting out or withdrawing — don't take it personally. It's the language of despair and trauma and damage and abuse and abandonment. And once you know what language they're speaking, you're not tripped up by the behavior.

What is the biggest challenge as an educator, and what is your approach/solution to overcoming it?

The biggest challenge as an educator right now is living in systems that can sometimes be asking teachers to do more with less — so it's more important than ever for teachers to stay connected with and be active in their union. Unions are taking up grassroots social justice orientations to work on issues that address the real underlying complex issues that manifest in our classrooms — class size, wraparound services for students and families, mental health services, student-to-counselor ratios, green spaces, less testing and more teaching, and more.

What would you say to fellow educators as they embark on another school year?

You got this! I'm so inspired by you, and so moved by the passion and power you bring to the job every day. Stay connected, reach out and make time for fun and games and silliness. And as Father Boyle says, "don't show up to the job to change and rescue others, let others change and rescue you."

Catherine Borek

AP ENGLISH LITERATURE
AND DRAMA TEACHER

Compton Education Association



What does it mean to you to be an educator?

I'm infatuated with knowledge and wisdom. I've had a crush on them forever, and it made me want to be an educator. The first crush is knowledge, because you get to gather all sorts of facts and stories and ideas and histories and equations — and then you get to think. Just think. And ask questions. And wonder. Then wisdom comes up and says, "Now, how are you going to use all that knowledge? Are you going to help others? Are you going to solve problems? Are you going to make the world a little better than you found it?"

To teach is to offer students a chance to discover knowledge so that they can then find their wisdom. I hope they get their knowledge and wisdom crushed too, because the lifelong learner makes our world a happier, more hopeful place.

Advice about making connections with students?

1. Ditch the computers.
2. Incorporate movement and play into your learning.
3. Find excuses to go outside.
4. Talk less. Encourage students to talk more.
5. Keep showing up.

What is the biggest challenge as an educator, and what is your approach/solution to overcoming it?

I believe that the greatest justice in our society is found in providing an excellent education to the students who need it most. The challenge here is twofold: 1) how do we engage students who feel trapped at school, and 2) how do we keep high-quality teachers at struggling schools?

Let's redesign schools so they don't feel like a factory. We want students to have autonomy and freedom to follow their curiosity. We want teachers who can be bold and creative. This doesn't happen on an assembly line. If we create spaces where people can tap into their human potential, then I think we begin to solve the equity gap.

What would you say to fellow educators as they embark on another school year?

The more educators I meet, the more I realize how much we need each other. At Dominguez High School, I am part of a team of teachers who have skills and talents I will never have. We complement each other and help each other thrive. Powerful teaching is a team sport.





Lauren Camarillo

HIGH SCHOOL SPANISH TEACHER, *Mountain View-Los Altos Union High School District Teachers Association*

Advice about making connections with students?

I am a strong believer that what you invest in the first few weeks of school in community-building and norm-setting, you will gain back throughout the year with committed, excited students. I have heard many times “You don’t start *actually* teaching until Week 3 or 4?” Teaching is not just covering curriculum. We need our students to know us, know each other and learn how the room functions with respect and collaboration before they have the right mindset to learn content. A tip for the first weeks of school: Have students do mini-presentations about themselves, so you can get a glimpse into their identities and they can find commonalities with each other. I have students make avatars of themselves or hands that we put on the wall to show our connections.

What do you wish someone had told you when you were a new educator?

It’s not about you. Try viewing your teaching through the eyes of your students, taking into account their daily struggles and successes. Teaching is about students’ safety in their identity, and then, much later, their connection to your

curriculum. Planning a cool, fun lesson is great, but it’s a tiny piece of the puzzle.

What is the biggest challenge as an educator, and what is your approach/solution to overcoming it?

It’s challenging to reach all my 150 students. I remind myself that every interaction matters, even a greeting at the door before class starts, or a message to families about how great the student has been doing in class. I may not get to connect closely with all my students, but I can make a conscious effort to learn about their lives and recognize their strengths.

Another challenge is maintaining hope in a challenging profession. Teaching can be isolating, but we have an enormous responsibility to our young people to instill hope and optimism in them, so we need to do everything in our power to let our passion and care extend to them. Whether this means connecting with a colleague from another department, or taking time to do things we love outside of school that refuel us, we must make sure we’re bringing our best selves to our students daily.

What would you say to fellow educators as they embark on another school year?

As I have my students chant in class to encourage each other, “¡Sí, se puede!” In the words of the incredible labor leader and activist Dolores Huerta, the goals we have as educators, both within our classrooms and in the whole educational system, are possible. Just as we want to encourage students to use their voice, we as teachers should use ours to make positive change. Teaching is the most challenging, gratifying, uplifting, emotional, inspiring profession there is, and we are so fortunate to get to play a role in our students’ futures. Lean on your colleagues, friends and families when you need to so that you can bring your best teacher self forward daily! ¡Sí, se puede!



Ben Case

MUSIC THEORY &
INSTRUMENTAL
MUSIC TEACHER
Irvine Teachers Association

What does it mean to you to be an educator?

When it comes to being an educator, my mantra is, “I don’t teach music, I teach students.” This is not to say the content we teach isn’t important, but it is instead a vehicle to reach, support and inspire students. It’s one thing to give a great performance, but it’s another thing to work collaboratively towards building a diverse classroom community that celebrates all voices in the ensemble. Students connect with and understand themselves and each other through their shared experiences, and I am thrilled to be able to help facilitate these as an educator.

Advice about making connections with students?

Taking the time to build the rapport and community early in the year pays dividends when the material gets challenging as things progress. How can we build this rapport? We can take the time to get to know the students’ interests beyond the classroom, to understand what motivates them and why they signed up for



Bridgette Donald-Blue
FOURTH GRADE TEACHER, UTLA

What does it mean to you to be an educator?

To be an educator is to be a part of the community, the village that helps a child reach his or her unique potential. Teaching a child how to read or do math or support them in learning to think and solve problems, and igniting their natural gifts to be successful is the joy of being an educator. To be an educator is to have a unique opportunity to be a part of the future. Very few professions can have direct impact on the future, but teachers do. We teach everyone. No matter what you do in life, everyone has been taught, impacted and inspired by a teacher.

Advice about making connections with students?

The beginning of the year is a time of wonder and new. You get a new class, new parents and a chance to build on your class community. I always spend time observing and talking to my students during lunch or recess. I also have them complete a 'getting to know you' worksheet to build community in the classroom. I call each family during the first two weeks of school. I want that first contact to be positive. I also invite parents to connect with me on Class Dojo so I can establish communication. Lastly, I have my students begin journal

the course to begin with. We can also be transparent and model vulnerability, taking time to share some of our own interests, passions and pursuits.

What do you wish someone had told you when you were a new educator?

I'm sure I was told this: I wish I truly understood that it's okay to start slowly. Taking the time at the start of the year to build community, establish routines and expectations, and involve students as valuable stakeholders in their experiences saves so much time and headache when things get challenging. Especially as new teachers, we often hold ourselves to unrealistic expectations of trying to live up to our mentors' image. This profession is a marathon, not a sprint, and every little experience shapes us into the teachers we become.

writing. I use a series of journal prompts and spend time with the students to get to know them. When students talk about what they like or share their stories you get to know them.

What do you wish someone had told you when you were a new educator?

I wish someone had told me to be patient with myself. I felt like I had to do everything perfectly. I took very seriously that I was someone's teacher. I thought about all the great and not so great teachers I had, and I wanted to get it right. Be patient and as long as your heart stays pure and you treat the students with respect and love, you will find your way. There is no need to stress trying to be perfect.

What is the biggest challenge as an educator, and what is your approach/solution to overcoming it?

I think the biggest challenge is class management. As a new teacher, I found it challenging to manage the needs of 30-plus first graders. Then, I got to know my students and families. I listened to and observed the students. I sought information and help from the parents. I invited those parents into the classroom and built a partnership. I eventually learned that not every student needed the exact same thing, and I used this knowledge of students to design class activities and lessons.

What would you say to fellow educators as they embark on another school year?

Welcome to a brand-new year — a chance to make a very positive impact on students. The students are ready to be inspired by you and your teaching. Some students will need you more to be a support and strength in their community because school is their safe space. Some students will be new to the school and need you even more. The students are ready for new school journeys and new school friends and the new year. The students are ready for you.

What would you say to fellow educators as they embark on another school year?

As a musician, I always feel best about a performance when I've practiced and prepared, and the same goes with starting the school year. The more I have thought out my first few days, weeks and even months, the more confident I feel once things get going. Further, the more prepared I feel, the easier it is to adapt and roll with the unexpected challenges synonymous with the beginning of the year. I recommend being deliberate about the classroom culture you aim to create. Setting the tone at the beginning of the year helps value what each student brings to the table, as well as gives them a better context for their role in the bigger picture throughout the year.



10

AWESOME TIPS

**...to get your students laughing,
connected and engaged** By EQ Schools

STUDENTS WHO PLAY together learn and work better together. Games lead us to feel more connected to others, feel emotionally safer and more regulated, and help us experience relaxed alertness and be more fully present and mindfully here. All these states lead us to be more ready to learn, collaborate and create with others.

Games also bring a little bit of vulnerability to the surface in a way that more deeply connects students and teachers to one another and makes failure and being an imperfect human feel a little bit safer. If you play the games below with your students, they are more likely to ask a question about the quadratic formula, how to write a word, or to admit and even celebrate making a mistake after they took a risk in answering a question in class.

Check out these amazing games and consider starting your class every day with one of these games in the next month!

Pass the Ball

Students stand in a circle. One person pretends to hold a large ball in their hands. They pass it to someone else with great eye contact across the circle. That person needs to pretend to catch the ball and then pass it to someone else. That person catches it and passes it to someone else. Etc.

After a minute or two, have students make a high-pitched "boowoo" sound when they pass the ball. It's a funny sound that people get giggles from.

After another minute, tell students to make whatever sound that comes to them (as long as it's appropriate) when they pass the ball.

Counting to 10 in a Circle

Students stand in a circle. In a random order they count digits up to 10. Each student can say only one digit at a time, and if two people count at the same time, the group starts back again at zero. If the group is successful, challenge them to do the ABCs.

Walk Cool

Play a fun song that students can dance to around the room or at least "walk cool" to. After about 15 seconds, pause the music and tell students that they need to freeze. Then they are to partner up with the person that is closest to them. If someone needs a partner, partner up with them.

Instruct the pair to come up with the most amazing handshake in the world. Tell them that they have 1 minute to come up with it and practice it. They also need to remember the name of their partner. Play the music again for about 15 seconds. Freeze it and tell them to partner up with a new partner. They are to come up with an amazing slogan (like "winter is coming"). On the third freeze they are to find a partner and give each other kind nicknames after learning a bit about each other (1 minute), and on the fourth freeze, they are to find a partner and give them a hug.

After they did the handshake, slogan, nickname and hug with four different partners, tell them that they have 60 seconds to find those four partners and do these again with

them. Play the music as they do it. At the end ask if anyone is proud of their handshake, their slogan, the nickname they were given or their hug.

Name It!

Have students walk around the room and every 3 seconds they should stop, point at something that they see, and name it with gusto! After doing that for a minute, students walk around the room and every 3 seconds they should stop, point at something that they see and name it anything they want BUT what it actually is. This is surprisingly hard to do, and you can have a discussion with students about why that is at the end of the game.

Plan a Party

Put students in groups of three or four and tell them that they are to plan a party. Let them know that they have an unlimited budget for this party. One at a time, each person adds an idea to the party. In the first go-round, when a person wants to add an idea they need to start their sentence with "yes, but..." So one student might say, "Let's have rockets with balloons on them" and the next student will start with "yes, but let's also have video games..." After a minute, see if any group is willing to share what their party is like.

In the second go-round, have students do the same thing but instead of saying "yes but", have them say "yes and" when they want to add an idea. They are going to see a dramatic shift in creativity and ideation. Have groups share their ideas.

Knife and Fork

Pair students up. Tell them that you are going to call to things and in 5 seconds or less, without talking, they are to transform themselves into these things. Shout out "Knife and fork," and see your students turn into that. Then shout something else, like "salt and pepper," and wait until they turn into that. Be sure to tell students to look at other pairs as they turn into these things.

4 Person Titanic

This game is similar to Knife and Fork except that your students will be in groups of four and you will give them between 10 and 15 seconds to become what you decide to call (like the Titanic). Remember to tell them to do it without talking and to look at other groups once they are done. Ideas to call out are Titanic, a plane, a car, the zoo, a house, etc.

Group Story

Put students into groups of three. They will create a story together by having each person say one word at a time. The first person will say "once". The second person will say "upon". The third person will say "a". The first person will say "time". Then the second person says whatever word comes to them, and the third person builds off that word with their own word, and so on. The group needs to bring the story to a conclusion of some sort.

The Realtor

Pair students and tell one of them that they will play the realtor and the other the home buyer. The person playing the realtor takes 2 minutes to interview the home buyer about what they love to do. Then the realtor takes 2 minutes to envision in their head the perfect house for the homebuyer.

Then the realtor takes the home buyer on a tour of the house. The realtor "shows" the homebuyer the door and the beautiful ringer on the door, the amazing rug, lights, artwork, and all the other ideas that they came up with. Important: the homebuyer has to be excited about everything the realtor says and ask the realtor lots of questions about the house. The realtor is to be fully confident about every answer they give.

At the end of the game you can ask them: "How did it feel to have someone agree with you and be enthusiastic about what you said? How did it feel to come up with answers on the spot?"

Group Rock Paper Scissors

Pair students up and tell them to play one game of rock paper scissors. The winner gets to duel with a winner from another pair. The loser becomes the most amazing and loud cheerleader for the winner, shouting their names and encouraging them to beat their next opponent. After the next round, the winner will have three cheerleaders behind them to duel another person who won in the second round.

The game continues until one person wins. Important: Emphasize that the support, enthusiasm and team effort by the cheerleaders is way more important than the winner of the game. ■

California-based EQ Schools provides trainings to schools and districts that help adults and students thrive. Founder/educator Roni Habib spoke at CTA's 2023 Summer Institute, through the Instruction and Professional Development strand. Visit cta.org/ipd to view the video and visit eqschools.com for more information and resources.

"Games bring vulnerability to the surface in a way that more deeply connects students and teachers to one another and makes failure and being imperfect feel safer."



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS...

...whose backgrounds differ from yours. A thoughtful approach that appreciates diversity within the classroom can help. By **Jaslynn Laurence**



WHEN I FIRST STARTED teaching, I found myself in a lively middle school classroom unsure of how to connect with my students. While we shared similar skin tones and cultural experiences, our backgrounds were different due to our places of birth being over 1,000 miles apart. I grew up in a small town, and here I was in a city with a population of 5 million. Having moved to the area only two years prior, I was unfamiliar with the unique challenges and opportunities the children in that environment faced and how their surroundings shaped their educational experiences.

Meaningful relationships with my students blossomed when I began to understand their perspectives and empathize with their lives outside of the classroom. Some simple acts allowed me to establish a nurturing classroom environment that created a community of mutual respect and care. Relationship building with my students created a foundation of high expectations and supported effective classroom management.

1. Start the school year with a visit

It's hard to see someone's perspective unless you can see the world through their lens. As a teacher who never lived in an urban environment, I knew there was no better way

to truly know my students than by visiting their communities. This could include meeting parents during their child's extracurricular activities or simply engaging parents in conversation on the sidewalk outside of their homes. I contacted parents through email, text or phone and scheduled a convenient time and location for them. It was important that parents saw this outreach as support and an introduction to the entire family.

The conversations were more informal than parent-teacher conferences, and I focused on being social and relatable as a new person in the community. These meetings showed my commitment to student/parent engagement and relationship building. They also developed a sense of trust, where I was seen as an extension of the student's network of care, and led to a crucial change in the parents' connection to the classroom. The meetings were key for classroom management because students knew that their parents were "on my side" and supported my efforts in their yearlong learning journey.

2. Learn about cultural differences

In my first years of teaching, I had a few mishaps when it came to culture. As a social studies teacher who loved

"A willingness to be reflective and humble so that you remain respectful to students and the school community will create an environment of mutual support and respect."

game-based learning, I created a lesson where children pretended to be the president for the day.

In the game, students drafted laws and reviewed the government's checks and balances. While circling the classroom, I realized that a student was not working. After I inquired, they let me know that they couldn't participate because their religious views prohibited them from running for political office or voting. In an instant, I had to come up with an alternative activity that would still enrich this student's learning experience. After school, I called the mother for clarity and a plan of action moving forward. It helped me to bridge a disconnect that I didn't know existed and provided an opportunity for my students to learn about tolerance, diversity and the importance of understanding one another.

I gained important insights: Lesson plans cannot have a one-size-fits-all approach. I needed to be flexible and prepared to create lessons that reflected the population of my classroom.

3. Appreciate an aspect of your students' culture or background

When it comes to appreciating and understanding different cultures, there's a fine line between appreciation and appropriation. As a teacher working in a diverse environment, you need to show interest and respect. During my time teaching elementary school, most of my students were Hispanic and Black. The school celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month and Black History Month to reflect those groups within the school's population. Every class was required to create a performance for each cultural celebration — a dance, a song, a poem, a play or any variation of performing arts.

I approached my class's performance for Hispanic Heritage Month with care and reverence. I sought input and contributions from Hispanic students and their parents through classroom discussions, informal conversations and self-guided research on the diverse Hispanic community of the school. This allowed everyone to express the aspects of their culture that they wanted to highlight while ensuring that non-Hispanic students could show their appreciation in

the most appropriate way. The school body enjoyed the performance, and I valued the opportunity to teach my students the history of the month.

4. Reach out to other educators at your school

Studies show that minority teachers usually work in environments where the community matches their own cultural identity. If you're in an environment where you don't share the same background as the community or neighborhood, there's a good chance that someone in the building does. It's best to reach out to that teacher, counselor, secretary or foreman and ask if they can offer guidance for connecting with the community. They can not only act as a buffer but also help you bridge communication gaps that arise with parents and students, as cultural barriers can hinder effective communication.

My first year of teaching was in an affluent African American community where most of the parents had an expectation of communication through email. When I moved to a Title 1 school later in my career, parents weren't very responsive to email for a variety of reasons. When I casually pointed this out to a veteran teacher, I learned that the community preferred to communicate through text messages and phone calls. The realization that meeting people at their preferred communication level is vital for nurturing teacher-parent-family relationships was a turning point for me that led to the practice of connecting outside of the classroom.

Creating relationships with your students will take time and consistent effort, require interest and understanding and should be a priority for the beginning of the school year. A willingness to be reflective and humble in your approach so that you remain respectful to students and the school community will create an environment of mutual support and respect that can result in successful academic outcomes. ■

This story originally appeared in Edutopia.



Free Books for Young Children

On June 6, California launched a statewide expansion of **Dolly Parton's Imagination Library**. It allows all California children under five to be eligible to enroll in the program to receive a free book every month in the mail. The program is currently active in 30 counties and is expected to fully cover the state by 2028. The expansion was made possible by SB 1183 (Grove), signed into law by Gov. Gavin Newsom last year.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is active in all 50 states and has gifted over 200 million books since 1995. California is the first state to provide a bilingual option (English and

Spanish), and when its expansion is complete, it will be the largest Imagination Library in the nation. Learn more at library.ca.gov/services/to-public/imagination-library.



HOW TO START STRONG

Engage students the moment they enter your classroom

By Sarah Gonser

THE FIRST FEW moments of class, like the opening lines of a novel, are critical. For teachers, they're the starting gate for the lesson that follows and "the key to enlivening — or extinguishing — student interest and learning," writes Curtis Chandler for MiddleWeb. Making sure that your warm-up activity is both substantive and highly engaging, or even downright fun, draws students into the classroom and the lesson. It takes practice and some trial and error, but veteran teachers say it's worth the effort.

"The battle against student disengagement and disinterest is winnable when we work to infuse the opening minutes with experiences designed to pique student interest, activate prior knowledge, have some fun and prepare them for the day's learning," writes Chandler, a professor at Brigham Young University-Idaho and former middle school teacher.

Class warm-up strategies aren't new, but they can get less attention than they should, especially when the focus for teachers is on moving quickly into the content. Middle school math teacher Jay Wamsted says he began his 8th grade math class the same way for more than a decade: with a warm-up problem on the board and the expectation that students immediately get to work solving it. Except, he writes, that's not how things went most days.

"What really happened was that out of 30 students, maybe five would diligently engage in the problem. The rest would delay with tactics ranging from pencil sharpening to grabbing a few extra winks," Wamsted writes. He says he'd have two choices: "Go over the warm-up problem for less than 20 percent of the class — typically the 20 percent that didn't need it in the first place — or waste time for the on-task students by giving less proactive students a few extra minutes."

How can you do better? Here are seven warm-up activities, from a variety of sources, designed to build connection,



activate prior knowledge, and be engaging enough to pull kids into the content.

Link to what they know

Taking a few moments at the beginning of class to help kids connect what they already know to new content — a strategy known as previewing — helps create more durable learning, "especially for students with limited background knowledge," Chandler writes.

Bait and switch: Begin by briefly discussing common misconceptions students may have about the topic of the day's lesson, Chandler writes. For a lesson about oceans, for example, everyday misconceptions might include statements like "all oceans have the same salinity," or "nothing lives in anoxic mud." Have students take a quick true/false quiz focused on statements that "all seem plausible but are all false," he suggests, before revealing to the class that all the quiz statements are in fact false — and that they're about to learn why throughout the lesson.

Informational hooks: Designed to get kids interested in the lesson ahead, informational hooks can be any type of short, targeted media: videos, clips from a podcast, news headlines, photos — even a great anecdote. To vet relevant hooks, Chandler suggests considering the following:

- What concepts or skills will the hook highlight?
- What is "truly unique, novel or useful" about it?
- Will the hook grab their attention — but not distract from the lesson?

Productive failure: Inspired by the research of learning scientist Manu Kapur, consider designing a short problem-solving activity, perhaps focused on crucial target concepts. The problem should be just beyond students' reach and designed to activate prior knowledge, motivate

them and surface what they do and do not know. Explain that the exercise is designed to be confusing and frustrating and that struggling is normal — even expected. Allow students to wrestle with a problem for a few minutes, then step in and build off their ideas and solutions, and then teaching how to correctly solve the problem.

Vocabulary splashes: Present key vocabulary terms and concepts, along with brief definitions, and ask students to sort the words in ways that make sense to them. With a partner or in small groups have them discuss their sorting rationales. “The teacher then leads a discussion of how the terms and concepts are related to each other,” Chandler writes, and connects them, if possible, to students’ interests and prior knowledge. Consider closing out the lesson by having students sort and explain the words once more.

Rapid review: Students partner with a classmate, discuss what they learned during the previous class, and then present to the group. It’s a quick, effective way to “get students active, and helps the teacher know what ‘stuck’ from the previous day’s lesson,” Chandler writes.

Or, make it chatty

Warm-ups don’t need to be overly complicated and a few minutes of chatting about things unrelated to content can be

enough to get class started. In Wamsted’s math classroom, he’s found that “just about any investment in actual conversation — whether it’s about doughnuts or spiders or the ramifications of this being the one-year anniversary of the U.S. pulling out of Afghanistan — will pay off mightily in the long run.”

At the start of class, students see a playful message on the board that’s designed to start conversations: “Wednesday? Wow! Halfway through!” or “Test next week? Probably!” for example. Wamsted then shows the day’s agenda on the board and follows with a slide he calls his “cold open” — designed to generate more chatting: “It might be a picture of my dog. It might be a trivia question about the top five fastest land animals.”

Once the chatter dies down, Wamsted introduces an attendance question. “At its best, this question connects to the cold open. It lets me share something about myself and opens the door for my students to share a little bit with me,” he says. If he showed a photo of a dog during the cold open, his attendance question might involve asking about his students’ pets, for example. ■

This story originally appeared in Edutopia.

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THE POWER OF MEMES

(PART 1)

Building Your Social Media Toolbox

By **Elizabeth Barcelos**

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

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

This issue, we'll walk through how you can add **memes** to your content toolbox.

Mememes aren't just something funny you chuckle at and send to your group chat. They're images with a language of their own that really are worth a thousand words. On platforms where brevity is key to getting your message across, they can be a valuable tool.

Done well, memes can be a great way to drive engagement to your social media pages. Once you understand the language of memes, it doesn't take much work to create content that people will want to share. Let's look at some examples.

▶ USING MEMES TO GET A MESSAGE OUT QUICKLY

One of the things I love about memes is that because they're funny, they can take the sting out of getting folks to change their online behavior. I'm very big on using hashtags correctly, but I don't like scolding people who are trying but don't know the right hashtag. When this happened at CTA Summer Institute last year, I threw together this quick meme to fix it.

When I say quick, I mean it. I used a meme generator (I like imgflip.com) to create this and shared it to our social media platforms in less than 15 minutes. After sharing it in a few Facebook groups and sending it to a handful of folks I already knew were at Summer Institute, word got out fast — faster than if I had tried to track down everyone posting about Summer Institute myself. People started using the right hashtag without feeling like they'd been scolded by a cranky social media manager.



USING TRENDING MEMES TO REACH NEW AUDIENCES

While some memes are evergreen, some are trends that come along, blow up and then disappear. I'm not saying you need to hop on every trend, but when it works, it works.

Anyone remember these Halloween costume memes from October 2022? When I first started seeing them, I thought to myself. "Okay, we have to do this. But it's not enough to be funny. If this post blows up, we want all those people to understand what it means to be a union educator." Call it the spoonful of sugar that helps the message go down, if you want.

While you can't predict when a post will go viral, I had a good feeling with this one. I was happy to see this post get a ton of engagement, but what made me happiest was when I saw folks who don't engage with CTA's content sharing it to their Instagram stories and Facebook feeds.

This is just the beginning of what you can do with a well-targeted meme. I'll be shouting out some more great examples in my next column, so if you've seen any memes for union educators that you love, send them to ebarcelos@cta.org. I might even feature them in my next column! ■



SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLBOX TOPICS COMING UP

- Memes, Part 2
- Member Features

More ways to build your toolbox: See past columns at cta.org/educator. And if you're attending CTA conferences this fall (including Region 1 and 2 leadership conferences), we'll be offering social media training sessions; check out cta.org/conferences.

Universal Design for Learning Resource

The **California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE)**, a state-wide agency that helps county offices of education, school districts and charter schools deliver a quality education for every student, has partnered with educators to create UDL for Educator Empowerment. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an educational framework based on research that guides the development of flexible learning environments and learning spaces that can accommodate individual learning differences.

The UDL learning path aims to empower California educators with the needed knowledge and skills to apply UDL holistically to their practices as professionals. Designed in partnership with teachers, for teachers, this path contains six modules of multimedia content, opportunities for reflection and community, and links to resources to deepen participants' learning and practice.

Through each of the modules, educators are invited on a "choose your own adventure" path of professional self-discovery that equips them with the skills for creating inclusive and equitable lessons and learning environments. Embedded within these learning experiences is the knowledge for diagnosing learning barriers in real time.

The learning path is open to all, on-demand, at no cost, and is the latest in a series of resources created by the CCEE to support the implementation of UDL in schools and districts across the state. Authors include CTA staff consultant on special education policy Karen Taylor. Find it at tinyurl.com/32nnvj8u. ■



▼ Educator Tina Luu, center, teaches nutrition and culinary arts with fresh produce from Hoover High School's food market.



The Right Stuff

The essential elements that make
a San Diego community school thrive by Katharine Fong

EACH COMMUNITY SCHOOL is different — they have to be. The community school model draws on the unique strengths of a neighborhood to address its students' unique needs. This is particularly clear at bustling Hoover High School in San Diego, one of five designated community schools in the San Diego Unified School District last year (another 10 have been designated to begin their transformation this year, 2023-24).

Hoover, with 2,136 students, is situated in the most ethnically diverse neighborhood of the county, City Heights. Many students and families are newcomers to the United States; 100% are eligible for free and reduced-cost lunch. "We have over 40 languages represented among our families," says Candace Gyure, the school nurse. The demographic breakdown, according to Hoover's website, is 75% Latino/Hispanic, 12% Asian, 9% African American, 1% White, 22.3% English Learners and 7.5% Homeless Youth.

"Hoover High serves one of the highest need communities in San Diego," says Kyle Weinberg, president of the San Diego Education Association (SDEA), which with CTA has long advocated for community schools. "Community schools are a great way to identify the unique needs of a community like City Heights, and also to transform how we do education within the classroom, have more culturally sustaining curriculum — more community-based curriculum, real-world projects, collaboration with community organizations on the issues that are facing our communities."



Kyle Weinberg

Like many schools, Hoover offered various services — including a wellness center, mental health center, etc., before officially becoming a community school. But the community school structure brought shared decision-making among students, families, educators, district and community as well as a data-oriented approach to assess needs and assets. This has resulted in

▼ Hoover High is situated in the most ethnically diverse neighborhood of San Diego County.

▼ In class with Chase Fite, Hoover's community schools site coach and AP Government teacher.



more accessible, coordinated services, and resources directed to or developed for specific needs. The structure has also allowed for enhanced partnerships with community organizations and stronger connections among the school, students and families.

"It's a long-term approach," Weinberg says. "Addressing [social, mental, physical] needs now will impact such things as academic performance, social emotional learning, and attendance in the coming years."

Here are the elements that Hoover has put in place and continues to refine:

Community Schools Site Governance Team

Composed of 10-12 elected positions who have an equal voice and represent all stakeholders: students, parents, community, union educators, district leaders. The team oversees the working group subcommittee, composed of about 22 people who work on strategy and communication, assessing needs and assets, developing protocols and processes, etc. SDEA has a precedent for shared governance won in a contract fight in the 1990s - see page 38 for details on how key this is to the community schools model, and what it requires..

Involvement of all stakeholders

- **Parents:** "Convincing parents that this is not district-driven but truly collaborative [is hard]," says Richard Gijon, Hoover High's community schools coordinator. "But I can see them get excited when I ask, 'What are the top priorities for your students,' and we actually listen to them and ask them to work with us and be part of that process."
- **Students:** It's the same with students, Gijon says. "To see their excitement has been amazing — 'not only are you asking me for my voice, but you're actually telling me what you're hearing!'"
- **Educators and community:** A big part is played by the community schools coordinator and site coach, says Chase Fite, Hoover's site coach, "You need someone who's trusted, [who can convince others that] this is something that is going to improve our site and improve the life of the students as well as all people surrounding our community."



"We've had top-down approaches to school transformation. But they didn't take into account the unique needs of each school. The community schools model is different."

—RICHARD GIJON,
Hoover High Community
Schools Coordinator





“Hoover reached out and invited us parents to get involved; they did a focus group to find out what we needed for ourselves and for our students. That was wonderful because, as a single mom, I could get comprehensive help for my child. And now I’m a member of the Site Governance Team — we get to make good choices, good decisions for the students....The school has a lot of activities to get involved with, a lot of clubs for young people, trainings and events for parents, family engagement.”

—LISA PEOPLES, parent and Hoover Site Governance Team member

People power

It takes a village, of course, but specific people in specific roles are crucial to success.

RICHARD GIJON, Community Schools Coordinator. Gijon works full time to coordinate all student and family support services and creates an environment that helps support student achievement and wellness. “The students and families in our community dictate what I do. Some days a family comes in in crisis [over] issues of food security, housing, and I connect them to the resources we have. Sometimes it’s mental health....We had all these resources [before, but] it was a little disjointed. Part of my role [is] trying to get all these programs to develop a plan to engage all our students.”

CHASE FITE, Community Schools Site Coach. The AP government teacher spends one class period on community schools work, including needs assessment and data collection and analysis; implementing expanded and enriched learning; and developing and implementing collaborative leadership and decision-making protocols and structures. “A site coach helps build up the relationships and the onboarding of the staff as well as the community partners on site. I’m also developing collaborative leadership protocols and structures and helping implement them.”

SITE GOVERNANCE TEAM, see previous page. The site team approach, with its shared governance, was actually established in the SDEA contract in the 1990s to ensure members’ ability to democratize the workplace, determining such things as school schedule and dress code. (Note: The team is different than the School Site Council.) Community schools’ work builds on these existing decision-making bodies.

SDEA AND MEMBER EDUCATORS, a critical force in supporting community schools as drivers of equity, democracy and engagement among students, families and community — and educators.

▼ At top: Slide from a San Diego community schools presentation. Bottom: At Hoover’s Health Center, students can visit licensed therapists from Rady Children’s Hospital.



"Because of community schools, we were able to expand Hoover Market; it gave us the infrastructure to give everyone more access. What made it meaningful is that it's infused throughout campus, it's part of our curriculum. Our lessons this month are on the connection between mental health and food, and how eating nutritious food can change your mood and decrease depression. Students are part of the transformational knowledge about how food impacts people, their health and their communities."

—ELIZABETH LONNACKER, English teacher who started Hoover Market



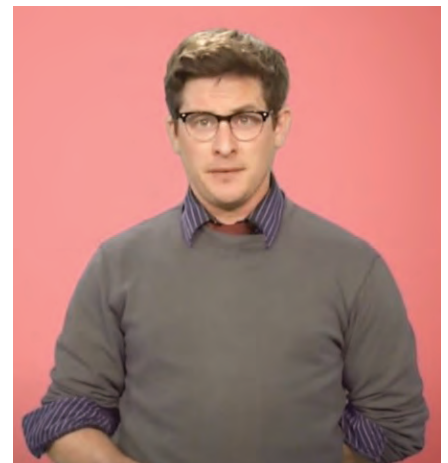
Assessment of needs and assets

Hoover sought answers from all stakeholders: What does success for students and the school look like? What are the barriers to achieving it? What strengths — including from parents and community — can we draw on to address the challenges? Through surveys and focus groups, the top three needs, by group:

- **Students:** Working bathrooms (last year there were only 2-3 working bathrooms per gender for 2,136 students; some were closed due to maintenance, vandalism, drug usage); health, including improved food; and attendance (not just chronic absenteeism, but security and being consistent with school rules).
- **Parents:** Academic enrichment and tutoring, mental health, opportunities for students to connect socially.
- **Educators:** Attendance (including tardiness), mental health supports, student engagement. Mental health services and supports were also among the top needs for students and parents.

Data collection:

- **Students:** "We reached 83% of the student body through surveys and focus groups," Fite says. "We audited the information to ID those students we have no data on — such as the chronically absent. Then we created a system to engage in home visits with those students and parents to ID a unique stakeholder group who have particular needs, assets and wants."
- **Educators:** 92% of certificated staff completed surveys. Overall, an aggregated 74.5% of classified and certificated staff participated in focus groups.
- **Parents:** "By June 2023 we will have reached 75% of parents," says Gijon. "We started multiple focus groups in January 2023, in Spanish and English, electronic and paper surveys in six different languages. Every day at drop-off we were asking 'Have you done your survey? We want your feedback.' We were also hitting all our big events, and asking community partners who have parent meetings to pass along the survey."



"If we improve the community at large, we're improving it for everybody, including ourselves. All the things that allow for us to be community schools is a product of union fights, union wins and continued union work."

—CHASE FITE, Hoover High Community Schools Site Coach





“The numbers of kids who are referred or self-refer to mental health services just exploded. Families don’t always have access to services. So one of the things we’re hoping is [that] our students bring awareness around mental health to parents, to be a bridge to help destigmatize getting services. There is still a lot of shame in families about what it means if their child is struggling with a mental health issue. Through community schools, we connect more with them and help them access services for their students.”

—ELLEN HOHENSTEIN, Health Academy director

Exploration of potential solutions

Use the data to determine the needs and assets; the working group with input from others are coming up with ways to use the assets to address the needs, as well as create other assets or bring in services for specific needs. This is an ongoing effort. Some early outcomes:

- **Class projects:** In a first-semester U.S. History class with juniors, Chase Fite’s students worked on a public health advocacy project using the community schools framework. “For me, this was a rough draft/dry run for implementing the framework before doing so with other stakeholder groups,” Fite says. Focusing on the bathroom issue (see previous page), students developed a needs and assets assessment survey and pushed it out to the school for completion, and created a website where they analyzed survey data, presented historical context of the issue, explained the science behind why the issue is harmful to the community, and put forward philosophical and ethical theories that they used to argue whether or not to act on the issue.

Students then presented their findings to other classes, teachers and administrative leaders, and engaged in collaborative dialogue about solutions the community would want to see implemented.

In a second semester AP Government class, Fite had students refine the working group protocols for determining and implementing solutions. This class found that the root cause of the bathroom issue was vandalism due to lack of student ownership, and that a student art installation, for example, could allow them to regard the space as their own and discourage vandalism. Another class found the root cause to be bathroom drug use and vaping, which cause other students to avoid bathrooms. Students suggested those who are caught using drugs take part in a Social Justice Academy-run student mentoring program with a focus on restorative justice.

- **Next wave of planning:** The district is paying for a two-week 2023 PBL summer institute where the working group and other stakeholders are delving deeper into the needs and assets data to come up with solutions. For example: creating a mental health campaign through Hoover’s Health Academy, as data shows more than half of students don’t know how to access the school’s mental health services; and dedicating community schools funds to more supports offered by community partners, such as those involving mental health.

These new efforts around mental health build on current/earlier initiatives by educators such as Ellen Hohenstein, whose students work on campus-wide projects to bolster mental health awareness and interventions, and Elizabeth Lonnacker, whose students created mental health public service announcements for the school.

- **More opportunities for engagement:** “Parents want the school to become that hub where they can have meaningful relationships with each other and with other positive adults,” says Gijon. To that end, he and Hoover have further developed resources and events for students focused on social connections, and for parents/families focused on health and wellness, government and community programs, etc.

“Having health services at Hoover benefits students because they have access in a timely manner, they can have their needs met and remain in school. It benefits parents who take less time off from work. They don’t have to worry about transportation or hours. Everything’s right here. ... [I will soon have] a spot screener to test vision and screen students who would otherwise not be screened. It will take about 5 seconds to get a complete reading, and then provide information to a vision specialist for follow-up.”

—CANDACE GYURE, school nurse



▼ Below, students stock classrooms with items requested by teachers for their students — a variety of healthy snacks and other foods.

Featured Services, Programs

Based on its unique needs, Hoover High School has integrated a number of successful student and family supports, among them:

- **Hoover Market**, in partnership with Feeding San Diego; a variety of foodstuffs are free to students and available in classrooms as well as at the market. Special needs students and Hoover’s Health Academy students stock and distribute foods; educator and chef Tina Luu teaches nutrition and culinary arts with fresh produce and other ingredients from the market, and the food distribution center is open to the community twice a month. The market was started by teacher Elizabeth Lonnacker in 2022, after she noticed students were taking snacks she had in a classroom cupboard as “food for the weekend.” She used project-based learning with students to help bring the market to fruition. The initiative addresses some of the student absentee problems as well, as many students hold part-time jobs to help their families pay for food, rent, etc., but whose jobs interfere with school. (See a recent video about the market at tinyurl.com/2jc5s8sm).
- **Organic school garden project**
- **After-school programming** with strong parental input, focusing on arts and music, science, etc.
- **At-risk student support** through Youth Empowerment



- **Health center**, offering health assessments, general assistance with chronic illnesses, immunizations, vision and hearing screening, family planning services, dental services; some services through La Maestra Community Health Center (on campus)
- **Mental health supports**, through Mending Matters, offering drop-in and crisis services and Rady Children’s Hospital, offering licensed therapists (both on campus)
- **Recovery services**, through Union of Pan Asian Communities (on campus)
- **Laundry facilities**, washing machines for student/family use (on campus)
- **College and career services**, through Avenues for Success (on campus)





"Our counseling team facilitates attendance, academics, mental health, education, referrals. We saw that there is a high need for parenting workshops, how to parent your teen, so we recently started them, with childcare available. We have lots of resources for families — Hoover Market, our upcoming Cardinal Closet with clothing, lawyers to help with the undocumented, wrongfully eviction, students who have lost their only guardian or parent."

—ANDREA MUNOZ, head counselor

Strong partners

In addition to community partners at individual school sites, a steering committee at the district level includes representatives from San Diego State University, community organizations, educators, high school students and others who meet monthly, oversee work groups and provide recommendations.

SDEA is a member of the San Diego Community Schools Coalition, which advocates with parents, community organizations, school board members and at the bargaining table to elevate parent and educator voice in the decision-making process.

Hoover High School maintains an extensive network of community, district and city resources for students and families in multiple arenas, including legal services, food and shelter, health and wellness, tutoring and more.

▼ At left, students working in Hoover's garden. At right, inside the campus Health Center. Next page, across: Mural on the Hoover High campus.



The Union Role

San Diego Education Association is unique in that it won a contract fight with the school district in the 1990s that codified shared decision-making. This has proved crucial to San Diego community schools' success — and is a sticking point for other locals who do not have such contract language. Without it, educators, as well as parents, students and community members, often struggle to be heard and participate as equals. Many locals are now organizing to ensure shared governance is codified, for community schools and for the public education structure that best serves students.

"SDEA has advocated for community schools because we view them as a way to elevate the voice of our highest-need school communities and get more resources and better processes to the students that we serve," says SDEA President Kyle Weinberg.

CTA's role is important on a statewide level. "CTA has been essential to establishing strong community schools in California — lobbying with the State Board of Education, with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, to make sure that the pillars and mechanisms of transformative community schools are embedded into state policy," Weinberg says.



"The biggest part about shared decision-making and why it is a strength [is that] no one has to be the most important voice in the room. We draw upon all the knowledge and experiences. So when we add all the voices, including student voices, we hear multiple perspectives and have to really think through what the impact for the student is."

—TRACEY MAKINGS, Principal



▼ CTA President David Goldberg records a community schools spot.



CTA and Community Schools

CTA is deeply committed to helping grow and support California's community schools, a partnership with the state, school districts, students, families and communities. Community schools' democratic model of shared decision-making ensures all students' needs are addressed so they can thrive and helps build power with community that leads to a more equitable society. Read more of our coverage of CTA and members' work, and find information and resources, at cta.org/communityschools.

Media Spotlight

CTA's series of TV, radio and digital ads spotlighting community schools are in full swing during this back-to-school season. They focus on the importance of the shared leadership and decision-making governance model that gives voice to educators, students, parents and community members. Watch them at youtube.com/@CaliforniaTeachers.



"Being part of the subcommittee has given us (students) a voice that we know will be heard and valued for many years"

—DANIELA SILVA, Hoover student

Daniela Silva graduated from Hoover in June and was a member of its community schools working group subcommittee. She spoke in a Hoover video presentation about how she and other students have been able to witness the many impactful changes at the school in recent years, including the community garden and Hoover Market. Watch the video at tinyurl.com/3fykue4.

▼ From left, Grant Schuster, Emma Alvarez, Cecily Myart-Cruz, Catherine Gilmore (Florida), Becky Pringle, Kelly McMahon (Iowa), Mary Parr Sanchez (New Mexico); not pictured: Nikki Woodward (Maryland).



TALKING COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

CTA and California were well-represented at an eight-person panel on community schools, held at NEA's Representative Assembly in July and moderated by NEA President Becky Pringle. In addition to UTLA President Cecily Myart-Cruz and Anaheim Secondary Teachers Association (ASTA) President and CTA/NEA Coordinator Grant Schuster, a recent graduate from Anaheim's Sycamore Junior High (a community school) also spoke.

The significant Golden State presence reflects California's nation-leading \$4.1 billion investment in community schools as well as CTA chapters' success in organizing, bargaining for and now implementing community schools in multiple school districts.

"The community schools model — an actual democratic model that includes every stakeholder — is for every school across this nation — urban, rural, suburban and every school in between," said Myart-Cruz. "It is the absolute antidote to privatization."

In 2019, following a six-day strike,

UTLA reached a deal with LA Unified School District that included funding to convert 30 campuses to community schools. LAUSD now has 55 community schools, with plans to add more.

Student Emma Alvarez, who was on Sycamore Junior High's community schools site team, spoke of being heard as an equal. "I get a say in what I want in my classroom, what I want to learn. I have the same amount of voice as my principal, my administrator, my parent, my friend and the people in my community."

Schuster talked about his and ASTA's experience in working with the school district, parents and students and community allies to open/transition 15 community schools.

"What we've learned is that listening is critical in building trust. We engaged with and educated our members and built relationships with community partners. Then we went together to the district and said, 'we want to implement this model! We built a steering committee including teachers, ESPs,

"We are learning that we must go intentionally slow to build the structures so that in the future we can go much faster."

—ASTA President **Grant Schuster**

parents, students, community groups and our district.

"We set out a five-month path for teacher leads and community school organizers to talk to every teacher, ESP and facility worker at every site, and then followed up with parent and student conversations, and community circles and one-on-one interviews. Before we started, parent participation averaged 15 percent. We made it a goal [to reach] 75 percent — and we got that at every one of the community schools.

"We were able to bring [what we learned] into the classroom. At Sycamore Junior High, for example, immigration [came] out in all the surveys. Parents did not understand what their rights were or what resources were available. Students were anxious about their families' future, and teachers saw that reflected in the classroom.

"The site team got together to talk about solutions. We now provide services around immigration, so parents can understand what they can do. The 7th grade English teachers got together to create a unit on immigration, so students can study U.S. policy on immigration and deportation to not only relieve their anxiety and express how they feel but to learn about opportunities for civic engagement and to advocate for themselves and their families.

"We are only two years into this process, but we are learning that we must go intentionally slow to build the structures so that in the future we can go much faster. Because we know that progress only travels at the speed of trust."

Update on CTA Priority Legislation

By Julian Peebles

CTA IS CURRENTLY TRACKING priority bills in the state Legislature, including sponsored legislation. Here is an update:

Co-Sponsored Bills

AB 5 (Zbur): Requires every public school serving grades 7 to 12 to use the California Department of Education's online training delivery platform and curriculum, or an in-service alternative, to support LGBTQ+ cultural competency training for at least one hour annually to all certificated employees on paid time, beginning in the 2025-26 school year.
Status: Passed by the Assembly. Re-referred to Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 260 (Santiago): Requires community colleges to provide parity in compensation for part-time faculty compared to full-time faculty and imposes a pay requirement upon the expiration or renewal of existing collective bargaining agreements.
Status: Placed in the Assembly Appropriations Suspense File. May be acted upon in January 2024.

AB 483 (Muratsuchi): Requires the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to establish a revised audit process for Medi-Cal claims; requires DHCS to provide technical assistance to local education agencies regarding claims; prohibits an auditor's determination from superseding the standards of practice of the practitioner, among other Medi-Cal auditing and claim changes.
Status: Awaiting hearing by the Senate Health Committee

AB 535 (Irwin): Requires the superintendent of public instruction to select an applicant county office of education to serve as a Statewide School Library Lead to work collaboratively with the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence and to establish library and literacy services supporting the statewide system of support.
Status: Referred to the Senate Appropriation Committee Suspense File.

AB 897 (McCarty): Allows adult education teachers to obtain permanent status and sets parameters by which such educators will be deemed to have served a full school year.
Status: Referred to Senate Appropriations Committee Suspense File.

AB 934 (Muratsuchi): Requires the Commission on Teacher Credentialing to contract with a public relations organization to develop a public awareness campaign that highlights the value and benefits of educational careers in California's public schools, spanning from prekindergarten and kindergarten to elementary and secondary schools serving pupils in any of grades 1 to 12.
Status: Referred to Senate Appropriations Committee Suspense File.

Priority Bills

AB 370 (Addis): This CTA-supported bill adds to the criteria for students to be eligible for the State Seal of Biliteracy by requiring students to both demonstrate proficiency in English by meeting one of four specified requirements and demonstrate proficiency in one or more languages other than English by meeting one of two specified requirements.
Status: Awaiting third reading in state Senate.

AB 393 (Rivas, Luz): CTA-supported AB 393 adds to the Early Education Act, which requires the provision of an inclusive and cost-effective preschool program; the development of procedures to identify and report data on dual language learners enrolled in a childcare and development program; and the development of directives and regulations to implement these provisions.
Status: Referred to Senate Education Committee's consent calendar.

AB 504 (Reyes): Establishes that it must not be unlawful or a cause for discipline against a public employee for the employee to refuse to enter the property that is the site of a primary labor dispute, perform work for an employer involved in a primary labor dispute, or go through or work behind any primary picket line. CTA-supported AB 504 also prohibits a public employer from directing public employees to cross a picket line and authorizes a recognized employee organization to inform employees of these rights and encourage them to exercise these rights.
Status: Re-referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee.

▼ TVEA members Jennifer Scharf (at mic), Dawn Murray-Sibby and Amy Eytchison at the press conference announcing the lawsuit.

Local Joins Parents, Students, Teachers in Lawsuit

Temecula Valley Educators Association stands up to district for accurate curriculum and against teacher mistreatment

By Ed Sibby

AFTER MORE THAN eight months of unrest and community division, students, parents, educators and Temecula Valley Educators Association (TVEA) filed suit against the school board majority that injected culture wars and chaos into an award-winning school district.

Under the guidance of non-profit legal organization Public Counsel, TVEA joined with Temecula Valley parents, students and individual teachers in a lawsuit against Temecula Valley Unified School District (TVUSD) in early August. They believe the school board violated the law in adopting its resolution in December 2022 banning the teaching of race-related topics.

"TVEA joined the lawsuit to guard against the negative impacts to Temecula students and educators



in the classroom," said Edgar Díaz, TVEA president. "In the months following the resolution's implementation, we've seen its broad and vague language used as a weapon against educators. Educators are identified and harassed on social media and classroom voicemails with horrible accusations that go against the nature of our service to the students of Temecula."

Díaz noted that TVUSD's current board majority has created a chilling atmosphere where teachers' choosing the "wrong" book results in being removed from the classroom. "Teachers have had their reputations irreparably harmed — one for incorporating a school library book in a project, others for serving as student advisors to clubs and guiding students to focus on school attendance while balancing students' First Amendment rights," he said. "The inability to facilitate academic discussions based on student ideas is causing educators to worry about discipline and their jobs."

Educator thoughts of reprisal are constant and palpable, according to Dawn Murray-Sibby, a high school teacher, TVEA member and one of the plaintiffs in the case: "This ban has created a climate of fear in our classrooms, and it is preventing my students from learning about the history and diversity of our nation. I'm proud to be a plaintiff in this case to fight for my students, who deserve an education not censored by board members' ideological beliefs."

At the heart of the decision to participate in the lawsuit is what TVEA, comprised of 1,300 members, believes is best for both students and members to provide the stellar education for which TVUSD is known. TVEA believes the school board's priorities are misguided and illegal, and it is students, parents and educators who are impacted the most. ■

"This ban created a climate of fear in our classrooms. It is preventing my students from learning about the history and diversity of our nation."

—TVEA member **Dawn Murray-Sibby**

VINDICATED:

ARBITRATOR SIDES WITH BELOVED EDUCATOR

Suspension overturned, district admonished

By Julian Peebles

JUSTICE IS SLOW, but sure — this held true in April when an arbitrator overturned a wrongful suspension levied on a beloved 30-year San Jose educator.

Willow Glen High School history and AP psychology teacher Mary Jeffries defended her students from adults who came on campus without permission peddling anti-LGBTQ+ messages and starting arguments during a 2021 incident. She was punished with a five-day suspension without pay and immediately went to San Jose Teachers Association (SJTA) for assistance and support.

“I was stunned when the district said five days suspension, and so was SJTA leadership,” says Jeffries. “They said it was an outrageous reaction.”

The incident began when adults from a nearby church demonstrated along the school’s perimeter, taunting students with anti-LGBTQ+ messages and using a bullhorn to amplify their homophobic speech. Their actions attracted students, who started engaging with the adults. School management said that as long as the adults stayed off campus, there was nothing they could do.

A couple days later, two of the anti-LGBTQ+ extremists returned to the school and resumed taunting and shouting at students, this time walking onto

campus without permission and escalating the situation. From her second-floor classroom, Jeffries watched the situation unfold and knew she had to intervene.

“I went down because I wanted the kids to know I see them and I support them,” says Jeffries, who added that the adults were antagonizing a group of students who are LGBTQ+. “Management basically felt that we’re supposed to do nothing. If it was another group (being attacked), I don’t know that it would’ve played out that way.”

When Jeffries arrived, the situation was tense and very loud. She stood with the students and redirected the energy to keep the peace. When the bell rang, students went to class and the situation calmed without major incident, but that wasn’t the end of it for Jeffries. Despite ample video evidence captured by students, an assistant principal created his own version of what happened that day, claiming that Jeffries had shouted profanity at the extremists and put her hands on them.

This assistant principal had previously worked at a church that also adhered to

anti-LGBTQ+ views, and based on his version of what had transpired, the district eventually handed down a five-day suspension to the dedicated educator who had never been disciplined in her 20 years at the school.

“The suspension was based on lies. Somebody went after me and it was political,” says Jeffries, who is an out educator. “I thought I was stopping someone who didn’t belong on campus. The district had no plan. The school had no plan. We need to stand up against hate on campus.”

SJTA rallied around Jeffries, with the local’s executive board unanimously voting to take the matter to binding arbitration.

“SJTA is committed to defending every single member against mistreatment by administrators,” says educator and SJTA site representative Michelle Robles. “This experience forces us to question whether we have a partner in district management who we can trust to treat our members fairly and justly.”

The arbitrator agreed that Jeffries was wronged by district management, specifically calling out the assistant superintendent who oversaw San Jose Unified’s \$20,000 investigation for failing to adequately examine the incident. All four of management’s charges against Jeffries were thrown out by the arbitrator and she was completely exonerated.

“The taint of the investigation and subsequent discipline undermines the validity of the final decision,” the arbitrator’s report states. “Moreover, the charges simply aren’t supported by the evidence record ... the district’s five-day suspension without pay is hereby rescinded.”

At a San Jose Unified School Board meeting following the arbitrator’s decision, Willow Glen High parent



Mary Jeffries



Leslie Gill called Jeffries a hero for her actions, and asked how the district could punish the only person who defended students during the incident.

"I was expecting her to get kudos. Mary Jeffries is the only person who stepped up and we should all be thanking her and giving her an award," says Gill. "This district needs to do a lot more to support LGBTQ+ students and teachers."

SJTA President Renata Sanchez spoke at the school board meeting, pointing out that the board had an opportunity to intervene and prevent Jeffries from being dragged through the experience, but failed to act.

"Our teachers spent more than \$23,000 of our dues money to defend Ms. Jeffries and we were glad to do it," Sanchez said, referring to the arbitrator's fees. "She deserves an apology for her treatment,

and this can never happen again.

Jeffries says in all her time as a SJTA member, she never anticipated she would need the union, explaining that as long as she did her job correctly, she thought it would get her through any issues. She says that without the support from SJTA and CTA legal staff, she might not have appealed the decision and just accepted the suspension.

"It was a year and a half process. I am sure I would've fallen down and said, 'I'm done.' It's just a little too much to go up against your employer like that. Having SJTA's support gave me confidence and strength that I was right," Jeffries says. "It matters so much that I have been supported by my colleagues, especially because they understand that it's not safe right now for LGBTQ+ people." ■

Governor Signs 2023-24 State Budget

GOV. GAVIN NEWSOM signed the 2023-24 State Budget package on July 10, following an agreement reached with the Legislature in late June. The budget includes a Prop. 98 minimum funding level for public education of \$108.3 billion and an 8.22% Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA). Further details available at cta.org.

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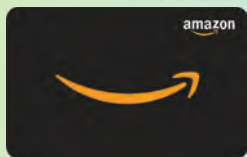
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Big Victory for Napa Valley Students, Educators

Court voids state approval of charter school in favor of local district's earlier decision

IN JULY, the Sacramento County Superior Court denied the State Board of Education's (SBE) approval of Mayacamas Charter Middle School, in a victory for Napa Valley students and educators — and the local school district.

Back in December 2021, a petition for the new 336-student charter school was unanimously rejected by the Napa Valley Unified School District (NVUSD) Board of Education.

The board, as well as the Napa Valley Educators Association and students, families and community members, argued that the proposed charter would have a negative fiscal and community impact for NVUSD students through cuts to staffing, programs and services. The proposed charter enrollment represented a 2% enrollment decrease for NVUSD, and an 8% enrollment decrease for NVUSD's middle school programs, meaning less funding. Among other issues with the proposed charter:

- There was no viable plan for enrolling and supporting English Learners at the levels the petition specified.
- At least 16 sections of the petition were written for students in another district, not students in Napa Valley. (The law requires a charter to demonstrate how it will serve the specific students of that specific district.)
- The plan for serving students with disabilities was insufficient and copied and pasted from a petition submitted in another district.

"We are pleased the judicial system upheld the law and ruled in favor of NVUSD. The implementation of this decision will support all students in our community."

—Napa Valley Educators Association President **Deb St. Clair**

- The budget was not sound.

Charter petitioners appealed to the Napa County Board of Education in March 2022 and were rejected again. They then appealed to the SBE, which approved the charter.

In November 2022, NVUSD filed a lawsuit contending that the SBE had ignored Assembly Bill 1505, an amendment to the Charter Schools Act passed in 2019

that requires the SBE to find that local districts had "abused their discretion" in deciding to overturn the prior denials. The court found that instead, the SBE had abused *its* discretion in reversing the district and county boards' decisions.

"As there was no proper legal basis for the State Board's decision in this matter, the State Board decision must be set aside," wrote Judge Shelleyanne W.L. Chang in the final ruling.

Educators cheered the ruling and what it means for students in the district. "We

are pleased that the judicial system upheld the law and ruled in favor of NVUSD," said Napa Valley Educators Association President Deb St. Clair. "The implementation of this decision will support all students in our community."

The petitioner, Mayacamas Charter, intends to appeal. The Educator will follow the outcome. ■

▼ Semitropic Teachers Association officers, left to right: Robert Robb, president and K-5 intervention teacher; Kelsey Moreland, vice president and sixth grade teacher; Ande Moreland, secretary/treasurer and first grade teacher.



Semitropic Chapter on the Move

Small but mighty local makes a big impact

BIG THINGS ARE HAPPENING at Semitropic Teachers Association (STA) near the city of Wasco in Kern County. STA President Robert Robb reports that after seven-plus years of having no meetings nor contact of any kind with teachers, the chapter welcomed several educators in August 2022, who immediately petitioned to elect new officers. STA works with Semitropic School District, comprised of one school — Semitropic Elementary School, which serves students in grades K-8; 92% of the student population is Hispanic.

“For a school of only about 150 students and 12 certificated staff, doubling membership from four to eight members was one small step for the union, but one giant leap in support of the school and its students,” Robb says.

The new executive board promptly initiated contract negotiations to create STA’s first ever collective bargaining agreement with the district, which took effect in July. “The superintendent/principal and the school board cooperated willingly with STA and CTA regional support staff in Bakersfield, making the process smooth and amiable,” says Robb.

“Contract negotiations helped create a better working relationship that allowed us to finally be heard and taken seriously on other issues.”

—Semitropic Teachers Association President
Robert Robb

Existing practices and policies were codified, and several issues were improved or clarified including extra pay for taking on additional students when substitutes are unavailable, calendars/schedules and time commitments, “no reason” personal use days, evaluations/observations, and attaining permanent status/“tenure.” While not directly negotiated, all staff received an 8% pay increase in December 2022 thanks to the superintendent/principal’s initiative — only the second increase in nearly a decade and the first over 3%.

Now STA is striving to improve communication and collaboration among all staff to address major issues facing their school and students. The executive board is diving headfirst into the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), shared governance, and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in an effort to improve every facet of the school.

The need to act became clear after one educator went on medical leave this past spring due to issues around student behavior. This led to STA developing and delivering a detailed presentation to administrators and the school board on the challenges the school faces as well as potential solutions. As a result, STA and school administrators are meeting regularly to discuss student and educator social-emotional and mental health, and school policies and procedures.

“None of that would have happened if it weren’t for us reviving the union,” says Robb. “I think contract negotiations helped create a better working relationship that allowed us to finally be heard and taken seriously on other issues.”

STA hopes to continue to build its membership. “The union is recruiting the rest of the teaching staff, educating them through discussions and newsletters, ultimately believing that sunshine will be the best disinfectant,” Robb says. ■

▼ Natomas Teachers Association's Mara Harvey, center, and Nico Vaccaro, third from left, worked with parents and community allies to elect new school board members last fall.



Powerful Change

Natomas educators and community organize — and win

By **Cynthia Menzel**

STUNNING SCHOOL BOARD wins, organizing for community schools and working together to change a culture of toxicity in district headquarters were all triumphs for the 600-member Natomas Teachers Association in the last school year. But the real win, says NTA President Mara Harvey, is “galvanizing the community to support teachers. It’s gratifying for members to see they live in a community that stands behind their students and all that the union wants to do for students.”

Harvey said the “wins at the school board were huge. We won two seats with such high margins, and we ran against candidates who were fundamentally opposed to much of what teachers stand for.” The 60% pro-teacher vote highlighted the unity communities feel when educators work together for transformative change in our schools. “I realized that there is support, strong support, for teachers and students in this community.”

NTA Political Action Committee Chair Nico Vaccaro did a stellar job of organizing the campaign, and especially developing a strong volunteer network from the community, Harvey said. “Every time we talked to someone in the community, a parent or whoever, we tell them we’re adding them to the volunteer list.” It’s particularly effective with parents who ask what they can do to help teachers.

“It’s gratifying for members to see they live in a community that stands behind their students and all that the union wants to do for students.”

—NTA President **Mara Harvey**

“We simply asked people to walk with us during the school board campaign. We knocked on every door in our neighborhoods during the election because we had plenty of volunteers to make it happen,” she said proudly.

NTA worked with the Central Labor Council, among other community groups. The campaigns helped identify new leaders, and that, Harvey notes, helps grow NTA and its leadership.

These school board victories spurred numerous changes in the school district. A controversial superintendent with a history of bullying educators and parents decided to step down. NTA also successfully negotiated a Memorandum

of Understanding on community schools, ensuring a path forward to establish shared leadership in Natomas schools alongside parents, students and community allies.

Moving Forward

These last three years were a huge learning curve for Harvey, especially balancing her teaching and leadership lives. “Relationships and face-to-face conversations are key learnings. Listening and understanding what the real issues are and helping people understand they have the power to fix things,” she says emphatically. “Sometimes people need outside support, but the vast majority of our



Continued on Page 49

BARGAINING ROUNDUP

Compiled by **Julian Peebles**

▼ The Mill Valley Teachers Association Bargaining Team after reaching tentative agreement with the district after 9 p.m.



MILL VALLEY:

Increased pay and resources, codified prep time

Mill Valley Teachers Association (MVTA) members stayed united during a lengthy bargain and won in June, securing a more than 14% pay increase over the next two years and codifying prep time for elementary and middle school educators. MVTA also won release time for TK-5 educators to administer one-on-one student assessments, increased stipends for various positions to support student learning programs, and increased stipends for doctorate degrees and National Board Certification. MVTA also secured increased compensation and instructional aide support if class sizes exceed a certain level in TK through 8th grade classes.

The agreement codifies planning and preparation time of 200 minutes for elementary and two planning and preparation periods for middle school unit members.



YUBA CITY:

Prep time, protection and increased pay

On May 31, **Yuba City Teachers Association** (YCTA) members won an 11.5% salary increase retroactive to July 2022, along with retention and signing bonuses to attract and retain quality educators.

YCTA also won an additional prep period for grades K-5, as well as increases to stipends and credit for previous experience. Additionally, members successfully fought off a proposal by management to increase their disciplinary rights and decrease educators' rights.

SHASTA COUNTY:

Saving money on health care

The 10-member **Child Development Education Association** (CDEA) received an 8% pay hike in April, retroactive to Jan. 1, 2023, plus a reduction in the amount members pay for medical insurance costs. The agreement adds a few hundred dollars a month to members' pockets.

CDEA President Lindene Kirkwood says the agreement came about because of the difficulty in hiring and retaining staff. CDEA members are early childhood educators teaching 3-to-5-year-olds in Redding, Cottonwood and Palo Cedro.



HARTNELL COLLEGE:

Faculty organizes as negotiations drag

Members of **Hartnell College Faculty Association (HCFA)** are organizing as negotiations drag on despite the community college district having the resources to show that faculty are a priority for Hartnell.

Working on an expired contract for a year, HCFA is calling on Hartnell management to reach a fair settlement for faculty and staff that considers the high cost of living in the Monterey County region, and the lack of competitive pay for faculty. Of the "Central 14" community colleges (those in the Central Valley region), Hartnell faculty salaries rank at or near the bottom in every benchmark, despite the college

being in one of the most expensive areas. Among the "Bay 10" community colleges (those in the Bay Area), faculty salaries at Hartnell rank last in each benchmark.

"We have faculty giving 110 percent and the district can't even grant us the state-allotted 8% cost of living allowance. We are frustrated and losing faculty," said HCFA President Nancy Schur-Beymer, who teaches nursing at Hartnell College.

"While our neighbors in the colleges and local school districts are receiving substantial raises, our requests for the same are being discounted. Our faculty are really struggling, and we need more than thanks. Our students deserve much more than this."

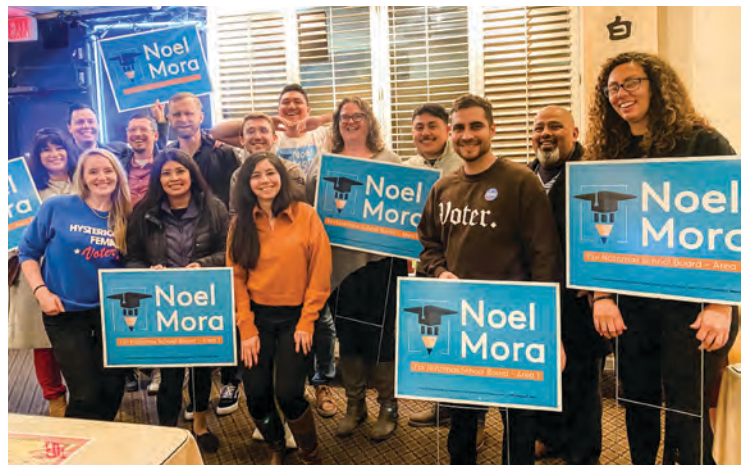
Natomas, Continued from Page 47

members can fix things on their own — and with their union. We empower each other."

Her plans call for going to every school site to hear from members and strategize together to fight for the schools Natomas students deserve. "The most important thing I can do as a leader is to spend time at every school site and show my respect for the power of educators at every site so that we can build a stronger union. I'm a high school history teacher. My vice president, Rachel Green, is a kindergarten teacher. She's amazing. I want to see what the day looks like for my colleagues and make decisions together."

Harvey started teaching in Natomas 20 years ago during a controversial time when teachers were dealing with anti-union managers. Times were tough in the community. A lot of folks had lost hope that things could improve. This past school year proved that change is possible when educators come together in their union.

Harvey prefers to concentrate on moving forward, saying she's excited about the new superintendent, and sees positive change for the district. "It doesn't matter who the



▲ NTA members show support for a winning candidate in last fall's school board election.

superintendent is, what matters is that our community supports our students," Harvey said. "I'm looking forward to working with our new superintendent — she has a new style of running things. A superintendent's job is to support teachers. In our union, we can make sure that happens." ■

Tunnel Vision

Every year, an educator urges his seniors to embrace uncertainty

By Michael J. Steele



"I conjure images of sunlight and open skies awaiting my students. There is light ahead."

ANYTIME I ENTER a tunnel, I inhale a deep gulp of air.

A friend told me to hold my breath in tunnels during third grade. She claimed it brought good luck, and my already fatalistic mind interpreted that as a warning about their inherent dangers. One could collapse, 10-year-old me reasoned. I might never escape the darkness. Twenty-seven years later, tunnels still put a knot of dread deep in my gut.

My seniors in Advanced Placement Calculus BC know this dread too. As winter surrenders to spring, they face potentially perilous paths of their own: deciding their futures. After submitting their collective achievements for judgment on college applications last fall — itself a daunting task — faceless admissions officers render verdicts. Some students revel in tall stacks of acceptances; others reel when a paltry few are granted golden tickets.

All face an unsettling truth: Their futures are no longer certain. Those 75 BC students applied to an average of 9.6 schools, but only now must their paths diverge from the familiar faces and cramped desks they know. They must decide where their futures lead. Fate is in their hands.

These are brilliant, driven students, by the way — the young people expected to change a stubborn world. They've embraced the hard work-and-discipline route to reach this moment, certain they were investing in

their futures with every grueling course.

That certainty wanes as they approach their prospective tunnels. Each underpass presents unique possibilities — new worlds and subjects to explore, new friends and programs to grow alongside — but each also looms dark and ominous. My students hesitate to enter, concerned their selection might crumble around them. They worry they might never reach the other side.

Four years is a long time to hold one's breath.

Despite my own perpetual apprehensions, I work to chip away at theirs. We devote weekly intervals to emotional balloon-emptying, but my words often feel insufficient. Many students stand convinced that only elite institutions grant them entry to their desired lives. Few have access to those brightly lit passages, though, so they hesitate at the ones before them, searching shadows for falling rubble while haunted by a singular question:

What if I choose the wrong tunnel?

Incapable of discerning 75 optimal paths, I appeal instead to experience. I've taught Calculus BC for a decade, so my first students are fast-approaching 30 and deep into their careers. I still remember their senior dread as they fretted over potential cave-ins.

I also remember their emergence. Knowing the stable present of my once-unsettled 2013 cohort gifts me foresight for today's students. They

share parallel excellence, ambition and heart. They were and are wonderful young people who will lead meaningful lives no matter which path they pursue.

While they stress over structural integrity, I conjure images of sunlight and open skies awaiting them. I assure them many have navigated those same tunnels. There is light ahead. They need no particular institution to achieve success because they will seize it anywhere they go. Different passages promise different futures, but all can lead to fulfilling ones.

I recognize my promise's inductive leap; I recognize too that what follows inevitably won't be smooth for everyone. But the apprehension that threatens to crush them so often arises from self-esteem — *I can't do this on my own!* — that I wield my influence certifying their agency. *They* are the architects of their futures, not some university. They can stop holding their breath. They will emerge from whichever tunnel they choose.

Finalizing one's future remains terrifying, just like driving into a dark hole in a mountain. But I do know what their faces express after I assure them that they can succeed no matter where they go. It's the same look in my eyes as the rearview mirror shows a tunnel disappearing behind me.

It's relief. ■

Michael J. Steele is a member of Elk Grove Education Association.

▼ Marisa Rinkel's winning design.



"I am fascinated with the relationship between the beauty of the room and how that shapes the architecture of the brain."

—Marisa Rinkel,
Corona Norco
Teachers Association

A Space That Sparks *Passion* Educator designs her winning classroom setup

By Amy Peruzzaro



▲ Students make use of the classroom's different work areas.

THANKS TO a \$40,000 giveaway from furniture maker KI, Corona Norco Teachers Association member Marisa Rinkel now has her dream classroom. A 4th-grade gifted and talented teacher in Norco, in Riverside County, Rinkel submitted her classroom design to KI's inaugural education furniture giveaway earlier this year and was one of three selected from nearly 500 entries across the country.

Rinkel was inspired to become a teacher later in life after seeing a teacher's positive impact on her son, who has a high IQ and a learning disability. To encourage learning with her own students, she designed a colorful and beautiful space where students have agency in where they learn, and the environment adapts seamlessly to their needs.

Using KI's design tool, Rinkel made about 10 drafts of her design until she had her ideal classroom setup. The design for her project-based classroom includes Ruckus chairs that don't tip over and a colorful and innovative furniture arrangement. There are different tables to lay out a project as well as tables that flip up to allow

space to work. The mobile nature of the space is perfect for the elementary classroom as different subjects are explored throughout the day.



Marisa Rinkel

The major focus of the setup is safety, storage and function, and beauty. Rinkel wanted to create an environment where her students would feel inspired, and incorporated vibrant colors like red, orange and lime green in the chairs as well as a sofa with a pattern that ties all those colors together. "I am personally fascinated with the relationship between the beauty of the room and how that shapes the architecture of the brain," says Rinkel. The resulting space is fun, functional and sparks passion.

Rinkel's winning furniture design has been a hit with her students in her classroom. "It's colorful, it's happy, it makes me feel bright. It

makes me have a good mood when I come into the classroom," says one of Rinkel's students.

To learn more, visit [ki.com](https://www.ki.com) and search for "classroom furniture giveaway". ■

2021-22 SUMMARY ANNUAL REPORT

For CTA Economic Benefits Trust Member Welfare Benefit Plan

THIS IS A SUMMARY of the annual report of the California Teachers Association Economic Benefits Trust Member Welfare Benefit Plan, EIN 94-0362310, Plan No. 590, for period September 1, 2021, through August 31, 2022. The annual report has been filed with the Employee Benefits Security Administration, as required under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA).

Insurance Information

The plan has contracts with Standard Insurance Company to pay certain life insurance, temporary disability, long-term disability and accidental death & dismemberment claims incurred under the terms of the plan. The total premiums paid for the plan year ending August 31, 2022, were \$49,605,326.

Because they are so-called “experience-rated” contracts, the premium costs are affected by, among other things, the number and size of claims. Of the total insurance premiums paid for the plan year ending August 31, 2022, the premiums paid under such “experience-rated” contracts were \$49,605,326 and the total of all benefit claims paid under these contracts during the plan year was \$29,146,666.

Basic Financial Statement

The value of plan assets, after subtracting liabilities of the plan, was \$162,217,932 as of August 31, 2022, compared to \$165,262,834 as of September 1, 2021. During the plan year the plan experienced a decrease in its net assets of \$3,044,902. This decrease includes unrealized appreciation and depreciation in the value of plan assets; that is, the difference between the value of the plan’s assets at the end of the year and the value of the assets at the beginning of the year or the cost of

assets acquired during the year. During the plan year, the plan had total income of \$50,234,429, including employee contributions of \$50,307,708, realized gains of \$179,323 from the sale of assets, other income of \$9,406,792, and net loss from investments of \$9,659,394.

Plan expenses were \$53,279,331. These expenses included \$2,040,459 in administrative expenses and \$51,238,872 in benefits paid to participants and beneficiaries.

Your Rights to Additional Information

You have the right to receive a copy of the full annual report, or any part thereof, upon request. The items listed below are included in that report:

- An accountant’s report;
- Financial information;
- Assets held for investment;
- Transactions in excess of 5% of the plan assets;
- Insurance information, including sales commissions paid by insurance carriers;

To obtain a copy of the full annual report, or any part thereof, write or call the office of California Teachers Association in care of Vicki Rodgers who is Plan Administrator at 1705 Murchison Drive, Burlingame, CA 94010, or by telephone at (650) 697-1400.

You also have the right to receive from the plan administrator, upon request and at no charge, a statement of the assets and liabilities of the plan and accompanying notes, or a statement of income and expenses of the plan and accompanying notes, or both. If you request a copy of the full annual report from the plan administrator, these two statements and accompanying notes will be included as part of that report.

You also have the legally protected right to examine the annual report at the main office of the plan (California Teachers Association, 1705 Murchison Drive, Burlingame, CA 94010) and at the U.S. Department of Labor in Washington, D.C., or to obtain a copy from the U.S. Department of Labor upon payment of copying costs. Requests to the Department should be addressed to: Public Disclosure Room, Room N-1513, Employee Benefits Security Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20210.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13)(PRA), no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number. The Department notes that a Federal agency cannot conduct or sponsor a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. See 44 U.S.C. 3507. Also, notwithstanding any other provisions of law, no person shall be subject to penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if the collection of information does not display a currently valid OMB control number. See 44 U.S.C. 3512.

The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average less than one minute per notice (approximately 3 hours and 11 minutes per plan). Interested parties are encouraged to send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of the Chief Information Officer, Attention: Departmental Clearance Officer, 200 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Room N-1301, Washington, DC 20210 or email DOL_PRA_PUBLIC@dol.gov and reference the OMB Control Number 1210-0040.

**OMB Control Number 1210-0040
(expires 07/31/2023)**

▼ John Horvath with students in the hangar, next to a Cessna 152.



▼ Horvath teaches Common Core subjects in the morning, left; guests have included members of a Chilean Air Force Acrobatic Team, right.



SKY'S THE LIMIT!

Alternative school educator teaches students basics of flight

By Julian Peebles

IN A CLASSROOM inside a 1940s-era hangar at Salinas Municipal Airport, educator John Horvath is teaching his students the basics of math, English, science ... and aviation.

Horvath teaches at the Bob Hoover Academy at Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE), an alternative high school and community school focused on supporting students who have had difficulty in traditional school environments and providing them with the unique opportunity to take to the skies and learn how to fly.

"I teach the students the Airline Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) high school curriculum. It's like Ground School lite," says Horvath, a member of Monterey County Office of Education Teachers Association (MCOETA). "We learn about the basics of flight — lift, drag, forces of flight — all the things you need to obtain a pilot's license."

In a modified independent study environment, Horvath takes his 20 students through Common Core math, English language arts and science lessons every morning with flight school starting after lunch. The students split into two groups: one with Horvath and the other with an instructor/mechanic to work on actual airplanes in the hangar, where they are

currently rebuilding a Cessna. The unique alternative/community/flight school is the only one of its kind in California and quite possibly the nation.

"Almost every day, we have students flying in air and in our simulator on site," Horvath says, noting that one of his students completed a solo flight in December. "If I had this opportunity when I was young, I would've been all over it."

While Horvath does not yet have his pilot's license (students fly with a qualified instructor), he has extensive experience teaching in alternative school environments, working to make connections with students who need additional support and guidance at continuation schools, court schools and in Juvenile Hall. He says he always wanted to work with the innovative program at Hoover, and finally got the opportunity three years ago when MCOE wanted to increase rigor in what was previously called the Sea Air Fire Earth (SAFE) Flight program and asked him to join the team. This is his first year teaching in person after teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"COVID wiped us out, so we were struggling for enrollment, but now we have a waitlist," he says.

Learning how to fly is a compelling incentive for his



students, many of whom have had challenging lives and have bounced around through different programs and learning environments before landing in Horvath's classroom. Many become interested in flying quickly, putting extra effort into their traditional assignments to get as much time as possible learning about and taking part in the wonder of flight. Horvath says it's amazing to witness the transformation in students.

"These kids have been kicked out or dropped out of every school they've attended," he says. "This place gives them hope, and that's a pretty powerful thing to see."

While Horvath works every day to help his students learn and grow, he also spends time as a peer of sorts, learning aviation and flight lessons as he works to earn his pilot's license.

"Usually as teachers we know the material, but I'm learning to fly alongside these students. It's always been a lifelong dream of mine. We're experiencing it together and it's really bonding," Horvath says, and then refers to himself: "Some students have more experience, so they get to teach too — that's really powerful." ■

"These kids have been kicked out or dropped out of every school they've attended," he says. "This place gives them hope, and that's a pretty powerful thing to see."

WIND BENEATH THE WINGS

IN ADDITION TO the Bob Hoover Academy-led flight and aviation ground training, MCOE provides a wealth of resources to support, help and inspire students, including:

- A full high school curriculum geared toward STEM and aviation
- Computers for every student
- Field testing of new AOPA high school aviation curriculum
- Regular sessions with a psychotherapist for each student
- Concurrent enrollment at Hartnell Community College
- Access to a college and career placement advisor
- The opportunity to earn an accredited high school diploma.

Visit bobhooveracademy.org for more information.



Continued from Page 55

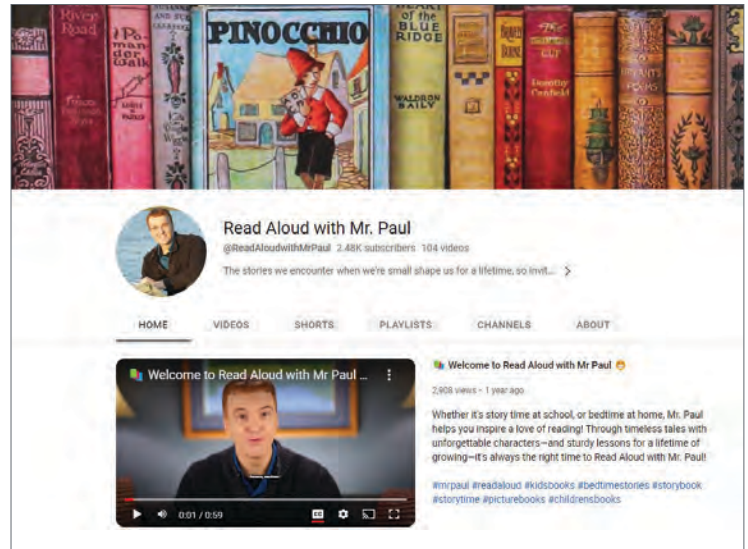


Adventures of Seraphina

CTA/NEA-Retired member Aaron Hall, who spent 20+ years teaching, writes children's books under the pen name Hannah Hope. His books feature a central biracial character named Seraphina whose stories focus on topics of interest for young readers in grades 3-8. In "Seraphina in Ukraine" (2022), Seraphina looks at how she — and you and your friends — can help the war-torn nation. In "Planet Seraphina at an Observatory" (2022), she and her friends are saving Earth and invite you to help them. "Seraphina and the Tail-Waggers: A Sensitive Heart Book for Kids" (2023) explores "people's best friends." On Amazon and other booksellers.

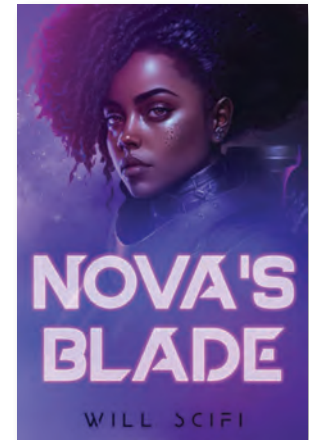
Read Aloud Stories

UTLA member and elementary substitute teacher Paul Laverack has created a YouTube channel, “Read Aloud With Mr. Paul,” which contains more than 100 story-time videos of great children’s books. These funny, touching, wonderful stories, from kindergarten classics to fairy tales to immigrant stories for older students, are a great resource for educators who need to rest their voice during the day and for children to listen to at bedtime — or anytime. On YouTube.



A Fight for Survival & Freedom

Pittsburg Education Association member and 10th grade English teacher Brandon Lawson’s latest creative work is “Nova’s Blade,” Book 1 of a young adult dystopian series. Writing under the pen name Will Scifi, Lawson fashions a world ruled by ruthless corporate oligarchs and deadly games — where one woman’s battle will ignite a rebellion. Nova is forcibly drafted into a televised death match tournament amongst kidnapped women known as the Valkyries. The victor wins a golden ticket to liberation and a marriage to a member of the world’s wealthiest families. There is, of course, much intrigue and drama offstage as well. On Amazon.



Ideas & Activities for Kids

CTA/NEA Retired member Carol Greene taught grades 4, 5 and 6 for 33 years — the last 12 of them as a creative arts specialist in San Jose. She’s also a music specialist and a ventriloquist who used puppets to help her teach; after school she was a Girl Scout, Cub Scout and Webelos leader. Greene recently wrote and illustrated “WOW,” a book that includes many of the participation activities and songs she created during those years. “Wow” is meant to encourage children to try new things, from making masks to dancing with a teddy bear. Elementary school teachers can use it as a guide for student writing and art projects. On Amazon.



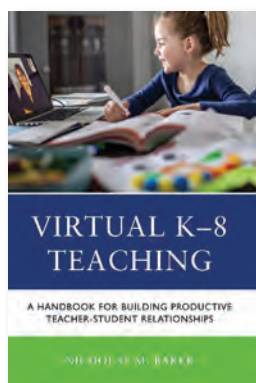
Got something for Lit From Within — a book, blog, album, video series, podcast or something else? Tell us at editor@cta.org with “Lit From Within” in the subject line. We lean toward new(ish) work that can be used in the classroom.



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

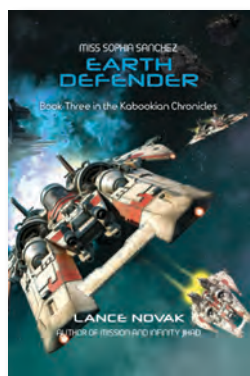
If I Were the Teacher

On the first day of school, Max dreams about what he would do if he were the teacher. His ideas are wild, chaotic and downright hilarious. In the end, Max realizes that it's probably good he's not in charge. He's thankful for his teacher and decides that if she's his teacher then he doesn't want to change a thing. *If I Were the Teacher*, by Cardiff Elementary Teachers Association member John Tiersma and illustrated by art educator Ron Van Der Pol (for younger elementary students), is a read-aloud that helps teachers build a safe and loving community of trust and wonder. The book promotes valuable conversations of imagination and curiosity while deepening the bond of the teacher-student relationship. On Amazon.



Handbook for Virtual Teaching

California Virtual Educators United member Dr. Nicholas Baker recently published *Virtual K-8 Teaching: A Handbook for Building Productive Teacher-Student Relationships*. An educator in the virtual setting for more than two decades, Baker's book is a deep dive into the ways virtual K-8 teachers build those ever-elusive relationships with virtual students. Research and insights from eight virtual middle-school teachers are included on such topics as student engagement, teacher academic and social presence, the nurturing of student sense of belonging, bridging the transactional distance gap and the importance of the student's educational community. In addition, a useful collection of teacher tips and tricks helps build meaningful, productive relationships with students that foster success. On Amazon.



Space Opera Saga Continues

High school English teacher and Las Virgenes Education Association member Lance Novak has just published his fifth young adult novel, *Miss Sophia Sanchez: Earth Defender* — the third installment in a science fiction/space opera series. Sophia Sanchez, the youngest corporal stationed on the starship Excelsior, and her squadron of fighter pilots escort an expeditionary team to planet Gnomon to begin relations with the fumpbushtas, a proud, dwarf-like race of intelligent beings. Meanwhile, a leezhahi force has also ventured to Gnomon. Can Sophia help stop the fumpbushtas from becoming the latest leezhahi conquest? And can she and her colleagues help humans take back Earth, an abandoned planet now colonized by the leezhahi? On Amazon, Barnes & Noble and more.

Continued on Page 55

Membership Manual

<u>Meet Your Leaders</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>History of Advocacy</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Scholarships & Grants</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>Connecting Communities</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>Sharing Resources</u>	<u>12</u>

Together, we are

**UNION
STRONG!**



And we are:

*Organizing For Power
Supporting Your Growth
Advocating For All Students
Funding For Innovation
Connecting Communities
Sharing Resources*

2023-2024

There's Strength in Our Numbers

**Did you know you're the engine that (em)powers CTA?
But not just you. We're all in it together.**

Just by being a member, you're helping educators all across California negotiate smaller class sizes and safer working and learning conditions. Your membership is helping an education support professional in another district bargain a living wage and a veteran teacher retire with dignity. And your membership adds to our power to secure and share cost savings through the CTA and NEA Member Benefits programs.

And collectively, as one voice, we've made a lot of important changes through the years — at the local school board, at the California State Capitol, and in the halls of our nation's Capitol.



DID YOU KNOW?

California is home to the fifth-largest economy in the world, with more than 10,500 public schools and 9 million students.

ORGANIZING FOR POWER

The California Teachers Association is a democracy.

As a CTA member, you get to vote for someone to represent you on the CTA State Council of Education, CTA's top governing body. You also vote for your own local chapter officers and delegates to NEA's Representative Assembly, which is the largest union governing body in the country.

The 743 State Council representatives, in turn, elect the three state-level CTA officers and the CTA Board of Directors. Together, the state officers, the Board of Directors and State Council set CTA's priorities, policies and goals.

At the national level, the NEA Representative Assembly delegates, the officers and the NEA Board of Directors do the same.



David Goldberg

PRESIDENT
Bilingual Teacher
United Teachers
Los Angeles



Leslie Littman

VICE PRESIDENT
History Teacher
Hart District
Teachers Association



Erika Jones

SECRETARY-TREASURER
Elementary Teacher
United Teachers
Los Angeles



Joe Boyd

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Former Educator
Longtime Organizer

Out of many, one!

Together, we number 3 million members across the country. That's 310,000 just in California from nearly 1,100 chapters.

At the same time, it all comes down to you. As a member-driven organization, you decide — well, everything! From the trainings CTA offers to what we fight for at the Capitol, you steer CTA's course.

This is what it means to be member-driven.



Every member has a voice.

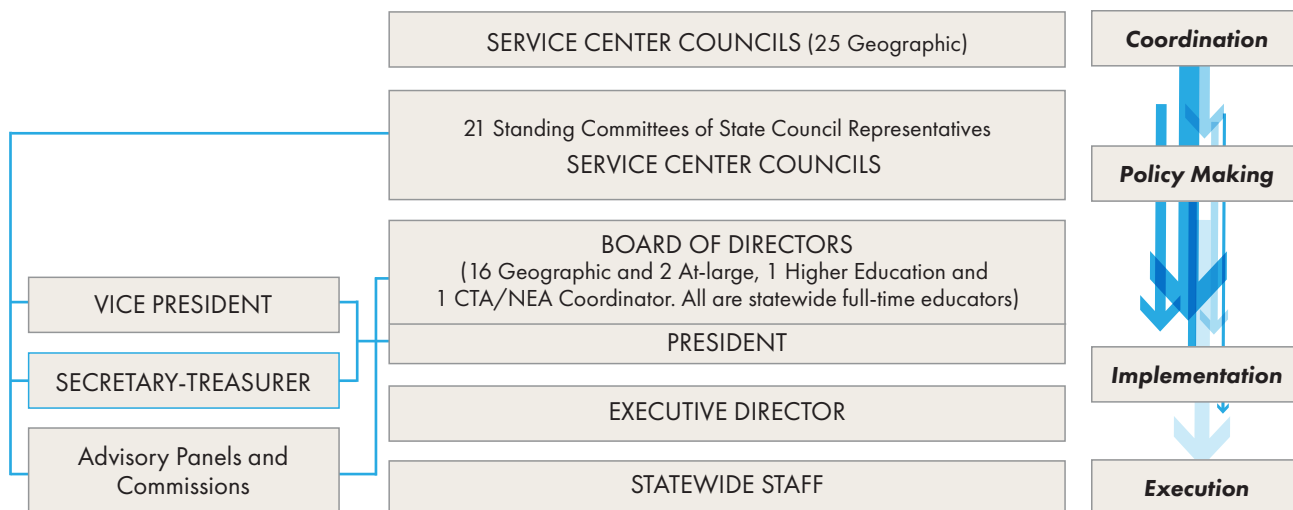
CTA's organization ensures that every member has a voice and a vote in determining our union's values, goals and leaders. CTA members just like you built, maintain and enhance this structure to advocate for, support and defend the public schools our students deserve, and focus on the needs of educators working hard to make a difference in classrooms.

MEMBERS



Small Chapters share State Council Representatives.

Large Chapters have more than one (on average — one representative per 438 members)



SUPPORTING YOUR GROWTH

Building Your Skills

CTA offers top-notch professional development opportunities designed to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Whether it's attending one of our conferences, participating in a training or workshop, or applying for a scholarship or grant, CTA can help you be the best educator you can be!

Events & Conferences

Our statewide multiday, multifaceted conferences deliver knowledge and skills for CTA members on a variety of topics including teaching and learning, collective bargaining, education advocacy, racial justice and equity, LGBTQ+ issues, new and veteran educator issues, special education and leadership training. Many sessions are recorded. Together with specialized trainings and workshops held throughout the year, CTA meets your professional development needs at every stage of your career.

Innovations in Student Learning

CTA members are at the forefront of innovative ideas for student learning and transforming the profession. CTA's Institute for Teaching (IFT), funded by member dues, offers substantial grants for innovative ideas, whether in one classroom or schoolwide.

Professional Development

CTA's Instruction and Professional Development site (cta.org/IPD) is a hub where you'll find information, resources and opportunities to build and improve your skills. These include CTA/NEA micro-certifications, educator-led professional development through the Instructional Leadership Corps, a program to jump-start your path to National Board Certification, as well as an ongoing calendar of topical webinars and a wellness center.

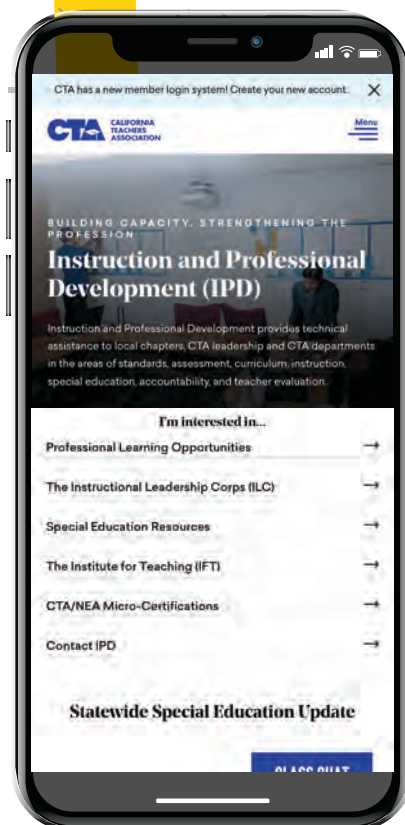
Conferences

When you attend a CTA conference, you experience engaging workshops, perspectives from some of the best content experts and thought leaders in public education, and opportunities to network with colleagues. The skills and information from our conferences can be immediately applied to your role as an educator and local leader.

Visit cta.org/conferences to register for a CTA conference.

Save the Dates

Search CTA events, build and download into your own calendar by visiting cta.org/calendar.



DID YOU KNOW?

You can attend CTA Conferences and get University Credit for Professional Growth Hours.

CTA members attending in-person or virtual conferences can accumulate the professional growth hours needed to qualify for university credit. As a benefit to members, CTA will cover the \$75/unit cost for six of the nine university credit units available.

Learn more at cta.org/credit.

Special Education Conference	10.6.23 - 10.8.23	Garden Grove
LGBTQ+ Issues Conference	10.27.23 - 10.29.23	Palm Springs
New Educator Weekend (North)	11.3.23 - 11.5.23	Santa Clara
Issues Conference	1.12.24 - 1.14.24	Las Vegas, NV
Good Teaching Conference (North)	2.2.24 - 2.4.24	Burlingame
New Educator Weekend (South)	2.23.24 - 2.25.24	Costa Mesa
CTA/NEA Retired Conference	2.29.24 - 3.1.24	Southern CA
Equity & Human Rights Conference	3.1.24 - 3.3.24	Southern CA
Good Teaching Conference (South)	3.22.24 - 3.24.24	Garden Grove
NEA Representative Assembly	7.3.24 - 7.7.24	Philadelphia, PA
Presidents Conference	7.18.24 - 7.21.24	Orange County
Summer Institute	7.24.24 - 7.28.24	Los Angeles

HEARD OF MICROCERTS?

Micro-certifications or "microcerts" are self-paced, practice-based professional learning sequences offered free for CTA members. After completing a 15-hour course of your choosing, you are eligible for micro-certification, which can be submitted to CSU Chico along with a small fee for one university credit.

Find out more at cta.org/ipd.

DEALING WITH STRESS

Experiencing stress, anxiety, depression, or other feelings of helplessness these days is normal. The supports we put in place can significantly affect the time it takes for us to recover and find a sustainable balance. We've compiled resources to help you and your students.

Access the Wellness Center at cta.org/wellnesscenter.

NAVIGATING NATIONAL BOARD

For members interested in National Board Certification, CTA offers information and guidance through the process, including hosting communities of practice and intensive prep programs, and BIPOC cohorts (with partners including the UCLA National Board Project and the National Board Resource Center at Stanford).

Find details at cta.org/nbct.

Building a Better State for Public Education

Since our founding in 1863, CTA has built a legacy of standing together and working for our students, educators and the belief that public education is a cornerstone of American democracy. It's these shared values that unite us and make us strong, as 310,000 CTA members from El Centro to Eureka and everywhere in between stand ready to support each other, fight for our students and defend our public schools and community colleges.

While we are unified in our mission and voice, our differences are a major part of what makes us stronger together. Though we are diverse in so many ways, we share a focus: advocating for our students, schools and communities. Ensuring that there is a place for everyone in CTA is a value that requires a solid foundation and structure, built to be inclusive and equitable, so that every member is seen and heard.

Guided by our values and powered by our solidarity, CTA continues our mission for even greater successes in the years ahead. We will continue to fight for seats at the table in our local communities and the State Capitol, to let our voices be heard, and to work with elected officials who believe in our vision for strong, vibrant public schools that serve all students. When CTA stands tall for a brighter tomorrow, there's nothing that can stop us. Because together, #WeAreCTA.



Leaders & Advocates

Whether they are setting policy at CTA's State Council, negotiating at the bargaining table or meeting with lawmakers there are no better advocates for students and public education than our members.



Camille Butts, CIVIL RIGHTS IN EDUCATION (CRE) COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

Association of Colton Educators
Working to educate a more informed populace is only possible with the support of a strong, social-justice minded and progressive union. Being entrusted to be a leader within CTA is the bonus.

ADVOCATING FOR ALL STUDENTS

160 Years of Advocacy

1863

CTA is founded by Superintendent of Public Instruction John Swett with fewer than 100 members, all male.

1866

CTA's first legislative win establishes free public schools for all California children — including schools for students of color.

In March 2022, members of the Sacramento City Teachers Association went on strike, winning a contract that ensures students get the quality education they deserve.



John Zabala, PRESIDENT
United Teachers of Richmond

By standing together in union solidarity, we uplift our common dignity, humanity and power. When we accomplish this, that's when our students truly thrive and excel.



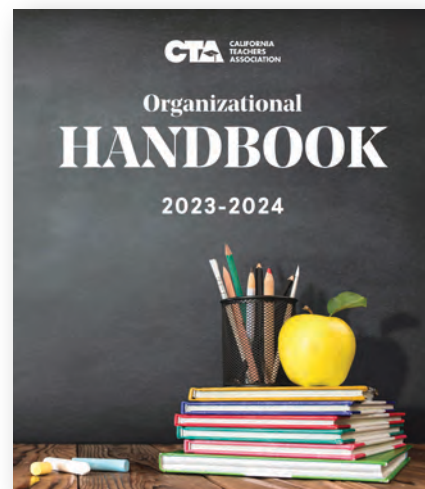
Juli Stowers, CTA/ABC MEMBER
Saddleback Valley Educators Association

Advocacy for our students and colleagues must extend beyond our classrooms, and our active involvement in CTA gives us the opportunity and collective strength to do so at all levels of leadership.



Edgar Diaz, PRESIDENT
Temecula Valley Educators Association

As a local president, I know CTA support, whether statewide or local, can make the difference in meeting our chapter goals.



Our Advocacy Road Map

CTA's structure, agenda, longterm plan and policies are contained in the Organizational Handbook. This handbook is our road map, providing the vision and path to accomplish the important work we do. For nearly 160 years, educators have crafted, molded and shaped bylaws and policies to help build our association into the powerful voice for educators it is today. Our agenda and goals are rooted in policies developed by our State Council of Education and set forth in this handbook.

More at cta.org/OrgHandbook

1890

CTA wins state Supreme Court ruling on "fair dismissal" law.

1911

CTA leads state funding fight to establish community colleges. ➤ At CTA's urging, free textbooks are printed and distributed at state expense.

1913

California State Teachers' Retirement System is created by legislation after CTA State Council calls for a statewide teacher pension system in 1910.

1927

CTA wins legal victory when state Supreme Court rules that a school board cannot fire a female teacher simply because she married.

1940

CTA is one of a few organizations in California to protest internment of Japanese Americans at the beginning of World War II.

1967

CTA establishes schools for children of migrant workers and leads the authorization of bilingual instruction classes for English learners.

1975

CTA-sponsored Rodda Act passes, making K-14 school employees the first public employees in California to win collective bargaining rights.

ADVOCATING FOR ALL STUDENTS

Fighting for Justice

CTA has a legacy of fighting for justice — for our members and students, and for the shared values we hold dear. This starts with representation on the job when educators are treated unfairly, members stand up for students being treated unfairly, or management is pulling something funny. Sometimes these issues require additional expertise, and CTA has an experienced team of attorneys who provide legal advice and assistance to protect the rights of our members and defend our students.

The shared belief that a better world is possible has guided our union since our founding, when a small group of teachers successfully established free public schools for all children in California — including schools that educate students of color. During our 160 years, CTA has fought for justice in our schools and communities — leading efforts to outlaw child labor and enact other legal protections for children; opposing the internment of Japanese Americans at the beginning of World War II; fighting for the rights of immigrant families to pursue the American Dream; and declaring without exception that Black Lives Matter. CTA's legacy of fighting for justice and progress informs our efforts as we work for a brighter tomorrow.

Read more about our advocacy at cta.org/Our-Advocacy.

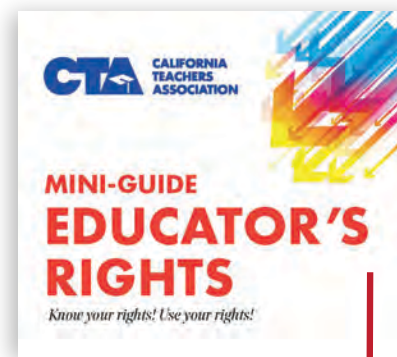


Welcoming All Students

Social justice for all begins with a free, quality public education. For that to happen our students need to feel welcome in schools and seen by their educators. For resources, videos, posters and shareables to create welcoming learning environments for all students, visit cta.org/SocialJustice.

Knowing Your Rights

Thanks to years of strong union advocacy, California educators have certain rights guaranteed by law on the job.



Download this guide to your rights at cta.org/YourRights.

1988

CTA drafts and wins passage of Proposition 98, which guarantees a minimum portion of state money to fund K-14 education.

1996

CTA wins Class Size Reduction law for K-3 classrooms.

2005

CTA defeats initiatives that would have cut school funding, destroyed teachers' due process rights, and silenced the voices of public employees.

2006

CTA authors the Quality Education Investment Act to help schools that serve low income students and English learners to close the achievement gap.

2012

CTA leads fight to pass Proposition 30, generating \$42 billion for public schools and local services over seven years.

2019

CTA helps pass landmark accountability and transparency reforms to charter school laws. Extended in 2016.

2020

CTA actively opposes hate, discrimination and violence and supports honesty in education.

Scholarships & Awards

Looking to continue your education or need financial assistance sending your child to college? Have you or a colleague made a positive impact on public education or on human and civil rights? If so, CTA can help and wants to recognize you. CTA provides grants and awards to educators and members of the community who promote quality public education and impact their students and community.

Here's a sampling.

CTA scholarships for members and dependents, including:

1. Scholarships up to \$5,000 for dependent children of members.
2. Scholarships up to \$3,000 for members.

Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Scholarship Program

Scholarships up to \$6,000 for members and dependents to encourage students of color to become educators, school nurses, school counselors or school therapists.

LGBTQ+ Safety in Schools Grant & Scholarship Program in Honor of Guy DeRosa

Grants up to \$2,500 to support groups, projects and presentations that promote understanding of and respect for LGBTQ+ persons; scholarships up to \$2,500 for self-described LGBTQ+ members pursuing careers in public education.

César E. Chávez and Dolores Huerta Education Awards Program DeRosa

Awards up to \$550 for both sponsoring educators and students who demonstrate an understanding of the vision and principles of César Chávez and Dolores Huerta with an essay or visual art project.

Musicians at Play



FUNDING FOR INNOVATION

Teacher-driven and Strength-based

Through special programs, research, conferences, networking, the mobilization of teachers, and community-based coalitions, CTA's Institute for Teaching (IFT) seeks to advance public education and promote the common good of our students and communities.

The IFT Board knows that school change must include two key factors: It needs to be teacher-driven, and it should be based on what is working and successful in our schools and classrooms.

Innovation Grants

One of the ways IFT helps struggling students and schools is by awarding innovation grants directly to CTA members and local chapters. To date, CTA members have funded 569 grant projects totaling more than \$6.7 million.

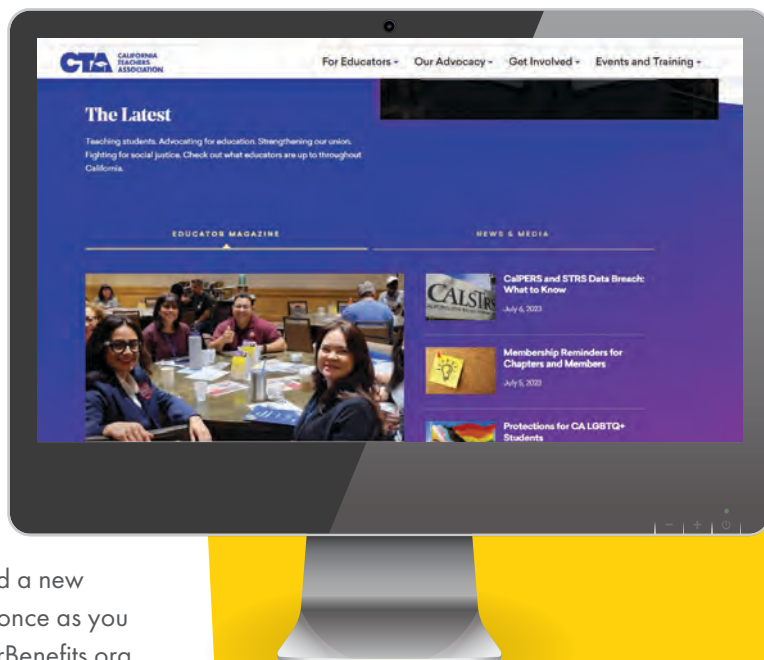
All CTA members are eligible to apply for an Educator grant (up to \$5,000) or an Impact grant (up to \$20,000). To learn more about everything IFT does and the grants offered, go to cta.org/IFT.

CTA.org

The CTA website makes it easier than ever to find educator resources and information about upcoming CTA events, conferences and professional development opportunities.

Updated and upgraded in 2020, cta.org is a one-stop shop for all things CTA. And last year, CTA launched a new sign-on option that allows you to log in once as you toggle between cta.org and ctaMemberBenefits.org.

Whether you're looking for news about public schools, information about our goals for the coming election, or want to help advocate and take action for our students, you'll find what you need at cta.org.



Get social, connect with educators and take the movement digital!

The world interacts on social media and CTA members are there. And it's not just sharing memes and pictures of food. CTA members are talking about some major issues on CTA social media pages and in online groups — engaging in dialogues and sharing resources about equity, social justice, classroom techniques, education trends and ways to get connected with CTA and the movement for the schools all students deserve.

Join the conversation using the hashtag #WeAreCTA to connect with educators from CTA and beyond to discuss education, share teaching and learning tips, and take the fight for public schools digital.



CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

CTA's digital platforms make it possible for you to stay connected to your profession and colleagues. Like and follow us today and we'll see you online!

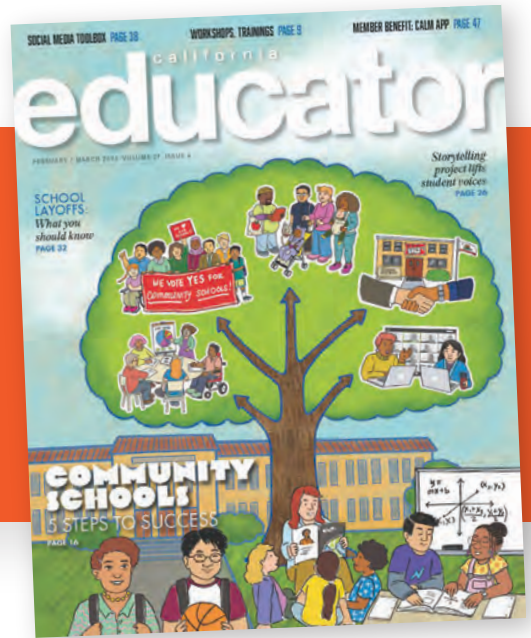
Visit CTA's main Facebook page (**@WeAreCTA**) and participate in more than 15 Facebook groups focused on a variety of education topics.

Follow breaking news that impacts CTA members and discussions about important education and social issues on CTA's Twitter page (**@WeAreCTA**).

Don't miss our Instagram stories and posts (**@WeAreCTA**) sharing the beauty of our craft and our union, since we all know a picture is worth a thousand words.

Browse our curated boards and pins on Pinterest (**@WeAreCTA**) and get resources to use in the classroom and beyond.

On our YouTube channel, you can find dozens of IPD webinars and trainings on a variety of topics in addition to CTA radio and TV spots, videos of events and other informative and interesting items.



Staying Informed

Sometimes you just want to turn the page and learn about what's going on with public schools and colleges.

Don't miss CTA's award-winning publications that spotlight important issues in our public schools and community colleges, as well as amazing members that go above and beyond to reach students.

CTA's official magazine, *California Educator*, is published every two months, mailed to all members and updated regularly at cta.org/educator.



Printed four times a year, CCA Advocate is the official publication of the Community College Association, CTA's affiliate representing community college faculty and educators across the state.

SHARING RESOURCES

Member Benefits

Together, we stand union-strong with CTA's 310,000 and NEA's 3 million members to negotiate exclusive programs designed just for educators. Your Member Benefits can help provide savings, unique educator-specific enhancements, and peace of mind for many of your personal and professional needs.

Unique Benefits and Savings

CTA/NEA Member Benefits programs are designed exclusively for educators. These quality programs are held to our highest standards for excellent service and preferred member rates. Whether you are looking for deals on back-to-school supplies or looking for ways to protect yourself and your family with insurance solutions, or searching for a quality retirement savings plan, we have you covered. We and our endorsed partners are ready to help and support you.

There are so many helpful Member Benefits programs available to CTA/NEA members, we can't fit them all here!



A Handful of Benefits

For a complete list of discounts and resources, visit our websites:

- CTAMemberBenefits.org
- neamb.com

Contact for questions:

memberbenefits@cta.org
(650) 552-5200

Benefits You Can Count On

CTA Access to Savings offers numerous discounts on everyday and major purchases, travel and entertainment.

CTA-endorsed Voluntary Disability and Life insurance from The Standard can help protect your paycheck and your loved ones, and includes access to extra benefits like the Student Loan and Cancer Benefits, at no additional cost.

Auto, Home/Renters Insurance through California Casualty offering preferred member rates and unique educator-specific benefits.

Exclusive member discounts on home mortgages and auto loans through Provident Credit Union and earn dividends with a Super Reward Checking Account.

Student loan forgiveness resources, including NEA Student Loan Forgiveness Navigator powered by Savi.

And don't miss...

CTA Retirement Savings Plan, the only 403(b) plan endorsed by CTA and created using a fiduciary standard of care, which means it was designed with your best interests in mind. More at CTAMemberBenefits.org/rsp.

CTA/NEA Credit Card: Learn more about Credit Card Services at CTAMemberBenefits.org/creditcard



For Highlights of the complete program:
CTAMemberBenefits.org/download



California's Community Schools

REIMAGINING PUBLIC EDUCATION

Shared decision-making with educators, families, students and communities.

Meeting students where they are. With classes built around their academic needs and the culture of the community.

Providing counseling, wellness centers, childcare and parent education.

LEARN MORE AT
[CTA.ORG/COMMUNITYSCHOOLS](https://cta.org/communityschools)





CTA Members, take advantage
of Auto and Home/Renters
Insurance that is...

Simple.
Trusted.
Affordable.
Right for you.



California Casualty
AUTO AND HOME INSURANCE



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